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The Heroine's reclamation of the girlish and the portrayal of girl-power in Sailor Moon

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The Heroine's Reclamation of the Girlish and the Portrayal of Girl-Power in *Sailor Moon*

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**By Quenby Joannette
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Abstract

This thesis considers the value of 1990s girl-power as demonstrated by the cartoon *Sailor Moon*. Girl-power and the girlish body were often chastised in 90s popular culture for providing girls with a negative example of empowerment that valued only a shallow, pleasure-seeking, and self-involved model of strength. Consequently, the girl-power genre is unfairly lumped in under the negative umbrella of post-feminism. Post-feminism is a label that sometimes includes ideas and thinkers that place themselves in opposition to feminism. The show is an adaptation of a Japanese text that, in its original format, represents various identities and orientations as powerful alternatives to normative ideology, which makes these alternative identities visible to a Western audience and helps to highlight the value of girl-power. This is more apparent in the English subtitled episodes that are not censored in the way the English dubs were. The examination of *Sailor Moon* as part of the girl-power discourse works to separate the negative post-feminist components of the text in order to situate the girl-power in the show within a feminist framework. How Sailor Moon and her friends use their bodies, play with gender constructions, bond with each other, and privilege their female-only space demonstrates the value of such texts within the scope of other American girl-power narratives in the 90s. This project examines representations of girls' bodies, girls' power, and girls' relationships within the text. The reclamation of the girlish seeks to claim the feminine as valuable in itself, and recognizes the power embedded within the transitive space of childhood. By rearticulating a site of oppression for girls, normative femininity can claim value and power the way the masculine realm has. The Sailor Scout body reflects the power of gender performance and fluidity, and the Scouts' feminine performances do far more than simply reinforce the male-gaze. Sailor Moon

and her friends act and react within a patriarchal world where they are not the exception to the rule of female power.

Dedication

This thesis is for my mom and dad, Rose-Marie and André, who have always supported my fascination with popular culture, people, and books. As a child, one of my fondest memories are Saturday nights with my family scattered around the living room watching movies together—the good, the bad, and the ugly. Inevitably, I would have so many questions as I absorbed the images on the screen, but my inquisitive childhood nature was never silenced or awkwardly avoided. Mom and dad, you will never know how much this has shaped me, but I promise you that you will see how far it will take me. The world around me was never censored, and I was able to learn and grow within this engaging environment. And, of course, my mom bought me my very first *Sailor Moon* doll, Sailor Moon herself. Serena has watched over all my long hours of writing, and that she is even on my desk reminds me why I was able to write this thesis in the first place.

I would also like to dedicate this thesis to my maternal grandmother, Shirley Kimakowich, who, unfortunately, will never be able to read this thesis, but whose passion for words, learning, and creating were inspirational, and I have no doubt that my talents are a result of her genes.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is the result of my parents' belief in me and my abilities. I could not have asked for more support, love, and encouragement than what I have received from them, not just in terms of my education, but also in regards to the person I am and who I will become. Thank you, mom and dad, from the very bottom of my heart. I could never have done this alone. It looks like I did not become a “singa and a danca” like I had originally intended, but I became the person I wanted and needed to be. In particular, I would like to acknowledge my mom's vast knowledge in so very many things, her wisdom in life, her courage to change, and her appreciation for words as the reason I have come as far as I have. I do not think I would have even been able to finish my thesis if she had not been there for me during the times I felt overwhelmed by this project. I have made her strength my own.

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I have also carried with me over the years these key words: “If not you then somebody else.” These are Greg McIlwain's words. Since the moment I stepped into his Grade 7 class so

much was expected of me, and I had never been challenged in such a manner before. I was always considered an average, and at times, a below-average student before he saw my potential that not even I could fathom at the time. I thank him for believing that I could accomplish so much more than I had been. I know if it had not been for his motivation, his sometimes-harsh insistence that I could always do better, the responsibility and accountability he taught me, and his trust in me as a person I would not be who I currently am, which is someone I am proud to be. I now know what those words meant and why he never let me forget them. I may not always be the best, but if I do not strive for the things I want, then somebody else will undoubtedly achieve what I have not tried to attain.

I am grateful for having Dr. Monica Flegel as my thesis supervisor. I honestly think that I could not have asked for a better fit for my topic. That she is a fan of girl-power texts and Japanese popular media made for interesting and valuable discussion. She has demonstrated the perfect balance of understanding and resolute supervision. If it had not been for her interest in popular culture and her belief in its value I would not have produced this thesis, as I had previously proposed a project in the realm of Romanticism, which is so very far removed from what I have actually created. I thank her for pushing me closer to my childhood passion and convincing me that I could write on a popular text that brought me so much joy as a child. This thesis was not just an educational endeavour, it was a personal one, and she helped me see that. She has guided this thesis, helped give it direction, form, and meaning. She has forced me to think about different arguments that I had not previously considered, to cut arguments that did not fit, and to learn the value of rewriting, all of which have only strengthened both this discussion and myself. Her knowledge on the cute child, childhood sexuality, and the girl-power hero were invaluable to me. In many ways, this thesis was fun to write, despite how grueling it

could be, because of the enthusiasm Monica brought to the table.

I also want to thank my readers, Dr. Batia Stolar of the English Department and Dr. Lori Chambers of the Women's Studies Department, for also finding value in this thesis on girl-power heroes. I am so very appreciative for their time, effort, and constructive feedback. I am particularly grateful for Dr. Stolar's meticulous editing job and for smoothing off many of the rough edges.

Not far from my mind is also the extraordinary English Department here at Lakehead University who have nurtured my creativity, endured my long papers, and encouraged me throughout my time here. In particular, I would like to recognize Dr. Douglas Ivison, who, in my undergraduate education, always took an interest in my different ways of seeing the texts he taught and who, thankfully, did not enforce page limits (although I have since learned the value of being concise). His enthusiasm for my ideas and papers helped direct me into the Masters program, a pursuit he personally encouraged. I am also thankful to Dr. Scott Pound who helped me return to my creative writing, and who is largely responsible for the leaps and bounds my writing has taken since attending his creative writing classes. He has taught me not just how to write, but also how to observe the world, its landscapes and its people the way good writers are wont to do.

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Introduction

“A Moon Star is Born:” Japanese Girl-Power is Reborn in North America

Fighting evil by moonlight.
 Winning love by daylight.
 Never running from a real fight,
 She is the one named Sailor Moon.
 She will never turn her back on a friend.
 She is always there to defend.
 She is the one on whom we can depend,
 She is the one named Sailor.....
 Sailor Venus
 Sailor Mercury
 Sailor Mars
 Sailor Jupiter
 With secret powers
 All so new to her,
 She is the one named Sailor Moon.
 Fighting evil by moonlight.
 Winning love by daylight.
 With her Sailor Scouts to help fight,
 She is the one named Sailor Moon.
 She is the one named Sailor Moon.
 She is the one . . . Sailor Moon.

~ *Sailor Moon* English Theme Song: “Moonlight Destiny”

“Moon Prism Power!” was often heard about elementary school playgrounds during the 1990s as the popular cartoon *Sailor Moon* dominated the children’s television market. As a child, I was attracted to the flashy transformation and fighting sequences, the pretty clothes, dazzling jewelry, and the cute boys. For many years I watched each episode faithfully, my appreciation for the show and its heroines growing, without particularly knowing why Sailor Moon was different from Supergirl, Wonder Woman, or all the Disney princesses. It was not that I did not appreciate the princesses in Disney movies, I loved them, but their brand of femininity seemed one-dimensional, and heroines like Supergirl seemed just too otherworldly to

relate to. Even when Belle or Jasmine reached through the passive mask of princess-dom to act defiantly, they just as quickly reverted back to damsel-in-distress mode, and the Wonder Woman types seemed to only possess physical strength. The heroines I had been introduced to previously seemed so limited. Granted, all these heroines are very different from one another, but as a child, I had no reference point to these voluptuous adult bodies, and my consumption of them left me feeling empty. Admittedly, the stereotypically beautiful bodies of the Sailor Scouts (the heroines of *Sailor Moon*) are what initially captured my interest as a child, but the show's Japanese origin and non-normative sex and gender elements are what have maintained my interest as an adult, and I have come to understand why their child-like bodies attracted my attention so completely. *Sailor Moon*, as a "girl-power" text, demonstrates alternative gender identities that were largely ignored in American popular culture texts during the early 1990s. Though seemingly childish, this show maturely deals with the concepts of sexuality, the body, femininity and power, essentialist gender categories, gender performance, and homosociality, and I will argue that it played a significant role in the discourse of girl-power in America by showcasing a heroine who reclaimed the girlish as a powerful and significant component of the super-heroine identity.

Over the years the US has imported many successful Japanese cultural products, and *anime* (Japanese cartoons) seems to have had a significant influence on Western heroines. *Sailor Moon* showcased heroines who were powerful mentally, physically, and emotionally. The show demonstrated that strength, power, and agency were not limited to a masculinized body. And while *Sailor Moon* as a text does not demonstrate a complete gamut of feminist values, it does manage to deconstruct existing gender stereotypes in order to restructure them to highlight the power of the feminine. That the program plays with gender, working with existing stereotypes to

rearticulate value, demonstrates how the show is full of tension and contradiction, but it is this play that makes for an interesting analysis of how it functions as a girl-power text in relation to those that came before and after; it has a place amongst other cult classics in American popular media. *Sailor Moon* broke the stereotypical mold that had been cast for heroines of the previous decades, and it is significant that she is a Japanese construct.

Appropriate This!: In My Defense

I do not purport to be able to conduct a cultural studies analysis of *Sailor Moon*'s place in Japanese culture because I do not have intimate access to such a context. However, I do seek to understand how its origins within its own Japanese popular culture mirror the changes that took place in America. This thesis examines *Sailor Moon* (both the English dubbed and subbed versions) as it is consumed by a Western audience and through Western theory. I acknowledge that this project may seem to reflect an appropriation of a Japanese text, and it seems to engage in a kind of cultural imperialism; however, this is not my intention. In no way do I mean to diminish the value of the original text. One of my main goals is to analyze why *Sailor Moon* as a Japanese text is viable in Western popular culture, and therefore ripe with situations and characters that function, at times, to influence normative structures of Western culture, particularly when examining the original Japanese episodes with English subtitles that highlight alternative identities and orientations as the norm within the text.

I understand that reading a Japanese text through Western theory participates in a re-writing of the original text, and subsequently an erasure of the text's original significance and meaning within its own cultural context. Veruska Sabucco, author of "Guided Fan Fiction: Western 'Readings' of Japanese Homosexual-Themed Texts," explains how these meanings can

be misinterpreted by a Western audience by looking at some of the Western elements embedded in Japanese popular culture:

some [...] *manga* artists portray their characters as crucified, as angels, dressed up as cardinals, or beside a Christmas tree. These are all images taken from Christian mythology. [...] However, those decontextualized Western elements do not have the same cultural meaning a Western reader might attribute to them. They are there for completely different reasons: because angels can represent innocence, because the Christmas atmosphere is evocative, or sometimes just for decorative reasons. [...] In some cases, we can witness a circularity in the process [...] call[ed] “domestication.” As I noted above, it is not uncommon for *manga* artists to make use of Western cultural elements or literary genres, which are interpreted by the Japanese and recontextualized in Japanese popular culture products. During this process, these Western cultural items lose part of their original meaning and acquire new meanings from the authors’ culture. The resulting cultural element is then decoded again by a Western reader, who, seeing the presence of Western characters, setting, words, or genres, either is puzzled about how exactly he or she is supposed to interpret them or simply attributes their original Western meaning to them. (78)

Some of the elements Sabucco identifies are certainly in *Sailor Moon*, particularly Serena’s portrayal as an angel to which I have indeed applied a Western (Christian) reading. And although I am aware of the differences and have access to the English subs, there are always issues about translation and accuracy, and I must still perform a Western reading because of my exclusion from the Japanese context.

Furthermore, the different bodies of power in *Sailor Moon*, the queer identities, the alternative relationships, and the portrayal of the cute Sailor Scouts take on a different meaning for the Japanese culture, and while I may see the queer identities in the show as progressive in terms of Western culture, I realize these identities are perceived differently in Japan. In relation to these sexual themes, Sabucco reveals her experience with male homoeroticism in Japanese texts called *shōnen ai* or *YAOI*: “In my opinion, Western readers’ reception of *shōnen ai* and *YAOI* texts is often different from the average Japanese reception” (71). I cannot argue with Sabucco’s assessment of Western-read Japanese texts, but despite the different way I may read the queer relationships in a Japanese text, “the increasingly transnational readership for boy-love *manga* [or any alternative to hetero-normativity] stymies efforts to make universalizing claims about processes of identification” (Wood 403). For many feminist factions, divergence from essentialist gender claims is part of a progressive discourse regarding sexuality, hetero-normativity, and identity in general.

While Sabucco’s claims may be true, the very back-and-forth appropriation of cultural elements that occurs in these texts is what allows for a Western reading of a Japanese text and vice-versa. I wish to demonstrate how the Japanese themes in the show overlap with the Western theory I will be using to examine the dubs and the subs, particularly Laura Mulvey’s theory of the male gaze, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s theory of homosociality, Judith Butler’s theory of gender performance, and Judith Halberstam’s theory of female masculinity. The themes in the show that allow for the use of Western theory include the sexualization of the child, the demonization of adult female sexuality, the fetishization of the schoolgirl, the maintenance of hetero-normativity, and the presence of patriarchy. Wherever possible, I will try to account for the differences, and acknowledge the cultural history and value each theme has in

its own context. This type of analysis is possible *because* of the cultural cross-pollination that has occurred and still occurs between Japan and the West since the end of World War II, particularly as it relates to popular culture. And while it can be said that many of the episodes I will be discussing were heavily edited or deleted in their dubbed format and therefore not consumed initially by a Western audience, the show's influence on a large portion of its fanbase has led to the demand for and consumption of the un-edited English subtitled episodes.

Many of *Sailor Moon*'s fans, myself included, actively sought out the original text because of the things the show was able to do even in its dubbed and censored format. As a young girl watching the series, I was undoubtedly influenced by *Sailor Moon*'s display of female power and the dynamic and intimacy of the all-girl friendships. Significantly, it was because the series was adapted first in English and had such an impact on a Western market that the show went viral worldwide, being translated in over thirteen different languages (Project WikiMoon). Some of the countries that translated the show did not censure it as heavily or at all, such as in Spain, Portugal, and Russia, choosing to air the last deemed-controversial season, rather than ignore its existence like those who adapted it for an American audience (Project WikiMoon). So while *Sailor Moon* has been uprooted from its original context, its themes have been able to influence other countries' popular culture, perhaps in different but altogether important ways. *Sailor Moon* is a rich cultural text, and as such I wish to explore how it has influenced and enriched American popular culture.

