Imōto-Moe: Sexualized Relationships Between Brothers and Sisters in Japanese Animation

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In this work I examine how *imōto-moe*, a recent trend in Japanese animation and manga in which incestual connotations and relationships between brothers and sisters is shown, contributes to the sexualization of girls in the Japanese society. This is done by analysing four different series from 2010s, in which incest is a major theme. The analysis is done using visual analysis.

The study concludes that although the series can show sexualization of drawn underage girls, reading the works as if they would posit either real or fictional little sisters as sexual targets. Instead, the analysis suggests that following the narrative, the works should be read as fictional underage girls expressing a pure feelings and sexuality, unspoiled by adult corruption.

To understand *moe*, it is necessary to understand the history of Japanese animation. Much of the genres, themes and styles in manga and anime are due to Tezuka Osamu, the "god of manga" and "god of animation". From the 1950s, Tezuka was influenced by Disney and other western animators at the time. His stories and themes had intellectual and philosophical depth that the western counterparts did not have. The works also touched themes that the western animation steered away from, including sexuality, which was not compartmentalized in a similar fashion in Japan as it was in the Western world. His works not only created new genres by themselves, but the constant combination by future generations created the thematic complexity that can be seen in manga and anime today.

Tezuka also had a role in underage girl sexualization: his girl characters were an inspiration for the sexuality of little girls, both real and fictional, in the 70s. The western works of Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita and Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland drew attention to the cuteness of little girls. In combination, sexualized versions of Tezuka's characters were drawn, at first as a parody. In the 80s there was a boom of drawn girls in sexually compromised situations, or *lolicon* art. During the 80s, the focus shifted away from connotations to real girl imagery and drawn rape imagery towards less violent forms.

In 1989, a dubious connection was drawn between *otaku*, fans of popular culture, including *lolicon* imagery, and a serial killer of small children. The moral panic that followed slowed the spread of *lolicon* in the 90s.

Meanwhile in the 90s, an idea of *moe* began to form: if fictional little girls are not corrupted by adult sexuality, the girls cause feelings of affection in the viewer. The viewers are affected by *moe* via isolated, but recognizable tropes, such as cat ears and tail, a speech habit, or twin tails.

A part of this research is to examine how well *imōto-fits* under the *lolicon* criteria, and under *moe*: the characters are sexualized: they are showing having sexual thoughts and expressing sexual activity. After the examination, I conclude that, at least in the works examined, *imōto-moe* fits under the latter category: the male partners are passive and follow the girl's lead, the ages are very close, and many of the series emphasize the virtual aspect: to enjoy little sisters, they have to be two-dimensional, outside the laws of reality.

Säilytyspaikka – Förvaringställe – Where deposited
Muita tietoja – Övriga uppgifter – Additional information

1. Table of Contents

2. Introduction

2.1. Overview

In the last few decades, an ever-increasing amount of people have been introduced to Japan through consuming works of Japanese modern popular culture, including video games, animation, and comics. In comics and animation, or *manga* and *anime,* how the Japanese versions of two media are known internationally, although the works are visually familiar to a western audience, they are also thematically quite varied compared to their Western counterparts. This is largely due to the legacy of Tezuka Osamu, known today as both "god of manga" and "god of animation": From the beginning in the 1950s, his art was influenced by Disney and other great Western animators at the time, whereas his stories and themes shared intellectual and philosophical depth that the Western counterparts did not have. He and his works were trendsetters for the complexity and variety that can be seen in manga and anime genres today.[1]

While much of the art and themes are relatable to the Western viewer, some of the more recent developments are less palatable by Western standards: In the 1980s and 1990s there was a *lolicon* boom, in which underage girls are drawn in sexually compromised situations, raising questions about its harmfulness and relation to child pornography. During the 1990s, *moe* developed from *lolicon*: the difference being the lack of adult sexualization present in *lolicon*.[2] During the 2000s, works in *lolicon* and *moe* styles that played around with incest between brothers and sisters, were becoming increasingly common, to the point that during 2010s, it was the main theme in many major anime, and a minor theme in many others.

In this research, I have coined the theme and expressions of incestual relationships and feelings in *lolicon* and *moe* styles as *imōto-moe*, *imōto*[3] being Japanese for "little sister", and *moe*

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[1] Bestor, Lyon-Bestor, and Yamagata, *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Culture and Society*, 227–28.
[2] Bestor, Lyon-Bestor, and Yamagata, 231; Galbraith, "Lolicon: The Reality of 'Virtual Child Pornography'in Japan."
[3] 妹, Japanese does have a word for a sister of any age, *shimai* (姉妹), but *imōto* is more established in colloquial usage, as two of the names of the anime chosen show: *Ore no imōto ga Konna ni Kawaii Wake ga Nai* and *Imōto sae Ireba Ii.* The issue with s*himai*, as well as "sister" in English, is that the Catholic nun character type is also included in the meaning.

referring both to the genre of girl illustrations where there is a lack of adult sexualization, and to the feeling that the characters cause in the viewers. The Aim of this research is to both note the types and the variety *imōto-moe* is expressed, and to analyze how *imōto-moe* affects gender images in Japan, in a similar fashion as *lolicon* and *moe* have affected ongoing schoolgirl sexualization and expression of both genders in various ways.

This thesis is a case study of four different Japanese animated television series, in which sexual attraction between siblings is a major theme, and which have been broadcasted on Japanese television. They are analyzed and compared to each other and the society surrounding them by both methods of literary criticism and multimodal discourse analysis, as the anime series are a combination of text, sound and picture, all with their own effects to the whole. Due to the nature of being a purposefully picked sample of fictional works, it is important to note what kinds of conclusions can and cannot be drawn based on them: we may be able to say what is there, what is the context, problem, or power relations and expectations near the problem, or is the meaning of something likely known or not known to the target audience. However, we cannot say much about why they are there, at least based on analysis alone, and the least about if something common in series is also common in real surroundings.

The anime series chosen for analysis were broadcasted in Japanese television between the years 2011-2016. Like many anime, they too have their original versions in another format, which can have an effect on the animated version. The reason to choose the anime versions for analysis is that for a work to become an anime, it must pass certain marketability and popularity thresholds, which means they could be considered influential. Because making anime is also more time and money consuming than making novels, manga, or visual novels, the total amount of them is a lot less in comparison. Thus, it is easier to have a more comprehensive understanding of anime sphere than it is to have a similar understanding of the range of the other types of media.

2.2. Research problem

Alongside Japanese traditional and martial arts, anime and the *otaku* culture surrounding it has recently been one of the more influential ways how Japan is seen to the outside world, especially to the younger audience. In addition to that, the sales of products related to the otaku culture continue to rise both domestically and internationally. However, as anime and its surrounding culture is contemporary and rather colloquial, academic research has generally not caught on to explain some of the more controversial aspects of it, with notable exceptions of e.g. self-publishing of homoerotic works, sexualization of girls, or idol culture. As there is much inside information in relatively large phenomenon that has also become both accessible and commercial, the need to

analyze various aspects of it grows. Among them, there is the surprisingly common theme of incest, be it ambiguous or direct.

Because anime is created by people for entertainment purposes, assumptions cannot be drawn about how common or problematic certain elements shown in the works are in the society the works are targeted to. What can be analyzed, however, is what are the elements that are being shown to the audience, and how are they shown. While it cannot be said for certain that the elements implied to be well understood for the target audience actually are so, for the purpose of this thesis, I am assuming that they are. The basis for that is that if there is something in a series that is expected to be taken for granted, that would cause dissonance in the reception of the watcher. It would mean that the series would neither be good nor popular.

Using external sources, one could also analyze how the works were received: did they cause controversies, uproars, exceptional popularity, or failure causing the related genre to drop in popularity over time, and draw deductions about the related groups based on the reception. However, the scope of this thesis is limited to the analysis of the works themselves, largely excluding the reception of them.

However, as a rather new, contemporary and colloquial topic, there is a need to define what it is that is being researched. For that reason, the scope of this thesis is limited to analyzing five different anime series revolving around incestual interaction between siblings through the methods of literary and discourse analysis. The methods are used to examine the interaction and context of the characters related to the topic, to clearly see what we are looking for.

2.3. Research aims

There are several contradicting factors that make the topic *imōto-moe* worth researching: For one, the theme is a borderline universal taboo, and the works walk a fine line on the border of it. For another, even though the theme of incest is a taboo, it is a popular and lately risen theme in Japanese popular culture sphere. Thirdly, the works are popular not only in Japan, but are spread to and liked by anime and manga consumers worldwide. Production of manga, anime and games is a huge part of what is imported from Japan, both culturally and commercially, and as of late, incestual themed manga, anime, and to some extent, games, are a visible part of them. Thus, they are seen and reacted from outside of Japan.

That being so, the handling of a controversial theme alters how the audience of the works are viewed by both Japanese and non-Japanese outsiders. The handling of the theme affects both the insiders and the outsiders in various ways: Be it negatively, as in that the theme would be a

continuation of sexualizing girls as objects of male lust and control, of which not even close relatives can be truly safe anymore. Or be it positively, as in that the works would broaden up what one can be as a person, not necessarily in terms of seeing one's own siblings sexually, but in a broader sense: if the characters can accept themselves, be accepted and can succeed as themselves nevertheless of what questionable feelings they hold inside, then it could be possible with real people and their own different underlying issues and insecurities that we may carry.

The aim of this research is to analyze these questions: how the works change the space and meaning of being a girl and a woman in Japan. This is important, as both gender relations and image of self both change over time and vary between countries. Incestual themes are naturally not a driving force of that process. Nevertheless, they are a piece of a much bigger puzzle of sex and gender perception, power and status.

2.4. Research question

The research question of this research is as follows:

How does *imōto-moe* contribute to the gender representations in Japan?

To understand the question, it is needed to examine what *imōto-moe* is and where does it come from, as well as what it is trying to portray. This is done in detail in chapter 3, where I explain the history of Japanese family construct in chapter 3.1, and the history of Japanese anime and manga in chapter 3.2. In 3.3, I explore the general background and problems in girl representation in Japanese media, of which the fictional girls in anime and manga are a part of. As a type of problematic girl representation that is relevant to this research, I explain *lolicon*, a genre of fictional sexualized underage girls in anime and manga, and how it can be interpreted, in chapter 3.4. From there, I explain *moe*, a non-sexualized genre of fictional girls and the feelings associated with it, in chapter 3.5.

Imōto-moe is a recent development of *lolicon* and *moe*, with varying sexual tension and possibly explicit acts included between brothers and sisters. Part of this research is to understand the range of how it is represented in the chosen works in which incest between siblings is a major theme: what similarities and differences are there in comparison to each other. For some examples of points to compare, is it shown as comedic or dramatic, is it shown in a positive or negative light, is it shown as factual or fictional, how do the major characters, or outsiders, react to the acts and implications of incest.

After establishing what *imōto-moe* is and how it shows in the different titles, it is possible to answer the main question. This is done by comparing the findings to the related genres by comparing how the previous genres of *lolicon* and *moe* have influenced the gender representations via ways the genres are read, both by the fans and by the outsiders, to how *imōto-moe* can be read based on the findings via what they express through semiotic means.

2.5. Research material

The series selected for analysis are *Ore no Imōto ga Konna ni Kawaii Wake ga Nai*, *Imōto sae Ireba Ii*, *Yosuga no Sora* and *Kiss x Sis*. The series are aired in Japanese television between the years 2010-2017, and each have brother-sister type incestual relationship or a situation hinting towards it in some way as a main theme. The first two are based on their respective light novels. Yosuga no Sora has its original work as a visual novel, which is explained in part 3.1., and Kiss x Sis has its original work as a manga. The works are chosen primarily because they center around incest or incestual connotations. [4]

Before 2010, series with incest as a main theme have been rare, but not nonexistent. In 2003, *Onegai Twins*, a love triangle comedy series, had a setting in which two women come to the protagonist's house, both having the same photo of a young boy and a girl together as a proof of them each being a sister to him. In 2006, in *Black Lagoon: The Second Barrage*, in a setting of modernized pirates in dark, twisted and gruesome setting, a pair of minor antagonist characters were presented as young twin orphans that had to become professional killers to survive. The pair was shown both kissing each other passionately, underlining both the setting's twistedness and the problem of crossing the taboo so broadly. When they lost in battle and were killed, it was revealed that in addition to all that, the boy had been living as the girl and vice versa. In 2008, the first Original Video Animation (OVA) of *Kiss x Sis* was published, OVA meaning that it was not broadcasted in television. In this case, bundled and sold together with manga albums of the original series up until 2015. In addition, between 2008 and 2010 there has been some other OVAs on the subject, one original work with twin sisters, one based on visual novel with elder sister and younger brother, but until 2010, the theme has avoided the main spotlight, and mostly even the minor roles as protagonist's sister in a harem, or male protagonist with many female minor characters, setting. It is likely that the popularity of *Kiss x Sis* manga, together with its OVA anime bundles or not, paved way for the whole incest theme to spread in other works, be it in major or minor role, but confirming that is outside the sphere of this research.

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[4] Kanbe, *Oreimo*; Ōnuma, *Imouto sae Ireba Ii.*; Takahashi, *Yosuga no Sora*; Nawa, *Kiss x Sis (TV)*.

3. Context

In this chapter there is a short presentation of several historical, cultural and societal aspects of Japan that lead to incestual fiction gaining some popularity in modern Japan.

3.1. Japanese family

The setting of love and sexual tension between siblings occurs within a family. Either the partners are blood-related, thus sharing a kind familial connection, or by affinity, without blood ties, but otherwise accepted to join the family unit. Thus, it is relevant to examine the family construct and its development in the Japanese society, in which the fictional incestual developments are placed.

A family is a social construct that varies between times and places, depending on the environment and issues present: what a 18th century Japanese thinks as a family differs both from a 18th century Brit, and from a 21st century Japanese, in ways formulated by the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*[5], and his successors. The idea of a sibling as a love interest is connected to the family environment: both the one the Japanese really live in, and the one they imagine. To better understand where the Japanese are and where they are going in terms of the family, it is necessary to lay out basic information about the history of the Japanese family construct, and some issues that that affect the construct: where they come from and what issues are they currently having. Merry White, who is a professor of Anthropology at Boston University, takes a similar view of family as something that changes according to the needs and realities of both those inside the families of differing positions, and those in power, in *The Routledge Handbook of Japanese Culture and Society, chapter 10*[6].

According to the *Handbook's* chapter about change and diversity in the Japanese family, up until the Meiji Revolution of the 1870s, the family system, or *ie*[7], organized around Confucian hierarchy and values: the family was a lineage that was maintained over generations, through ideally unbroken line of inherited management and productivity through eldest sons. Younger sons were to form branch families who would be under the main family's influence. In practice, the people practiced more flexible hierarchies, e.g. in adopted sons-in-law, to adapt the leading position, if there were no sons otherwise. However, when the Meiji leaders researched the status of the family system to determine the basis for land reforms, they found out that the practical customs of families were at the

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[5] Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*.
[6] Bestor, Lyon-Bestor, and Yamagata, *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Culture and Society*.
[7] 家

time much looser than they anticipated, and began reforms to turn the chaos into something more homogenous and more Japanese, according to their standards.[8]

In the Meiji Civil Code of 1989, the Meiji government laid out a structure of the "good family". In it, the family with its roles was redefined and linked to the state: duty and loyalty towards the family was duty and loyalty towards the state. The family was oriented around a male head, with women officially pronounced as daughters, wives and mothers, something inferior to the leading man, according to age and gender. This stem family pattern freed both younger sons, who were the prime industrial workforce in the time of the industrialization process, and young women workers, who were sought for textile and other industries that demanded fine motor skills, for the young women to return home later to get married and adopt the role of housewives. During this time, the role of wife changed from someone to obey and produce children, to one who oversaw household, as a place of solace from the harsh "outside". Marriage itself also transformed from contracts between families into a choice made by the partners themselves.[9]

By the 1930s, the development of industry and society had also changed the family essentially from a unit of production into unit of consumption: families shared income and the roles were divided: the husband was the breadwinner operating at the outside world, and valued according to it, but somewhat a stranger to the home circle. The wife's role was maintaining herself, the home, and the children. In practice, the families often needed the wife's salary, but as working was outside of what belonged to the role of a good wife, the wife's work was not valued as such. Urban families were increasingly nuclear, while three- and four-generational families were found more in the countryside. [10]

In 1872, primary education became universal and compulsory. From there, children's education came to be increasingly more important for the families: for the boys to attain occupational success, and for the girls, to attain marriageability. The importance of school degrees increased: in the early 1970s, the middle-class status already demanded a college degree. For the families, this means pressure for both the parents, who must spend time and money for the child's academic well-being, often by preparatory schools and in-home tutors, and the children, who have the first-hand pressure to show results. Over the decades, a class system has emerged, where there is a high contrast between those who have succeeded, and those who dropped out, with serious inequities between the groups.

[8] Bestor, Lyon-Bestor, and Yamagata, *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Culture and Society*, chap. 10.
[9] Bestor, Lyon-Bestor, and Yamagata, chap. 10.
[10] Bestor, Lyon-Bestor, and Yamagata, 133.

With the children requiring more money and effort to raise, the number of children the families were having dropped.[11]

Between the 70s and the 90s, families' needs as a consumer unit shifted to a more modern direction: televisions, refrigerators, cars, and later, computers, became necessities. Children and young people gained spending power, to which markets answered by targeting products to them. While family incomes rose during this era, distances between workplaces and homes grew due to the families not affording to live close by the father's white-collar work, and up to 70 percent of women who were housewives and mothers had experience working outside, as their income was needed.[12]

For the present, the mean age at marriage has risen from 24.5 for women and 27.2 for men in 1965, to 28 for women and 29.8 for men, in 2008. Also, the rate of those who never married has risen marginally. While the amounts are on the rise, which implicates some cultural change and possible difficulties in family forming, people will undoubtedly keep wanting to form families and have children. There are more divorces than in 1962, from 0.73 per 1,000 persons to 2.3 in 2000, and to 2.0 in 2008. The latter numbers include fathers as single parents. The roles are changing in the way that the women are increasingly working and accepted to work outside the home, besides the men, and the young fathers take greater share of childcare.[13]

In conclusion, in a century, the Japanese family construct has changed form from a hierarchical, age and gender based multigenerational organism into a nuclear family with few, educationally pressured children, and the hierarchies remaining to a much lesser extent.

3.2. General history of Japanese anime and manga

For a description of the history of Japanese animation, Susan Napier, Tufts University professor of Japanese Studies, offers a detailed description in her chapter titled *Manga and anime: entertainment, big business, and art in Japan*, in the book *the Routledge Handbook of Japanese Culture and Society*[14] which is a summary about the Culture and Society and their development in Japan.