Limited Bodies: Heroines Prior to the 90s

Heroines who occupied prime-time television slots during the 60s, 70s, and 80s were women who possessed strength, magical powers, and a keen fashion sense, much like the heroines of the

90s; however, they also incorporated all the limitations of what was thought of as appropriate or normative femininity. Characters from such popular shows as *Bewitched* (1964), *I Dream of Jeannie* (1965), and *Charlie's Angels* (1976) exercised their powers for the pleasure of millions of viewers, and, on their shows, most often if not always for the benefit of a man. Indeed, these heroines were thought to be progressive during the era of their popularity because they pushed the boundaries of acceptable female behaviour, but since their debut, heroines of the 90s have pushed those limits further. As Victoria Anne Newsom argues in “Young Females as Super Heroes: Superheroines in the Animated *Sailor Moon*,” such early heroine narratives sent the message that women *could* have power as long as a man sanctioned it—any job was available to a woman, but only if she worked for a man (para.7). For instance, Jeannie and Samantha wielded unlimited power, and yet they were often chastised for its use, and were forced to restrict themselves to accommodate their male lover’s need to control their seemingly chaotic and supernatural powers. Samantha and Jeannie’s lovers, Darrin and Tony, respectively, punished them by withdrawing from them if they were not obeyed. In the first episode of the series, Darrin finds out on his honeymoon that his wife, Samantha, is a witch. He does not take the news well and makes Sam promise to be a “[normal] suburban housewife” (“I, Darrin, Take This Witch, Samantha”). Subsequent episodes outline the conflict between a wife’s obedience to her husband and her own magical nature. When Darrin meets Sam’s mother, Endora, for the first time, Endora is appalled that her daughter has forsworn magic—for a mortal man no less. Endora tries to prove a point by asking her daughter to hand her an ashtray that is out of reach:

Endora: “Why did you carry that ashtray to me?”

Samantha: “Darrin prefers that I don’t do any of that *stuff* anymore.”

Endora (to Darrin): “Why do you object to my daughter being herself, young man?”

Darrin: “I don’t. [...] I like Samantha the way she is; she doesn’t need any of that other nonsense. [...] We don’t need those powers of hers. [...] We want to live normal lives.”

Endora: “What is normal to you, young man, is to us asinine. Samantha’s what she is and that you cannot change.”

Samantha: “Mother, I made the decision myself. [...] (To Darrin) Whatever it is that you want, that’s what I want too.” (1.3, “Mother Meets What’s His Name”)

While the show demonstrated Sam’s intelligence and creativity as a normal suburban housewife, it frowned upon her uninhibited use of her otherworldly powers, the use of which demonstrated her autonomy. There are numerous occasions in which Darrin withdraws from Sam, indirectly threatening to leave her for her disobedience, but he inevitably returns to her out of love, an event that usually motivates Sam to again promise obedience but not always keep it.

Alternatively, in *I Dream of Jeannie*, Tony is frequently frazzled by Jeannie’s insubordination to his, her master’s, will. She is often reprimanded for causing chaos in his life and jeopardizing his career as an astronaut. He, like Darrin, also forgives Jeannie out of love for her, but only after she promises to be more obedient in the future which, again, is a promise she will break. At one point, Tony is about to proceed with an important space mission only to have Jeannie turn him into a chimp. Obviously, the mission is never completed (3.1, “Fly Me to the Moon”). In “The Problematics of Reclaiming the Girlish: *The Powerpuff Girls* and Girl Power,” Rebecca Hains notes that, in the past,

when the mainstream media have appropriated feminist rhetoric and ideals to depict strong, powerful women, they have undermined these characters to avoid threatening the male audience members' masculinity and ideals. For example, in Susan Douglas's analysis of television shows from the era of "prefeminist agitation" in the mid-1960s (125), she noted that Samantha on *Bewitched* and Jeannie on *I Dream of Jeannie (IDJ)* possessed active supernatural powers that their husbands sought to contain, preferring for the women to be passive and under their control. Although Samantha and Jeannie regularly used their powers illicitly, the outcome resulted in the mixed message that "female power, when let loose in the public sphere, is often disruptive to male authority, but sometimes it also bolsters that authority. These colliding messages made *Bewitched* and *IDJ* simultaneously cautionary and liberatory" (136-7). (6)

One of the ideas portrayed by the illicit use of their power was that "behind every great man is a great woman" because Jeannie and Samantha only tended to be reprimanded if their magic did not directly improve their lover's relationships in business and with others socially. However, the women were to remain normal, domestic trophy wives within the private sphere otherwise.

As the title of the show suggests, the Angels were the property of Charlie (Inness 41-2); they took orders from him and vied for his affection by always trying to impress him through their missions, which, most often, involved the rescuing of a damsel-in-distress. This recurrent plot element reminded the audience that the Angels were an exception to the rule and not the rule itself (Hains 6, Inness 5), in much the same way that Samantha and Jeannie's powers were otherworldly. Because all these women took orders from a man, their agency, strength, and power were restricted in order to coddle the ego of the males around them, an aspect that was

highlighted by the fact that they all reported to a man (Hains 6). In this regard, the heroines used their skills (such as martial arts, target shooting, knife throwing, etc) to advance their male superiors, working within the patriarchy in order to maintain it. More importantly, the Angels acted as an extension of Charlie, who was a disembodied voice, and in this manner, their individual identities were absorbed by the overarching command of Charlie's identity. After all, they were *his* Angels, and therefore his property, which is akin to his physical limbs that he could control. The Angels were trained for his use. Heroines like the Angels could "therefore access the power structure that exist[ed] and become personally empowered within it, but they could not challenge the structure itself" (Newsom para.7). Girl-power heroes of the 90s become personally empowered within the structure of mainstream femininity, but they also challenge the misconception that masculinity and male power usurp femininity and female power.

These somewhat limited representations of the feminine as powerful are important in regard to resisting the normative ideology of their time, and the heroine of 1990 popularity drew on the same feminine stereotypes, but extended their boundaries to rearticulate the feminine as powerful in itself, apart from the masculine, and independent of a male influence or overseer. This was no doubt the beginning of 90s girl-power. However, these American heroines needed a push. Changes began to take place with the help of importing identities and values from foreign popular culture, which had a hand in influencing the girl-power movement.

The Heroine Reloaded: Reclaiming the Girlish in the 90s

Girl-power is a term born from the Riot Grrrl movement in the early 90s, which was a music and zine-based political movement. In her essay "Pleasures and Problems of the 'Angry Girl,'" Kimberley Roberts states that the Riot Grrrl movement is "[a]rguably a more radical and overtly

political movement than girl power” (218). This political movement represents “a discourse and set of practices somehow largely outside the commercial and media-saturated realm. Riot Grrrl possesses the political muscle often lacking in girl power” (218). Girl-power, according to Roberts, represents the “tamer, more palatable version of Riot Grrrl,” which she believes is largely constructed by the media (219). By contrast, Rebecca Hains argues that girl-power is “a playful form of third wave feminism [...that] seeks to reclaim the feminine and mark it as culturally valued” (1). That is not to say that girl-power ignores that femininity is a patriarchal concept enforced by male ideals of gender performance, but rather that girl-power *accepts* that femininity is socially constructed and actively plays within its boundaries, stretching and transforming them to reclaim femininity *for* girls. Traditional notions of femininity largely inform the girlish, and this construct draws on ideas of gender as socially constructed and instilled in girls at a young age as part of the cute little girl tradition. Therefore, the girlish works with existing ideology to redefine the space as powerful. This girl-power movement may not be as overtly political as Riot Grrrl’s stance, but it is informed by feminist principles, allowing those girls who enjoy femininity to feel good about it, rather than feel criticized.

In her article, Hains identifies girl-power as a term popularized by the English pop singers who formed The Spice Girls in the early 1990s, which

denotes an ideological shift in femininity’s conceptualization and its portrayal in mainstream culture. Rather than being passive, girls can actively speak out in verbal and nonverbal modes, as do girl power role models on television’s *Buffy the Vampire Slayer (BtVS)* and [*The Powerpuff Girls*] PPG. Girls can make their voices heard in speech and print, and they can make mainstream femininity work for them, instead of against them. (2)

While I agree with Hains' statement, I do not consider The Spice Girls to be an appropriate representation of girl-power, although they are undoubtedly a post-feminist construct. Within girl-power texts, and by re-ascribing meaning to femininity, girls are encouraged to act feminine, not because it ensures the maintenance of male hierarchy and control, but because it is empowering as a performance. It is a way of reclaiming power for the self by acknowledging gender as a role to be played.¹ Roberts maintains that girl-power narratives reflect "the changing face of feminism: the notion perpetuated in the popular press and elsewhere that feminism has abandoned its so-called puritanical roots and has 'evolved' into a politics of pleasure" (219). However, popular culture critics, like Hains, celebrate the pleasures involved in being feminine and powerful, rather than criticizing the performance as retrogressive to the feminist movement.

Sailor Moon's demonstration of girl-power is a form of feminism, or at least a continuation of it, rather than a complete break from its principles. The text should not be completely shadowed by the overarching umbrella of post-feminist discourse, which, for many feminist critics, is not considered an appropriate venue for female empowerment, as it is often connected to the backlash against second-wave feminism. Feminist scholars criticize "postfeminism as a way in which popular culture functions to undermine the achievements of feminism and work towards its undoing, while simultaneously appearing to engage in a well-informed and well-intentioned response to feminism" (Angela McRobbie qtd. in Amy-Chinn 88). I would argue that this is not at the heart of what *Sailor Moon* does. On the contrary, the sexual liberties taken by the program in its own culture transfer over to Western culture,

¹ Butler asserts that "[t]he view that gender is performative [seeks] to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body" (*Gender Trouble* xv). What we consider to be internal aspects of our identity are actually "anticipate[d] and produce[d]" from external influences, creating, "at an extreme, an hallucinatory effect of naturalized gestures" (xi-xvi). Gender is no more natural than a man-made lake. It is formed and molded by society and perpetuated by its acceptance through patriarchal institutions, and is therefore erroneously considered universal and natural.

providing a popular text that helps to form a counter-culture in popular media by largely resisting normative ideology in lieu of alternative identities. Regardless of how these sexualities and identities are perceived by a Japanese audience, for a Western one, they place a spotlight on the value of the queer identity, homosociality as the ultimate female strength, the unadorned female body as a site of raw humanity and autonomy, and gender as performance and power.

These themes found in the text are reflective of many of the tenets of feminism. Of course, there are some who will argue that *Sailor Moon* and other girl-power shows like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* are post-feminist creations, and they partially are. They certainly do have negative components that deny them a feminist status. I acknowledge that aspects of *Sailor Moon* and other girl-power texts engage in the heteronormative and patriarchal ideology of post-feminist pleasure narratives, but what they do in terms of the female body and experience demands critical attention. Angela McRobbie rebukes post-feminist values as having “scant consideration of wider political issues, and no address to young women readers as anything other than narcissistic, pleasure-seeking, individualized and fatally insecure subjects” (537). I suggest that such a post-feminist label stigmatizes these girl-power shows, eclipsing their value. They should not be written-off; the texts *do* function to highlight important feminist ideology. While I do not praise *Sailor Moon* as a feminist text in its entirety, I feel that I should defend its components of girl-power as participating in a feminist discourse and as separate from the negative connotations associated with post-feminist narratives.

In the scholarship on *Sailor Moon*, critics describe the text largely in negative terms; they criticize the Scouts’ girlishness, rather than finding the significance of what transpires because of this transformative space. And while the show does demonstrate the femininity involved in the girlish, the show focuses on more of a(n) (e)valuation of mainstream femininity’s merits. What

girl-power allows girls to do is rearticulate femininity the way other marginalized groups have done with other terms and tools of oppression. Like most critics of girl-power, I claim that the girl-power hero “offers the *possibility* for change and empowerment” (Shubart 3) through her use of the girlish as powerful. The girl-power heroine is a “contested site, a paradoxical and ambivalent creature open to feminist and postfeminist interpretation, a figure of oppression as well as liberation” (7). As I will demonstrate in my analysis of *Sailor Moon*, girl-power can and does work with gender and queer theory to disrupt “traditional representations of female bodies and female power” (Heinecken 132), a fact that demonstrates its value as a cultural text.

Under the post-feminist umbrella, Sailor Moon’s power is made invisible, and while her text is inherently contradictory, that does not mean we need to discount girl-power altogether. I agree with feminist critic Charlotte Brunson who believes it is time to abandon “a certain kind of politically correct feminist identity which constructs other feminine identities as somehow ‘invalid’” (qtd. in Amy-Chinn 176). We cannot speak of empowerment by denying and silencing other valid identities, which would obscure the importance of the girlish child or adolescent.

The introduction of characters like Buffy, Gabrielle, and the Powerpuff Girls in the mid-to-late 1990s broke the traditional mold of the passive and obedient heroine, but they were not free-standing creations. They were directly influenced by the political agendas of movements such as Riot Grrrl’s, and such heroines actively took part in the “changing face of feminism.” These modern heroines are part of a collection of female heroes influenced by the feminist movement occurring prior to their conception, and, I argue, by the introduction of Japanese animation that created a sub-culture in the West. Lorna Jowett, author of *Sex and the Slayer: A Gender Studies Primer for the Buffy Fan*, recognizes that Japanese anime “serv[ed] to inform the

show [*BtVS*]” with its disregard for traditional modes of gender performance (20). Using information gathered from second-wave feminism, Buffy’s creator, Joss Whedon, chose to go beyond the concept of appropriate “socialized values and behaviour[s] associated with either ‘feminine’ (passive, submissive) or ‘masculine’ (active, heroic) values thought to be related to biological sex” to create a hybrid heroine who was both warrior and hero (20). This hybrid was prevalent in the *manga* (comic books) and *anime* (cartoons) brought over from Japan.

Japan’s Heroic Formula: *Shōjo Manga* and The Birth of *Sailor Moon*

Japanese popular culture showcased a female lead in genres that were previously gendered male, such as science fiction, horror, and fantasy. These Japanese heroines were not passive, weak, silent, or masculine. Japanese heroines were hyper-feminized, wielding unimaginable power in terms of technology, strength, and magic. Unlike Samantha and Jeannie, these girly heroines were always encouraged to develop their powers further because the world depended on them. Japanese creations like *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (1984), *Sailor Moon* (1992), and *Magic Knight Rayearth* (1994) function as predecessors to massively popular heroines like Buffy, the Powerpuff Girls, and Sabrina the teenaged witch, who demonstrated that girls can take centre-stage and “make their own decisions, speak their minds, raise their voices, and be aggressive, while engaging in the production of normative femininity” (Hains 1). However, this new type of heroine still retained the white, slender, ample-breasted, and beautiful stereotype of previous decades, which many feminist critics consider retrogressive, particularly those who agree with Mulvey’s idea of the male gaze (cf. Allison, 2000; Gateward, 2002; Grigsby, 1998; Hains, 2004; Heinecken, 2003; Inness, 1999; Jowett, 2005; Newsom, 2004; Ross, 2004; Shubart, 2007). Despite this setback, Rebecca Hains insists that “beyond body politics [...] many current

texts reinforce girls' power, making them an improvement over some predecessors" (11). However, in order to understand how these Japanese heroines have become part of, and participated in, the girl-power movement in the West, it is important to know the context from which they came.

The Japanese female hero was born of *shōjo manga* (girl comics) written in the 1950s and 1960s by men who outlined traditional ideas of, and goals for, girls and women (i.e. the desire for marriage and a place inside the private sphere of the household) (Ito 469). Therefore, although girls were the center of these comics, the limitations were "reflected in the fact that ladies' comics present[ed] marriage as a natural goal for women" (Ogi 784). These male-written texts seem to mirror the production of heroine narratives in the West during the 60s. However, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the girls who grew up reading these comics became artists themselves, the protagonists' goals changed and the genre "was expanded [to include] stories that dealt with sportswomen, epic stories, and stories based on history" (Frederik Schodt qtd. in Ito 470). *Shōjo manga* therefore developed "its discourses of subversion within the structures of [male] power[,]" much to the chagrin of male artists (Matsui 177). As a whole, [t]he presence of females as featured heroes in *manga*, animation, and live action shows has been much stronger in Japan than in the United States, particularly since the 1980s. The reasons for this are complex and, while hardly due to a greater feminist consciousness in Japanese society, are clearly linked to the increase in female *manga* artists in recent years as well as to the large consumer audience of girls who read, watch, and even write their own, fantasy stories. (Allison 268)

The progression of female artists writing *manga* “for women, by women, of women” (Ogi 792) saw the use of women imbued with mystical or magical powers, eventually leading to the 1990 “products such as *Sailor Moon*, which combined the female protagonist, slim-cute body style, interest in romance, and transformativity characteristic of *shōjo* comics with the plot-driven combat stories of *shōnen* [boy comics] narratives” (Orbaugh 215). The personalities of the heroines changed from the passive and tragic characters created by men to more active and tenacious in those created by women (Shiokawa 103).

These new personalities enjoyed a myriad of occupations and positions, some in glamorous or exotic settings, which was a revolution in girls’ comics since female characters had never been given the chance to go beyond the private sphere of the home (Shiokawa 103). A hybrid was created, which revolutionized the way *shōjo manga* was created and consumed in Japan. The female heroes in *shōjo* were always extraordinary women, occupying the role of android, alien, secret service agent, fighter, police officer, robot, or girls with magic powers (Iwamura 67). And although they may appear to be girls doing normal things by day, like shopping, school, and hanging out, their alter-egos were massively powerful and their “purpose [...was] not just to be decorative: their roles always [had] significance” (67). *Shōjo manga*’s increasing popularity with girls and women was demonstrated by its phenomenal ratings; Japanese popular media was forced to acquiesce to the fascination with this new heroine who could kick butt, have fun, and look cute doing it. *Manga* is a dominant mass cultural product in Japan, which gives the medium the power to influence its audience. Due to the enormous success of this new heroine, the plots and characters became a widely sought after trend because it appealed to larger audiences more than any other type of hero (Shiokawa 117). Women and

men were now used to seeing girls in the popular media in leading roles, possessing awesome powers, and working for themselves.

Unlike American heroines, these Japanese heroines were not female copies of their male counterparts. In the West, “[m]any female heroes that have had their own series were, unfortunately, copies of successful male heroes” (Grineau para.6). For instance, popular heroes like Batman, Superman, Spiderman, Captain Marvel, Aquaman, and The Hulk all have female carbon copies, respectively Batgirl/Batwoman, Supergirl, Spider-Woman, Ms. Marvel, Aquagirl, and She-Hulk. Heroines who are merely the female version of a hero tend to have no personality of their own and very rarely have a history as complex as the original hero. However, I do acknowledge that there are exceptions, but, for the most part, she tends to be defined by and perpetually compared to her counterpart, never fully enjoying a separate identity: “Female knock-offs of established male super-heroes are like photocopies; fuzzy, ill-defined and often unappealing” (para.6). This explains why such copies were never as successful on the market, to girls or boys.

Moreover, the male hero overshadows the female hero, and it is inferred that she would never be able to beat the original male version since he came first. In this regard, the male has the power of authority and autonomy in much the same sense as the biblical Adam had control and dominion over Eve; after all, Eve was formed from Adam’s rib. And since the superhero genre is enriched by a variety of mythologies, it is perfectly apt that this biblical meta-narrative be one of the key myths informing the comic book universe. Because these heroines function in the same manner as their male counterparts, many of them tend to uphold American values, and their heroism can be construed as simply promoting male ideology, working for America’s patriarchy rather than functioning as a mechanism for change within the established system. I

admit that such heroines demonstrate a conflicted site in themselves; I simply wish to point out how, despite the progress made by these characters, male values are upheld and privileged over the female ones because they closely follow the mold cast from manly heroes like Superman.

If there was ever an exception to this unfortunate case of inferior heroines, Wonder Woman immediately springs to mind, as she has her *own* history. She is unique in numerous ways and repetitive in others. She dons the red, white, and blue costume similar to Superman, and stands for the same ideals with the same unwavering resolve. In this way, we can see the popularity of a hero template, one that directs Wonder Woman to uphold patriarchal conventions despite her position as the princess of Paradise Island, an Amazonian nation void of men—a matriarchy. Unfortunately, the scope of the scholarship on Wonder Woman is outside the range of this thesis, and she deserves her own in-depth analysis, but I do want to acknowledge her presence as demonstrating difference amongst the field of sameness for super-heroines prior to the 90s.

Because many heroes spring from a mythological resource, heroes tend to share identical powers and skills. This explains similarities between Japanese and American heroes. There are templates for heroism. Superman is constructed from different archetypes and has become *himself* an archetype for the male hero (HeroicWorld para.9). In particular, since the end of WWII, Japan and the US “have been simultaneously a model, a foe, and a friend to each other” (Graillat para.2). Obviously, Japan has its own distinct superheroes, such as Godzilla, Astroboy, and Akira; however, America has greatly influenced other popular Japanese characters. For instance, Spiderman, Batman, and Superman provide heroic templates for Japanese heroes like Starman, Ultraman, and Supah Jaianto (Graillat para.7). However, that is not to say that the borrowing is one-sided. The US has seen the media value of *anime* and *manga* and has

translated a lot of popular Japanese shows and movies into English (i.e. *Astroboy* [1963], *Speed Racer* [1994], *Sailor Moon* [1995], *Pokémon* [1998], *Digimon: Digital Monsters* [1999], *Kiki's Delivery Service* [2003], *Spirited Away* [2003]), as well as creating American cartoons with Japanese-style animation. When the *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers* (1993) was made for an English audience it was wildly popular. Not many knew it first saw popularity in Japan. The Japanese creation of a fighting group with heroes who were identified by their own colour, power, and personality seen in *Power Rangers* was a common technique used in many Japanese hero-narratives, and the US was undeniably influenced by this notion of colour-coded heroes. *The Powerpuff Girls* (1998) is one example, as each heroine has her own colour—green, blue, and red, respectively. Walt Disney even combined popular Japanese videogame characters from Squaresoft's *Final Fantasy* series with its own world of princesses and princes to create the successful *Kingdom Hearts* (2002- 2005) series for the PlayStation console. Moreover, American pop culture demonstrated a fascination with Japanese traditions and martial arts, and its culture inspired American products like *The Karate Kid* (1984), *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (1987), and *Beverly Hills Ninja* (1997) which is similar to Japan's fascination with Western traditions like Christmas.

What I mean to point out here is the constant sharing occurring between Eastern and Western media, which helps to explain why *Sailor Moon* made its way to the US and had the impact that it did. However, unlike other heroes who had been imported into America from Japan, *Sailor Moon* was the first heroine narrative to be adopted by an American company, and the series did something different for girl-power. The heroines in the show occupied feminine spaces, but did not simply pay lip service to female strength and value. They embraced the power of the feminine, rather than participating in masculine modes of crime fighting like

Wonder Woman who hog-tied her enemies or deflected bullets. For comic book heroines such as these, the feminine realm of emotion and communication was considered a weakness. The Scouts' valuation of a more traditional feminine method of communicating and fighting helped to deconstruct entrenched gender binaries in American popular culture about femininity's inferiority to masculinity. Japan's female super-heroes were different from their American counterparts because they combined power with femininity and autonomy. Japan's heroines were so popular because they *were* feminine and they were independently created as valuing femininity as heroic. Japanese cartoons and comic books constructed girlish femininity as charming and cute, emotive and communicative, and included giddy and excitable personalities that highlighted the transformative space of childhood. American heroines failed to break stereotypes of femininity by avoiding the feminine altogether, by playing the recycled part of a male superhero. In comic books and on screen, it seemed as if I was still watching a man perform heroic acts. *Sailor Moon*, on the other hand, provides an example of the successful female hero who was not powerful because she copied male heroes, but because she harnessed the power of the feminine through her female relationships and by relying on forgiveness and compassion to fight evil. Her powers developed and matured within this feminine space, particularly in regards to the strength garnered from her close female bonds.² The series begins with Serena as a crybaby and ends with an unwavering hero, a title that could not have been accomplished without experiencing the love, support, and respect from the trials and tribulations shared with her fellow Sailor Scouts.

² According to Sedgwick, the female realm of the homosocial is very different than it is for males. It is a space of mutual "aims, emotions, and valuations" that emphasize "women's attention to women[,] [...] and the active struggles of feminism" (2). Female homosociality promotes the interests of women, and places value on women's lived experience with one another, and so the term "'homosocial' [is] applied to women's bonds" (3). It is not an oppressive space, as it promotes the mental, emotional, and physical health and growth of girls and women.

The series claimed femininity as valuable, and *Sailor Moon* highlighted a heroine who demonstrated the power of gender performance. She no doubt also claimed traditionally male attributes as well as feminine ones so that strength, agency, and power were no longer perceived as only ascribable by either male or androgynous bodies, or those heroines who looked hyper-feminine but acted like all the other male heroes—a hero in drag, if you will. In this respect, I acknowledge that all heroes and heroines are performing a role, even the Scouts; however, it is one thing to dress the part, and another to perform it. The Scouts look feminine and also demonstrate the psychological transformations and identifications associated with the traditional characteristics of this space. What is significant is that the Sailor Scouts' performance did not privilege masculine power; it was the feminine realm that took centre-stage. Japanese *manga* opened up the stage for various bodies of power, and not just for those who mimicked the masculinity of male heroes. The girl-power hero is “able to fight in a capacity associated with male heroes without necessarily ‘becoming’ male” (Newsom para.5). Dolores Martinez, author of *The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture: Gender, Shifting Boundaries and Global Cultures*, asserts that one “cannot help admitting that all aspects of the female persona have a far wider play in Japanese culture than they [did] in the West. In particular, the varied combinations of psychic powers and femininity [...] seem to offer intriguing alternatives to Western fantasy females, suggesting [...] that empowerment and femininity can come in many forms” (Martinez 105-6). In this manner, Martinez seems to acknowledge that femininity and the feminine exist on a wide spectrum, and that there can be power from end to end. Her use of the word “play” aptly describes gender performance and the power feminine performances can portray. Many American heroines were granted power because they lacked what was perceived as feminine

weakness. This type of power and autonomy is decidedly different from that of the Japanese *shōjo* who embraced her femininity as a dimension of power.

Japan had “numerous female heroes [...who were] popular precisely because they [were] both girlie and heroic” (Allison 275). Because of the popularity of these evolved *manga/anime* creations, “there was no resistance to having powerful female characters in the lead or roles of equal importance,” particularly because the “cute-girl” action heroine appealed to all audiences for various reasons (Shiokawa 116-7). In her paper “Busty Battlin’ Babes: The Evolution of the *Shōjo* in 1990s Visual Culture,” Sharalyn Orbaugh discusses how this hybrid of cute and power

absolutely repudiate[d] many of the earlier negative associations [of female protagonists]—far from being framed as signs of irresponsibility, weakness, and passivity, these new *shōjo* are powerful and active as they lead the fight against the forces of evil. [...] They are rarely dreamy and indolent, nor are they figured as passive consumers. And yet, being (unmarried) females, these protagonists retain the *shōjo*-identified characteristics of liminality[...and] relative freedom from socially prescribed roles. (217)

The cute heroine was without adult responsibilities, and significantly, was not married, which would have produced, within a traditional Japanese context, a gender dynamic in which a husband had control over a wife. The transitional period of the adolescent heroine allowed for the transformative powers she enjoyed, leaving her free to take on the evils of the world by “means of endurance, good humor, and not considerable luck” (Shiokawa 103). This notion of a temporarily powerful space is obviously problematic, as it emphasizes the powerlessness of womanhood, but it also calls attention to and privileges the young girl, a figure rarely imbued with authority.

Sailor Moon Prism-Powers Her Way into the West: *Sailor Moon* 101

Many of the academics writing on the topic of *shōjo* and Japanese heroines, Iwamura included, recognize that Sailor Moon is “one of the most influential of all animation characters. It was written by a woman, Naoko Takeuchi; it’s about girls and written for girls” (Iwamura 71). I will be focusing specifically on the *anime* (cartoon) version of *Sailor Moon*, rather than on the *manga* (comic) that came before because, as a child, my love-affair with the series began with the Westernized cultural product, as it did for most of *Sailor Moon*’s Western fans. Sailor Moon is significant in terms of understanding how her influence has changed traditional ideas of the heroine in Japanese popular culture, and how her importation has influenced Western popular culture. Frances Gateward, author of “Bubblegum and Heavy Metal,” claims that

Japanese animation, despite [its] ambiguous and sometimes contradictory messages, provide[s] a valuable lens through which we can examine cultural issues and social change, especially for girls. [...] In an increasingly globalized culture, media messages easily cross national boundaries and may provide possibilities and alternatives to the staid or retrograde images that flood contemporary American popular culture. (281)

And while *Sailor Moon* was not imported into the US until 1995, the heroine dynamic the show portrayed guaranteed its place amongst the influential girl-power narratives of the 1990s.