According to Napier, anime and manga are, like many other art forms of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, a combination of several traditions. The word "anime" reflects this, as it is the Japanese shortening of the English word "animation", that appeared in the 1970s. Both anime and manga real strong influences from Western comics and cartoons, while also maintaining significant connections with Japanese artistic traditions, pointed out by both Japanese and Western

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[11] Bestor, Lyon-Bestor, and Yamagata, 133–35.
[12] Bestor, Lyon-Bestor, and Yamagata, 135,136.
[13] Bestor, Lyon-Bestor, and Yamagata, 138,139.
[14] Bestor, Lyon-Bestor, and Yamagata, chap. 18.

commentators. According to Napier, connections are drawn to the strong "pictographic" tradition in Japanese culture: she mentions the commentators pointing to *emakimono*, long picture scrolls that tell a story when unrolled, and to Edo period printing culture of 16th and 17th centuries, with its illustrated books and woodblock print pictures, often accompanied with related written story.[15]

With Japan opening to the West in the late 19th century, Western influence in comics and animation began flowing in. At first, British political comics and then American "funnies", gained traction, the American style of narration with its speech balloons and punch lines being especially influential. By the 1930s, Japanese artists moved beyond the one-off pieces and drew longer, more complex story lines that were published in thick, cheaply printed books. The first Japanese animated film was produced in 1917, inspired by a French animation that had appeared a year earlier. The animation techniques were different, with the Japanese turning to cut-out techniques. The themes and contents were like the Western counterparts of the time, leaning towards the humorous or fantastical, however. The West and Japan also shared the fact that the most successful animations were based on cartoons. An example of one such popular work is *Norakuro* (1931), which is a work about a dog that rises through canine army ranks. *Norakuro* is also a fine example of the American influence: According to its creator, the character is based on the American cartoon and comic character *Felix the Cat*, but with the American version lacking the military aspect that *Norakuro* had*.* In addition to *Norakuro*, the influence of war is also obvious in that the government started to limit manga printing as a waste of resources. In addition, animation was produced as war propaganda, including well-made and highly successful *Momotarō no Umiwashi* (1943), which celebrated the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and its sequel, *Momotarō no umi shimpei* (1945), a less-seen work about the takeover of Singapore, which is now considered to be a technical masterwork. The mix between the West and Japan can be seen in that the characters are Disney-like cute animals, whereas in the animation there is interplay of beauty and violence, such as dandelions drifting down from the sky, transforming into bombs.*[16]*

The few years after the end of World War II, Japan was war-torn and starved for entertainment. Due to high paper costs manga was unaffordable for many children, who were the target audience at the time. For them, *kami shibai*, or street performances using paper illustrations, became the main form of entertainment, until 1950s, when the country recovered enough for manga to become affordable. Manga was still seen as cheap children's entertainment, or as a light break from one's own daily life, in a four-panel form.[17]

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[15] Bestor, Lyon-Bestor, and Yamagata, 226,227.
[16] Bestor, Lyon-Bestor, and Yamagata, 227.
[17] Bestor, Lyon-Bestor, and Yamagata, 227,228.

Both manga and its image changed in the 1950s and 60s due to both Ozamu Tezuka, (1928-89), and the 1960s college culture. Ozamu Tezuka is renowned today as both "god of manga" and "god of animation". His many works have a large variety in themes and styles, from child-oriented action adventure *Tetsuwan Atomu* (*Astro boy*), through gender-bending romance for girls, *Ribon no kishi* (*Princess Knight*), to deeply intellectually exciting and philosophical works. Although the works are enormously varied, they have certain similarities in common: provocative story lines, agonized characters, and a deep but unsentimental commitment to humanistic values, as listed by Napier. The works often were trendsetters by themselves: they laid down the basis for ever-increasing variety and complexity in manga and anime genres that the other creators continue. The variety, which can be seen in the variety modern manga and anime, which is comparable to the variety of literature in the West. Comparably, mainstream Western comics had emphasis then and continue having now on humor and superheroes.[18]

The radical period in colleges of the 1960s both broadened manga creation and reader base among university students. From this base, *gekiga*, or "dramatic" manga, was born, which often included adult themes and preoccupations, ranging from the environment and politics to violence and aberrant sexuality.[19]

Much of anime's history is connected to the rise of manga, to the point that many anime are based on popular manga. At the same time, animation offers both creativity that conventional filmmaking cannot answer, and movement and transformation that manga can be lacking. Due to the medium thriving on movement and transformation, many of the greatest and most popular works are science fiction or fantasy. As is the first full-length animated color movie in Japan was *Hakujaden* (*Legend of the White Serpent,* 1958). Soon after, Tezuka's *Tetsuwan Atomu* was made into a weekly anime. Throughout the 1960s much of Japanese animation consisted of cartoon series aimed at children, as *Tetsuwan Atomu* was. They were made cheaper than both the animated movies and the American counterparts at the time, to hit the weekly broadcasting quota. This limitation lead to a certain, less fluid and nuanced style of animation. The limited ability to do subtle facial expressions lead to the artists focusing on showing expression through the emphasized eyes, leading to the distinctive anime "look" associated with anime. Western viewers have also often commented on what they see as Caucasian features on many anime and manga characters. Early on, Japanese animators were indeed heavily influenced by Western cartoon, and other, icons, of the time. Beyond that, manga

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[18] Bestor, Lyon-Bestor, and Yamagata, 228.
[19] Bestor, Lyon-Bestor, and Yamagata, 229.

and anime create their own artistic world, which is a blend of various influences and each artist's personal tastes.[20]

For the anime version of *Tetsuwan Atomu* to happen, Tezuka had to depend on sponsors, merchandise, and cross-platform serialization. While not called as such yet in the 60s, this was the beginning for the content publishing strategy that is called *media mix* in Japan. In addition to manga, anime and character goods, media mix often includes serialized book series, known as *light novels*[21], games, and live-action movies. The idea behind is that the different versions increase the value and visibility of the others: an anime gains interest because there is a successful existing manga, the anime draws new readers for the manga version, they both increase recognition of character goods, and so on.[22]

From the 1960s onward, new popular works, genres and general trends were formed: these included not only sci-fi themes in the 80s, but also strong female lead characters in them, as in Miyazaki Hayao's post-apocalyptic classic *Nausicaa of the Valley of Winds* (1984), which was also the first major production of Miyazaki's Studio Ghibli, both the director and the studio being extremely significant for the reputation of anime as an artistic medium[23]. By the end of the 80s and the early 90s, the female-lead sci-fi manga *Ghost in the Shell*, and the anime movie classic of it, were made and published. Meanwhile, *Sailor Moon*, at first as manga, popularized the all-girl superhero magical girl genre, which was followed by a hit anime series and an enormous variety of product spinoffs.[24]

During that same time period between 1960s-80s, pornographic manga also grew increasingly popular, both works aimed for female and male readers. Male-oriented pornography had been around since at least the 70s, and sometimes contained some surprisingly imaginative works as in the "tentacle sex" genre, pioneered by the writer Maeda Toshio. Maeda used enormous tentacled demons and other supernatural monsters to bypass Japanese censorship laws that prohibit the explicit depiction of genitalia. While the works are shocking and disturbing, they also often contain engrossing plots and imaginative and detailed artwork. [25]

By the 1980s, a different erotic genre known as *lolicon*, or "Lolita Complex", was forming. Napier describes lolicon and the reasons for its popularity as follows:

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[20] Bestor, Lyon-Bestor, and Yamagata, 232,233.
[21] Light novels are serialized soft-cover books with manga-like illustrations, E.g. Ichiyanagi and Kume, "Raito Noberu Kenkyū Josetsu."
[22] Ichiyanagi and Kume; Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan*.
[23] Bestor, Lyon-Bestor, and Yamagata, *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Culture and Society*, 234.
[24] Bestor, Lyon-Bestor, and Yamagata, 230.
[25] Bestor, Lyon-Bestor, and Yamagata, 231.

"Short for 'Lolita Complex,' Rorikon[26] was pornography involving extremely young girls, usually barely pubescent but sometimes even younger. Some commentators have suggested that the rise of this genre is related to the increasing sense of anxiety and inadequacy experienced by Japanese men in the post-bubble era. According to the argument, cute young girls are seen as less threatening to the male ego than demanding and aggressive older women."[27]

Manga readership peaked at the mid-1990s, due to video games and the internet competing for the same free time the potential readers have. During this time, production of self-published amateur manga, *dōjinshi*, greatly rose in production. The works produced are not only new works but also parodies from already existing works, often pornographic in various degrees, of their creators' favourite works. The dōjinshi phenomenon involves hundreds of thousands of fans, which has led to huge amateur manga conventions, Comiketto (short for Comic Market) being the most important, which meets biannually in Tokyo. There are multiple reasons for the dōjinshi development: manga is a relatively easy medium to break into, since it requires only pen and paper, and the manga industry has traditionally welcomed new outside talent, also in the ways of sponsoring new talent competitions. Dōjinshi both helps to keep the manga market creative and exciting, and it also reflects the love the fans have for popular manga series. Some of the genres popular as dōjinshi are *yaoi*[28], works usually written and read by women that center around beautiful boy characters, who are shown to have activities varying from mythically romantic to X-rated explicitness, and, not mentioned by Napier, *yuri*, which is love and sex depictions between girls directed to mainly male audience.[29]

While there were fears of manga fading away in popularity, manga has gained some new ground in digital format, to be read in smartphones and other devices. Additionally, manga have an increasingly global reach, both in new non-Japanese readers, but also in new overseas manga artists.[30]

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[26] Napier uses the transliteration "*rorikon*" derived from Romanized katakana spelling, but at present, "*lolicon*" is commonly used in English language.
[27] Bestor, Lyon-Bestor, and Yamagata, *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Culture and Society*, 231.
[28] In Japan, BL or Boys' Love is nowadays the more commonly used term.
[29] Bestor, Lyon-Bestor, and Yamagata, *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Culture and Society*, 231.
[30] Bestor, Lyon-Bestor, and Yamagata, 232.

3.3. Real girls and their depiction

Imōto-moe is a result of how girls have been depicted both in manga and anime, and the contemporary Japanese society. Thus, it is relevant to examine the history of depictions, circumstances and trends of girls.

As mentioned in 3.2, manga and anime create their own artistic world, which is a blend of various influences and each artist's personal tastes[31]. Likewise, the artistic worlds are connected to the real world by those influences. For a fantasy or science fiction work, the setting allows be more general and abstract connections due to cognitive estrangement [32] allowing high suspension of disbelief, including the female sci-fi warrior heroes of the 80s and 90s. In contrast, if the series is placed somewhere in contemporary Japan, the setting, the story and the characters must mirror the society closer for the work to be believable, deviating from it only when it is necessary. Yet, no matter if a work tried to emulate real world or not, the representation differs from the reality. What this means there are sets of truths in each respective fictional world, and a set of truth in the real world that differs from them. Following that, there are real women and girls, among other real sexes and genders, and then there are the fictional women and girls who at some level represent, but are not, their real counterparts. In this part I examine the similarities and differences of the images and roles of the girls both in the manga and anime world, and the non-fictional world.

For research about the changing image of real girls in contemporary Japanese society, I turn into Sharon Kinsella's *Schoolgirls, Money and Rebellion in Japan* (2013)[33]. Sharon Kinsella is a lecturer in Japanese visual culture at the University of Manchester, and the book is a collection of her sociological articles about Japanese girls and changing sexualized culture surrounding them.

According to Kinsella, the image of a schoolgirl has changed from a demure and obedient, in training to become the obedient wife and a prudent mother, to less than demure figures, both in term of sexuality and defiance, in the 1980s and 90s, via both mass media, and underground culture. Kinsella argues that this change happens alongside both financial difficulties that caused rising unemployment, poverty and irregular employment, especially for male workers, as females are enjoying increasing gender equivalency and decreasing pay gap compared to the males. The changing dynamic was reflected not only in manga and anime by the strong sci-fi heroines, mentioned in chapter 2.3 by Napier[34], but energetic, young and powerful little girls were seen and heard in all kinds of communications, advertising, television and new digital visual media at the time. In his article *A*

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[31] Bestor, Lyon-Bestor, and Yamagata, 233.

[32] E.g. Buchanan, *A Dictionary of Critical Theory*.

[33] Kinsella, *Schoolgirls, Money and Rebellion in Japan*.

[34] Bestor, Lyon-Bestor, and Yamagata, *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Culture and Society*, 230.

Genealogy of the Beautiful Fighting girl (1998), psychiatrist and cultural critic Saitō Tamaki estimates that about 80 percent of the most popular animations produced in Japan in the 1990s featured some version of the beautiful fighting girl (*bishōjo senshi*) character at its core[35].[36]

Along with the increased power and visibility, Kinsella focuses on the resistance reaction that rose within the male-oriented subculture and journalism. The energetic image the media and fictional works portrayed women as was used to build a new negative image of strong, individualistic women as a group that did not apply themselves fully neither to corporate needs nor home duties, but instead had disposable income and free time available to them. The image of strong women was negatively caricaturized and publicly shamed, partly hidden, most openly in commercial magazines, comics and animations aimed at male audiences, which converged with even more exclusively male reportage linked to the sex-services, *otaku* subculture and online communication.[37]

An example of this negative image building is the *enjo kōsai* (*compensated dating*) moral panic between 1996-98. Liberal newsmagazines and newspapers discovered that some high-school girls had developed a well-earning business dating older men for hire, probably involving sex, for money or goods. From that ground, the more it aggravated the readers, the more reportage was sought and created, which again raised more interest. Whatever the validity of the original source, the blunt utterances of street-interviewed schoolgirls were soon made to fit the *enjo kōsai* narrative. The formed narrative also brought up films and pornography that repeated and enforced sleazy schoolgirl image.[38]

Even though the girls and their image were under defaming attacks by the male targeted media, the girls also responded, via ways Kinsella explains in the chapter called *Girls as a race*. Predominantly on the Tokyo's fashion center of Shibuya, the girl youth culture developed new styles and trends. Before the 2000s, the trends in the youth culture were towards embracing the individuality, moodiness and punk attitude: the same features that were used to defame girls. During the 2000s, the trends climaxed to increasingly darkened skins and strategically undarkened faces and mouths, with the styles nicknamed in the media accordingly: on the less extreme side they were *gyaru* or *kogyaru* (gal or little-gal, depending on age and youthfulness), whereas on the more extreme side there was first *ganguro*, literally *blackface*, and then *yamanba*, an unflattering name meaning a hag in Japanese folklore or *Nō* theatre.[39]

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[35] 斉藤環, "戦闘美少女たちの系譜"; Saitō, *Beautiful Fighting Girl.*
[36] Kinsella, *Schoolgirls, Money and Rebellion in Japan*, chap. 1.
[37] Kinsella, chap. 1.
[38] Kinsella, chap. 1,3.
[39] Kinsella, chap. 6.

In the press, the reactions to the style were negative: the styles were portrayed as flaunting ugliness, stupidity and sexual deviancy, and viewed through zoological, racial and ethnic analogies: as skin or animal coloring, or primitive tribal decoration. According to Kinsella, what the media mainly missed was to read black face as a style: as a clearly deliberate instance of sartorial communication[40]. The styles are partly a response to the girl image that is under attack, to make it their own. The point of the style was not to appeal to males and other accusers targeting them, but instead for the girls themselves. This is not to say the styles were only or mainly rebellion, instead a lot of influence was drawn from the western, and African American culture.[41]

3.4.   *Lolicon*

Lolicon is important for *imōto-moe* for several reasons: there is a clear historical continuum from *lolicon* depictions to *moe*, and from *moe* to *imō*to-*moe* as its subgenre; there is a similar underlying question about if and how it depicts real girls; and if parallels are drawn to real girls, what is shown is highly controversial. For those reasons, to analyze imōto-moe, it is necessary to understand what *lolicon* is.

Patrick W. Galbraith, cultural anthropologist who specializes on *otaku* culture, gives a more detailed explanation and background for the *lolicon* phenomenon, in his article *Lolicon: The Reality of 'Virtual Child Pornography' in Japan* (2011)[42]. For the origin of the term, Galbraith refers to Takatsuki, who writes the following: "*lolicon* is an abbreviation for "Lolita complex," derived from Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Lolita* (1955)[43], but more associated with the Japanese translation of Russell Trainer's *The Lolita Complex* in 1969."[44]

Galbraith lists referring to Takatsuki, that *shōjo*[45] nudes began to appear in major media outlets in Japan: a photo collection titled *Nymphet: The Myth of the 12-Year-Old* in the same year[46], the classic novel *Alice in Wonderland* inspired nude photos in 1972-73[47], and with T*he Little Pretenders*

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[40] Kinsella, 109.

[41] Kinsella, chap. 6,7.

[42] Galbraith, "Lolicon: The Reality of 'Virtual Child Pornography' in Japan."

[43] It is worth noting that the publication of the novel written by the Russian American author is an example in that the West was not devoid of underage child sexualization. That said, the book was controversial: due to refusals in the US, the book was first published translated in France. The book was banned in the United Kingdom the same year, and in France, December 1956, for two years. When it was published in the US in August 1958, it became a bestseller, and inspired a Stanley Kubrick film adaptation in 1962, along with several stage adaptations. Boyd, *Vladimir Nabokov: The American Years*.

[44] Galbraith, "Lolicon: The Reality of 'Virtual Child Pornography' in Japan," 94; Takatsuki, *Rorikon: Nihon No Shōjo Shikōshatachi to Sono Sekai*, 6.

[45] S*hōjo* (lit. little girl) here refers to pre-teen or young teen girl photos, not to the drawn manga and anime style targeted to girls

[46] Takatsuki, *Rorikon: Nihon No Shōjo Shikōshatachi to Sono Sekai*, 50.

[47] Takatsuki, 55.

in 1979, *shōjo* nudes lost all pretense of "fine art" and shifted to the adult market. In the early 1980s, there were many specialty magazines that carried nude photos, reviews, essays on the appeal of young girls, fiction, and "reader submissions", including illegal photographs of girls on the street taken in moments of unanticipated exposure[48]. In 1985, laws were passed in response to the overexposure of the sexualized *shōjo*. According to Takatsuki, the boom in photographic images faded not only because of the laws, but also because many young men preferred two-dimensional images of *shōjo*[49].[50]

On the two-dimensional side, the girl characters in the works by the anime legends Tezuka Osamu and Miyazaki Hayao, while not generally presented in a sexualized fashion, were a source for *lolicon* inspiration[51]. Galbraith notes that Tezuka and his works were inspired by Walt Disney: In comparison, the works had more adult themes, including sex and moral ambiguity, and his characters looked younger[52]. For reasons for the difference, Galbraith remarks that "as with manga, animation was not partitioned off as 'for kids' and did not have many medium-specific limitations"[53]. Ōtsuka Eiji[54] asserts that "anime reflects a hybrid of influences from imported media, for example Disney animation and Russian avant-garde cinema, and thus developed expressions not seen in American or European cartoons[55]. Kinsella notes that "Pornography had not been as strongly compartmentalized in post-war Japan as it has in post-war America or Britain, and pornographic images have tended to appear throughout the media as well as in specifically pornographic productions"[56], and continues that these images of "notable preference for young and young-looking characters"[57], until recently, generated little anxiety.[58] Galbraith does not imply that Tezuka and his works fit as themselves into *lolicon* category, but instead that the girl characters, with their circular lines, had a certain eroticism to them[59]. That eroticism, together with the Alice boom and *lolicon* manga inspired by it, inspired creators like Azuma Hideo, the "Father of *Lolicon*", to draw Tezuka-style cute characters having sex[60]. Galbraith writes that "while some *lolicon* images demonstrate a sharp contrast

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[48] Takatsuki, 47.
[49] Takatsuki, 64–65.
[50] Galbraith, "Lolicon: The Reality of 'Virtual Child Pornography' in Japan," 94–95.
[51] Galbraith, 93; Galbraith, "Moe: Exploring Virtual Potential in Post-Millennial Japan," 348.
[52] Galbraith, "Lolicon: The Reality of 'Virtual Child Pornography' in Japan," 93.
[53] Galbraith, 93.
[54] Ōtsuka Eiji is a social critic, folklorist, media theorist, and in the 80s, was editor-in-chief for the *lolicon* magazine *Manga Burikko*
[55] personal interview, Galbraith, "Lolicon: The Reality of 'Virtual Child Pornography' in Japan," 93.
[56] Kinsella, *Adult Manga: Culture and Power in Contemporary Japanese Society*, 46.
[57] McLelland, "The World of Yaoi: The Internet, Censorship and the Global 'Boys' Love' Fandom," 76.
[58] Galbraith, "Lolicon: The Reality of 'Virtual Child Pornography' in Japan."
[59] personal interview with Itō Gō, author of Itō, *Tezuka Izu Deddo: Hirakareta Manga Hyōgenron e*.
[60] Takekuma, "Otaku No Dai-Ichi Sedai No Jiko Bunseki: Akumade Kojin-Teki Na Tachiba Kara," 107.

between realistic bodies and cartoony faces, the general trend after Azuma was towards an unrealistic (iconic, deformed) aesthetic".[61]

By that the images generated little anxiety "until recently", Galbraith is referring to a moral panic of 1989: a child murderer and molester of four girl victims was arrested. Due to the police finding 5,763 videotapes in his room, the mass media decried him as an "*otaku*", a word that was used to identify certain types of manga and anime fans. The connection to the murderer branded the term with negative connotations, such as that the *otaku* have an "unhealthy" fixation on hobbies, or are disconnected from society and its norms. While the videos were of different genres, the media jumped on examples that fit the *lolicon* narrative.[62]

According to Frederik L. Schodt in *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics* (1983), a very successful movement rose to "banish harmful manga", made up of "housewives, PTAs, Japan's new feminist groups, and politicians. Tougher local ordinances against obscene manga material were passed by various prefectures throughout Japan. Arrests of store owners found to be selling this obscene material increased dramatically".[63] On the other hand, Galbraith states that the "so-called "harmful manga" was also encouraged by obscenity laws, if not also by the capitalist system itself. To erase the genitals is to promise pleasure but ultimately withhold it, engendering a desire that cannot be fulfilled despite endless consumption."[64] According to Akagi (1993), in the early 1990s *lolicon*-type imagery, sexualized girls who appear underage, actually expanded and became acceptable in manga.[65] As for why, Galbraith continues with the following:

"Indeed, this is precisely the situation that collapsed together target audiences for *shôjo* media[66] in the 1980s (for example, anime such as *Magical Princess Minky Momo*[67]) and placed adults and their desires in close proximity to children; this situation of risk, as Foucault might put it, was in turn the kernel of moral panic. However, the ingrained need to expand the consumer base did not simply disappear.