Sailor Moon has five story arcs or seasons, the fifth having never been officially translated or aired in North America because the season introduced transgendered characters that were the main plot point, and they could not be edited out without losing the entire story. The show focuses on the nine official Sailor Scouts, as the heroines are referred to: the group consists of five main Sailor Scouts who are representatives of the planets (and moon) in the inner solar

system (Venus, Mercury, Mars, Jupiter, and Earth's moon); there are four other girls who make up the outer Scouts (Saturn, Neptune, Uranus, and Pluto). These heroines possess key powers supplied by the various elements of nature. They are the guardians of their particular element, ranging from fire, water, lightening, and love to time and space, chaos, solar energy, and sound. These guardians were all reincarnated millennia ago on Earth and now protect the galaxy and Earth from dark forces. Each story arc has its major enemy who is responsible for the mayhem on Earth. The Scouts do not take orders from any man, although they *are* given information and weapons via Serena's (Sailor Moon's) talking cat and guardian, Luna, who is also female. The only males in the group are Artemis, Sailor Venus' talking cat, and Darien, who is Tuxedo Mask. He acts as a friend to the Scouts who offers moral support in many of the episodes and who later becomes romantically involved with Sailor Moon. He often provides enough of a distraction for the Scouts to regroup and prepare their attacks.

The Scouts always get their man, quite literally, as the generals of destruction are men, who are, importantly, controlled by much more powerful women, as I will discuss in Chapter Two. As vessels for such naturally volatile forces, the Scouts demonstrate that “[g]irl power offers girls and women a space to resist, on an individual level, patriarchal ideals of passive, accommodating femininity and the idea that females are inferior to males” (Hains 10). Although the girls always try to reason with the enemy and heal them, they are most often forced to kick, punch, and vaporize wrong-doers all in the name of love, friendship, justice, and girl-power.

For the purpose of this thesis, I will refer to all characters by their translated English names, except for the characters from the fifth season that exist only in their subbed form. In some cases, I will be using the subbed version of episodes that have also been dubbed, in which case I will be using the original Japanese title and episode number. I will be identifying episodes

by both the season and episode number, followed by the name of the episode. For the Japanese subbed citations, it will be helpful to know that Usagi is Serena (Sailor Moon), Mamoru is Darien (Tuxedo Mask), Rei is Raye (Sailor Mars), Michiru is Michelle (Sailor Neptune), Haruka is Amara (Sailor Uranus), Makoto is Lita (Sailor Jupiter), Minako is Mina (Sailor Venus), Chibi-Usa is Rini (Sailor Mini-Moon), Setsuna is Trista (Sailor Pluto), and Ami is Amy (Sailor Mercury).

Sailor Moon Unbound: Chapter Breakdown

In Chapter One, I examine the Japanese and American constructions of “cute” or “cuteness.” Both cultures have a long tradition of appreciating everything cute, and how the Sailor Scouts function within the text and inform its meaning is significant in understanding why their strong bodies are hyper-feminized. The cute body is intimately linked with the sexualized body. Because of this, the eroticization of the child is an overarching function of past and present popular media. In this chapter, I outline how this cute space is problematic because it functions to contain power within a liminal body, and this is particularly evident in relation to the female villains who are not cute. The villainesses are deadly beautiful and must be destroyed because their power is not contained within the strictures of a child’s body. I examine the spaces of girlhood and womanhood as represented in the text, and I acknowledge the problems the text creates in terms of the child’s contained body and the career woman’s brutal fate. However, I argue that, as a children’s show, it is significant that the liminal space of the child body is represented as powerful, and that this in itself is valuable to *Sailor Moon*’s intended audience of young girls.

In Chapter Two, I examine gender performance, femininity and masculinity in *Sailor Moon*, focusing on the bodies that are granted power, how and why. I trace the significance of these bodies to the cultural values and beliefs they confirm and reject within Western culture, and how the girl-power narrative negotiates the feminine space that the Sailor Scout bodies occupy. *Sailor Moon*, I argue, is significant in the way it represents the feminine and the female body as powerful through the use of the girlish.

In Chapter Three, I expand upon the concepts of the body outlined in Chapter Two, and analyze homosociality and compulsory heterosexuality in *Sailor Moon*. I pay particular attention to the diverse romantic relationships in the text that function as alternatives to heteronormative sexuality, and the non-threatening space the text attempts to navigate. I discuss the different bodies that matter in *Sailor Moon*, from the feminized bodies of many of the male enemies, the masculinized bodies of some of the Scouts, and the transgendered bodies of the Sailor Starlights in Season Five. The heavy focus on female homosociality privileges female spaces and relationships; this privileging functions to counter the argument against the sexualized bodies of the Scouts in terms of being a narrative focus. Female homosociality in the series demonstrates an important part of female adolescence and well-being. Furthermore, how the text deals with both female and masculine homosociality, at times suggesting queer relationships, is significant in understanding *Sailor Moon*'s broad range of resistant elements.

Sailor Moon, with its diverse array of gender and sexual issues, must be considered as a richly layered and valuable text within the girl-power genre. While *Sailor Moon* has been taken seriously amongst academics, the cute bodies of the Sailor Scouts objectified, their femininity scrutinized, and their penchant for girlishness criticized, few have addressed the show beyond the superficial exterior of the Scouts. Their appearance is undeniably important in analyzing

their position along the spectrum of evolving super-heroines; however, other aspects of the show have been overlooked, such as the overarching commentary on gender relations and how such a dynamic affects Sailor Moon's capacity to fight, the significance of the male and female enemies, and the reclamation of the girlish and the feminine.

Chapter One

“Tomorrow’s Big Dreams:” Childhood Erotics and the Cute Formula

I don’t ever want to grow up.
 Never forget your childhood.
 Or your childhood dreams
 when you were your happiest.

Dream, dream, don’t doubt it.
 An adult is what a child ends up becoming....
 so they say...

~ English Dub: Speech from “Tomorrow’s Big Dreams.” Season Four, Episode Thirty-Three

The notion of childhood sexuality or the eroticization of the child has a long-standing tradition, and has been of concern to, and scrutinized by, the adult world since the late eighteenth-century (Foucault 3). During the Victorian era, doctors and educators were actively involved in curbing childhood sexuality, particularly masturbation (42). In The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Michel Foucault outlines how “precocious sexuality was presented from the eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth as an epidemic menace that risked compromising not only the future health of adults but the future of the entire society and species” (146). During this era, “innocence [was] pumped into the child in an effort to pump everything else out” (Kincaid Erotic Innocence 57). Focusing on childhood sexuality, creating anxiety around it, and simply talking about sex in relation to the child made the eroticization of the child inevitable. Sex and the child, as James Kincaid suggests in his book Child-Loving: the Erotic Child and Victorian Culture, have been “married [...], even when we deny that they are on speaking terms” (183). On one hand, children are culturally imbued with sexuality because of the focus put on its repression, and on the other hand, they are culturally denied it through the

idealization of the purified child. The child, therefore, is of a dualistic nature whereby the child is “either free of any whiff of sexuality or is, sometimes, saturated with [it]” (183). Kincaid asserts that this dualistic rhetoric “reflects a process of imaging the problem that makes the eroticizing of the child inevitable” (183). The modern child, therefore, is infused with adult sexuality, and the child’s desires and power are obscured by the projection of adult desires and suppressed by adult power.

The child is eroticized because such purity, or a blank canvas, allows for the projection of sexuality, not of legitimate childhood sexuality, but adult carnality. In this regard, I do not purport that children are without sexuality; rather, I agree with Linzi Fredman and Cheryl Potgieter that “childhood sexuality, like all other human potentials, awaits a social environment to become significant. It is not something static that awaits repression or liberation or biological timing, but something which is socially constructed. Sexuality, as a part of identity, is constructed by the social forces which operate and impinge on all aspects of our identity” (50). Childhood sexuality *does* exist, but it is given meaning by an “adult, patriarchal, heterosexist social context” (50-1). Because childhood sexuality is socially constructed and children have less power than adults, children oftentimes perform to adult desires or are slotted into assigned roles that reflect society’s cultural attitudes. Kincaid outlines many of the categories, sanctioned *and* censored, of which “child-love” is a part: “[a]dmiring children, responding to children as erotic forms, investing one’s primary emotions in children, desiring children, engaging in sex with children, helping children, molesting children, worshipping children, devoting one’s life to children, living for children, living through children” (Child-Loving 187). Many of these aspects are reflected in Western popular media, and they are generally paired, sanctioned and censored alike. Frequently, the sexuality in children that is censored by society is replaced by sanctioned

adult projections of sexuality when paired with the overarching title of childhood innocence and cuteness.

By examining the contextualization of cuteness in Japan and America as it relates to *Sailor Moon*, I will discuss how the cute, innocent, and sexualized body of the girl-power hero is problematic, and why her liminal state can be considered detrimental to girl-power narratives that seek to be culturally progressive.¹ Can we see this liminal body as empowering? If it is only the liminal body that is identified as the choice receptacle for power, can that body retain such power and still be considered valuable as a mature woman? How do we account for the containment of power through childhood and adolescence? While the liminal body is projected on and reshaped sexually according to an adult audience, it is also, I argue, a site of potential not just for the adult but for the child as well, and this is one of the ways the liminal body is granted agency and power. By acknowledging the liminal body as an obstacle to female power and autonomy, we can begin to focus on the ways it can liberate the very same body.

The Cute, the Good, and the Deadly: Why This Body?

The Japanese have a fascination with all things cute, from doe-eyed animals to starry-eyed dolls. All aspects of cuteness are summarized by the Japanese word, *kawaii*. In his article “Cute But Deadly: Women and Violence in Japanese Comics,” Kanako Shiokawa states that the concept of *kawaii* has a long history in Japan. It is this fascination with all things cute that can be seen as the reason Japanese girl heroes all seem to inhabit the young bodies that they do. These bodies matter because the concept of cute is linked to a classical tradition that producers of the girl-child

¹ For the purpose of this thesis, “girl” means both a prepubescent and pubescent body. The only requirement is that the body has not reached adult sexual maturity. However, I do acknowledge that I reference adult bodies throughout my thesis within the context of girl-power, particularly as they relate to heroines prior to the 90s. That I can only cite adult bodies prior to the rise of girl-power heroes is significant because it highlights the obscurity of the child in popular culture texts and said body’s erasure from power narratives.

subculture in Japan have tailored to their needs. According to Shiokawa, classical meanings for cute refer “to the sentiment of pity and empathy, [...] [and] to persons and things that inspired such sentiments” (95). This idea was melded with the contemporary need to sell a product. In this regard, tradition and pop culture collided, which allowed *anime* and *manga* writers and producers to assign new value to cute, particularly in a heroic format. While the cute heroine looks helpless, and therefore charming, she is deceptively powerful.²

Shiokawa traces how cute females in *shōjo* (girl) comics transformed from the stereotypical male view of women evident “during the early, male-dominated stage of the Japanese comics industry [where] females were often stereotyped as merely ornamental characters[,]” into the new breed of hero who stars in her own action-packed stories and series (95). Shiokawa reveals that

[I]ater centuries [...] saw a slight change in the context of *kawaii*, where compassion for the helpless state of infants and children began to include an undercurrent of charm being exerted by their very helplessness. Soon, girls and women were included in the category [...] [because they were considered] docile, dependent, and demure[.] [...] The inclusion of the female sex in the *kawaii* category added new meanings to the term itself, based on certain characteristics often associated with the female virtue at the time, namely fragility, delicateness, sensitivity, prettiness, and, consequently, the notion of “Handle with care.” (95)

² Rosemary Iwamura explains that while these girls “may look cute, [...] there is often more to them than meets the eye” (70). This refers to how the cute heroine is deceptive in that her cute exterior, which is often likened to the innocence and harmlessness of small animals, conceals a remarkable and potentially destructive interior power. In terms of Western literary tradition, this deceptive nature partakes in the misogynist discourse surrounding the female sex. The notion that girls and women are duplicitous and deceptive harkens back to the Bible and John Milton’s portrayal of Eve in *Paradise Lost*. However, while this idea of the deceptively cute heroine fulfils a negative stereotype for girls and women, it also underscores the idea that we often underestimate children (the small and cute package), and we tend to ignore their power, strength, and value. Alternately, in Japan, female stereotypes valued the demure, decorative, sensitive, and weak girl. So while this deceptive character perpetuates stereotypes in Western literary tradition, it transgresses the Japanese tradition of the helpless and dependent girl.

While the transition of female characters in *manga* and *anime* saw independent and indestructible heroes traipsing about the public sphere, the illusion of helplessness remained, as Shiokawa indicates in the title of his article, “cute but deadly.” The heroine had, for the most part, shed her fragility and demure composure for ambition and awesome power, while maintaining her link to the cultural tradition of *kawaii*. She kept her feminine virtue of charm.

The Sailor Scout body is significant for a Japanese audience because it encompasses the pretty and delicate idealization of *kawaii*. Her large starry eyes equate her to the helplessness of furry doe-eyed animals that are easily preyed on by hunters and bigger animals. Like many small animals, however, the cute heroine has deadly defenses against those who would prey upon her. And while the Sailor Scouts can be viewed through the Japanese concept of *kawaii*, cute is conceptualized somewhat differently in the US, but is equally important in order to understand how the text is absorbed into Western culture. The Western tradition of cute begins in a similar fashion to the Japanese tradition in that certain characteristics became valued within a certain body and were then idealized. The ideal of innocent and adorable beauty, argues Gary Cross, author of *The Cute and the Cool: Wondrous Innocence and Modern American Children’s Culture*, has remained relatively fixed in the last hundred years (6). Cross’ book identifies how children became glamourized in the eighteenth-century, made into a perfect image of “wondrous innocence” (14). The helpless and pathetic child was considered valuable because the child’s helplessness was thought of as endearing and charming (Kincaid *Erotic Innocence* 113). However, the notion of innocence suggested naivety (Cross 6), and a generally void-quality or blank slate that allowed for adult projections of desire and sexuality.

The result of these projections created a tension between child and adolescent sexual potential and innocence, which made innocence and children far more alluring than adult sexual

experience. The child, the little girl in particular, is “framed as liminal, outside both the productive and reproductive economies of the adult world, ungendered and innocent but with sexual potential” (Orbaugh 205). This unformed identity caters to all sorts of adult fantasies and desires. The apparent smooth or flat surface of a child’s skin “signifies nothing at all and thus doesn’t interfere with our [adult] projections[.] [...] In the same way, desirable faces must be blank, drained of color; big eyes round and expressionless; hair blond or colorless; waists, hips, feet and minds small” (Kincaid Erotic Innocence 17). Kincaid affirms much of Cross’ discussion in his own book Erotic Innocence: The Culture of Child Molesting, asserting that “[t]he physical makeup of the child has been translated into mainstream images of the sexually and materially alluring” (17-8). In this regard, Kincaid suggests that a fetishization of the child and of the cute is in effect in contemporary Western culture (18). Because the child’s body can be projected on, and attributed with sexuality and desire, this act suggests that the “child is functional, a malleable part of our discourse rather than a fixed stage; ‘the child’ is a product of ways of perceiving” (19). Therefore, the young and cute Sailor Scouts in the Western cultural imagination occupy a stage of transition. This stage is not fixed like adulthood; rather, it is flexible and full of potential. Popular culture projects onto this malleable identity, imagining or perceiving childhood sexuality as it functions for its audience, whether that be girls and boys looking for a model or a crush, or adults looking for a fetish.