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[61] Galbraith, "Lolicon: The Reality of 'Virtual Child Pornography' in Japan," 95.
[62] Galbraith, 103,104.
[63] Schodt, *Manga! Manga! : The World of Japanese Comics*, 56.
[64] Galbraith, "Lolicon: The Reality of 'Virtual Child Pornography' in Japan," 104.
[65] Akagi, "Bishōjo Shōkōgun: Rorikon to Iu Yokubō," 231.
[66] S*hōjo* (lit. little girl) media here refers to pre-teen or young teen girl depictions, not to the manga and anime style targeted to girls
[67] Which, according to Galbraith, is "the story of a coquettish little girl who transforms into a sexy adult, complete with fetish costumes, (1982-1983), Galbraith, "Lolicon: The Reality of 'Virtual Child Pornography' in Japan," 98–99.

Selling adult sexuality to children and youthful innocence to adults was far too profitable to abandon."[68]

Galbraith mentions obscenity laws to be a factor for the development of *lolicon* both in the 1970s-80s, and post-moral panic. According to Anne Allison (2000), the laws date back on 1907 and 1910, to the period when Japan was in a period of modernization. Allison argues that Japan was put into an inferior position by western nations judging the emerging Asian power to be "primitive", and the "new laws were a means of covering the national body from charges that it was obscene".[69] The obscenity law in Japan, as elsewhere, was based vaguely on shame and sexual desire[70], and according to Rubin (1984), codified by a court ruling as "pubic area need not be hidden but there should be no anatomical details to draw the viewer's attention"[71]. According to Allison, the restrictions were loosened along with sexual censorship in the years following WWII, but by the end of the Allied Occupation in 1952 the laws were restored as they were[72].

On the other hand, according to Galbraith, in 1991, the ban on depictions of pubic hair was partially lifted, which lead to a string of "hair nude" photo books. However, manga and anime did not qualify as artistic expressions. Child pornography was outlawed in Japan in 1999, but manga, anime and games escaped the regulation, preserving the market.[73]

Although the public sphere implied strong connection between *lolicon* media consumption and sexual abuse of minors, via desensitization and priming, and raising criminal cases of varying and sometimes nonexistent connections as evidence to support the idea[74], Galbraith argues that the decrease of actual crime rates do not match the view: according to Saitō (2007), there is nothing indicating that fans are in any way more prone to crime[75], and Takatsuki Yasushi (2010) finds that "sexual abuse of minors was statistically much more common in Japan in the 1960s and 1970s, and has actually been decreasing since, which roughly coincides with the increasing presence of fictional *lolicon*"[76]. He continues to summarize Diamond and Uchiyama's (1999) findings as follows:

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[68] Galbraith, 104,105.
[69] Allison, *Permitted and Prohibited Desires: Mothers, Comics, and Censorship in Japan*, 149.
[70] Allison, 149.
[71] Rubin, *Injurious to Public Morals: Writers and the Meiji State*, 44.
[72] Allison, *Permitted and Prohibited Desires: Mothers, Comics, and Censorship in Japan*, 169.
[73] Galbraith, "Lolicon: The Reality of 'Virtual Child Pornography'in Japan," n. 34.
[74] Galbraith, 105.
[75] Saitō, "Otaku Sexuality," 228.
[76] Takatsuki, *Rorikon: Nihon No Shōjo Shikōshatachi to Sono Sekai*, 258–62.

"Drawing attention to this correlation, a trajectory that coincides with Diamond and Uchiyama's general findings on pornography in Japan, is not to suggest that desires are redirected from real children to fictional ones. Rather, it is to suggest that the prevalence of these images does not necessarily reflect the desires of the viewers or influence them to commit crimes. Not all fantasy is compensatory; not all imaginings are of that which is desired in reality. This calls into question dominant understandings of how fiction relates, or does not relate, to reality."[77]

Galbraith also raises that Japan is not necessarily unique in production and consumption of sexualized images of young girls. He mentions John Hartley, according to whom "the mass media tends to communicate using images of young girls (drawing an audience and holding its attention), and to position the comfort-seeking consumer as an infantilized and feminized subject. Hartley refers to this process as "juvenation", or "the creative practice of communicating…via the *medium* of youthfulness".[78] Another researcher mentioned is M. Gigi Durham, who "agrees that the sexualization of girls is a general phenomenon in capitalist societies". She calls the phenomenon "Lolita effect", or a "distorted and delusional set of myths about girls' sexuality"[79], and she traces the main reason to be to cultivate consumers as early as possible. Durham estimates that in the United States, this sexualization of young girls is related to the high amount of estimated molestation rates of 25 percent for girls, and 20 percent for boys[80], and to the rate of teen pregnancy and abortion being the highest in the industrialized world[81], which is eight times that of Japan.[82]

While Galbraith agrees with Durham on many points, he does not agree that "all images of sexualized children, including those that are purely fictional, are equally part of the problem, that all of these images, regardless of context, exploit girls and empower men, and that ideology is necessarily aligned with images"[83]. Based on the vastly differing crime rates between Japan and the United States, and Diamond and Uchiyama's research, Galbraith sees that Japan offers a different scenario in how another modern capitalist nation deals with the Lolita effect.[84]

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[77] Galbraith, "Lolicon: The Reality of 'Virtual Child Pornography'in Japan," 105.
[78] Hartley, "News, Girls and Power" in Allan, Branston, and Carter, News, Gender and Power.
[79] Durham, *The Lolita Effect: The Media Sexualization of Young Girls and What We Can Do about It*, 12.
[80] Durham, 12.
[81] Durham, 28.
[82] Galbraith, "Lolicon: The Reality of 'Virtual Child Pornography'in Japan," 84–85.
[83] Galbraith, 85.
[84] Galbraith, 85.

Galbraith lists multiple indicators for why a frame of pedophilia is not necessarily accurate for *lolicon* consumers. According to McLelland, fans "militate against any kind of real interpretation of these stories"[85], are offended by those who align their works with child pornography and reject real and pseudo child pornography[86], and that the characters do not necessarily represent real boys or girls, but rather a "third gender"[87].[88] Galbraith shows that *Manga Burikko*, one of 1980s genre defining *lolicon* magazines, featured rather realistically drawn *lolicon* manga and photos of young nude girls side by side, sometimes indicating a loose association of the subjects of photographs and drawings by wording used to portray them. Galbraith notes that the magazine began changing its format towards a softer, more unrealistic direction in June 1983. The following months, readers, both male and female, write to the magazine that they do not feel anything for photographs, or manga about penetration or girls being raped, until the magazine redefined itself fully out of real model and gravure photography, excluding advertisements, in November 1983, which continued until the end of the magazine's existence.[89]

Galbraith raises another point for gender vagueness in that the unrealistic style *lolicon* turned into is strongly influenced by not only Tezuka's work through Azuma Hideo's art, but also due to *shōjo* manga: the comics and comic style targeted at young girl readers, which men readers began reading in the 1970s. This *shōjo* manga influence is also suggested by Schodt and Kinsella[90]. Schodt draws attention to the importance of female artists participating in the production of erotic manga for male audiences, and Galbraith notes that *Manga Burikko* regularly featured well known female artists: given all this, Galbraith argues, "*shōjo* characters and desires for them certainly cannot be reduced to "male fantasy"".[91]

Novelist and critic Honda Tōru ties the 1970s male readers of *shōjo* manga to the societal development of the same time: according to him, time consumption had come to play an increasingly important role, and women gravitated towards men with resources, which he coins as "love capitalism" (*renai shihon shugi*). Honda suggests that men marginalized by this system, especially "*otaku*" types, who invest in hobbies rather than relationships, turned towards the fictional girls of manga and anime[92]. Galbraith argues that this matches with the view of Durham, according to whom

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[85] McLelland, "The World of Yaoi: The Internet, Censorship and the Global 'Boys' Love' Fandom," 69.
[86] McLelland, "Australia's Proposed Internet Filtering System: Its Implications for Animation, Comics and Gaming (ACG) and Slash Fan Communities," 14.
[87] McLelland, "The World of Yaoi: The Internet, Censorship and the Global 'Boys' Love' Fandom," 73.
[88] Galbraith, "Lolicon: The Reality of 'Virtual Child Pornography'in Japan," 92.
[89] Galbraith, 99–101.
[90] Schodt, "Dreamland Japan: Writings on Modern Manga (Berkeley, Calif," 55; Kinsella, "Japanese Subculture in the 1990s: Otaku and the Amateur Manga Movement," 304–6.
[91] Galbraith, "Lolicon: The Reality of 'Virtual Child Pornography'in Japan," 102.
[92] Honda, "Moeru Otoko [The Budding Man]," 59,81,151.

the Lolita effect was encouraged by the patriarchal backlash against feminism[93]. Sharon Kinsella adds to the view by suggesting that *shōjo* imagery offered both something to abuse and resent, and something to be envious and sympathetically identify with, for the male audience who were witnessing the societal change from secure graduate employment to indefinite uncertainty[94].[95]

For an explanation for *lolicon* imagery and their meaning, Galbraith turns to Akagi Akira. According to him, the meaning of *lolicon* among fans shifted away from older men having sex with younger girls in the 1980s[96]. The desire for two-dimensional girls was not for girls *per se*, but for "girlness" (*shōjosei*), that was symbolized by "cuteness" (*kawairashisa*)[97]. The reason for young age and small size of characters was to amplify cuteness. Akagi raises that substitution and mimicry in *lolicon* function to transform straight sex into parodic forms[98]. On the point of substitution, Shigematsu comments that the male penis is often absent from *lolicon*, and the replacements are objects that do not feel pleasure[99]. The face of the attacker is also often not depicted[100]. Akagi sees this point as a major separation from the erotic manga that came before, where there was a sort of "hero attacker" to whom the readers would project themselves. Instead, Akagi suggests that *lolicon* fans project onto girls instead: "*Lolicon* readers do not need a penis for pleasure, but rather they need the ecstasy of the girl. At that time, they identify with the girl, and get caught up in a masochistic pleasure"[101].[102]

Even though the evidence suggests that *lolicon* is often read precisely because the *shōjo* characters are unreal, Galbraith adds that "it is not possible or even prudent to posit a unified way that 'they' approach 'these' images. Interactions with media are dynamic, and defy static categories of analysis".[103]

3.5. Moe

As noted, during the 1980s, *lolicon* was transforming from drawing sexualized, paedophilic parallels with real girls, into a form, where a fictional *shōjo* was a pure, powerless vessel of fictional gender, into which a reader could project themselves[104]. While the *lolicon* trend may have quieted down from its peak in the 90s, it is still ongoing in the commercial *otaku* youth culture, with

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[93] Durham, *The Lolita Effect: The Media Sexualization of Young Girls and What We Can Do about It*, 129.
[94] Kinsella, *Schoolgirls, Money and Rebellion in Japan*, 162–63.
[95] Galbraith, "Lolicon: The Reality of 'Virtual Child Pornography'in Japan," 87–88.
[96] Akagi, "Bishōjo Shōkōgun: Rorikon to Iu Yokubō," 230.
[97] Akagi, 230.
[98] Akagi, 230–31.
[99] Shigematsu, "Dimensions of Desire: Sex, Fantasy, and Fetish in Japanese Comics," 130.
[100] Akagi, "Bishōjo Shōkōgun: Rorikon to Iu Yokubō," 232.
[101] Akagi, "Bishōjo Shōkōgun: Rorikon to Iu Yokubō."
[102] Galbraith, "Lolicon: The Reality of 'Virtual Child Pornography'in Japan," 102–3.
[103] Galbraith, 110.
[104] Galbraith, 102–3; Akagi, "Bishōjo Shōkōgun: Rorikon to Iu Yokubō," 232.

Akihabara as its central location[105]. During the 90s, alongside *lolicon*, a similar but somehow different trend of *moe,* began to take form on *otaku* internet message boards and elsewhere in *otaku* youth culture consciousness[106]. In this part I examine what is meant by *moe*, both its presentation and what *moe* is about behind the images and characters.

In both his article *Moe: Exploring Virtual Potential in Post-Millennial Japan* and his book *The Moe Manifesto*, Patrick W. Galbraith's explanation for the history of *moe* is the same than for *lolicon*: From Western influences of Nabokov's *Lolita* and *Alice in Wonderland*, through Tezuka's girl characters and Azuma's erotic parody of them, into *lolicon* magazines[107]. In a personal interview with Galbraith, Itō Gō comments:

"I believe the most *moe* of all Tezuka's manga were released during the early to mid 1960s, which originates in the power of his circular lines. Moe is the discovery of the pleasure of these circular lines."[108]

The concept of *moe* had not yet been developed at the time, but Tezuka's early girl characters expressed something similar: "a certain amount of, albeit repressed, eroticism"[109].

In the first half of the 1990s, *moe* as a term began to appear in online discussions: there were notable girl characters with Moe as their first name, one in a children's show, the other in a *shōjo* anime. According to Morikawa Kaichirō, fans would show their affection towards the characters by typing something like "Moe-chan, *moe moe*". Morikawa suggests that originally the *kanji* character meant by *moe* is the character meaning "to burn[110]", as in burning passion. Instead *moe* with the character meaning "to bud[111]" was used, because, he presumes, that character is the first one to come up in a conversion from Roman letters to kanji. The usage would catch on because the anime and manga characters named Moe fit to the nuance of "to bud".[112]

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[105] Kinsella, *Schoolgirls, Money and Rebellion in Japan*, 8.
[106] Galbraith, *The Moé Manifesto: An Insider's Look at the Worlds of Manga, Anime, and Gaming*, 5; Galbraith, "Moe: Exploring Virtual Potential in Post-Millennial Japan," 351.
[107] Galbraith, "Moe: Exploring Virtual Potential in Post-Millennial Japan," 348; Galbraith, "Lolicon: The Reality of 'Virtual Child Pornography'in Japan," 95–105.
[108] Galbraith, "Moe: Exploring Virtual Potential in Post-Millennial Japan," 348.
[109] Galbraith, 348.
[110] 燃え, also in the meaning of "to get fired up"
[111] 萌え
[112] Morikawa's personal interview with Galbraith, Galbraith, "Moe: Exploring Virtual Potential in Post-Millennial Japan," 351; Galbraith, *The Moé Manifesto: An Insider's Look at the Worlds of Manga, Anime, and Gaming*, 5.

Itō and Galbraith hold that the audience became more character-oriented in the 1990s, as evidenced by the growth of *dōjinshi* market, in which amateur fans of anime, manga and games create and sell self-published works of their favorite characters[113]. Hiroki Azuma suggests that at the heart of *dōjinshi* growth is a transition from *narrative consumption*[114] to *database consumption*: according to him, culture, *otaku* culture included, has shifted from being determined by the world as a modernist *grand narrative*, or a single grand worldview, into actively interpreting various fragmented narratives that are out there, in the "database"[115]. What this means is that the focus shifted from fully imagined characters embedded in the narrative to isolated, affective character icons[116]. Azuma sees the change in comparison between *Mobile Suit Gundam* franchise, from the 1979 onwards, with fans appreciating the coherent timeline and mechanical data, and *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, from 1995, with fans appreciating the female characters through reimagining them isolated from the series, in pursuit of *moe*[117].

For the next example in narrative losing its importance, Azuma raises Di Gi Charat, the mascot for an anime- and game store called Gamers. As such, the character had no narratives behind it. Instead, the character works by "*chara-moe*": the design is a result of sampling and combining recent well-recognized elements from *otaku* culture, e.g. cat ears, maid uniform, green hair, "antenna hair" – or something not necessarily visual, such as a speaking habit, setting, or narrative development.[118] The focus on affectionate characters shifted on to *anime:* Azuma notes that fans buy excessively goods that trigger the *moe* feeling in them, which in turn increased the market size for both *anime* and related goods[119]. Galbraith sees that due to the success of Evangelion, corporate sponsors financed numerous anime in hopes for the next big hit. Studios could not keep up with the quality and deadlines with the amounts demanded, and the overextended industry collapsed[120]. As a result, fewer frames per second, more anime was aired at midnight with lower advertising costs, and more focus on charismatic characters that attract the attention of fans, thus supporting merchandise and spinoffs. "*Moe* characters are optimized soulful bodies, practically not moving and virtually bursting with

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[113] Galbraith, "Moe: Exploring Virtual Potential in Post-Millennial Japan," 351; Itō, *Tezuka Izu Deddo: Hirakareta Manga Hyōgenron e*.

[114] Azuma refers to Ōtsuka's narrative consumption theory, Ōtsuka, *Monogatari Shohiron*.

[115] Azuma, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, 31-33,53-54.

[116] Galbraith, "Moe: Exploring Virtual Potential in Post-Millennial Japan," 352.

[117] Azuma, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, 34–37.

[118] Azuma, 42–44.

[119] Azuma, 48.

[120] Galbraith and Schodt, *The Otaku Encyclopedia: An Insider's Guide to the Subculture of Cool Japan*, 25; Galbraith, "Moe: Exploring Virtual Potential in Post-Millennial Japan," 352.

potential movements and affects. In the hands of producers and consumers, the layers of the soulful body are revealed, exfoliating across series and media".[121]

As Azuma says, character elements can trigger *moe*, but what is the *moe* that is triggered in the viewer? Comparing *moe* to a self-lit and put out fire, Ōtsuka argues that it is us, the viewers, who awake something in ourselves through the characters: "*Moe* is like that. There is no fire besides the one that we ourselves started and poured oil on."[122] He continues that it should not be seen as something special to Japan, through an orientalist lens: "It is simply the Orientalism of Europeans and Americans thinking that Japan possesses something special".[123] Azuma defines *moe* as follows:

"In the original meaning, it was something only used when talking about characters—you didn't say you felt moe for a human being. Moe referred to a sort of perverse way of experiencing feelings of love—loving a fictional character as though it was a real person."[124]

Akamatsu Ken, manga artist behind bestseller manga titles *Love Hina* and *Negima! Magister Negi Magi*[125], lists his thoughts for the feeling of *moe* in his internet diary as follows:

1. No sex: Moe is something to enjoy leisurely from afar

2. You are stronger: the moe object is weak and dependent for safety on someone

3. Moe is moment specific: moe is an act of enjoying the present moment. The viewer does not want the moment to change but to last forever. … In reality, moe objects grow, fall in love, and graduate from the present moment.