Various characteristics are considered cute in American culture, such as a child’s “attractive, bubbling enthusiasm,” which is associated with positive displays of charm and desirability (Cross 43). In *Sailor Moon*, the Sailor Scouts, particularly Serena, demonstrate these valued characteristics; Serena often bubbles over with giddiness and has a naturally happy disposition, as her blonde pigtails bounce about her petite body. An example of Serena’s

bubbling enthusiasm is nicely demonstrated in “Nightmare in Dreamland” when Amy, Raye, and Serena take a trip to Dreamland to figure out why people keep disappearing from the park. Raye and Amy are shown discussing their plan of action when they notice Serena is not with them. The camera pans to Serena on a merry-go-round, waving at her friends happily. The episode is full of this type of enthusiasm, especially when Serena meets the Dream Princess who is the mascot of the park. As the princess talks, Serena looks up at her with stars in her eyes, unbridled childhood excitement shining in her face. Even in the heat of battle, when the Dream Princess turns into a Dream Dolly, a dangerous marionette, Sailor Moon stops to exclaim, “She’s so cute!” (1.8). The other scouts can also be seen demonstrating such girlish glee frequently in other episodes. Serena and her friends are fourteen throughout the series, at the threshold of womanhood and holding, trapped in a liminal body that cannot achieve mature sexuality; however, they are also powerless to avoid the projections of adult sexuality thrust upon them from inside and outside the text.

Child-like Japanese characters such as Sailor Moon can be seen as filling a similar role in Western popular culture as child icons such as Shirley Temple, Little Orphan Annie, and Tatum O’Neal. Doll-like appearances became popular in film and television in the early-to-mid-twentieth-century, and many adult stars tried to mimic this look, “accentuating youthful poses and wide-eyed looks” (Cross 56). Such childish images recall child-stars like Temple in the 1930s, and more contemporary child-stars such as Macaulay Culkin and Winona Ryder (Kincaid Erotic Innocence 18). Indeed, the Sailor Scouts have those wide and wondrous eyes that twinkle as they gaze out at the world, demonstrating their innocent and pure state. So too, Kincaid compares such child-stars to the vacated images of cartoon characters, like Sailor Moon, that function as a canvas to be written on, or to have adult desires and passions projected upon (20).

Cross identifies this contrast between innocence and maturity in terms of childhood sexualization as an ambiguous presentation, worsened by an audience which denies their desire for the cute child, though they cannot get enough of this image in popular media (66). I am reminded of the beauty pageant craze in southern America where little girls are made up to look like adult, and very sexualized women. They tan, get hair extensions, wear fake eyelashes, don skimpy swimsuits and evening gowns, wear seductive makeup, and are taught to flirt coyly with the judges. Not only do they act as canvases for the adult audiences who watch these competitions, but parents and guardians also exploit them in order to fulfill this sexualized role.

Gradually, doll-like coyness transformed into erotic ambiguity as the innocent schoolgirl look became a fad and a fetish, resembling the eroticism of a Lolita (Kincaid Erotic Innocence 104). Of course, Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita represents the best example of the erotic child in Western literary tradition; there is no doubt that Lolita the child is a canvas projected onto by the main character, Humbert, who epitomizes adult male fantasy. Nabokov's work is responsible for establishing and outlining the Lolita category associated with the images of sexualized schoolgirls in film, advertisements, and television. The Lolita figure in American culture is widely popular.³ For example, the sixteen year-old Angela Hayes, Mena Suvari's character in American Beauty (1999), represents the canvas for Lester Burnham's sexual desire. However, as much as the Lolita figure in Western culture is isolated, sexualized, and denied autonomy, the

³ Interestingly, the term Lolita has come to mean something a little different in Japanese culture, as it is considered a fashion trend and sometimes a lifestyle. The term describes ultra feminine attire and mannerisms as the epitome of elegance and grace in regard to the schoolgirl ("Lolita Fashion" para.1). Serena and her friends are considered Lolitas in Japan, as their "childish outbursts, pouting, and tantrums are viewed as charmingly erotic" (Mikkelson and Mikkelson para.7). There are many other *shōjo anime* and *manga* that showcase these types of girls and the power harnessed by the schoolgirl. *Shōjo* narratives like *Maria-sama ga Miteru* (2004) or *The Virgin Mary is Watching* highlight an all-girl private school where girls in a higher grade pick a girl from a lower grade to mentor. What transpires between the girls is reflective of the power of Adrienne Rich's lesbian continuum and female-only spaces discussed in Chapter Three. For now, I will point out that the relationship Serena and her friends share is an example of a female-only adolescent space, and it is infused with the power of female homosociality and strength.

Lolita figure in *shōjo* is not without power. It is not hard to see how Sailor Moon fits into this fetish, as she and her fellow Scouts don Japanese school uniforms.

The uniforms themselves are not sexual, especially not the Scouts' civilian uniforms that conceal everything. It is the fact that such suits adorn young bodies that the attire becomes sexualized through the eroticization of the child. In the same way that desire is projected onto the child in America, that the sailor suit is a component of school-age tradition in Japan is significant. In Japan, the schoolgirl is a dominant figure in pornography and fetishization, so much so that there used to be vending machines outside of porno shops that sold used panties worn by schoolgirls. This product sold rapidly and was insanely popular amongst Japanese men. The girls would pick up a pair of panties at the shop, wear them to school, and then return them for a price at the end of the school day (Mikkelson and Mikkelson para.9). Even if the underwear had not been worn by an actual schoolgirl, the possibility was alluring enough.

Barbara and David Mikkelson reveal that

“bura-sera” or “buru-sera” [is] the term for a specific male fascination relating to [Japan’s] schoolgirls. “Buru” is anglicized for “bloomers” and “sera” for “sailor”; the term refers to the sailor suit, the predominant style of girls’ junior and high school uniforms. Dozens, if not hundreds, of magazines are exclusively devoted to bura-sera photographs, pictures that feature girls clad in school garb, holding up their skirts to display their panties. (para.5)

However, even though Serena and her friends must shed the schoolgirl uniform for another sailor suit, the one they transform into is a kind of military power suit, rather than a fetish. The outfit the Sailor Scouts wear has been reinscribed with meaning; therefore, Serena, the child, who is inscribed with the eroticization of the schoolgirl, and who is powerless and objectified, is re-

inscribed as Sailor Moon the Sailor Scout (or Sailor Soldier in Japan). The suit becomes masculinized in this way because of the association with military power and decorum. The Scouts also shed their schoolgirl persona in order to become powerful heroines; exams and grades that tend to dominate their schoolgirl minds are replaced with worldly concerns.

The Cutest Little Sex Sailor You Ever Did See: The Erotic Child Exposed

Particularly evident in *Sailor Moon* is this notion of fulfilling childhood potential for sexuality through the use of coercive and trust-worthy adults—through characters the adult audience can project themselves onto. In Season Four, Rini, a prepubescent child, is the only one who can see Pegasus (the Greek mythological flying horse), who acts as a powerful force in the season. He is *supposed* to be a reflection of childhood innocence, as he reveals to Rini when he explains why only she can see him: “One day I saw a light, a beautiful dream light, the only light left to me. The light helped me change into Pegasus. Suddenly I was freed and able to greet the light, and I met you—sweet, beautiful, and innocent as a thousand dreams. [...] Only your pure dreams, and pure heart allow me to exist in the real world” (4.31, “Pegasus Revealed”). However, subsequent sexualized encounters with Rini only affirm the duality of the innocent and sexualized child. His own adult perceptions and desires are projected onto Rini’s flat body, producing a tension between sanctioned and censored child-love. Pegasus often tells Rini, in an obviously adult voice, that only she can see him because her dreams are pure, and that is where he has found sanctuary in a world of chaos and jealousy. Pegasus lends his power to Rini so that she can help Sailor Moon fight as Sailor Mini Moon, the youngest of the Scouts. As long as she does not tell anyone about him, only she will be worthy of him: Pegasus: “I want to be around you.” Rini: [...] “Can we see each other any time from now on?” Pegasus: [...] “Yes, but just

the two of us, alone” (4.8, “A Teacher’s Lesson”). She must keep their meetings secret, adding an air of sensuality (or creepiness) to the encounters. However, this secret is far from romanticized, as Pegasus seems more like a predator than a harmless animal. At the same time, Rini is sexualized as the innocent and naïve child, for Pegasus whispers sweet things to Rini, coerces her into trusting him, and confesses his love for her, all the while leaving Rini to blush profusely and daydream about him.

At one point, she rides him in a white dress, reflective of a bridal gown, while caressing and stroking him. As she is riding him bareback, Pegasus tells her that the experience of flying is “[a]mazing every time” (4.32, “Rini’s Lovely Rhapsody”). The sexual overtones in this line are rampant. The other Sailor Scouts suspect that Rini has been acting differently because she has a boyfriend, though they cannot fathom who has really attracted her attention. The Scouts, and even Darien, speculate about who it could be. They assume she has a crush on an older man, and Darien is at once furious, perhaps even jealous. Serena claims that age does not matter; it is romantic because of the age difference between herself, fourteen, and Darien, twenty-five: Darien: “Unless he’s super tall for his age, I think he’s too old for you.” Serena: “Aww. Hunny-bunchkinz, you know very well age doesn’t matter at all.” (4.32, “Rini’s Lovely Rhapsody”). Granted, it is still problematic that the age difference between Serena and Darien is eleven years, but Rini is only an eight year-old, while Pegasus, or Helios (his human form), is technically as old as the earth, but appears to be an eighteen or nineteen year-old boy.

The conclusion to the episode shows Rini telling Pegasus that she was put on Earth for him, a confession that seems more like a marriage vow than an innocent admission:

Rini: “Ever since that day [I met you] I’ve felt like time has stopped, and that our friendship has lasted forever. And that we’ve been living in a sort of dream I

never want to wake up from because I can't even imagine living life without you, Pegasus. Do you believe in fate, Pegasus? Do you believe each one of us has a destiny to fulfill? Because it wasn't until I met you that I felt there was a specific reason for why I was born, and that I had a special purpose here."

Pegasus: "I know exactly what you mean, Rini, and I'm glad our paths have crossed."

Rini: "I love you, Pegasus."

Before the credits roll, Pegasus promises Rini one thing: "I promise you this, little one...someday I'll tell you everything. You just have to be patient." Rini: "I'm very patient. I can wait" (4.32, "Rini's Lovely Rhapsody"). This encounter is very sensual, bathed in a soft haze and candlelight. This notion of being patient seems to suggest an upcoming event, in particular, the day when Pegasus is finally free and can physically be with Rini instead of solely in her dreams—a day when he can finally "tell her everything," or, alternately, *show* her everything. Being patient entails waiting for their wedding night when they can finally consummate their relationship. The patience required of Rini does not seem to indicate waiting for her to be mature, just until Pegasus has his human body back (otherwise, the show would border on bestiality as well as pedophilia).⁴

In her naivety, Rini is eroticized in relation to Pegasus' advances. Although he is in horse form, Pegasus represents adult desire for the child, and provides a safe space in which to enjoy an intimate *and* sanctioned relationship with Rini. He is considered harmless, one of the

⁴ I would also like to point out that Rini's love for Pegasus is part of a long Western tradition of understanding the love girls have for horses, and its manifestation of their sexuality. Liz Taylor in *National Velvet* (1944), Scarlett Johansson in *The Horse Whisperer* (1998), the various adaptations of *My Little Pony* (1984), and even Lisa from *The Simpsons* (1989) demonstrate the little girl's desire for and love of horses. This association is often sexualized for various reasons. For instance, the movement of the horse can be considered a form of masturbation for girls and women, and can lead to a sexual awakening in young girls, which seems to be the case for eight year-old Rini. Because of this long standing tradition in the West, it is easy to see how Helios takes advantage of this female association with horses since he chooses Pegasus as his dream-form so that he can approach Rini without difficulty.

good guys, occupying a position of trust for Rini. In “A Teacher’s Lesson” Pegasus reveals to Rini that he wants to spend more time with her and to be better friends. Rini is ecstatic that she can talk to him whenever she wants, but of course, only when they are alone. In a moment of innocent trust, Rini tells Pegasus to hold on a moment while she changes; the scene shows Pegasus blush as he averts his eyes, catching quick glances here and there. The shot widens to show Rini without a shirt, without developed breasts, wondering what is wrong with Pegasus. Even though she is undeveloped and without sexualized markers, Rini’s little girl’s body is still eroticized and desired by Pegasus. Rini does not understand why her body makes him blush, though one can infer it is because he is aroused (4.8, “A Teacher’s Lesson”). The scene therefore takes on a voyeuristic function. It is her innocence in the scene that makes it erotic, and only in her childish state can this eroticism be maintained.

An example of this preference for childhood sexual potential can be found in “Pegasus Revealed,” where Rini wishes she could be older like Serena so she can do adult (sexualized) things. The scene opens with Rini walking past a kissing booth; she is carrying a small doll that looks like Darien, her father. She laments: “I wish I wasn’t just a kid. I wish I were already grown up like Serena so I could have someone like Darien. Then *we* could be in a kissing contest. What would Pegasus think of me if I was all grown up?” (4.31, “Pegasus Revealed”). Rini realizes that she lacks the physical markers of adult sexuality, and understands that she is inexperienced in her young body, unable to please Pegasus in a way she believes she should. During the episode, a magic spell is cast on Serena and Rini, causing them to switch ages. Rini’s legs extend, her hips widen, and her breasts enlarge. The camera gazes intently at her body from the legs up. Rini recognizes that her body is different, developed, and she believes that Pegasus will prefer her new body because it has adult characteristics. She blushes at the thought of her

budding sexuality and her enlarged breasts. The English subbed version indicates this much better than the dubbed version that is censored. In the Japanese episode Rini gazes at her naked body in the bathroom mirror, musing at her new form: “The long legs and arms that I dreamt of for so long...soft breasts...” (4.31, “The Secret of Pegasus”). Rini wishes Pegasus could see her adult body, and the nudity in the scene suggests a hope that it will arouse him.

However, Pegasus refuses to visit her in this adult state. When she calls on his power to help Sailor Moon, nothing happens. Later, Pegasus appears to her in a dream and tells her that he was drawn to her because of her sweet innocence (4.31, “Pegasus Revealed”). The only way for them to be together is to live inside her child body, inside her innocent dreams. She pleads to be a child again, and so Pegasus reverses the magic spell. She would rather be a child that has no effect on the world than an adult who is undesired. In her reverted state, Pegasus comes to her and leans down to kiss her; as he does this, he turns into his adult human form. On one hand, this seems more like adult wish-fulfillment than a little girl’s dream. And on the other hand, the scene confirms the idea that culture sexualizes children, as the dreamscape encounter imagines that children think about such erotic situations, particularly with adults. Whether or not children have such dreams is irrelevant, as long as adult desires are projected through the child.