I think that:

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[121] Galbraith, "Moe: Exploring Virtual Potential in Post-Millennial Japan," 352.
[122] "There is an expression in Japanese, macchi pompu, which means to set a fire and pretend you are a firefighter to get credit for putting it out.", from Galbraith's personal interview, Galbraith, *Otaku and the Struggle for Imagination in Japan*, 79.
[123] personal interview, Galbraith, 79.
[124] personal interview, Galbraith, 113.
[125] 魔法先生ネギま！

☆ 'Moe' is 'motherly love' that is latent in some men. It is an irregular feeling that has appeared even though it should not be there. It is pure love unrelated to sex and an extremely peaceful desire."126

For other opinions, Galbraith has gathered views on *moe* from various informants. One, male, says, "*Moe* is a wish for compassionate human interaction. *Moe* is a reaction to characters that are more sincere and pure than human beings are today." Another informant sees *moe* as "the ultimate expression of male platonic love". Yet another comments that "archetypes of desire are formulated between age twelve and fourteen, and in Japan people of that age are surrounded by young girls in uniform". He proposes that "for them, youth represents a time before social pressures to perform as a responsible adult at work and home".[127]

On an internet fan site, author named Shingo has written a comprehensive report on what they think of *moe*[128]. The author lists four "laws of *moe*" that they think regulate the amount of moe the viewer experiences towards the character:

1. *"A moe character cannot be aware of her own appeal.*

2. *The greater an image's emphasis on style and fetish symbol at the expense of narrative, ambience and relationships, the less relevant propriety becomes.*

3. *The closer the viewer (or his narrative proxy) becomes to a moe character, the harder it is for her to maintain her sense of propriety.*

4. *The viewer's emotional response to a moe image is a function of the convergence of his position relative to the image with the heroine's state of maidenly virtue as depicted therein."[129]*

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[126] 「（１）性行為を伴わない・遠くから眺めてなごむのが「萌え」。性行為の対象にはならない。（２）自分の方が強い・萌え対象物は弱く、こちらに安全を依存しているか（子供など）（３）状を肯定する・萌えは「現状」を楽しむ行為であり、今後の変化を望まない。いつまでも楽しんでいたい。... モラトリアムな（３）の感情は、ネガティブにとらえれば「引きこもり」的な印象となりますが、実際には「萌え対象物が成長し、恋をし、現状を卒業 ... 私は、 ☆「萌え」とは、一部の男性群に遺（のこ）された「母性愛」が変形して 出てきたもので、本来はあるべきでないイレギュラーな感覚であるが、 性行為を伴わない純粋な愛であり、極めて平和的な欲求である。」, Akamatsu, "２００５年７月18日の日記帳 (18/7/2005 Diary)."

[127] Galbraith, "Moe: Exploring Virtual Potential in Post-Millennial Japan," 356.

[128] Shingo, "Heisei Democracy - Modern Visual Culture Digest » The Moe Image."

[129] Shingo.

According to the author's explanation, the first law is about "maidenly virtue": "a conservative, almost mythically hypertraditional sense of correctness" affirmed by the narrative[130]. Or, in Akamatsu's terms, something that is protected by sexlessness (1) and is fleeting (3). The second law is a relative: the more sexuality and power character accepts and expresses, the less *moe* it is. The third law is novel: the author notes five possible levels of male presence, from the less *moe* inducing to the more, according to the narrative distance: "none", viewer ignored, "accessory", viewer or his narrative proxy is acknowledged but minimal, "voyeur", acknowledged, but not active, "central", focal point, affects narrative, and "intimate": implicated as heroine's lover. The fourth law is a summary law.[131] Using the character of Ayanami Rei from *Evangelion*, Galbraith gives an example of Shingo's classification of distance and argues, that:

"Ayanami Rei is the vision of a pure character in the original *Neon Genesis Evangelion*: She is a fourteen-year-old virgin who plays the role of both mother and daughter. The original work does not provide desires that can be consummated; in Shingo's terms, the 'access' is zero. However, in re-articulations made by fans in pursuit of *moe* she is a target for sexual and intimate desires; the access increases to maximum. It is precisely because these ranges in the *moe* spectrum were not explored in the original work/character that they are exposed as virtual potential. Both purity and perversion are expressed in extremes, and the existence of one makes the other possible. Sex is deferred as long as possible and when indulged, often takes the form of transgression or abuse."[132]

The report is also relevant in another way for analysis: Shingo presents four different categories of *moe* images, based on the laws:

"*Jun'ai-kei[133] moe*: images in which a loving, but not explicitly sexual relationship is depicted or implied between the *moe* heroine and the male viewer or his narrative

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[130] Shingo.
[131] Shingo; Akamatsu, "２００５年７月18日の日記帳 (18/7/2005 Diary)."
[132] Galbraith, "Moe: Exploring Virtual Potential in Post-Millennial Japan," 357.
[133] 純愛系, "pure love type"

proxy. Found most commonly in *ren'ai*[134] games such as those produced by Aquaplus / Leaf and Key.

Otome-kei[135] *moe*: images in which male presence is deemphasized in favor of a scene which implicates the heroine(s) as the centerpiece of an idealized past or present. Found most commonly in (nonsexual) *yuri*[136] such as *Marimite*[137] and in anime / manga such as *Kamichu*, *Kokoro Library*, and *Yokohama Kaidashi Kikou*.

Erokawaii-kei[138] *moe:* images in which the *moe* heroine is sexualized, to an extent limited by a) her innocence and b) her consent, for the benefit of the male viewer or his narrative proxy. Found most commonly in erotic games, manga and anime, and as such is often conflated with lolicon.

Denpa-kei[139] *moe:* images in which style, fetish symbols and costumes crowd out significant narrative meaning, trading on the value of pure exhuberant cuteness. Found most commonly in mascot characters, the work of artists such as POP, and nonsensical anime (*Digi Charat* killing two birds with one stone here)."[140]

The "style, fetish symbols and costumes crowd out significant narrative meaning" and trade "pure exuberant cuteness"[141] Shingo mentions are evidently the well-recognized elements *moe*-stimulating elements that Azuma writes about[142]. To simplify, I combine the two definitions as "tropes", following Ehrat's usage of the term in Peircean tradition[143], to use in analysis later.

Although Shingo's analysis is a fan account, not an academic text, the categories described here build on the other views of Azuma, Akamatsu and the fan accounts recorded by Galbraith[144]. They solve some definition-related issues: For one, the *moe* in works as *Di Gi Charat* can

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[134] 恋愛, "love", or romantic love
[135] 乙女系, "maiden type"
[136] 百合 "lily", homoerotic love and sexual tension between girls, such as *yaoi* is between boys
[137] *Maria-sama ga Miteru* or *Maria Watches Over Us*, a famous *shōjo*-style anime about girls in a Catholic all-girls school with heavy homoerotic tension
エロ可愛い系 "erotic cute type"
[139] 電波系 "radio wave type", as explanation implies, used also in the meaning of "peculiarly strange"
[140] typos original; romanization of Japanese terms changed according to Hepburn system, Shingo, "Heisei Democracy - Modern Visual Culture Digest » The Moe Image."
[141] Shingo.
[142] Azuma, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, 42–44.
[143] Ehrat, *Cinema and Semiotic: Peirce and Film Aesthetics, Narration, and Representation*, 442–49.
[144] Akamatsu, "２００５年７月１８日の日記帳 (18/7/2005 Diary)"; Galbraith, "Moe: Exploring Virtual Potential in Post-Millennial Japan," 356; Galbraith, *Otaku and the Struggle for Imagination in Japan*, 79,123.

now be differentiated with the *moe* in the series under analysis of this research. For the other, the gradual approach instead of a binary one for sexualization of the characters mean that the apparent sexual tension in the incest theme does not necessarily make the works not *moe*, but *lolicon* instead: it is now possible to analyze the grade and meaning of sexualization.

There are yet more relevant points of view from Galbraith's interviews:

"Syu-chan, a self-proclaimed *otaku* in his thirties, explained his fetish for schoolgirl uniforms and related 'little sister' characters in anime as coming from his inability to consummate the young love he dreamed of as an adolescent. 'By my late twenties I realized that what I didn't have back then is what I will always want. I will always be single.' For Syu-chan, it made sense to imagine a space of "pure love" apart from reality. The "fictional context" for this was the little sister in uniform, which did not equate to actual incestuous desire (Syu-chan was an only child). Rather, it might be understood as first a longing for a time of youthful possibilities and hope (signified by the uniform) and second a desire for an uncompromising intimacy (the little sister). Syu-chan's *moe* character was a being unspoiled by social maturity or reality. Put another way, and more generally, *moe* characters are not part of the world that some are reluctant to accept and many at times want to temporarily escape from."[145]

"Syu-chan" not only agrees with unreality requirement expressed by Azuma earlier, but also raises some other interesting points: the longing for that pure young love he never had, and that pure, asexual love especially in form of a little sister: for the affection and intimacy the little sister role presupposes. The school uniform can be seen a symbol for the time without adult responsibilities and social pressures, and full of possibilities, for the future and otherwise. Naturally, that time of youth symbolized by the school uniform is an idealized version, without the actual drama and pressures the one imagining might have personally gone through at the time.

In addition, Saitō has the following to say on *imōto-moe:*

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[145] Galbraith, "Moe: Exploring Virtual Potential in Post-Millennial Japan," 356.

"Desire does not have to be symmetrical – you can desire something in the two-dimensional world that you don't desire in the three-dimensional world." "There is a truism in *otaku* culture that those who feel *moé*[146] for little sister characters in manga and anime don't have little sisters[147]. If these men actually had sisters, then the reality of that would ruin the fantasy. If the object exists in reality, then it is not *moé*."[148]

That desire does not have to be symmetrical means that even if an anime plays around the incest theme, that does not mean the viewer would look at their real siblings sexually: whatever is, belongs in a fictional world for someone of 3rd sex, outside the realm of real world. That is, for the viewer to feel *moe*: if not, the viewer may interpret the character through the frame of real siblings. The same disagreement of frames is at play when the fans of *lolicon* are judged as pedophiles, although they may strictly enjoy two-dimensional characters, or even assume themselves as the *shōjo*[149].

4. Theory

4.1. Westermarck-effect: reverse sexual imprinting

The Finnish sociologist Edvard Westermarck was the first researcher to formally describe that children raised within the same household and growing up together, will not be sexually attracted to each other, in his work *the History of Human Marriage* [150]. It was not until half a century later, when the French structural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss formulated general rules for kinship in his work *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* [151] . Lévi-Strauss argues that cognitive structures manifest into social patterns. According to Lévi-Strauss, the exact forms may change from culture to culture, but the fundamental structures behind them are universal: The law forbidding incest is central in enforcing exogamy: it necessitates a kinship structure that is governed by the exchange of

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[146] In Moé Manifesto, moe is typed as moé to emphasize the correct pronunciation [mo.e], Galbraith, *The Moé Manifesto: An Insider's Look at the Worlds of Manga, Anime, and Gaming*, 5.

[147] Truism, as in an assumed but unvalidated truth. As a counterpoint, the author behind Oreimo and Eromanga Sensei, another little sister light novel series, has a big sister according to an anime news blog site animemaru.com, "'Eromanga Sensei' Author No Longer on Speaking Terms with Sister."

[148] personal interview, Galbraith, *The Moé Manifesto: An Insider's Look at the Worlds of Manga, Anime, and Gaming*, 180.

[149] Voice actress and media personality Momoi Halko raises a similar point for *moe* as a way for men to become female (and for women to become male) characters, or to practice girlness through them. Personal interview, Galbraith, *The Moé Manifesto: An Insider's Look at the Worlds of Manga, Anime, and Gaming*.

[150] Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage*.

[151] Les Structures Élémentaires de la Parenté, Lévi-Strauss, *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté*.

women.[152] Westermarck and Lévi-Strauss have different conclusions about the type of incest *taboo*: on one hand Westermarck holds that there is a biological mechanism for it[153]; on the other hand, Lévi-Strauss argues that incest is a universal, but varying, rule, exactly because culture fills the empty form that is devoid of a biological mechanism:

> "The fact of being a rule, completely independent of its modalities, is indeed the very essence of the incest prohibition. If nature leaves marriage to chance and the arbitrary, it is impossible for culture not to introduce some sort of order where there is none. The prime role of culture is to ensure the group's existence as a group, and consequently, in this domain as in all others, to replace chance by organization. 3 The prohibition of incest is a certain form, and even highly varied forms, of intervention. But it is intervention over and above anything else; even more exactly, it is the intervention."[154]

For Lévi-Strauss, the importance of incest rule is in that the different family and kinship structures, including exogamy and alliances, have the incest *taboo* as their base.[155]

In Marcel Mauss's *The Gift* [156] Mauss noted that gifts have crucial role in forming and maintaining social alliances: gifts carry the power to be repaid on some level. By combining the idea of social alliances by gift-giving to family relations, he could develop an explanation to exogamic marriages. In other words, if the family's daughters are treated as gifts, families form alliances with other families that gift their own daughters reciprocally. Why daughters instead of sons must move, likely is about power and ownership in the respective cultures i.e. patriarchal forms of power and governance.[157]

From this basis, it can be concluded that endogamy, or incestual relationships, are wrong in a sense that the family loses resources for alliance making, resulting in loss of social power: because there are no relatives through marriage, there are less relatives in general. Lévi-Strauss's formulation of general rules for kinship are good not only because one can explain various formations of existing family models with it. They are also good because by thinking the situation through power,

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[152] Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, chap. 2.
[153] Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage*; Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, 32.
[154] Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, 33.
[155] Lévi-Strauss, chap. 2.
[156] Mauss, *The Gift : Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, originally 1925.
[157] Mauss.

endogamous marriages within monarchy in Europe and Ancient Egypt, for example, can be explained: if there is more power to be gained for the family, and ultimately for the leader of the family, through internal than external marriage, then it is obviously chosen.

While Lévi-Strauss's theory is adept at explaining sociological reasons for incest taboo, sexuality and pair-forming likely also have a physiological aspect. Sexuality and sexual behavior is, after all, not only essential in human reproduction, but also in reproduction of other species of varying cognitive abilities as well. In parts of China and Taiwan, there used to be a custom of *shim-pua*[158] marriage, also known as *tong yang xi*[159], in which families would give their daughters for marriage at a very young age, not to marry immediately, but to grow up with the spouse and marry him at a later time. It was done both for economic reasons, as major marriage was costly, but also to ensure the safety of the household by having a bride available. Along with Israeli collective farms, or *kibbutzim*, it is one of the most cited examples of Westermarck effect in action, as the *shim-pua* marriages at least presumably often did not work out. In case of Israeli *kibbutzim*, a quite recent research opposing Westermarck's findings and finding instead that "individuals who grew up in the kibbutzim's communal education system were in fact often attracted to their peers, and only rarely did they develop sexual aversion toward these peers"[160]. As a sociological subject, the matter likely has qualitative elements that greatly affect the outcome.

Another notable name, a viewpoint to the subject of incest, and also Westermarck's contemporary, Sigmund Freud, with his theories on psychoanalysis, should be noted. His concept of Oedipus complex as a necessary stage of psychosexual development, the name originating from an Ancient Greek play about a man fulfilling a prophecy of him killing his father and marrying his mother, suggests that sons normally experience sexual desire for their mothers, and daughters respectively to their fathers[161]. Freud's view thus clearly contradicts Westermarck's findings, in which the sons and daughters wouldn't experience sexual attraction just for living their childhood near their parents.

Other related terms to the subject of incest and sexual imprinting are assortative mating and genetic sexual attraction. Assortative mating is observed not only in animals, who choose to mate with mates similar to them for varying reasons, but also in humans. In humans there is not only the social part, in which humans choose their partners more likely within similar social, cultural or economic surroundings, but also a genetic side. As there is overlap between ethnic and social circles,

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[158] 媳婦阿
[159] 童養媳
[160] Shor and Simchai, "Incest Avoidance, the Incest Taboo, and Social Cohesion: Revisiting Westermarck and the Case of the Israeli Kibbutzim."
[161] Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Die Traumdeutung, 1899.

it is difficult to estimate the relative importance of each. One example of such research about genetic assortative mating is Guo et al. [162], whereas an example of an article arguing for population stratification explaining the results seemingly leading to confirming genetic assortative mating, i.e. ethnic subgroups being more likely to marry those inside the same subgroup, would be Abdellaoui et al.[163].

However, genetic sexual attraction is a term originating from outside academic circles coined for cases in which close relatives, who did not grow up together, experience strong sexual attraction towards each other [164]. While these kinds of cases break the incest taboo, they fit Westermarck's hypothesis well: the children or family that grow up together, even if they are not blood related, will usually not feel sexual attraction towards each other. However, if the reason for not feeling sexual attraction lies in growing up together, then obviously it is not a hindrance when close relatives have grown up afar from each other. While there might not be enough examples for a quantitative study, there are several documented cases of these kinds of mutual attractions happening[165]. It is also worth noting that in one of the chosen samples, Yosuga no Sora, genetic sexual attraction is given as a reason for the siblings to strongly fall in love with each other, and Westermarck effect is explicitly mentioned as a reason for why it does not happen in normal circumstances, with siblings living under the same roof.

The darker side of incest is, naturally, the occasionally surfacing cases in which someone in a superior power position is sexually abusing an unwilling subject, with no feeling of mutual attraction. In these cases, it often turns out that the perpetrator has also been a victim of sexual assault in his or her childhood. In these cases, it is safe to assume that the situation has little to do with sexual attraction, and is instead about power and domination, due to the person having been abused himself.

4.2. Sexual morality and the law

While *imōto-moe* has not been illegalized anywhere, there is thematic proximity to both sexual abuse of children, and incest, both of which modern societies generally punish based on both moral arguments and on grounds of causing harm.

Michel Foucault points out that regulating sexuality only began appearing into law after 1810 in France, "as if sexuality was not the business of the law", but that the law has been increasingly

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[162] Guo et al., "Genomic Assortative Mating in Marriages in the United States."
[163] Abdellaoui, Verweij, and Zietsch, "No Evidence for Genetic Assortative Mating beyond That Due to Population Stratification."
[164] "Genetic Sexual Attraction."
[165] "Genetic Sexual Attraction."

oppressive in the 19th and 20th centuries, not only in France but also in the United States[166]. He notes that from the 1800s, the law was characterized by the fact that it was never capable of telling exactly what it was punishing:

> "In practice, whenever a legislative intervention into the sphere of sexuality had to be justified, the law on *pudeur* (decency) was always invoked. And it may be said that all the legislation on sexuality introduced since the nineteenth century in France is a set of laws on *pudeur*. It is certainly a fact that this legislative apparatus, aimed at an undefined object, was never used except in cases when it was considered to be tactically useful."[167]

Foucault sees that due to "the pornographic explosion and the profits that it involves, in this new atmosphere, it is no longer possible to use" undefined "decency", "attacks" and "outrageous acts", "to make the law function"[168]. For what has replaced arguments of decency, Foucault sees that:

> "[W]hat is emerging is a new penal system, a new legislative system, whose function is not so much to punish offenses against these general laws concerning decency, as to protect populations and parts of populations regarded as particularly vulnerable. In other words, the legislator will not justify the measures that he is proposing by saying: the universal decency of mankind must be defended. What he will say is: there are people for whom others' sexuality may become a permanent danger. In this category are, of course, children, who may find themselves at the mercy of an adult sexuality that is alien to them and may well be harmful to them. Hence there is a legislation that appeals to this notion of a vulnerable population, a 'high-risk population'"[169]

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[166] Foucault, Hocquenghem, and Danet, "Sexual Morality and the Law," 271.
[167] Foucault, Hocquenghem, and Danet, 275.
[168] Foucault, Hocquenghem, and Danet, 276.
[169] Foucault, Hocquenghem, and Danet, 276.