An example of the sexualized child that does not include Rini, and perhaps is more alarming and overtly signals the culture of child molesting, occurs in “Cutting It Close,” where a little girl, the same age as Rini, is practicing to be a samurai warrior. The scene cuts away to a bar where the three villains of the episode are discussing who to go after next. Tigerseye gazes at a picture of Miharū, the little girl. He fingers the picture gently while boasting that he already has her in his grasp:

Tigerseye: “Wow, what a babe—totally together. Pretty nose and small mouth. Very cool. [...] I like to tease girls like that.”

Fisheye: “You have such weird taste.”

Hawkeye: “She’s not bad, but don’t you think she’s young? Besides, she looks totally focused. I don’t think she’d be at all into boys at this time. She may be the teasing type, but it’ll have to be in a special way.”

Tigerseye: “I know just what to do. I’m Tigerseye, the special guy. I know lots of ways to change focus. Let me tell ya. [...] Ya gotta know how to talk to girls.”

(4.12, “Cutting It Close”)

Later, Tigerseye approaches Miharu while in disguise, spouting poetic lines about procreation: “Hello there. Spring has come with singing birds and spawning fish” (4.12, “Cutting It Close”). Eventually, he convinces the girl that he is a better samurai than she is by using magic to beat her. In this way, he lures her away from her safety zone by telling her he can teach her to be like him, that she can be his apprentice:

Miharu: “Where are we going?”

Tigerseye: “We must train in a *private* place. [...] First of all, I must warn you the skills that I possess are very hard to learn.”

Miharu: “I know. I’ve seen you in action. I’m ready.”

Tigerseye: “Now, you have to start by closing your eyes.”

Miharu: “Closing my eyes?”

Tigerseye: “You want to be a champion, don’t you? Or don’t you trust me?”

Miharu: “Oookay.”

Tigerseye: “Now, I don’t want you to move until I say so, got it?” (4.12, “Cutting It Close”)

While her eyes are closed, Tigerseye uses his magic to strap her into a restraining device, and he magically wrenches her Dream Mirror out of her body. A Dream Mirror is a small looking glass that resides in everyone’s soul; it reflects beautiful and innocent dreams. By looking inside them, the Dark Moon Circus can see if Pegasus is hiding out in an individual’s dreams. Miharu screams that Tigerseye is a “weirdo,” a term that can very well describe a pedophile, right before he forcefully pushes his head through her Dream Mirror, laughing pleasurably as he invades her. She protests, screaming out in pain as he ravages her dreams. This is not simply a villain searching for his payload; this is a brutal rape of an eight year-old.

Lured away, enticed by figurative candy, the child is powerless to this violation, and the perpetrator could not enjoy it more. One has to wonder about the skills Tigerseye was alluding to, if they were not altogether sexual. The building of trust between himself and Miharu is too familiar, resembling countless stories of childhood sexual abuse, and yet the scene is sanctioned under the guise of childhood innocence—this episode certainly was not edited out or censored in its American format. Miharu is certainly a cute child with wonderfully innocent dreams, and her juxtaposition to evil Tigerseye only confirms the purity of the child. So too, the scene’s cartoon form dulls the sexual content in the scene. After all, he has not actually done anything scandalous. Both their clothing remain on, and he never touches her. The mirror floats *away* from her body. However, the child’s eyes stare vacantly at him, empty and drained of colour, an indication of the psychological anguish inflicted on her. The metaphorical connotations suggest that he has spoiled her innocent dreams by raping her, leaving her with only nightmares.

When Tigerseye does not find what he seeks, he pulls out, unsatisfied, anxious for another such encounter. Miharu is not, and will not be his only victim. In each episode of the season, this type of violation is the norm, and it reflects the predatory and insatiable habits of a child molester. That the villains never actually find Pegasus in any of the Dream Mirrors means they will continue to terrorize until they reach (sexual) satisfaction. Tigerseye articulates out loud that Miharu was a waste of time, and that it is now time for her to die. Her value lies only in what her body can do for the adult. Miharu could not have possibly been ready for such violence, but her cute and sexualized body indicated otherwise for a predator like Tigerseye. This sexual assault may not cause anxiety for the viewers because it is disguised as part of the evil-doer's agenda to find Pegasus. This disguise can allow for the sanctioning of such sexual violence and is similar to the type of pleasure viewers receive from watching violent pornography; the audience is meant to gain pleasure from the spectacle. However, using Miharu's metaphorical sexual assault as a plot device is exploitative of the girl-child in the same manner that the literal rape and murder of women in the popular media is used exploitatively to rouse the hero to action. Furthermore, that Miharu is a target because of the purity of her childhood dreams attempts at once to strip her of her own childhood sexuality and project onto her Tigerseye's.

I would like to bring the discussion back to Rini at this point in order to focus on her relationship with her father. It is important to see how it is structured in both the American and Japanese version. Recalling the episode where Rini passes the kissing booth, "Pegasus Revealed," she is holding a doll in the likeness of Darien. She wishes she could kiss a man *like* her father, but it is not entirely clear whether she does not simply mean Darien himself. On various occasions their relationship demonstrates a certain intimacy, but nothing that seems

unusual. Darien often gives Rini piggyback rides, holds her in his arms, holds her hand, has her over for snacks, etc. In the same vein that American sweetheart Shirley Temple was handled by her male caretakers in her movies, there is often a scene where Rini's already short dress has been hiked up because of all the man-handling she receives. And like Temple's characters, Rini enjoys this attention, and vies for it, constantly in competition with Serena, Darien's present girlfriend, future wife, and Rini's mother (Rini is transported to the past from Serena and Darien in the future). These types of situations and jealousy over Darien are evident in many of the episodes of Season Two when Rini is first introduced and before Serena and Darien know they are her parents. At first, the situation presents a young child who desires an adult man, and these desires remain unchanged once Rini recognizes that Darien is her future father. What transpires in the series is an acting out of Freud's Elektra complex wherein the daughter not only subconsciously desires the father, but very consciously as well.

Rini often talks about "dating daddy," and being better for Darien than Serena. At least in Temple's movies, she never had to fight for daddy's attention. In the Japanese episode "Chibiusa's Little Rhapsody of Love," Darien takes Rini out on a dinner date because he wants to know who her new love interest is, not knowing that it is already an inappropriate target, Pegasus. Darien states: "I wonder how much longer you'll go on dates with me." Darien's tone hints at jealousy over the little girl's divergent affections. She replies: "My darling will always be you" (4.32). This type of conversation, the complete admiration of the adult and the attention Darien lavishes on Rini, is familiar, reminiscent of the types of relationships Shirley Temple had with her father figures on screen, demonstrating what Kincaid calls a "pedophile plot" (Erotic Innocence 121). Kincaid discusses a Temple movie that showcases a handsome man who saves Temple's character from an orphanage, prompting the little girl to confess that she wants to

marry him (121). In another of Temple's movies, Kincaid transcribes a song she sings with her father figure. The surrogate father sings that she has "that certain magic," continuing with "Please let me make this confession, / You are my magnificent obsession." Temple replies: "I love to kiss and hug you. / Marry me and let me be your wife" (121). The father figure in this plot, and many other such plots in Temple's young career, demonstrates the desiring of the innocent daughter, and America's already embedded penchant for celebrating narratives that "invest superior wisdom, virtue, or prowess in the child," and the willingness to worship such a cute, young body (122). Rini, whether viewed through the English subtitles or the American dubbed version, effectively mimics the Shirley Temple type of obsession with childhood innocence and desire. While Temple can croon about being able to marry her father, the audience is never treated to the visuals like in *Sailor Moon*, suggesting that while a Western audience can entertain these desires on a subconscious level, their actual demonstration must remain taboo.

The fantasy of marrying one's father, of kissing and hugging him, is played out for Rini and made possible in an episode that was never aired in America perhaps because of the demonstrated incest. In the episode, Wiseman, the villain of the season, shows Serena a false vision in an attempt to make her more susceptible to his evil powers. He shows her an adult, and very sexualized, Rini kissing Darien passionately. He bellows: "Behold what Tuxedo Mask is doing right now. Tuxedo Mask has bound his heart with that of [Rini.] [...] You have been discarded. Discarded!" (2.40, "Believe in Love and the Future! Usagi's Will Power"). For a moment, Serena is fooled, thinking the two have betrayed her. That this has not actually taken place is irrelevant because *Sailor Moon* can consider it as real based on her previous observations of Rini and Darien together.

The subtleties of this childhood sexualization surface more aggressively in another Japanese episode, “Seeking Friends! Chibi Moon’s Actions” where Serena and Rini publicly fight for Darien’s attention. The dialogue in the English dubbed version is similar, but avoids using words that directly indicate dating. Both Serena and Rini are out with Darien and they argue about who he belongs to: Serena: “[Darien] is on a date with me right now!” Rini: “He’s *my* [Darien]!” They proceed to have a tug-a-war with him. Serena shouts: “Get away from him!,” to which Rini responds: “I don’t want to!” Later on in the episode, during a picnic, Rini wishes to feed Darien food: “Here, I’ll feed you some.” Serena and Rini then fight over who gets to feed him. Serena exclaims: “No, that’s what *I* do!” Rini insists: “No, me!” (3.15). Food and sex go together in an erotic fashion, as Serena acknowledges through her insistence that feeding Darien (sensually placing food in his mouth), is what *she* does.

Moreover, in the English sub of “A Couple Made for Each Other! Usagi and Mamoru’s Love,” Darien introduces Serena as his girlfriend to some friends, to which Rini cuts in, claiming: “I’m his *real* girlfriend!” (4.5). They both cling to each of his arms, refusing to let go. Rini claims that Darien belongs to her, and she assumes a spot on the couch specifically *between* his legs and not on his lap, while Serena rants beside them that Rini is in *her* spot. The connotations of Serena’s claim on the spot between Darien’s legs are recognizably sexual. Serena would not physically be able to fit in such a small spot like Rini, but she references having sex with Darien as the only reason Rini is even around to pester her, and in this way, his penis and alternatively, his affections belong to Serena because it was she who was involved in conceiving Rini. The two girls compete for one man, or at least the possession of certain sexualized parts, as is also shown with their fight over food and his mouth. A Western audience can sanction these images because they appear comical, cute, and endearing, not unlike Temple

who dances the alluring hula for her father figure in *Curly Top* (1935) (Kincaid *Erotic Innocence* 121). However, because both girls are young, one a child and the other a young adolescent, their vying for an adult's attention and desire have them competing with each other using flirtatious methods and a coquettish manner. Each is subtly sexualized in this way, preserving her childhood innocence while assuming adult desire. This image of the coquette is easily identifiable in Western popular culture as a component of the cute tradition.

In the early 1900s, popular girls' dolls were given a coquettish manner and flirtatious descriptions like Miss Mischief, Naughty Marietta, and Flossie Flirt (Cross 51). These types of associations amplified the sexualization of the child in popular America. However, this sexualized coquette tended to be "subdued [...because] [s]he was, in effect, too threatening to innocence. Sexuality was a form of rebellion and manipulation that parents (and an obliging media) feared and wanted to suppress" (66). So while the child was sexually desirable, encouraged to act coyly and seductively innocent, adult society refused to acknowledge that their projections were the source of their own anxieties (Kincaid *Erotic Innocence* 120). The popular media contained the danger of this sexuality by portraying the cute girl as coquettish but also as nurturing and domestic (Cross 67, 79). The child is cute, void, and unthreatening while the mature woman is beautiful and sexually active. The woman who possesses her own sexuality is no longer innocent and therefore poses a threat to the malleability of her body (Kincaid *Erotic Innocence* 120). She is harder to project onto. Cross concurs with this observation; he identifies one of the predominant versions of the innocent child, one that is "a vulnerable but malleable creature on a course to maturity" (191), but one that has not actually entered into sexual maturity. By perpetuating the cute tradition, popular culture sexualizes youth, while consciously denying

the child mature sexuality and autonomy, and therefore exploiting the innocence it has romanticized in children.

So far, in my analysis of *Sailor Moon*, we have seen how the cute body is admired and desired in American popular culture, and how childhood sexuality is contained within the boundaries of adult projections. This perspective does not immediately lend itself to a discussion of powerful bodies and girl-power in the text, nor can the text be manipulated to do so, but the significance of the cute, innocent, and girlish body, its power, and its necessity will become more obvious later. In the meantime, attempts made by the popular media to contain the child in a state of innocence, free of overt sexuality, beg the question: what about the sexually mature woman? How is she treated in popular culture in comparison to the cute, young female? In *Sailor Moon* she is a marginalized character, whose power and autonomy, like the child's, are contained by cultural attitudes. Powerful women are generally recognized as successful career women in society and in pop culture as demonstrated in Fatal Attraction (1987), Basic Instinct (1992), Disclosure (1994), and the newly released, Obsessed (2009). The career woman—beautiful, sexy, and powerful—must always meet her end.

Reserved Heroism: Containment of the Cute Body

There is a stark contrast between the cute heroine and the beautiful villainess in *Sailor Moon*. The emphasis on innocence for one highlights the overt sexuality and experience of the other. Both bodies are contained in a similar fashion. For the child heroine who encapsulates the value of the Japanese *kawaii* and Western cuteness, power is contained by popular culture's denial of her adult form.

The notion that only the liminal adolescent body is allowed power is affirmed in the second part of Season Two when Rini is sent to the Sailor Moon of the past (and the show's present) for protection. In the thirtieth-century, Tokyo is a utopian city called Crystal Tokyo, ruled by Neo Queen Serenity (an adult Serena) and King Endymion (Darien). Their kingdom is under attack by the Dark Moon Kingdom, and Neo Queen Serenity is forced into a deep sleep, powerless to help her family, friends, or subjects. As a mother and a queen, Serena is officially grown up. The other seemingly still adolescent Scouts are the only ones keeping her alive, and the awesome powers that made her a heroine in her youth are gone. As an adult, her magical powers have been contained by duty and responsibility, both as a mother and a wife, which is why she cannot protect her daughter from evil. Only adolescent Sailor Moon can save the future and her future self, its queen. And while Serena may be queen, *potentially* wielding political power, because she has a king, it can be assumed that decisions are ultimately his to make. After all, Earth is *his* planet just as the moon is Serena's and other planets belong to the Scouts. Serena's moon kingdom was destroyed in the War of the Silver Millennium. That she marries into Darien's kingdom suggests that he is the dominant ruler.