Foucault notes that it is commonly accepted among specialists[170] that children have their own specific sexuality, in itself a derivation from before, when children were thought as pure and not knowing about sexuality. However, he sees an issue in that this line of thought gives the specialists overarching and poorly defined power to intervene, to protect the child's sexuality to be influenced with adult's sexuality, not for specific actions, but on the grounds of potential harm.[171]

The line of thinking Foucault raises is relevant to *lolicon* and *moe* on two major ways: One is the reasoning to ban material deemed harmful not for moral reasons or for a well-defined, concrete act, as in no actual children are violated in any way when a purely fictional image is created[172]. The other is the distinction between adult sexuality and child sexuality. With *lolicon*, adult sexuality invading child sexuality is not only definitive of the genre, it is also the underlying issue, from where the potential harmful causations are drawn. As for *moe*, what makes it different from *lolicon* is the lack of implicit or explicit adult sexuality: the characters are able to convey that immature and pure child sexuality, without danger of adult sexuality corrupting it. Or choose not to, for that matter.

McLelland notes that the ease of communication the internet allows has raised concern about previously isolated individuals with pedophilic interests to contact each other and distribute pedophilic imagery. In this discourse it is often argued that "erotic interest in children is overwhelmingly a male preserve, exposure to child sex-imagery is a step toward performing child sex-abuse and that any erotic interest in children is deeply pathological and entirely outside the range of acceptable normal, healthy sexuality". By this basis, it is argued that "any expression of sexual interest in children communicated via any medium is in need of surveillance, censorship and prosecution". Some of these claims may have some validity: the internet has certainly made worldwide distribution of actual child pornography easier than before[173]. If media consumption influences the viewers towards sexual deeds and preferences, Diamond and Uchiyama, and Galbraith argue that it is not necessarily the case[174]. Galbraith argues that the question of censorship ultimately ends up as a question if a person's private thoughts can and should be regulated, and because the evidence

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[170] such as psychologists, psychoanalysts, psychiatrists, or teachers, Foucault, Hocquenghem, and Danet, 276.

[171] Foucault, Hocquenghem, and Danet, 276–77.

[172] McLelland, "The World of Yaoi: The Internet, Censorship and the Global 'Boys' Love' Fandom," 63–64; Galbraith, "Lolicon: The Reality of 'Virtual Child Pornography' in Japan," 89,108.

[173] Temporini, "Child Pornography and the Internet."

[174] Diamond and Uchiyama, "Pornography, Rape, and Sex Crimes in Japan.," 9; Galbraith, "Lolicon: The Reality of 'Virtual Child Pornography' in Japan," 86,110.

suggests that there is no real danger to self and others, they should not[175]. McLelland also argues against the censorship on grounds of personal sexual freedom[176].

4.3. Gender performativity and the production of the heterosexual matrix

In Gender Trouble (1990), Judith Butler formulates gender as an act of acquired performance, instead of a "natural" continuation from sex that e.g. structuralist views have held[177], or pre-existing gender identity that feminist theory has assumed[178]. The work is about how gender identities of existing persons are formed, and it is useful in the context of this research in the following ways:

At first, whilst the characters here are not questioning their genders, the characters are made to perform their genders in a more literal sense, nevertheless. In different visual, contextual, and other types of clues, the characters imply to the viewer that they exhibit a certain gender.

Secondly, the genres of *lolicon*, *moe*, and also *yaoi*, exist partly because of a twist in gender performativity: for *lolicon,* the economic difficulties and comparatively raising power of women made many males unable to fulfill their inner gender performance expectations. As a reaction, many found the compromised position of girls of imaginary gender relatable, and something they were able to project themselves, at least temporarily, into[179]. In other words, men perform the *shōjo* to come to terms with an unstable gender identity[180], which is certainly a diversion from their regular gender performativity. *Moe* emerges from the same roots as *lolicon*, the difference being that *moe* lacks the sexualizing "adult touch", implicit or explicit, that *lolicon* has[181].

Thirdly, *imōto-moe* questions the universal rule of incest *taboo* presented by Lévi-Strauss, by exploring the theme. As established earlier, incest as a *taboo* has a necessary role in Lévi-Strauss's explanation for family and kinship rule formation[182]. Butler builds on Lévi-Strauss and argues that for him, incest "is not a social fact, but a pervasive cultural fantasy"[183]. According to her, "that the prohibition exists in no way suggests that it works", but instead "its existence appears to suggest that desires, actions, indeed, pervasive social practices of incest are generated precisely in virtue of the

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[175] Galbraith, "Lolicon: The Reality of 'Virtual Child Pornography'in Japan," 109–10.

[176] in this article, through the lens of women readers and fictional, possibly underage, boys, McLelland, "The World of Yaoi: The Internet, Censorship and the Global 'Boys' Love' Fandom," 72.

[177] Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (p. 2006)*, 51.

[178] Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (p. 2006)*.

[179] Galbraith, "Lolicon: The Reality of 'Virtual Child Pornography'in Japan," 103.

[180] Kinsella, *Schoolgirls, Money and Rebellion in Japan*, 163; Galbraith, "Lolicon: The Reality of 'Virtual Child Pornography'in Japan," 103.

[181] Galbraith, "Moe: Exploring Virtual Potential in Post-Millennial Japan," 350.

[182] Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, chap. 2.

[183] Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (p. 2006)*, 58.

eroticization of that taboo"[184]. In other words, Butler is saying that whatever erotic meaning incest has, it is due to the fact that it is a *taboo.* With this, Butler argues that the structuralist, universal rules of incestual taboo (between boy and mother), seen through Lacan's theory of language, mean that there is consequentially right and wrong heterosexuality, and following that, right and wrong sexuality, e.g. homosexuality[185].

4.4. Semiotics

For the theoretical basis to analyze meaning in art and media, I turn to semiotics, or "the science of signs". There are two main schools for semiotics, of Saussurean and Peircean.[186] Whereas the Saussurean school is useful on language research and important for Lévi-Strauss's and Lacan's theories through structuralism and post-structuralism, both mentioned earlier in this research, the Peirceian tradition, continued by e.g. Eco[187], is more relevant for visual analysis.

For Charles S. Peirce, literally anything could be understood from a semiotic perspective. His model of the sign is a part of a larger ontological system, which consists of three interrelated universal categories he calls firstness, secondness, and thirdness: "firstness is a mode of being which does not require reference to anything else, it exists in a state of immediacy; secondness, in contrast, is precisely a category of reference, of comparison and reflection, an intermediary state of relatedness; thirdness is pure mediation, it combines first and second things with other first and second things, as in memory and synthesis."[188] A sign is something that mediates, thus belonging to the third category. According to Misak in *The Cambridge Companion to Peirce* , Peirce had many different divisions of signs, the most famous being into icons, indices and symbols, on the basis for the division being that the prior relation of an icon to its object is monadic, that of an index is dyadic, and that of a symbol is triadic[189]. The conception of sign consists of three parts – sign, object, interpretant[190] – where the interpretant is often, but not necessarily, another sign of the same object[191].

For examples of signs, objects, and varying interpretations in Peirce's framework, Misak gives the following:

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[184] Butler, 57.
[185] Butler, 50,57-59.
[186] Buchanan, *A Dictionary of Critical Theory*, "semiotics."
[187] Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*.
[188] Buchanan, *A Dictionary of Critical Theory*, "Peirce, Charles Sanders."
[189] Misak, *The Cambridge Companion to Peirce*, 223.
[190] "Why did Peirce speak of interpretants and not of interpretation? He never says. I suggest that an interpretation is a class of interpretants that are, in some sense yet to be defined, equivalent. An interpretant is thus one particular bearer of an interpretation." Misak, 237.
[191] sometimes, "representamen" instead of sign, Misak, 214-215,230-235.

"A foxy odor is a sign of danger to the rabbit but of dinner to the cougar; "E = mc2"
is a statement of physical law to the physicist but to the general public it is an icon
of braininess; to those who worshiped it, an ancient religious artifact was an icon,
even qua embodiment, of suprahuman powers, but to the anthropologist it is an
index of social organization and cultural development."[192]

5. Methodology

5.1. Visual analysis

The main method to use for the analysis of the series is visual analysis. As Per Ledin and
David Machin explain in *Doing Visual Analysis: From Theory to Practice[193],* all "stuff" is in some way
"semiotic materials", meaning that "stuff" communicates to us, in all kinds of ways, "that make them
into the wholes that we experience". They continue that:

"This idea of semiotic materials is fundamental for how we approach such artefacts
[as photographs, office spaces, commercials, or food containers], such instances of
visual communication. It captures how we experience them in everyday life, how we
use them, and how we can explore them as researchers. It also helps us to think
about how these materials are manufactured and designed in our societies for
specific reasons and how they shape what we can do with and through them."[194]

Using a shampoo bottle design as an example, Ledin & Machin note that we
immediately recognize not only that a shampoo bottle is a shampoo bottle, we also recognize from the
shape, color, texture and lettering, what kind of shampoo it is: the texture may be glossy to indicate
the results of the hair, the pictures and diagrams may indicate quality, the shape and color that it is
aimed for men or women: it is an artefact that sets up and codes social meanings. Ledin & Machin also
note that the objects and the semiotic information is part of a longer history: "a person from 150 years

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[192] Misak, 235.
[193] Ledin and Machin, *Doing Visual Analysis: From Theory to Practice*.
[194] Ledin and Machin, 3.

ago would not really understand what they were looking at". Objects are "part of wider forms of social meanings, ideas and types of social interactions".[195]

The chapters in the book are examples for how different kinds of semiotic material can be analyzed, from photographs to data representation[196]. For short film clips, Ledin & Machin give instructions on analyzing narrative genres and stages, scenes, settings, characters, rhythm and sound, and language.[197] The list is not meant to be exhaustive, but to be used appropriate to what is being researched: all "stuff" via which communication is made, is semiotic material[198].

In addition to visual and aural semiotic information, the animated television series offer semiotic information in a more traditional form of stories, or narrative. Visual discourse analysis is an expansion of earlier types of discourse analysis, such as critical discourse analysis[199], or Foucauldian discourse analysis[200], and thus the methods they offer for e.g. analysis of power relations, sex or distance, also apply for visual discourse analysis[201].

6. Material

In this chapter there is a plot synopsis for each of the series, additional background context, and explanation about how the works relate to the theme.

6.1. *Ore no Imōto ga Konna ni Kawaii Wake ga Nai* (*My Little Sister Can't Be This Cute*, 2010)

Ore no Imōto *ga Konna ni Kawaii Wake ga Nai*, often shortened as *OreImo*, was broadcasted on Fall 2010. The series was made by Studio AIC Build, and it consisted of 12 24-minute-long episodes. The series is based on a light novel series written by Fushimi Tsukasa, which spans over 12 volumes between years 2008-2013.[202]

Oreimo is about big brother Kirino Kyōsuke, and his little sister Kirino Kōsaka. Kirino is, as opposite to the big brother, is highly capable in multiple different ways: she is near the top of her age group in running, works as a professional model beside school. Later in the series, she begins to write a highly successful light novel series: the setting is a protagonist surrounded by a little sister

[195] Ledin and Machin, 3–4.
[196] Ledin and Machin, chaps. 3–8.
[197] Ledin and Machin, chap. 7.
[198] Ledin and Machin, 3.
[199] Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*.
[200] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*; Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*; Foucault, Hocquenghem, and Danet, "Sexual Morality and the Law."
[201] Ledin and Machin, *Doing Visual Analysis: From Theory to Practice*, chap. 2.
[202] Kanbe, *Oreimo*.

harem, only in this case the protagonist is also a girl. Kōsaka's attitude towards her brother is cold, distant and condescending, until Kyōsuke finds out that Kōsaka has secretly been an otaku: she has spent most of her earned money buying huge collections of anime subculture goods, including erotic games. From there on, Kyōsuke began giving "life counseling" lessons to Kōsaka, concerning on how to keep her secret hidden, and helping her in all kinds of situations. During all this, how the siblings feel about each other changes over time, including also sexual undertones.

In addition to the original season, there is a four-episode-long alternative ending to the series, which were originally broadcasted on the internet, or ONA [203], a second season with the name *Ore no Imōto ga Konna ni Kawaii Wake ga Nai*., with a dot at the end marking the seasonal difference, and another three episodes long ONA ending, that finishes the story. In this research, the additional episodes and the second season are omitted from analysis.

The alternative four-episode ONA ending is chronologically timed after the 11th episode of the original series. They show an ending that follows the story as it is in the original light novel instead of the original ending of the anime. The reason for the two endings to differ is that even if making anime is more time and money consuming than writing a book or drawing manga, anime is made and broadcasted in a much faster pace. Thus, it sometimes happens that the anime version is made or broadcasted before the original work that the anime is supposed to be based on. In these cases, the animation production must either consult the writer, who might not yet know or might change where he is going with his story, or make up their own, differing version of the story.

6.2. *Imōto sae Ireba Ii.* (*A Sister's All You Need, 2017*)

Imōto sae Ireba Ii. came out in Fall 2017, containing 12 episodes of 23 minutes each. The anime was made by studio Silver Link. The anime is based on a light novel written by Hirasaka Yomi, published from March 2015 to February 2020, for a total of 14 volumes. The English title is from the English translation of the light novel series by Yen Press.[204]

The series is about Itsuki, a male light novel author in his twenties, who is very into little sisters and sexualization of them. In addition to making exaggerated jokes, references and occasionally parodies about the little sister subject, the series also focuses on his group of friends having fun together talking, drinking or playing board games. Much of the series is also about the problems in the publishing world and media mix. In addition to comedy, the series also has drama about the characters'

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[203] 「Web アニメ」 in Japanese
[204] Ōnuma, *Imouto sae Ireba Ii.*

respective issues, showing in serious manner what are the situations that made the characters the way they are.

In the context of little sisters and the main character, the show also handles many issues relevant to the topic: why is he interested in little sisters as characters, what does little sister actually mean to him, is it relevant if he had a real little sister or not, or does it matter if he is actually related to the little sister or not. Later in the series it is revealed that his mother had died in his 2nd year of middle school, and he began to resent his father for remarrying just after three years. He isolated himself from the family, including his new younger stepbrother, with whom he started to have good relations with only after moving on his own. After some foreshadowing, it is revealed that the new little brother is in fact, unbeknownst to him, his new little sister. It is however never explained why the little brother disguised to him, as to my understanding, at the time of them meeting he was not yet a writer or obsessively into little sisters. While the anime does not reach far enough into the story for the little brother's gender to be revealed to him, it will likely come up as a subject later in the novels.

6.3. *Yosuga no Sora* (*Sky of Connection*, 2011)

Yosuga no Sora started airing in Fall 2010, with 12 episodes. It is an adaptation from a same-titled visual novel, which was released two years prior, in December 2008. The episodes consist of 22 minutes of main story, and a three-minute bonus segment with light mood, deformed characters and extensive humour. In the setting, an older brother Haruka and a sickly younger sister Sora, twins, move to their childhood home in the countryside due to them suddenly losing their parents in an accident. Unlike most televised anime, Yosuga no Sora shows multiple explicit and visual sex scenes, including incestual ones between the siblings. In addition, there is a sequel game, containing additional scenarios from the original setting, and a manga adaptation.[205]

As with the visual novel, the series is divided to several 'routes', or alternate timelines: they spur from some choice the protagonist has to make, at which point the story focuses on a specific girl, and her solvable issue, and the route ends with the protagonist successfully starting a boyfriend-girlfriend -relationship with her. At that point, the series cuts back to the convergence point, and shows what happens with the alternative of that fluctuation point. Thereafter, in the context of the series, the alternate timeline with its progress never happened, but the viewer may be informed about new sides of the characters. In some routes, the reciprocal feelings of the siblings play only a minor part.

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[205] Takahashi, *Yosuga no Sora*.

## 6.4.	Kiss x Sis (2010)

The televised anime of Kiss x Sis (キスシス) aired in Spring 2010 and had 12 episodes of 24 minutes each.[206] It is based on a manga, which is published from December 2005, and is still ongoing. In addition, there is an original video animation, from 2008 to 2015, with 12 episodes, which were bundled with the corresponding manga volumes. Of these two different animated series, only the 2010 anime is under analysis.

In the main setting of the anime there are two twin sisters, Ako and Riko, and a one-year younger brother, Keita. The brother is unrelated to the two twin sisters, but the three have been growing up as a family. The parents of the family are remarried, with the twin sisters being from the mother's previous marriage, and the younger brother from the father's previous one. The three children were close, with Keita sharing affectionate, non-sexual kisses with them, and a childhood promise to marry them both. At the beginning of the anime, the now-teenage girls are competing to provoke Keita sexually into accepting one of them as his girlfriend. Meanwhile, Keita tries to distance himself from them, while trying to apply for the same high school as the sisters.

Generally, the anime is about the brother and the twin sisters drifting into a comedic, sexual situation, and that sexual situation dissolving one way or other, often by the other sister putting a stop to the act. The parents are sexually active and free-minded, and thus are not against it, rather they are expecting Keita to get together with one of the sisters sooner or later. In addition, there are three other girls with whom Keita experiences sexual situations with: a teacher in the sisters' school, Keita's underclassman and sports manager, and a girl Keita's age, each with their own quirks. While the series is a light-hearted erotic comedy, there is also quite a lot of character development present.

7. Analysis

In this chapter I analyze each of the series by their narrative genres and stages, visuals, settings, characters, and by rhythm and sound in scenes, for how they relate to *imōto-moe.*

I use "scene" as defined by Ledin & Machin, to refer to a period wherein a "camera[207] is located in a time and space, where it moves in different ways to combine shots"[208]. For locations and the analysis of them, I use "settings"[209].

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[206] Nawa, *Kiss x Sis (TV)*.
[207] In the context of animation, in an abstract sense for the lack of a physical camera.
[208] Ledin and Machin, *Doing Visual Analysis: From Theory to Practice*, 150.
[209] Ledin and Machin, 152–55.

7.1.1. Narratives

In episode 1, Kyōsuke, the big brother, is shown as if living in a shadow compared to the successful little sister, Kirino: she is both a successful model for a magazine, and a successful track and field runner. Because of this, their father seems to be only interested in Kirino, in a manner of doting father. Kyōsuke laments this out loud in school by branding himself as "just" normal: not really bad at anything, but not shining at anything either. Because of these differences, the siblings do not have much in common in the beginning of the series and act cold and distant towards each other.[210]

The series generally follows the conventions of a light comedy with a steadily progressing plot, but occasionally turns heavy. On those scenes, as when Kirino is being revealed as *otaku* to her *otaku*-hating model friend[211], or when Kirino is under scolding from the father when an *imōto* visual novel is found[212], there is no comedy, the environment sometimes goes dark and the mood is frozen stiff, until those situations are eventually saved by Kyōsuke self-sacrificing himself and his reputation in favor of her little sister.

Along with the brother-sister incest theme, there are two major related themes: the different levels of fiction, and the *otaku* culture against the non-*otaku* culture. What I mean by different levels of fiction is that the series makes us wonder if Kirino's obsession to fictional little sisters means that she might feel something towards her real big brother as a little sister. Then there's the fictional layer of little sisters in the series with their complex motives. To the other direction, that we wonder about Kirino's hidden tendencies begs the question about the fans' dispositions. Coming back to Butler, incest *taboo* would not be a social fact, but a "pervasive cultural fantasy"[213]: as a near-universal rule that is nevertheless occasionally broken and is related to sexuality, there is potential for it as a fetish. If the fans only feel it on fictional little sisters or also on real ones, that is the question the series is asking by Kirino's wavering.