This is made all the more clear in "Legend of the Negamoon" when the Scouts are transported to the future to save the king and queen from the Negamoon Kingdom (2.36). Upon arriving, they find the entire kingdom absent. The only one around is King Endymion, but he is an apparition. He has programmed his consciousness into Tokyo's technology, and so he can be anywhere its computers are. He watches over the kingdom while he waits for its liberation; he is in control of its politics and national security. Neo Queen Serenity, on the other hand, has no control over such matters and is completely incapacitated. Moreover, King Endymion goes on to tell the Scouts about how he used to tell Rini bedtime stories about Sailor Moon, "the most

powerful warrior of legend” (2.36, “Legend of the Negamoon”). This demonstrates that Sailor Moon no longer exists in thirtieth-century Tokyo—Rini certainly does not recognize Sailor Moon as her mother. Sailor Moon is actively sought out from the past because of the Queen’s inability to defend the world in her mature state. The series can give its audience a glimpse into the future, but cannot structure a super-heroine narrative around adult Serena, which explains the show’s failure to explore this part of Serena’s life beyond the second season.

It is interesting to note that Rini is too young to be effective and Neo Queen Serenity is too old; both bodies are contained by the confines of age and expectation. Sailor Moon, in her adolescent state, has more power than adult Serena because her cute body is reflective of cultural traditions that center on the non-threatening capacity of an adolescent’s body. In her liminal state, the adolescent heroine is not yet able to perform the duties of a mature woman, nor is she completely dependent as a child figure. She occupies a space of fantasy and possibility, “nestle[d] in a shallow lacuna between adulthood and childhood, power and powerlessness, awareness and innocence” (Napier 119). The female child can have power because it is only temporary, and it vanishes with maturity and the acquisition of a family and domestic duties, leaving the dominant hegemony and patriarchy intact. This reliance on the child as heroine values an in-between and seemingly unthreatening cultural space for female characters. However, this value can only be maintained if the child or adolescent remains sexually inexperienced and innocently naïve. This focus on the heroine’s purity is essential in order to effectively juxtapose the evilness of the experienced, and subsequently fallen, woman. This comparison functions as a way to justify the containment of adult female power via the career woman who seems to ooze sexuality in popular culture texts.

Beauty, Sex, and Careers: The Villainess' Unhappily Ever After

The cute body is a young, pubescent body. Rosemary Iwamura, author of “Blue Haired Girls with Eyes so Deep, You Could Fall into Them: The Success of the Heroine in Japanese Animation,” observes that “[o]lder women who appear [in *anime* and *manga*] are wicked witches, frustrated school teachers, or mothers who come across as either stupid or hysterical” (70). In almost all of the *Sailor Moon* episodes, the female villains are voluptuous older women. For example, in Season One, Queen Beryl looms over her subjects, chest large and ripe with cleavage as she dons a curve-hugging, floor-length dress with a provocative slit up one thigh, her raspy voice oozing sexuality. Even the female monsters are obviously older and womanly, as their long legs and full chests indicate. This contrast they provide is significant. While the heroine is cute and strong, her nemesis is strikingly beautiful and powerful, wielding unimaginable powers of destruction. Shiokawa asserts that “as the heroine becomes more full-figured and powerful, her overall cuteness is the telltale sign of her position in terms of good and evil, so that, in essence, if one takes the typified cuteness from the action heroines, they can be easily transformed into evil and deadly foes” (119). An example of this occurs when Rini is captured by the Negamoon Kingdom, and is fed evil energy near the end of Season Two. The climax of her brainwashing is her transformation into Wicked Lady. Her body grows longer and shapelier; the camera cuts to her thighs, her bottom, her legs, and finally focuses on her enlarging breasts (2.38, “Birth of Wicked Lady”). The camera lingers longer on this area, giving the audience more time to observe the image, a choice that accentuates the fully developed markers of adult sexuality.

Similarly, in Season Three, the same thing happens to Sailor Saturn whose normal body is that of a pubescent girl, slightly older than Rini's. Mistress 9, an evil force, inhabits her body,

turning her into an all-powerful force that can destroy the world (3.34, “Wake Up Call”). As Mistress 9, her body matures in the same way that Rini’s does, showcasing a similar provocative outfit with slits up the side and a plunging neckline; this signals her transition to evil. Both Scouts’ powers are extraordinary, but they are obviously more developed and mature than their former Sailor friends. Their cute factor is replaced by astounding beauty, showcasing their fall from cuteness, and therefore goodness, as they become overtly sexualized. Both characters are destined to fail in this form, as are all other villainesses with a similarly mature and exposed body.

The evil villainess has a mature body that exercises its power through both sexuality and deadly magics. Unlike the cute heroine, the powerful woman is threatening to patriarchal power, and therefore her power must be contained through her elimination. She threatens to dominate the world, while the heroine ensures that the social order remains intact as she fights for “love and justice” (every *Sailor Moon* episode). The heroine inadvertently upholds the patriarchal order, making her body and power less of a threat. Although both the heroine and the villain seem to promote ideals of individuality and ambition, one agenda is more palatable than the other. Shiokawa illuminates the issue in terms of Japanese values:

The notion of ‘cute’ in Japan [...] helps one conform to the age-old aesthetical and social values that favor peace, harmony, and self-discipline, while scorning conflict, disorder, and conceit. Individuality (or more accurately, being unique and standing out in the crowd) and independence (or pronounced self-reliance and self-sufficiency) traditionally are considered threats, especially in women, whose innate power has been a source of religious and spiritual awe in Japan’s traditional religious belief systems. (121)

Destroying the powerful villainess and camouflaging heroic power in a cute package curbs threats to the patriarchy. And while *kawaii* encapsulates power in child form, the contrast demonizes the adult female and chastises her sexuality, effectively devaluing her existence, and essentially labeling her power as unnatural.

This rejection of the powerful woman speaks to a cultural attitude, in the East and the West, about career women. After all, the villainess is undoubtedly a career woman. A career woman is the complete opposite of the domestic woman. She is usually successful, occupying a high-paying and powerful position, and is completely immersed in her job. She is single and has no time for a family. In the popular media, she is also considered sexually aggressive. She uses her time efficiently and economically, has her eye on the bigger prize (world domination), exudes confidence and ambition, is organized, and, in *Sailor Moon* where villainesses are the main Big Bad of the season, functions as a CEO type of character, barking orders and demanding productivity. Maia Tsurumi, author of “Gender Roles and Girls’ Comics in Japan: The Girls and Guys of Yukan Club,” confirms this perspective for Japanese culture, stating: “Evil women tend to be [...] career-oriented” (181). The image of the career woman is empowering, but its progressive appeal dissipates with Sailor Moon’s obligation to thwart the female villain’s plans. The most threatening aspect about a career woman is the power she wields through her sexuality—to acknowledge an autonomous and willful use of sexuality deviates from traditional, and, unfortunately, still entrenched cultural values of the obedient, domestic, and private female.

Such a fear of female sexuality is also very much a part of Western culture. While the sexuality of children was under scrutiny during the Victorian era because of its “perilous [and] dangerous [...] potential” (Foucault 104), the same narrow lens was focused on women’s sexuality. This long-held tradition of denying women sexuality helps to explain the aversion to

the career woman in popular media. In The History of Sexuality, Foucault discusses the “hysterization of women’s bodies,” which is a “threefold process whereby the feminine body was analyzed—qualified and disqualified—as being thoroughly saturated with sexuality” (104). That the powerful villainesses in *Sailor Moon* are demonized and otherworldly harkens back to this belief that female sexuality is threatening and fearsome, and in need of containment.

Childhood sexuality is sanctioned because it is hidden under layers of subconscious denial and also because it is controlled by a patriarchal gaze; overt female sexuality is dangerous because it rejects repression and it can be considered an appropriation of male virility or a threat to patriarchal dominance. In her book Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture, Sherrie Inness suggests that “toughness [...] must be negotiated for many career women. [...] [W]omen are forced to walk a tightrope because they are impinging on male spheres of power” (20). However, most of the time, this negotiation never takes place, and the threat of the female villain is neutralized instead. They come off as mentally, and certainly socially, unstable, and therefore dangerous to society at large: “Typically, these evil harpies are depicted as insane because they dare to usurp men’s power and authority” (172). Moreover, ending the world and/or universe definitely has an air of insanity about it. In Western culture, an intense female sex drive is often unfairly considered an addiction or medical abnormality, and so the “term nymphomania resonates with a sense of the insatiable sexuality of women, devouring, depraved, diseased. It conjures up an aggressively sexual female who both terrifies and titillates men. [...] [T]he twentieth-century notion of a nymphomaniac is embedded in the popular culture: referred to in films, novels, [...] and boardrooms” (Groneman 337). This insatiable sex drive is indicative of the powerful and sexy woman who encroaches on territory formerly reserved for men. The child heroine does this in a different manner, but the single adult female

is far more threatening for her apparent trespass. Furthermore, “women who opt for the career track are to be viewed not merely as unfeminine, but also as destructive who must be themselves destroyed” (Bromley and Hewitt 17). This unstable femme fatale pattern is widely popular in American pop culture although it is a marginalized role.

The career women in the femme fatale films like I have previously referenced are driven so aggressively by their sexuality that it drives them to assert their will on others, causing them to lie, manipulate, blackmail, and murder. In “Nymphomania: The Historical Construction of Female Sexuality,” Carol Groneman observes that many authors in Western history

began to focus on the potential ‘masculinization’ of women who stepped outside the boundaries of family and home. Career women, feminists, educated women who did not marry—a growing number at the turn of the century—were taking on male roles and potentially acquiring the ‘masculine’ trait of aggressive sexual behavior. This concern about women’s masculinization coincided with the development of new psychoanalytic theories that reasserted the essential passivity of female sexuality and underscored the notion that a mature, fulfilling sexual experience for a woman could only be achieved through vaginal orgasm in heterosexual intercourse (Freud [1905] 1962, 86-93). (358-9)

The career women in *Sailor Moon*, unlike the other job-oriented women in the popular media, take no lovers, demonstrating that they can satisfy themselves; they are uncontrolled by man. They do not need the phallus because they assume their own, which is often metaphorically displayed through the staves and swords that they wield; Sailor Moon herself tends to use weapons that are round or oval shaped, representative of the womb (a circle tiara, a crescent wand, a crystal sphere, a purity chalice). Appropriately enough, this round shape is also in

accordance with the moon as a symbol of the feminine in Western discourses. The appropriation of the phallus by the evil women in the series is considered abnormal in the text, and the tension it creates must be alleviated. Interestingly, while the villainesses display a certain kind of feminine performance (appearance-wise), they do not seem to gain power through the feminine realm in the same manner as the Scouts, and their privileging of the masculine realm (like the comic book heroines of the past) is what creates the tension in the text. The Scouts demonstrate that they do not need to assume the phallus in order to have power. The villainesses threaten to eclipse the importance of the Scouts' feminine performance, and this cannot be allowed to happen, and so their masculine performance is demonized.

These female villains are unmarried and have no children in order to emphasize the immorality of their situation, highlighting “the unmarried working women as deficient in humanity” (Bromley and Hewitt 79). Such an aggressive form of sexuality fails to adhere to the norm in the same way that homosexuality does not and is considered deviant (Khanna and Price 29). Renu Khanna and Janet Price maintain that “[n]ormative views of sexuality may be used to reinforce oppressive ideologies, including patriarchy” (29). The evil career woman experiences the notorious glass ceiling in her climb to the top; her world-domination goals are prevented from being realized through her destruction. The termination of a villainess restores the patriarchy.⁵ Only an anti-sexual, restrained, or reformed woman can be allowed to exist in the

⁵ The Sailor Scouts could also be considered as having a successful career; their job is to save the world, and it is an undoubtedly powerful position. Even Buffy acknowledges that saving the world is a career: “I kill vampires, that’s my job” (2.11, “Ted”). And like Buffy, saving the world is a job the Scouts do not get paid for. In the episode “Flooded,” Buffy momentarily laments this fact after her mom dies and money is scarce. She humours the idea of charging victims for saving their lives after Anya suggests Buffy should “[s]tart charging” for “providing a valuable service to the whole community” (6.4). The Scouts hit the glass ceiling as adults; in their mature state their magical powers are no longer accessible. However, they are not destroyed as powerful adolescents because they are not evil and sexually aggressive; the Scouts protect the patriarchal institution that recognizes adult female sexuality and independence as threatening.

Sailor Moon universe, and alternately, the child heroine who enters the text already unsexed and unthreatening to the patriarchy.

An example of a reformed career woman and the importance of childhood can be seen in Season Four through the antics of the Amazon Quartet, a group of girls who work for Queen Nehelena. The girls care a great deal about makeup, food, playing, and friendship amongst themselves. When Sailor Moon cures them in “Golden Revival” they lose their evilness. However, they also lose their powers because they are too far along the maturity spectrum to exist as the Scouts do without black magic; the quartet is more developed physically, donning far more flesh exposing outfits than the Scouts (4.38). However, they are not so old as to be lumped in with the all-encompassing and evil career woman who brainwashed them in the first place. This is why they are cured rather than destroyed. They were corrupted by a woman but not irredeemable. Essentially, these girls were career women in training; the removal of the training also removed the threat that they would go outside the closed system and find careers of their own. The Amazons often talk about how they never want to grow up because that is when playtime stops and duties begin. In “Tomorrow’s Big Dreams,” they claim that they “will not grow up!” (4.33). Unfortunately, unlike the perpetually liminal Sailor Scouts, they cannot stop maturing, and as their powers fade they must enter into society as productive adults, fulfilling culturally appropriate gender roles. Ironically, it is in this episode that concerns a coming of age party celebrating those who are turning twenty that the Amazon Quartet tell the Scouts “never to forget their childhood” because the Scouts have been fantasizing about being of age. The divide is reminiscent of adults who wish to be young again and children who cannot wait to grow up. So while the Quartet may look younger than most of the villains, their experience in terms of

knowing what they would miss if they left childhood is all too familiar to an adult frame-of-mind.

The Glass Half Full: The Child Heroine Redeemed?

The child is decidedly different from the adult. Cross points out that children, in various stories, are considered adult saviours, free of adult responsibility and duty (53). In this regard, the Sailor Scouts, as young girls, fit this American tradition of cute quite accurately despite their Japanese origins. Despite its negative sexualization, the child is considered free and liberated, and therefore is able to exist in a liminal state. Girl-power narratives like *Sailor Moon*, *The Powerpuff Girls*, and *Sabrina the Teenaged Witch* demonstrate that the child and the adolescent still exist within a valuable, coveted, and therefore powerful body. The adolescent's state is worshipped and envied: adults try to mimic it physically, and at times try to relive it mentally. That adults want to achieve youth for as long as they can is indicative of this power. This notion of power is in direct contrast to the perspective that adult infantilization only proves childhood fetishization. The child is no doubt a blank slate, which, as well as signifying a canvas to be painted on with whatever fathomable or unfathomable desires, also signifies that children and adolescents have not yet achieved maturity and can be anything they themselves desire, like super-heroines, for instance.