7.1.2. Narrative distance

The series follows the viewpoint of Kyōsuke: the camera usually follows him in third person, we see his dreams, hear him talk to himself, and hear his inner thoughts. Sometimes we even note the things he subconsciously pays attention to, such as the many little sister references during the school day after the little sister dream which he had[214], or Kirino's short shorts while she's sitting

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[210] *Oreimo* ep. 1.
[211] ep. 4-5.
[212] ep. 3.
[213] Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (p. 2006)*, 58.
[214] *Oreimo* ep. 1.

on a sofa[215]. Scenes where Kyōsuke is not around are rare but do exist: Episode 3 starts with an introduction on Kirino's classmates, who do model work with her[216]. Unlike in that scene, Kyōsuke is usually somehow connected to the situation: a transition scene tells us where he is meanwhile Kirino is shown shopping at Akihabara[217]; in a previous scene Kyōsuke is reminded of Kirino, and there is a transition to Kirino elsewhere sneezing for that reason[218]; Kyōsuke is in the next room[219]; or the scene depicts a group chat where he is being talked about[220].

On the other hand, Kirino is narratively more of a mystery to us: we never hear her inner voice, although we occasionally do hear her talking to herself without Kyōsuke or anyone else being present to hear it. While we do not hear her thoughts out loud, we are given hints on what she thinks through expressions: while chatting on a phone with Kuroneko, one of her *otaku* friends, she has first a surprised, then an overly happy expression, when Kuroneko mentions that she needs to bathe her little sister.[221] There are scenes that imply that Kirino might feel something incestual towards her brother in the way of her games: a quiet look towards her brother that he did not see, after the brother helped her make *otaku* friends in the end of the episode[222], Kirino kicking Kyōsuke's door and his chair as an emotional response for fear that she might lose Kyōsuke to another girl[223].

Kyōsuke is evidently central for the storytelling. Other than his human connections, he is also a character that is little more than "average" on his own: he is a template for the viewer to cast themselves as. Yet, even though the siblings get closer and the relationship gets more undertones as the series progresses, they can hardly be called as lovers yet. There is some sexualization on Kirino besides what we can see through Kyōsuke, such as a panty shot of Kirino being intentionally shown to us during her photoshoot by the narrative camera[224]: a "voyeur"-type distance in that case. Compared to the other series, however, sexualization is relatively minor.

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[215] ep. 4.
[216] ep. 3.
[217] ep. 3.
[218] a person sneezing because someone is talking about them elsewhere is a common narrative trope, ep. 6.
[219] ep. 3.
[220] ep. 6.
[221] ep. 3.
[222] ep. 2.
[223] ep. 6.
[224] ep. 3.

7.1.3. Visuals

Picture 7.1: Oreimo episode 3 Kyōsuke consolidates Kirino, who has ran from home after a confrontation with the father

Visually, the characters are on the small and round side. Overall, there is an emphasis on warm colors. While the general trend is on simple geometry and undetailed, single-color walls, some items, especially *otaku* goods, are drawn with great detail. Ambient light is used effectively as a tool to emphasize drama, as in picture 7.1, which is taken right after a scene in which Kirino has been confronted by the father who has found her *eroge*[225]. In another instance, in episodes 4 and 5, the weather gets increasingly darker as though foreshadowing drama: when the dramatic turn occurs, the environs are very dark, and it starts to rain and thunder[226].

The smallness of the characters is apparent in the scenes when the father is present: as an adult man in his 40s, he is big and bulky compared to the around 13-year old girls and Kyōsuke, who is around a year older.

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[225] ep. 3.
[226] Kanbe ep. 4-5.

Picture 7.2: Oreimo episode 4: while attempting to grab the package, Kyōsuke has fallen over her little sister

In picture 7.2 one can see the flat surfaces the series has in less dramatic scenes. The use of geometry is also evident here, which the series uses for the impression of changing camera angels between shots. What occurs here is a scene where Kyōsuke has tried to take back a box which Kirino has mistaken to be make-up goods, but which really are *otaku* items that the two model friends on the background must not know about. Both long hair and an honest character type, and twin tails and a mischievous character type are tropes. What occurs in the foreground is a narrative trope, in which there is an accidental sexual act, here in the form of accidental groping and showing underwear in the aftermath of fighting for the box.

Even though the characters are drawn well and detailed in the important scenes, in the less important scenes the characters are often drawn with less detail and accuracy. This works both as a cost-saving measure and as a way to highlight importance, at the cost of overall visual quality.

7.1.4. Settings

For the setting, Kōsaka family lives in a modern two-story house in a residential area. Tokyo's Akihabara is far enough from home that they don't expect to find acquaintances there, but close enough for traveling there by public transportation. The home, the siblings' school, places related to Akihabara, e.g. cafes, anime production offices or concert venues, and occasionally their friends' homes. For one other interesting setting, there is the love hotel from Kirino's and Kyōsuke's research date[227]. While they were there to gain information and change clothes that Kirino intentionally

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[227] ep. 7.

drenched, it was left hanging how much of the research date was research for Kirino, and how much of it was a date in the romantic meaning.

Culturally there are two different "real" main settings: the setting that is not accustomed to *otaku* culture, and consequentially, *imōto-moe*, where the "regular" people live: Kyōsuke himself in the beginning, their parents, their friends in the local school, Kirino's model friends etc. Then there is the *otaku* culture setting for those who know the *otaku* world and act in it: Kirino and her new girl *otaku* friends, the people at Akihabara, the anime producers, and the cosplayers[228]. How Kōsaka and some of the other characters become accustomed to the *otaku* culture when they come in touch with it is part of their character progress.

Along with the "real" cultural settings, there are the settings that are fictional in the reality of the story. There is Kyōsuke's dream the series started with, with a little sister who was "too cute to be true" as a straight reference to the title[229]. Then there are the fictional worlds inside the series: There are the worlds of the erotic *imōto-moe* themed visual novels[230] Kirino plays and makes Kyōsuke play, for him to understand what they are about[231]. There are the worlds of anime series Kirino and the other *otaku* girls like[232], and where the characters that are cosplayed are from. And then there is the fictional world of the light novel and its anime adaptation Kirino writes, which has the girl main character collecting a little sister *harem* around her.

7.1.5. Characters

Kyōsuke is a generic high-school aged boy character He has some friends, boys and girls. There is no indication that he has any hobbies, nor is there anything said about his school records or plans. Where he shows character is in relation to others: he is protective and self-sacrificing towards his sister. He does not see his sister as a potential girlfriend, although it is shown that he is aware of her sexually. He does have other potential love interests in the other girls: one of whom is a childhood friend who he sees as "extremely normal" and other in Kirino's model friends: he has to sacrifice the potential relationship there to protect Kirino's *otaku* secret.

Kirino is of a *tsundere* archetype: she is overflowing with emotions and finds it sometimes difficult to accept the feelings she feels: the disconnect causes her to act violent in order

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[228] Those who dress up and act as the fictional characters as a form of enjoying the character
[229] *Oreimo* ep. 1.
[230] or *eroge*, erotic games due to the age restricted versions of visual novels having sex scenes due to genre conventions
[231] *Oreimo* e.g. ep. 1,2.
[232] ep. 6,7.

to cope with embarrassment[233]. Both the implication for overflowing emotions of love and affection, possibly sexual tension, and the inability to control them, are *moe* inducing elements: they show her emotional purity and incompleteness: fleeting weaknesses to protect and enjoy while they last. She also finds it hard to show weakness to others: she has kept her absorption into *imōto-moe* a secret from her family and friends for the fear of them deserting her for it. Part of that is due to her hobby being "weird" and "repulsive" for the people outside the *otaku* cultural sphere. Her fears are justified, as some of the characters, including her best friend and her father, cannot accept it, whereas other characters of the non-*otaku* sphere turn up to be more understandable to it. For other *moe* tropes besides *tsundere*, she has brown hair, although visually the hair is blonde, has a visible upper canine, or a "*moe* fang", and is energetic.

For the quality of Kirino's *imōto-moe* attraction, she is shown to strongly enjoy the erotic scenes in them[234]. In episode 1, she attests that she does not know why she likes *imōto*s as much as she does[235].

For the other girls, there is the "normal" childhood friend girl with her short hair, round glasses and a soft personality, where the glasses and the personality type are *moe* tropes. For Kirino's *otaku* girl friends, one dresses in a Gothic *Lolita* style dress: a dark Victorian-inspired dress with frills. At times she wears a cat ear headband. The dress and the complicated language she uses are influenced by the types of anime she likes, in a way that is close to a *chūnibyō*[236] trope. Her house is small, and she is looking after her two younger siblings. The other *otaku* friend dresses like an old-fashioned *otaku* man, with round glasses that cannot be seen through a spiral indicating the glasses' fogginess. She is nonetheless revealed to be a rich girl with servants, and it is implied she chooses to dress like that to imply her *otakuness* in those circles. On the internet she is courteous and polite, whereas in person her talk is laid-back. For the two characters, there is evident *gap-moe*: cuteness through contradictory characteristics.

For others, the mother and father are worth mentioning. The mother is accepting and supportive for the children's hobbies and having sexuality, in a sense that she is fine with Kirino having *eroge* and expects Kyōsuke to have porn magazines or that he uses Kirino's computer for erotic material. The father, however, is stern: he would not accept Kirino's *otaku* hobbies due to the bad

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[233] "Tsundere"; Akamatsu, "２００５年７月 18 日の日記帳 (18/7/2005 Diary).", a combination word of *tsun tsun*, "cold and pushing away", and *dere dere*, "warm and affectionate"
[234] *Oreimo* ep. 9.
[235] ep. 1.
[236] 中二病, "eight-grader syndrome". Refers to delusions of grandeur for children around second year of middle school, which includes standing out and possibly acting as if they had special powers, possible due to a need to find themselves as individuals.

image *otaku* have on the society. Not really for Kyōsuke, either, but there's a difference: for the father, Kirino is a perfect daughter: she is successful both as a model and a runner, and the dad proudly keeps a collection of his daughter's achievements. In contrast, Kyōsuke does not stand out, thus his doings matter less to him. He is angry that Kyōsuke seemingly likes little sister themed *eroge*, after Kyōsuke has taken the blame for it, but lets the matter be after hitting him in anger[237].

In contrast to Kirino's *tsundere* behavior, the opening scene presents an idealized *dere* version of her: a little sister who openly and affectionately loves his brother, as a brother, and is willing and able to show it[238].

7.1.6. Rhythm and sound

On comedic times, there is a smooth and steady flow, and an uplifting music track. On dramatic scenes, there's usually a distinct lack of music for a dramatic effect. Sound effects for rain and thunder may be used, or the sound of crickets with the semiotic meaning of Japanese summer. In the scene of picture 7.1, the music is originally slow and melancholic, but changes according to Kirino finding her resolve. Before the scene of picture 7.2, the lack of music is used for dramatic effect when the contents of the package are revealed to Kyōsuke. Afterwards, there's music indicating aggressive fighting for the box, and when the two fall down, again a dramatic quietness to indicate drama. "Whoosh" sound effects are added when the camera zooms to Kirino's compromised underwear and breast, to implicate the lewdness of the situation.

Oreimo differs from the rest of the series by its opening and ending music: whereas the others have generally one opening track and one ending track, using a single opening and ending video for them, *Oreimo* uses a different ending song and ending video for each of the episodes, the song and video themes narratively fitting to the episode. For the opening, the song is the same, but it is sang by different artists or voice actors in each different episode.

7.2. Imōto sae Ireba Ii.

7.2.1. Narratives

Imōto sae Ireba Ii. Is about a light novel writer Itsuki and his friends, most of whom are rival light novel authors. Itsuki is fanatically into the little sister theme: in the series, he is constantly challenging the theme to the limits: In the beginning of episode 1 we dive into Itsuki's draft of a little sister waking his big brother up inside the story[239]. The scene is a parody of the opening scene of *Oreimo*, where an affectionate dream version of Kirino is waking Kyōsuke up. In another draft, Itsuki

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[237] *Oreimo* ep. 3.
[238] ep. 1.
[239] *Imouto sae Ireba Ii.* ep. 1.

offers a draft of a monster *imōto*, which is a giant, formless, pixelated sludge that tries to eat the "brother"[240]. In the reality of the series, Itsuki writes an action series where a brother gains magical superpowers by kissing his little sister[241].

One narrative of the series is to follow Itsuki's and the other author friends' development as authors. There is the progress they make in sales and book adaptations, including drama on when an anime turns out bad, or Itsuki being locked up by the editor due to him being very close to miss a deadline. and there is a heavy emphasis on the leisurely activities they do meanwhile: from board games that they turn comedic via *imōto* or *ecchi*[242] tropes, or gathering background material via traveling around Japan.

In addition to Itsuki's *imōto* fanaticism and the group's growth as authors there are the group's developments in interpersonal relations: the past of the different persons and their relationships are revealed, and new changes to them happen. Itsuki's little brother, who is revealed to be due to his father's remarriage, is revealed to us and some of the characters to be female, but to pretend to be a boy for Itsuki and the friends for unrevealed reasons. In episode 10, it is shown that Itsuki bears a grudge for his father for remarrying so early after Itsuki's mother's death, when he was in high school.[243]

In episode 12 it is shown that Itsuki got into *imōto* light novels in his second year of middle school, the year his mother died after a period of hospitalization. His father worked late, and they hired a housekeeper. Itsuki was isolated in school and went fast home to read books. Itsuki developed a crush to the housekeeper's daughter, who was a year older than him, to whom he was able to share his light novel interest. He was turned down and heartbroken, as she said that she cannot see Itsuki as anything more than a little brother to her. Thereafter, Itsuki saw himself as not even a minor character in a story, and he found resolve to turn himself into a protagonist of his life story. He began writing novels, and he attended a novel competition where his favorite author was a judge.[244]

7.2.2. Narrative distance

We generally cannot hear what Itsuki is thinking, although we are shown his past without anyone in the series explaining it to us. Itsuki is the main character and a narrative proxy, but we are shown a lot about the other characters and them acting together without Itsuki being around or knowing anything about what is happening. Itsuki is more of a character than Kyōsuke: he is strong-

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[240] ep. 10.
[241] ep. 2.
[242] Erotic but with a recognized funny implication
[243] *Imouto sae Ireba Ii.* ep. 1,10.
[244] Ōnuma ep. 12.

willed, shows what he is interested in, where he is weak and how he is progressing as a writer and as a person. Physically the two male leads from the two titles are similar: medium brown hair, not many features to speak of, and a frame on the slimmer side.

For *imōto-moe*, the fiction-inside-a-fiction imōto characters that Itsuki writes are interesting: the parodic version in picture 7.3 is clearly a twisted version of the pure affectionate version of the *Oreimo* fictional sister, made by overly sexualizing her for joke purposes: the humor is in that the potential sexual implication that there is in the normal affectionate version is here made very explicit. The scene has the function of introducing Itsuki as a shameless degenerate in his *imōto* infatuation. The male character in the scene is a proxy, but not only there is the proxy character of Itsuki in between the viewer and the girl, the distance is widened by the overblown sexualization of the sister: there's but a little of *moe* effect. The little there is is due to her wearing some of the *moe* inducing tropes, as the blonde twin-tails, for having a "*moe* tooth", and due to that her act, including her nakedness and overblown speech characteristics, is so out there that it would fall into *denpa-kei*[245] territory.

For the fictional man-eating monster girl of episode 10, "a practice draft for how much can something be loved just for being a little sister"[246] : Itsuki says that the monster *imōto* is "maybe borderline ok"[247] for him, to which the editor responds that if it's just that for him, it's "definitely out for everyone else"[248]. The reasons why it is a "miss" is due to the monster being bigger and stronger, instead of any of the *moe* elements it has only the non-cute monster elements, and instead of any kind of affection, there is only existential dread for the fear of getting eaten.

7.2.3. Scenes

In the following passage there are transcriptions of the opening scenes of episode 1 mentioned in 7.2.1., consisting of dream sequences and the following scene that explains what the dream sequence was to the audience.

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[245] Shingo, "Heisei Democracy - Modern Visual Culture Digest » The Moe Image."
[246] 「 新規格の習作だ。とりあえず雰囲気を掴むために書いてみた。ただ妹であるというだけで、人はどれだけ妹を愛するか。」*Imouto sae Ireba Ii.* ep. 10.
[247] 「ぎりオーケーかな」 ep. 10.
[248] 「お前ってぎりオーケーなら常人には完全アウトだ！」 ch. 10.

Picture 7.3: Imōto sae Ireba Ii. ep. 1: the oversexualized naked little sister is sitting over the crotch of her big brother

Girl's voice: おっきっきい。おっきっきい

(Wakey wakey! Wakey wakey!)

Blue curtains are drawn from a window, revealing bright sunlight. Harp music associated with morning and brightness starts playing.

Girl: あっ、お兄ちゃん、おっきっきい！

(Wakey wakey! Wakey wakey! Ah, big brother [with a diminutive honorific referring to childish or endearing affectation]! Wakey wakey!)

Viewpoint, or "camera", shows the sleeping boy's face, and then the overview of the room from overhead. The boy is lying on the bed, fully clothed in pajamas, and neatly under the blanket. The girl chirping 'wakey' extremely childishly is young, and she has long, blond hair in twintails tied with red ribbons. She is shown sitting on the boy's pelvis with her legs spread, altogether in a very sexually suggestive position. In addition to the setting being a cliché, and the action of the girl showing

extreme naivety and improperness, the room and the characters are drawn and colored in low detail, very untypical for a recent anime.

The girl tilts her head. The boy starts to smile, and says:

おはよう、アリス。

(Good morning, Alice.)

From here, the camera scrolls her up, and the background music changes to a light piano tune. A beam of light from the window conveniently covers the girl's breasts, a common and jokingly clichéd form of censorship. Her face is reddened under the eyes the whole scene, as if blushing. The boy's voice starts to explain in a narrative tone:

Brother: 彼女はアリス。今年十四歳になる、俺の妹だ.

(This girl is Alice. She will turn fourteen this year. (She's) my little sister)

Alice: 眠そうだにゃ、お兄ちゃん。そんな寝坊助なお兄ちゃんには…

(You seem sleepy, big brother! For that kind of sleepyheaded big brother [I'm going to]…)

Ending her phrase with [nya] instead of original [na] here is another example of fictional childish and affectionate way of speaking.

Then, the camera changes to a close-up showing Alice kissing the supposed big brother passionately, with muffled grunting sounds, and a line of drool hanging from their lips afterwards.

Alice: エヘッ、目が覚めっちんぐお兄ちゃん？

(Did you wakey wakey now, big brother?), she said smiling meekly.

Then, awkwardly, she starts to shake as if something was boiling inside her, and soon after two comically clear puffs of smoke, conjoined with faint sound effects, are drawn on the sides of her head, implying release of the bubbled feelings.

Alice: んん、今日の朝ご飯はアリスの手ずくりだやっぱ冷めないうちに速く来てんやろう。

(Mmh, I made breakfast myself today so you should come fast before it gets cold!)

Brother: んん、分かった。

(Okay, got it.)

The scene moves on to show and explain by the boy's voice how he washes his face in the bathwater his sister had just used, as if it was normal, wipes his face dry in the sister's bra, gasping erotically meanwhile, and goes to the kitchen. In the kitchen, there is "Yoshiko, who was supposed to have died yesterday" sitting at the kitchen table, staring blankly and clothed forward. The sister is next to her, still fully naked, and this time first unexplained white smoke or censoring her private parts. The sister invites him to the table, and the camera angle changes so that her body is strategically hidden behind the kitchen drawers. The kitchen is also very simplistically drawn, with shelves containing nothing but straight edges, the legs of the table and the chair looking misdrawn, and nothing but pure whiteness can be seen from the big windows. The brother starts to explain the food ahead of him enthusiastically:

今日の朝食は、アリスの卵で作ったオムライスと、アリスのミルク。クリーミーで酷があり、口の中で妹が広がってゆく。。妹の産み立て卵と搾りたてミルク。美味しいです！

(Today's breakfast is omelet rice made from Alice's eggs, and Alice's milk. Alice's milk is creamy and rich, so the little sister's flavor is spreading in my mouth. My little sister's freshly laid eggs and freshly squeezed milk! So tasty!)

Alice: あいい、お兄ちゃん、口にケチャップがついているりん。しょうがにゃあぷるりん！

(Ohh, brother, there's ketchup on your mouth, well it can't be helped ['that I have to help you', idiomatic].)

The level of cutesy character language has risen to more unbelievable level. Then the sister quite literally opens a portal of violet light into a supposed parallel world, grabs a pair of her "fresh worn panties", and wipes the brother's mouth with them. The brother continues to gobble the panties in his mouth, until swallowing them.

At this point the scene changes to a man throwing a manuscript angrily at the table in another room, asking strongly "what (in the world) is this"[249]. In the room there are reflections, fence behind the window, and detailed board games drawn at the shelf on the wall, suggesting that the scene has jumped from parodic fantasy world into the real setting of the series. The angrily shouting man, who keeps pointing out the absurdities in the scene that was presented earlier is presented as the editor, which the other character, here presented as Hashima Itsuki, 20 years old novelist, has written.[250]

The main point of the scene is not only to present the editor and the protagonist, but also the protagonist's obsession to little sisters. While the view presented is exaggerated and also rejected by the series itself, the scene also lays out general tropes related to the situation. While the context does not lead to actual sex, and the supposed imaginary little sister does not seem to experience the situation sexually, the context for the story's protagonist is clearly sexual every step on the way, from being naked during the whole scene to swallowing the panties. While just from this scene it is unclear if the protagonist in the setting made just for him and his author would go all the way with his sister, or if there would have been an invisible line preventing it from happening, from the explanations of his bought erotic video games which include direct sexual acts (episode 4, 14:34), it would not likely have been a problem at least in that sense.

In addition to sexualizing the little sister, her clothing, not minding her obvious lack of wearing clothing in the scene, and her bodily fluids, both existing and imaginary, are fetishized.

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[249] 「なんじゃこれは」
[250] *Imouto sae Ireba Ii.* ep. 1.

7.2.4. Visuals

Picture 7.4: Imōto sae Ireba Ii. ep. 1: the friends are having a friendly discussion in Itsuki's room

In picture 7.3 we see the imaginary setting of the opening scene: the characters and the surroundings are crudely drawn, making the scene look cheap and old. Isometry is used for the impression of camera angles; window light is unnatural and casts but a small shadow on the surroundings, although not from the characters. Surfaces are even and undetailed. All this gives an impression of extremely cheap and crude animation from the past, which is the style the scene is parodying.

For the regular animation style, in picture 7.4, we see that the use of shadows, colors and details are on a much impressive level. As are the characters, with their right proportions and expressions. In the room one can see Itsuki's many board games in great detail, similar to how *Oreimo* presented its *otaku* goods. There is a difference in the objects between the two series that in *Imōto sae Ireba Ii*. the objects are mainly based on real items and products: the board games do exist, as well as many of the light novels at Itsuki's shelves, and are used as references to other works, including *Oreimo*.

The characters are mostly adults and are drawn relatively bigger in comparison to the environment and other adults than the characters of *Oreimo*. There is nevertheless a certain roundness, especially in the girls.

The coloring of the characters and the environment is bright and warm, but possibly slightly less saturated overall.

7.2.5. Settings

Other than the occasional settings of Itsuki's and others' stories, there is not much emphasis on fictional settings. The main location is Itsuki's room in picture 7.4, where they play the board games in the picture, eat and drink, and have discussions. Other settings include the places of reminiscence of Itsuki's and other's pasts, schools, past homes and such. A lot of the settings were places for both information gathering and leisure, including Okinawa and Hokkaido trips, restaurants etc. Then there is the publishing company office.

Culturally the division between "normies" and *otaku* is there, but in a minor extent: the outsider world is there only in the sense of Itsuki's alienation from school, or that Miyako, Itsuki's college friend, was a slowly warming outsider to Itsuki's stories and *imōto* obsession.

7.2.6. Characters

Most of the characters in the story are adults and above the drinking age of 21, except Nayuta, a successful girl author and Itsuki's closest love interest, and Chihiro, his stepsister that he thinks is her stepbrother, that cooks for Itsuki and sometimes for the group.

In a flashback to the past, Nayuta is shown to ask Itsuki as his boyfriend. Itsuki has declined it previously because he found out how good of an author Nayuta is, and he needs to prove his writing skills to himself first: he needs to see himself not as a no-name husband of a successful author, but as a successful author on his own equal to her[251]. She finds it out only due to being around when Itsuki tells about it to the other male author of the group, having woken up in the bed next to them and pretending to sleep, which is shown to us. She has a past of being severely bullied in middle school, due to which she stopped going to school altogether. She feels that she was saved by Itsuki's novels, which is why she is so into him.

Before Nayuta proposed that, she was shy and courteous towards Itsuki. Afterwards she is constantly saying things to him with an obvious erotic innuendo, and asking him as his boyfriend, as a half-joke. She is shown to write her books alone naked, and later in the series, with the other girl in the group she befriends.

The other one is Miyako, Itsuki's college friend from before he dropped out to be a full-time writer: a girl who is revealed to have a crush on him[252]. As the series progresses, she finds herself interested in being an editor, at least some of it due to her friendship with Nayuta. Part of Nayuta's

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[251] ep. 11.
[252] ep. 8.

and Miyako's relationship is Nayuta dragging Miyako to join in the nakedness with her, in a voyeuristic *fan service*[253] for the audience.

As for Chihiro, the stepsister, there are no implications from either side that Itsuki would be interested in her or other real sisters, although the fear of it might be behind Chihiro's crossdressing in some way when Itsuki is present. Crossdressing can be a *moe* trope: in these cases, usually the persons just dress up like the other gender, while still see themselves as the other. For Chihiro herself, there is no indication that she would not think of herself as a girl. What is questioned instead is if Itsuki's passion for little sisters reaches to real stepsisters.

For the last main character of the friend group, there is Haruto, a male novelist who wears glasses and is taller than Itsuki. As a writer, he sells more, but he feels that his works are inferior to Itsuki's: as writers, the two are rivals that spur each other on. While he seems more strait-laced, he is heavily into maid characters.

Haruto has a little sister. What is interesting in her is that Itsuki thinks of her as "a monster of a little sister": the sister however is very similar to Kirino in her act: she is a *tsundere* towards Haruto, unable to be honest to her feelings of affection to her brother.[254]

Another worthy character to mention is a tax accountant who is introduced halfway: she's mentioned to be 32 years old, thus "old", but she is wearing a flashy Lolita-style[255] dress[256]. For visual tropes, the Lolita fashion dresses and the age gap *moe* are examples of such, but other than those, visual *moe* tropes are relatively few. For narrative tropes, there are more examples, however.

Then there is a girl character who is chosen to draw the manga adaptation of Itsuki's series, who is shown to enjoy the series and *imōto* excessively. She and *Oreimo*'s Kirino raise a point about possible female audience for *imōto-moe.*

7.2.7. Rhythm and sound

Music is generally uplifting to help the comedic atmosphere. On drama, a dramatic silence is used, as in episode 10. Often, the ending theme starts playing softly before the ending video, to soothe the transition in between.

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[253] i.e. lightly erotic material for the purpose of pleasing the audience
[254] *Imouto sae Ireba Ii.* ch. 10.
[255] Meaning Victorian era inspired frilly clothing and dresses. The basis in *lolicon* is somewhat the same, in that the aim is a childlike look in some form, but other than the occasional characters that dress in Lolita fashion, the anime and manga genre has little in common to the fashion style.
[256] *Imouto sae Ireba Ii.* ch. 4,10.

7.3. Yosuga no Sora

7.3.1. Narratives

In the main narrative of *Yosuga no Sora*, twins Haruka and Sora move to the countryside where they spent much of their childhood in, due to their parents' sudden death. They begin living there by themselves in their late grandfather's house, having sold the house of their parents for living expenses. From there on, Haruka meets both his old childhood friends and new acquaintances, while Sora, having been sickly, is largely dependent on Haruka for accustoming to the new life.[257]

The anime story follows the branching arcs of the light novel: Haruka befriends a girl, solves the issue the girl is suffering, after which Haruka and the girl are shown to have sex and begin a relationship together. Following that, the narrative shifts to a "diverging point", to a past event that would have led Haruka towards a different girl and to solve a different issue, had he chosen to do something differently at the time. While there is a "true end" among them, the other routes offer true insight about the characters and their situations that we otherwise would not have.[258]

In the routes which revolve around Sora, the series paints a picture of dependency, due to Sora's physical weakness as a sickly child, and due to monetary issues, which are brought up on multiple occasions. There are also flashback sequences in which the problematically affectionate side of the relationship is brought up from early age, such as where Haruka saves Sora from a falling flowerpot and kisses her on the spot. In addition, according to Haruka, his growing sexual feelings towards Sora stem from Sora having been away in a hospital due to her sickliness, after which he began to see her differently. While the Westermarck effect is not explicitly referenced in the anime, the conditions seem to circumvent the effect of not developing sexual attraction due to shared childhood. [259]

The final route, consisting of the last episodes, tells about Sora's strong fear of being left alone, her openness and assertive showing of sexual interest towards Haruka, Haruka's gradual and wavering acceptance of his reciprocal feelings towards Sora, which evolves into sexual relationship. Shortly thereafter, the pair is caught having incestual sex at the entrance of their house by their classmates, which causes Haruka great mental pain and anxiety. Shortly after, Sora tries to drown herself in a lake, which was foreshadowed as a religiously significant lake of rebirth. Haruka, who can't swim, runs after her trying to save her, causing them both to sink underwater. He wakes up after at the shore, Sora having saved him, after which there is a time lapse where the pair is revealed to have

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[257] *Yosuga no Sora* ep. 1.
[258] ep. 1-12.
[259] ep. 10-12.

moved out of the country somewhere where they are not recognized as siblings, as boyfriend and girlfriend.[260]

Of the two classmate girls who spot the pair having sex at the entrance, their reactions to the incest vary greatly. One of them, Kozue or 'class rep', who does not have her own route in the anime or the original game. Even so, she was shown having a crush on Haruka in the first episode, is shocked by the incestual sex. During a conversation with Haruka the next day it is shown that she has been crying. She tells that she will not tell anyone about them but that she will never talk to him again.[261]

The other girl is Nao, with whom Haruka had a successful route. In this alternation, Haruka had also started a relationship with Nao, but contrary to the previous route, they now have issues due to Haruka's awakened sexual feelings towards Sora. It has been shown that Nao thinks she has forced Haruka into sex a few years earlier, to escape her parents' conflict about adultery, just before the siblings moved out to the city. The resolution of her route is about confirming that the act was indeed consensual.

Due to Nao finding out about the sex, she accepts that Sora is the one on Haruka's heart and breaks up with him. After the twins have moved out, she is shown to be accepting and without regrets, noting that "you cannot decide who you fall in love with". To that, Kozue doubts if just feelings would be enough, due to them certainly enduring hardships due to being siblings.[262]

The series sets the mood to melancholic and eerie due to flashbacks and flashes to future events in the first episode, which the first time viewer cannot understand without outside information: Haruka and Sora are shown kissing when they were smaller; or Sora is shown thinking about kissing the current Haruka, only for the narrative to show that nothing really happened at that moment: Sora is looking at nothing. In the end of the first episode, Sora creeps to Haruka's futon in the darkness of the night. As lightning flashes behind her, she begins undressing her white frilly dress, whispering "let me come".[263] It is only later revealed that she meant Haruka to take measurements of her body, so that she can have a school uniform and go to school[264]. Nevertheless, the narrative was set so that there is an uncanny mood due to the possibility of incestual desires, right from the beginning of the series.

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[260] ep. 10-12.
[261] ep. 11-12.
[262] ep. 12.
[263] 「行かせて」, in Japanese with a sexual double meaning as "make me come", ep. 1.
[264] Although, as we can see in picture 7.5, the scene and her body language tell a different story.

Picture 7.5: Yosuga no Sora ep. 1, Sora undressing for measurements in a flash of lightning

The series shows a lot of explicit sex: both at the end of the routes for other girls, and especially between Haruka and Sora during Sora's route.[265] In Sora's case, the narrative reasoning is about Sora accepting her needs for intimacy and a strong sexual attraction towards Haruka. In their relationship, Sora is the one initiating, and Haruka is there to accept Sora's whims. [266]

How the two got to that point was due to Sora developing a fever alone, while Haruka was away having doubts about where his ongoing relationship with Nao was going. While Haruka was nursing Sora back to health, including wiping her sweat off her naked body with a towel, the two confirm their feelings that they feel strongly for each other, emotionally and sexually.[267]

The two get caught by Nao and Kozue catching them in the act at the end of episode 11, while Nao is still Haruka's girlfriend[268]. After Haruka has talked to the two in school, breaking up with Nao in the process, Haruka develops a huge inner conflict for his incestual relationship with her sister, and cannot have sex which Sora tries to initiate with her anymore. Sora spends a good while arguing to him that there is nothing wrong with it, while scantily clothed. The drama nonetheless escalates to the point where Sora throws herself into the lake, followed with their metaphorical rebirth, accepting each other, and leaving the town for good.[269]

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[265] *Yosuga no Sora* ep. 4-12.
[266] ep. 10-12.
[267] ep. 11.
[268] ep. 11.
[269] ep. 12.

Although incest and the loss of face is risen as the utmost problem, there's another in that Haruka was technically cheating Nao, although Nao is shown to have found Haruka's feelings out and has accepted them. Then there are the issues the narrative doesn't raise: that the two are underage and one is dependent on the other, thus in a compromised position. One of the points Sora did raise in the heat of the moment was her willingness to abort the child if she were to become pregnant, which Haruka did not take well[270].

7.3.2. Narrative distance

Haruka is certainly the character proxy for the viewer to experience the series through: in the beginning we are only told bits and pieces of his past, and he seems to be more a willing driftwood in the stream than a person with his own wants and needs. His past is slowly added up around him, as the series progresses, and in the end of the Sora episodes, he certainly reacts to the situation as his own person. Visually he is a slender, good-looking boy with no clear defining characteristics, other than his light-grey hair, which marks his relation to Sora as her brother.

Sora and the other heroines on their turn are our lovers: we are intimately invested to them and their problems. The branching structure adds a narrative meaning that we are making the choices that affect the girls. Even though the girls are sexual, especially Sora, in a way they are not sexualized: they are the willing initiators to which we respond as the heroine's lover.

7.3.3. Scenes

The scene is in episode 12, after the group of friends left the house Haruka and Sora were living in, to where the group went after Haruka and Sora had contacted them via a text message. The two talking are Nao and Kozue, while the rest of the group is silently walking and listening along.

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[270] Takahashi ep. 12.

Picture 7.6: Yosuga no Sora ep. 12, Kozue challenging Nao's acceptance of the twins' relationship

Kozue: 分かりません。本当に幸せになれるんでしょうか。

(I don't understand. Is it really possible for them to be happy?)

Nao: そうだね。はるちゃんにとってはこれからの戦いだよね。でも私には、はるちゃんは間違ってるって言いきれない。

(Yeah [affirming that she understands the question]. For Haru, the battle has just begun. But I would not necessarily say that Haru is wrong.)

Kozue: どうしてですか。

(Why not?)

Nao: だって、誰かを好きになる気持ちは止められないもん。だから、幸せになれるって信じてあげたい。

(Well, you cannot decide who you fall in love with [in passive tense]. For that, I want to believe that they can be happy. [smiling faintly])

Kozue: そんなのないです！気持ちさえあればいいんですか。

(There's no way! [sternly, startling Nao, Kozue continues with tears in her eyes] Is everything fine as long as there are feelings?)

Nao: そうは言わないけど。。。

(I would not go that far, but…)

Kozue: 気持ちだけでしちゃっていいなら、私だってやりたいこといっぱいあります。

(If just feelings were enough, then there is so much I would want to do, too!)

[others stop, looking at Kozue sympathetically. Kozue keeps on walking alone, sniffling]

This scene is interesting in that it marks both the silent acceptance and well-wishing of the group towards Haruka and Sora and their relationship, also for the incestual love relationships in general, but also shows that there is inner conflict within Kozue. Of what kind and is it just due to the two breaking the social norm, that is left unclear. She is indicating that there is something she would really like to do but cannot.

7.3.4. Visuals

Picture 7.7: Yosuga no Sora ep. 1: the twins arrive to the town, and ride along the road on a rented bike

The coloring can be vivid and warm, with a warm evening sun coloring the surroundings in warm orange. However, usually the color palette is on the pale side, as in picture 7.7 with an emphasis on light green. This adds a sense of melancholy to the series: it is not a comedy, at least outside the 12-episode comedic mini-series that comes after the ending theme of the series, which has its own uplifting ending theme. As also seen in 7.7, the drawn environment can be quite detailed.

The characters and their clothes are also pale, especially compared to the brightly clothed characters of *Oreimo*. The characters also appear older than in *Oreimo*. Possibly even older and less rounded than in *Imōto sae Ireba Ii.* Considering that the characters in that series are adults and in *Yosuga no Sora* they are all high school aged teenagers, there is a semiotic choice in style away from *moe* and comedy, towards seriousness and drama.

Picture 7.8: Yosuga no Sora ep. 12: Sora is saved from the lake, and the two hug each other

There is generally a lot of attention to character detail: the movement is smooth and meaningful, and the characters move a lot, and are drawn in different positions according fit to the scenes and action they're in.

Picture 7.9: Yosuga no Sora ep. 11: The incestual relationship of Haruka and Sora is revealed

The environmental light is used effectively and varyingly as a semiotic tool for mood. In 7.8, the morning sun shines lightly on the *torii* and the surroundings after Sora was saved from her suicide attempt in the lake. In the dramatic scene when the two are caught having sex, the scenery is surrounded by warm evening sun: otherwise the warm colors, including the evening sun, are used sparingly and for happy moments. There is a symbolic juxtaposition of the darkness inside the house against the warm and bright weather outside instead: the darkness of their incestual relationships comes to the light of the warm outside.

7.3.5. Settings

The physical settings of the series are the environs of the village, train to and from the village, and the few flashbacks to the twins' old home in the city. In the village the most important settings are the twins' late grandfather's house and the clinic attached to it it where they live, the school, the streets in between, and the local temple with the sacred lake next to it. Both the city and the town are unnamed.

For cultural settings, there's the city setting and the village setting: Sora is more accustomed to the city setting due to her being sickly as a child, whereas Haruka is more accustomed to both settings. In the first episode, Sora is shown missing internet and the ease of shopping that the city offers.

7.3.6. Characters

The main character and the male lead is Haruka, a boy with slim but fit build and light grey hair.

Sora, the main female lead and Haruka's twin little sister, has a long light grey hair, dresses in a white dress, often carries a black plush rabbit with her. It is shown in the ending that she has had it from childhood, from when their parents were alive. In the real ending, the two form an incestuous relationship, are revealed for it, and leave the town to somewhere where no one knows them. Sora has been a sickly child. Because of it, she has spent much of her childhood in a hospital and not socializing around in the town as Haruka. This is relevant to both the fact that she's dependent of Haruka, and also due to a narrative that the separation from Haruka might have influenced the two to see each other as more than siblings[271].

For other characters, there's Nao, Haruka's next door neighbor and childhood friend, whose hobby is swimming. Nao is tall, has short, dark hairstyle, and wears oval, rimless glasses. In her route, it is shown that she wears feelings of quilt for thinking that she has forced Haruka when they were younger, as an emotional response for her parents fighting about infidelity, the last time Haruka was in town. In the route, Haruka assures that the sex was mutual, instead of forced. In both her route and true end route, she and Haruka are in a relationship, but in the true route, it does not work out due to Haruka's mind being on her sister.

There's Akira, who is the shrine maiden. She works and lives at the shrine due to being orphaned as a baby, and her late foster grandfather at the shrine having raised her. In her route, her deep problem is about if she was mixed with another baby at birth. She has a bright and helpful personality, large eyes, and a short, brown hair.

Kazuha is the daughter of a rich and renowned family in the village. She looks after Akira, which raises questions about their relationship to each other: in the narrative, they're vaguely implied to be in a relationship, but it is revealed later that they're half-sisters of the same father. Kazuha's worries are about her parents not acknowledging Akira. She plays a viola, and has long, black hair.

Kozue is the class representative of the class. In the first episode, she is shown to develop a crush on Haruka almost immediately. She gets the most shocked upon finding about the incestual relationship between Sora and Haruka. Although she has a stern look in the picture 7.7 with

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[271] ep. 10.

her hair open, her behavior and appearance are more mellow in the beginning of the series, when she wears pigtails.[272]

There's a rare male character in Ryōhei, who is a reliable friend that likes to joke around to them. He's taller than Haruka, but otherwise does not stand out.[273]

7.3.7. Rhythm and sound

For sound, nature sound effects are used to represent summer, or to spark tension. At more peaceful times there is a relaxed, uplifting music. During the drama there is usually melancholic music that varies with the intensity of the scene. During the most dramatic scenes, there might be no music at all. The background music makes use of violin and piano, and in its melancholic form, forms a recognizable theme music for the series. During the drowning scene, underwater sound effect without music is used.

Both the opening and ending theme songs are also melancholic, indicating that the series is a melancholic drama.

7.4. Kiss x Sis

7.4.1. Narratives

Kiss x Sis revolves around two twin sisters, Ako and Riko, who are both trying to start a relationship as lovers with their younger brother by marriage, Keita. The series is a lightweight comedy with a lot of erotic innuendo.

Keita and the sisters have grown up together, and used to share affectionate, non-sexual kisses when they were young. During their childhood, Keita has made a promise to marry both of the sisters. Because it is not possible to marry them both, the sisters are in a competitive situation, trying to have that childhood promise fulfilled. Meanwhile, having learned that he can't marry them both and grown up otherwise, Keita has been less enthusiastic to accept the kisses that he asked for himself when they were younger. The fact that he is less enthusiastic is also due to the fact that he has become aware of the girls sexually.[274]

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[272] ep. 1,11-12.
[273] Ryōhei represents a functional character type in visual novels who offers help for the player who is otherwise lost, offering information such as how much a certain heroine is currently liking the main character.
[274] *Kiss x Sis (TV)* ch. 1,4.

One theme that the series raises is coming to age: it is shown in episode 1 that Keita was the one who was protected by the strong and active big sisters, from an angry dog[275]. As of late, the two girls are still strong on their own, Ako being known schoolwide as the intellectual and responsible manager in the school's student council, and Riko being physically active and a member in the school's disciplinary committee. Nonetheless, the begin to see Keita as growing up in manliness, with him growing up bigger and stronger than the two of them, from the small and weak boy that needed to be protected and pampered.

Another narrative for the series is that Keita, who is in middle school, is trying to get accepted into the same school where the twin sisters are[276].

In relation to incest, Keita and the twins are not related, but are within the same family unit as a stepfamily: they have nonetheless lived as a family for close to ten years, from when the children were little. They have grown up together. While it could be expected that the parents would be against the children to get together, they are instead encouraging it, because they are not related[277]. The parents are also implied to be active and happy with their sex life.[278]

In the scenes, Keita and the girls are going quite far sexually, with kissing, touching genital area, having an erection and getting wet etc., but stop or are stopped at the latest just before a definite sexual act such as copulation would occur.

7.4.2. Narrative distance

The fact that Keita has character traits, wishes and a past that is shown right at the first episode, increase the narrative distance compared to the male leads in the previous titles. He is also a bit more manly. The series often follows the different girls and their intentions instead of Keita's, making us sometimes more familiar with the girls' perspectives. We are also shown sexual fantasies the girls are having of Keita. The girls have each their own narrative fetish tropes, increasing the narrative distance, but adding *moe*.

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[275] ep. 1.
[276] ch. 2.
[277] though this is explained to the three as if they don't know or remember the fact at the end of the episode, ep. 1.
[278] ch. 1.

7.4.3. Visuals

Picture 7.10: Kiss x Sis ep. 1, the twins have opened multiple locks and tied Keita's hands to crawl up on him

As with *Oreimo*, *Kiss x Sis* uses bright colors and round characters. The characters are simplified and are marked with identifying visual traits, such as hairstyles. There are little details in the faces. Generally, there are few details in both characters and backgrounds. Scenes with lots of movement look especially cheap, as if with the implication that they do not matter, such as the boys of Keita's middle school, who all idolize the twins, and are chasing after them due to them appearing in Keita's school.

The erotic scenes as in picture 7.10 above can have a little more detail, but they also are generally simplistic: there is no grading in the shadows or light sources. Weather effects are generally not used as they are in the other works, reflecting on every surface and changing the color of the scene. Instead, sometimes a filter effect is used for the whole picture, usually with the semiotic meaning of marking the scene as a flashback, or as imagination. The effect can be especially pink, with saxophone music playing in the background, to emphasize the eroticism that the character feels. Sometimes manga-like drawn explosion effects and such are used, as when the father explains that Keita should go for the girls and show affection unreservedly, because they are not related.

While picture 7.10 is an example of an erotic scene, the picture 7.11 shows a regular one. 7.11 shows the regular lighting and type of background in the scenes. Characters are easily identifiable, show their moods and personalities through their actions, but are otherwise undetailed.

Picture 7.11Kiss x Sis ep. 12, Mikuni, Mikazuki, Ako and Riko competing for Keita's last uniform button

7.4.4. Settings

The main physical settings are the family house, where most of the scenes happen, and Keita's middle school. In addition, there is an episode for visiting Akihabara, a public pool, and a festival.

For differences in cultural setting, there is the difference of opinion if incestual relationship between stepsiblings should be allowed or not, and if it should be allowed underage or not. While most of the major and minor characters are on the allowing side, the history teacher in the twins' school where Keita is applying for, Yūzuki, is the rare voice of opposition. After finding out about the sisters and Keita, she is actively trying to "uphold public morals" by watching over them, reasoning that "it's abnormal", "they won't have a future", and that they "are going to be miserable".[279]

Yūzuki also represents the *otaku* culture: she finds out about the tree while she was *cosplaying* at Akihabara, during which she and Riko are fighting over a last copy available of a certain *eroge*. Earlier in the episode, the sisters have urged the parents to buy a computer for the two of them, "for research", as they reasoned, but intended for porn. The *eroge* was about "lewd twins opening up to their younger brother, golden shower time until the morning": the series is throwing a reference to itself.[280]

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[279] ch. 6; Yūzuki is also the one Keita first forms a relationship with later in the manga, Ditama, *Kiss x Sis (manga)*.
[280] *Kiss x Sis (TV)* ch. 6; the golden shower is a reference to ep. 5, which introduces Mikuni, Keita's female classmate, who is introduced in ep. 5 and has a weak bladder, ep. 5.

7.4.5. Characters

Keita is the main character lead. He has a slightly tanned skin, faint dark blue, slightly spiky hair [281]. He belongs in a track-and-field club and is a fast runner. Compared to the other male characters of his age, he is slightly taller and more muscular than the rest. Her looks together with her athletic skills makes him appear manly in the eyes of the others.

Ako is the intellectual and maternal of the two sisters. She is the manager in the student council in the twins' school. Even though her demeanor is more reserved, she is more childish, whiny and easily embarrassed of the two. She is also more brazen sexually than Riko. Her hair is on a ponytail of medium length. Her headbangs are held by a hairclip on one side.

Riko is the less academically accomplished but more sports oriented of the girls. She is straightforward and cunning in her act, including her sexuality, but as for her imagination, she is the more reserved of the two. She is a member of the disciplinary committee of the school. She has a long ponytail, and a bandage under her left eye.

Yūzuki is the inexperienced 24-year-old history teacher in the sisters' school where Keita is applying for. She is trying to hide from others that she is an *otaku* who spends his money on a collection of character goods inside her room. As such, she has not been in a relationship. She has a long blonde hairstyle.

Mikuni is a female classmate of Keita, and she continues to the same high school with him. She has a short, dark blue hair with glasses. Due to the rumors surrounding Keita, she has a bad impression of him from the beginning, which changes due to interacting with him. She has a character trope of weak bladder, which causes her and Keita to have accidental erotic interaction related to that.

Mikazuki is Yūzuki's little sister, and Keita's manager in the track-and-field club. She is active, has blonde twin tails. She's small in size and is willing to flash herself to Keita in an attempt to seduce him. Those and her other traits make her a mischievous *loli* character type, even though she is only one year younger than Keita. He is not really that interested in her as a partner, possibly due to the *loli* connotations.

Of the parents, they are referred as "mother" and "father". Father wears dark, sharp-angled glasses, and acts briskly: both overall and in urging Keita together with the sisters. The mother has a well-rounded personality, but she shows support towards the children's relationships all the same.

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[281] Hair that is colored as faint dark blue represents black hair.

Sometimes there is also Toda, Keita's male friend from middle school. He is jealous of Keita for his relationship with the sisters.

7.4.6. Rhythm and sound

Various types of music is used to create mood: slow paced saxophone music to deliver erotic mood, a playful, faster paced music in more comedic situations, especially if Mikazuki is around, piano music with slow tempo in reminiscence scenes, etc. There are times with no music, with no specific dramatic effect to note. The opening and ending themes are playful around the young love theme, the opening theme being sang by the voice actors of the twins.

8. Contribution to Gender Representations

According to the four series, there are commonalities and differences in handling of the incest theme. For common points, in all of the series there are one or more characters that do not approve of incest or the theme, at some level: In *Oreimo*, it's the father, the model friend, and possibly the others who are not inside the *otaku* circle. In *Imōto sae Ireba Ii.,* it's implied that the father might have doubts, due to which the little sister is made to dress as a brother. There's also Itsuki's editor to retort when he thinks Itsuki is going too far with the theme for the audience to accept it. Then there's Miyako, who was distanced by the theme at the beginning, but got used to it gradually. In *Yosuga no Sora,* Kozue was unable to accept it to the end, to the point that she would stop talking to Haruka. In *Kiss x Sis*, the surroundings are otherwise very accepting of it, but Yūzuki is limiting it on the grounds that it is immoral and can cause trouble for them.

On the other hand, while there is one or two characters against, in all of them the general view is accepting. In some it is handled as an *otaku* trope inside the series, noting that there is a big difference with real people and imagined girls. That being so, the series that make that point also play with the idea that there might be a relation to real world: be it Kirino's and Kyōsuke's telling looks to each other, sometimes Kirino's legs in Kyōsuke's case, or the presence of the "real" *imōto* characters in *Imōto sae Ireba Ii.* However, in that title, it is shown that Itsuki does not show interest to his friend's little sister as a little sister character, but he has shown interest to real girls who are not little sisters: the doubt does not seem to be in his head but in the heads of others.

While in two of the series there's mostly innuendo towards the "real" *imōto* in the series, in two of them the situation is real inside the series' inner reality. In *Yosuga no Sora* the attraction between the real siblings is very concrete: the two characters are holding it in, sometimes thinking about it, until they are able to reveal and confirm the mutual feelings for each other. The narrative states that the feelings are awakened due to Sora being hospitalized for so long: when she comes back,

she's a different girl than the one Haruka had grown up with. For another, Haruka saves Sora from a falling vase after, kissing her onto lips in the heat of the moment. The narrative implies a *suspension bridge effect* trope, in which an apparent danger that is experienced together awakens emotions and sexual interest in the pair of different sexes. The representation of the theme is dark and eerie: the possibility is at first implied via unexplained sexual imagery, then via seductive lines said while undressing in a flash of lightning, in the darkness of the night. The series is emphasizing that the act and the feelings are somehow wrong. When they get caught by the others in an incestual act, what follows is an avalanche of emotional drama to the two of them, which results to Haruka withdrawing mentally and Sora trying to sacrifice herself, to not be a burden for Haruka.

In *Kiss x Sis* the incestual feelings is kind of real, but very different. Although the three have grown up together, Keita is not related by blood to the girls, which makes the children to form a relationship acceptable in the eyes of the sexually open parents. It is unclear if this was an issue for the twins or not: the father explains that they are not related to them as if they do not remember it, in a "I have told you before" fashion[282]. Regardless, where it was a dark secret in *Yosuga no Sora*, it is more a matter of fact, a non-issue, or even a basis for comedy for most of the characters. Keita is envied for having the sisters that show sexual attraction to him, not shunned.

For the feasibility to imagine ourselves as the girls, it varies: For *Kiss x Sis*, it is easy: we are shown what they are thinking and what they are feeling. In *Imōto sae Ireba Ii.* the perspectives and reasoning behind the characters' thinking and action is also clear and relatable. For *Oreimo* and *Yosuga no Sora*, the inner workings of the main heroines and of other characters are a mystery until they are slowly revealed to us as they happen. Understanding the full force and the meaning of the emotions the characters are having is only possible afterwards.

For the narrative distance to the sisters, in *Yosuga no Sora* the distance is minimal: the viewer is invested in the character, and it is hard to isolate her from the narrative. In *Oreimo*, there is a little more distance: Kirino is not established as the lover, and she and the other characters do have *moe* tropes that make them cute but increase distance to the characters. The same is true for *Kiss x Sis*: the characters are based around different characterizing tropes, and no one of them have been established as the main character's lover. For *Imōto sae Ireba Ii.,* there is the most distance: mostly there are no *imōto* characters, just the idea of them: there is no attachment to Itsuki's fictional characters due to that distance. The two *imōto* characters that are there in the same world, the

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[282] *Kiss x Sis (TV)* ep. 1.

tsundere little sister and the stepsister dressing as a boy have to be extracted from the story to be reimagined in that role.

Approaching distance from the main character's side, while the main characters have differences in personality and setting, all of them look somewhat similar: they're young boys with short, usually dark hair, and a slender frame. Their ages are also relatively close to the sisters: in *Yosuga no Sora*, the two are twins. In *Oreimo* and in *Kiss x Sis* there is a one-year gap, although to different directions. What this means is that the difference in power positions is generally very low. This might be due to what Momoi Halko raises about a "trend towards feminization"[283]:

> "In anime, you have weaker male characters – for example, Amuro from *Mobile Suit Gundam* and Shinji from *Neon Genesis Evangelion* – and stronger female characters. These days, no one is interested in the male characters, but everyone likes the female ones. In *bishojo* games, male players don't want strong male protagonists, because that might get in the way of their imaginary relationships with the female characters, on whose lives the game is almost entirely focused."[284]

If we think about Itsuki and Chihiro, the little sister dressing as a little brother, the two would have around five to six years of age difference, Chihiro being at high school age and Itsuki being over the drinking age of 21. However, the only implication for a semi-incestual relationship with them is the implication that if Itsuki knew about Chihiro's gender, there might be an issue due to his obsessions in the two-dimensional sphere.

Other than the ages and the lack of masculinity on the male characters, there's the question about the initiator of the incest. In *Oreimo* the one who is actively playing with the theme is Kirino, with her games and *otaku* interests. While it is implied that the two may occasionally think about the other as a boyfriend or girlfriend, Kyōsuke is never the one initiating anything or acting on those thoughts: he is just following Kirino's lead. The caricature *imōto* in *Imōto sae Ireba Ii.* Is active, as is the original in the beginning of *Oreimo*, in that they actively show affection towards the big brother. In the *Imōto sae Ireba Ii.* scene, the brother in the draft is happily indulging, though. In *Yosuga no Sora*, it's again Sora, the sister, who initiates the illicit action which Haruka follows on. Just as it is

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[283] personal interview, Galbraith, *The Moé Manifesto: An Insider's Look at the Worlds of Manga, Anime, and Gaming*, 77.
[284] personal interview, Galbraith, 77–78.

with *Kiss x Sis*, with the sisters actively initiating the sexual action towards the brother, never the other way around.

This is an important point for what kind of sexualization *imōto-moe* is. Coming back to the differences between *lolicon and moe*, in chapters 3.4 and 3.5, one of the main differences between the two is if there is an influence of adult sexuality or not: in *lolicon*, the adults are corrupting the pure child sexuality, whereas in *moe*, the pure girls are free to act on their sexuality without implicit or explicit adult corruption. Based on these findings, I argue that *imōto-moe* falls more into *moe* category than into *lolicon* category: even though the underaged girls exhibit sexuality that can be seen as morally dubious, they are not generally looked as targets of sexual attraction for the reader. Instead, the showing of sexuality represents the pure, idealized young sexuality, which is uncorrupted by the adult world, and which they find difficult to control even if they wanted to.

In watching the works in detail and understanding the genre, it is possible to conclude that the works are sympathetic towards the characters, and consequently, at the least offer no harm for the real-world equivalents of the fictional girls: following the narrative, the works are enjoyed in a way that we are accepting and happy that the characters are able to express themselves. However, there is a similar issue as there was with the *lolicon* media panic: the works can be read superficially: to stop at the sexualization in them and declare the works as harmful and degrading for little sisters, girls and women in general.

9. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to understand better the contradictory appearance of *imōto-moe* theme in contemporary Japanese manga and anime: On one hand, incest is a taboo: a near-universal rule, or "a pervasive cultural fantasy"[285]. On the other hand, it has yet appeared as an increasingly popular theme in manga and anime during the 2010s. The ones that are shown in the works of the genre are underage girls, who are shown in sexual situations. This raises the question how it relates to the sexualization of girls that is apparent in the Japanese society. If it is related, the question becomes about if it is harmful to the girls and women, as in if *imōto-moe* is framing the girls inside the same families as sexual targets. Or if it's a positive: by showing that a girl can show even questionable thoughts and feelings, it would broaden the possibilities for being oneself without fear of rejection. To note the possibilities, I examined how *imōto-moe* contribute to the gender representations in Japan, via the narrative methods that is used, by tools provided by visual analysis.

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[285] Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (p. 2006)*, 58.

In analyzing the four different anime series that have incest as a central theme, *Ore no Imōto ga Konna ni Kawaii Wake ga Nai*, *Imōto sae Ireba Ii., Yosuga no Sora: In Solitude, Where We Are Least Alone., and Kiss x Sis*, I conclude that the incest theme in them, *imōto-moe*, follows the conventions of *moe*, a genre, which is a branch of *lolicon.* The difference between those genres is that in *lolicon* the sexuality presented by the fictional girls is under corruption by adult sexuality. While those works are often read via the reader assuming the role of the underage victim instead of the corruptor, the genre is riddled with dubious sexuality. *Moe*, on the other hand, is defined by the lack of that corrupting adult sexuality: the characters and their possible sexuality are enjoyed because there is no adult sexuality corrupting the idealized pure sexuality.

According to the analysis, the evidence points towards *imōto-moe* belonging into the category in which sexuality is enjoyed for its purity, not for its corruption: The age differences in the four works are minor between the siblings. The male partners in those relationships are feminine, thus the power difference among the pair is small. In three of the works, heavy emphasis on *otaku* culture is drawn, and in two, although the idea is being played with, the characters stress that the fictionality of the *imōto* sexuality is essential.

Due to these findings and the ethnographical interviews of Galbraith and others, I conclude that *imōto-moe* is enjoyed for the characters showing pure sexuality. As such, it follows that reading the works in the genre as objectifying real close relatives as sexual targets would be at odds with the narrative of the genre.

10.   Filmography

Imouto sae Ireba Ii. 妹さえいればいい。．Directed by Oonuma, Shin. Original light novel by Hirasaka, Yomi. Silver Link. October 8, 2017 to December 24, 2017

Kiss x Sis, キスシス. Directed by Nawa, Munenori. Original manga by Ditama, Bow. Feel. April 5, 2010 to June 21, 2010

Ore no Imouto ga Konnani Kawaii Wake ga Nai. 俺の妹がこんなに可愛いわけがない. Directed by Kanbe, Hiroyuki. Original light novel by Fushimi, Tsukasa. AIC Build. October 3, 2010 to December 19, 2010

Yosuga no Sora: In Solitude, Where We Are Least Alone. ヨスガノソラ In solitude, where we are least alone. Directed by Takahashi, Takeo. Original visual novel by Sphere. October 4, 2010 to December 20, 2010.

11.   Sources

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