Innocence has come to signify sexual allure in its flexible and unrealized quality. For example, although Serena must first be nude to transform into Sailor Moon, she is noticeably void of female genitalia—"unsexed and sexualized" at the same time (Kincaid *Erotic Innocence* 106). However, the power of the blank canvas is aptly demonstrated by these transformation sequences present in every *Sailor Moon* episode. While the Scouts transform nude, their breasts

are void of areolas and the “vulva is always smooth, hairless, and seemingly imperforate” (Orbaugh 220). This can function to open up the girlhood body for the audience’s own projections, or alternatively, to highlight the unique transformative space of adolescence.

Sharalyn Orbaugh, author of “Busty Battlin’ Babes: The Evolution of the *Shōjo* in 1990s Visual Culture,” reveals that

[t]he feminine but imperforate body featured in these scenes underscores [...] the power of the battlin’ babes[, which] derives from the tension between their sexual potential and their refusal to activate it. The absolute omnipresence of the naked twirling transformation sequence for *shōjo* [girl] heroes (never for *shōnen* [male] heroes) may be because they must entirely reveal their liminal bodies—sexually mature, as seen from the full breasts, but ‘pure’ and somehow still childish, underscored by the lack of pubic hair and imperforate genitalia—in order to take on their power. Again this tension between sexual potential and innocence is an old, old trope of girlhood[.] (220)

Essentially, the child heroine represents the pure and virginal state of girlhood, and her power depends on maintaining this asexual state. If the girl hero is without the things that would make her sexually mature, there is no danger of her reaching reproductive maturity, and therefore losing the powers inherent to her liminal body.

While one might see these curvy transformation sequences as explicitly sexual, I argue that they are also inherently *spiritual*. Although the figures are naked on the screen, they exude an ethereal quality. That they are suspended in midair and their outlines are filled in with brilliant hues and light elevates their bodies to an almost godly status, and it proves their bodies are pure and worthy of the awesome and cosmic powers their bodies wield. This also makes

sense if we consider their divine connection to the Roman pantheon of gods and goddesses, or more significantly how these sequences reflect the common Christian narratives of alchemy and transformation.⁶ Furthermore, the Sailor Scout body exists for that moment in a complete state of raw power. This state confirms the value of childhood in popular culture, but in a manner that does not necessarily or solely engage in the culture of child molesting. That the state of childhood is elevated in comparison to adulthood *is* encouraging, particularly for an intended audience of children who themselves may feel powerless in their small or changing bodies. The Sailor Scout transformations *do* highlight the sexual potential of the adolescent body, which can then be projected onto by adult desires. However, these magical transformations, where the body is filled in with a blank surface, can also indicate the myriad potential of that very same adolescent body. That blank canvas can potentially transform into anything or anyone, whether masculine, feminine, policewoman or lawyer. In this way, Sailor's Moon's blank transforming body can privilege the projections of the *child's* desires.

The Scouts transform into a version of childhood, *and* girlhood, that can finally act on its own, and perhaps resist the sexualized projections of the adults inside and outside the text. The Scouts' sexy bodies may entice an adult audience, but their bodies also threaten those who would actively seek to abuse them. The child can finally exercise power over the adult. So while the *Sailor Moon* canvas is painted in sexual hues, the cute Scouts successfully resist the metaphorical and physical advances of adult enemies within the story. The Scouts actively resist their sexualized role, or the consequences of that sexualized role, by effectively defending

⁶ "Six days later, three of them did see it. Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain. His appearance changed from the inside out, right before their eyes. His clothes shimmered, glistening white, whiter than any bleach could make them" (*The Message* Mark 9.2-3). In Christian theology, Jesus was believed to have undergone a transfiguration before the eyes of his disciples, which is a momentary transformation into a divine entity. This was before he died, rose again, and ascended into heaven. The emphasis here is placed on a mortal man undergoing spiritual alchemy, taking on aspects of the divine and becoming closer to God.

themselves against rape and sexual harassment. Ideally, Sailor Moon's sexy clothes should not make her a target for sexual aggression, no matter how many enemies missed that memo. A prime example of this resistance in action is in "The Past Returns" when the Scouts are confronted by one of the Negaverse's strongest enemies, Malachite, a bleach-blonde emblem of masculinity. He uses boomerang blades to tear at the Scouts, ripping their clothes to shreds, revealing more flesh than usual. This image is a metaphorical attempted rape, but it is only an attempt; Sailor Moon destroys Malachite before he can finish the deed (1.39). As much as Sailor Moon as a child is victimized, she is not helpless.

I acknowledge that the liminal bodies of the Sailor Scouts are problematic. Child heroines, or the Japanese *shōjo*, are "presented with a choice between libidinal activity or power and autonomy. There is no scenario by which a woman can have both: she can have adult heterosexuality within the strictures of wife-and-mother [...], and she can have power only while in the not yet socially grounded state of the phallic virgin" (Orbaugh 226). This is one of the most glaring arguments against the powerful bodies of girlish heroes, and this seemingly empowered feminine space is not without its drawbacks. Because child heroines are only young girls, existing in liminal spaces, their powers are contained. This certainly does not have a positive message in terms of an adult body. Power is available to girls, but only before they are old enough to marry and perform the duties of a wife. Womanhood is therefore contained within traditional ideas of gender. However, within a fantasy space and as a children's show, heroines of *shōjo* are empowering, if but for the sole reason that the images in these narratives provide young girls with an image of power. During a time when a girl's body is changing, in a perpetual state of flux, *Sailor Moon* showcases a transformative space, valuing its importance, rather than eclipsing the process and power of puberty. The Scouts' transformation sequences

are on display for the audience, and this is a very different treatment of the heroic figure who transforms into an alter-ego. Wonder Woman, Superman, and The Flash change in a whirlwind of speed, and other heroes like Batman are suited-up off screen. Even Buffy changes into her patrolling gear behind closed doors. For the Sailor Scouts, this moment of transition is emphasized, and their shifting identities become a site of vast potential. This is the site of the girlish, and it is incredibly powerful and valuable to those who occupy its transitive space.

At the time of its translation, *Sailor Moon* was doing “something unprecedented in children’s television: providing a strong role model for pre-teen girls” (Kingwell 83). Andy Heyward, “president of DIC Entertainment, the California-based company that adapted the show for North America” insisted that, back then, “[t]here[...was] very little, if anything, out there starring a girl” (qtd. in Kingwell 83). As a young girl myself, I felt marginalized on two levels: one as a child, and the other as a girl. *Sailor Moon* was able to give me power on both fronts when I was the most powerless, and I agree that “[b]y denaturalizing girls’ weakness, [even within a contained space,] girl power discourse frees girls [...] from this pattern of disempowerment and subordination” (Hains 3).

Rebecca Hains acknowledges that “reclaiming the girlish may create as much harm as good” (5). Nevertheless, I argue that femininity and the girlish are valuable in themselves, and as a part of feminism. Reclaiming the girlish is not without its problems, but it does open up avenues of power for those who occupy its demographic. *Sailor Moon* and other girl-power narratives can function as a site of resistance, and they can also open up a space for social and cultural discourse on the importance of such girlish bodies. The child’s cute body is both revered and exploited in popular culture, and is simultaneously a symbol of power and powerlessness.

In the next chapter, I consider why the bodies of the Scouts matter, focusing on what makes them effective girl-power images. I look at essentialist gender categories, power as gender neutral, sexuality, normative femininity, female masculinity, and gender performativity. The Scouts take up the position of both subject and object, and how they negotiate this shared ground demonstrates their resistive construction within a culture that still ascribes to dominant gender norms.

Chapter Two

“She’s Got the Power:” *Sailor Moon* and Bodies That Matter

A crash of thunder.
 A brilliant flash of light.
 A battle has begun
 And only one will win the fight.
 Danger in the air,
 Destroying everything in sight.
 The time has come to right the wrong
 With Prism Power might!
 She’s got the power.
 A desperate struggle,
 The strongest takes it all.
 The battle rages on
 Until the weakest finally fall.
 A vision fills her heart
 And gives her strength that’s pure and true,
 And when it seems that all is lost
 She knows what she must do.
 She’s got the power.

~ English Dub: Song: “She’s Got the Power” from “Final Battle.” Season Two, Episode Forty-One

What is a body that matters? Often, a body that is considered valuable in Western society is one that adheres to societal norms—one that is biologically easy to identify and categorize as heterosexual, white, male, masculine, attractive, middle-class, and able-bodied. How, then, is value ascribed to bodies that differ from this rigid standard? And what are the consequences of deviating from this norm? Is a body that tries to access the same power as masculinity merely a weak mimicry or faulty imitation? In *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”*, feminist critic Judith Butler suggests that it is possible to restructure these markers by turning regulatory law against itself “to spawn rearticulations that call into question the hegemonic force of [such] regulatory laws” (2). We can recognize that gender and the realms of masculinity and

femininity are socially constructed by understanding that norms are not natural, fixed, or even possible to fully attain. Gender “becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one” (Gender Trouble 9). *Sailor Moon* displays female bodies that play with such gender norms, while simultaneously rearticulating what constitutes a powerful body. The show features an array of different bodies, in particular, the alien bodies of the evil-doers, and while it privileges white, cute, and feminine bodies, a program choice which speaks to the power of the attractive white body, these feminine bodies also perform masculinity by asserting their bodies actively on the world, and in doing so deconstruct the myth that naturalizes male power and essentialist gender categories. The Sailor Scouts step outside their prescribed gender roles both in Japan and in America, and demonstrate not only the fluidity of gender and sexuality, but also the possibility of reascribing meaning and power to aspects of traditional or normative femininity.

Sailor Moon reascribes meaning to the female body beyond its capacity as a sexual object, and rearticulates femininity as an area of power, authority, and strength; this is in direct contrast to traditional concepts of masculine superiority. The Sailor Scouts diminish the notion that behind every powerful woman is an even more powerful man. They function independently of male influence, claiming power on behalf of the girlish.¹ However, they do not simply mimic masculinity. The Scouts demonstrate that masculinity and femininity are both aspects of a performance, revealing the impossibility of mimicking a natural aspect of maleness. In this regard, even males can only ever perform masculinity, and perform only in varying degrees, never to perfection (Halberstam 20, 27). Judith Halberstam, in her book Female Masculinity,

¹ Granted, Darien (Tuxedo Mask) also fights on the Scouts' side, and does influence Sailor Moon in terms of the pep-talks he gives her, but he has nothing to do with the power she controls or lessons she learns as part of an all-girl fighting group. I develop this point further in Chapter Three.

indicates that while masculinity is hard to define, society finds the masculine ideal easy to spot. This ideal is generally found in “‘heroic masculinities’ [that] depend absolutely on the subordination of alternative masculinities” (1). I do not mean to suggest that the Scouts merely appropriate these heroic masculinities or that they settle for “the rejected scraps of dominant masculinity in order that male masculinity may appear to be the real thing” (1). The Sailor Scouts move along the gender continuum, changing as their bodies require a certain performance. For instance, when the Sailor Scouts must stop the villain of the episode from hurting the general public, they switch into high gear, relying on the physical realm of a masculine performance, helping Sailor Moon to moon-dust him/her. This type of performance works for fighting day-to-day annoyances. Alternatively, when a battle requires more than adrenaline, the scouts must harness the power of a feminine performance to vanquish the Big Bad of the season. They commune with one another, relying on collectivist principles that value nurturance and support.

This type of gender play is indicative of the types of performances people in society already engage in, demonstrating that the performance of the Scouts is not part of some fantastical space of impossibility. There is no essential gender. Halberstam states that “many, if not most, sexual and gender identities involve some degree of movement (not free-flowing but very scripted) between bodies, desires, transgressions, and conformities; we do not necessarily shuttle back and forth between sexual roles and practices at will, but we do tend to adjust, accommodate, change, reverse, slide, and move in general between moods and modes of desire” (147). The Scouts adapt to each individual situation, garnering power from their capacity to perform in general. Their hyper-femininity does not disguise their male performance or make it more palatable; rather, the Scouts reclaim both femininity and masculinity for the female body,

and they do not necessarily try to dupe its audience into accepting their performance by looking more feminine. The Scouts' identities consist mainly of performing femininity inside and outside of their transformation, but they are not limited to all tenets of normative femininity, which is why they can access gender performances outside of its perceived confines. Moreover, because there is no masculinity that can claim realness or materiality, the Scouts present a threat to this culturally constructed ideal because they prove that it floats free from the male body.

Butler identifies gender performance in relation to the regulatory norms of sex wherein they “work in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality and, more specifically, to materialize the body's sex, to materialize sexual difference in the service of consolidation of the heterosexual imperative” (Bodies That Matter 2). In other words, regulatory norms give the illusion that sex and gender are fixed, natural, and connected so that heterosexuality is perceived as natural and normal, and anything in opposition to it is abnormal. However, Butler extends that this myth does not take into account that even heterosexuality itself exists along a continuum. The flexibility and fluidity of gender, sexuality, and sex destabilizes the notion that only some bodies are valuable because *no* body can achieve the norm.

Not only does the show's representation of the Scouts' bodies demonstrate that the tenets of masculinity are attainable by their female bodies, but it also demonstrates that femininity is just as attainable for male bodies. Some of the characters in the show are male who identify with femininity, and in such cases, their bodies are *still* powerful and are not treated as deviant. For example, in Season One, Zoysite, a powerful foe, is an effeminate character with long lashes, a petite frame, and long, wavy hair. He preens over his hair and pretty face, and uses pink petals to attack his enemies. These aspects do not make Zoysite any less threatening to the Sailor Scouts. In fact, he is one of the most threatening and powerful of all the male generals under

Queen Beryl's command, as he comes closest to killing the Scouts and Tuxedo Mask. Similarly, in Season Four, Fisheye from The Amazon Trio is a transvestite. He wears makeup, stilettos, and dresses; he concerns himself with shopping and fashion, and only targets men when attacking on behalf of his evil master, Mistress Zirconia. Unfortunately, both these villains are easily made into girls in the Western adaptation because their femininity is readily recognizable for an American audience. Normative ideals are emphasized in order to avoid the tensions that would arise in the text if both villains were not castrated. A Japanese audience perceives male femininity differently. In its original context, girliness is not just about girl-power and reclaiming the girlish for the female body, but of ascribing power to femininity in general so that anybody can claim it, effectively demonstrating the divide between sex and gender. The transformative, ever-shifting space of girlhood reflects this concept of shifting gender identities. Therefore, *Sailor Moon* celebrates girliness as a form of power in itself because it caters to the power of gender performance. Moreover, even though gender is a performance, the Scouts prove that bodies are powerful and valuable because of what their bodies *do* when performing either femininity or masculinity.

Powerful Bodies in Motion: The Dynamics of Taking Up Space

Despite the negative connotations surrounding the sexual adult female, as indicated in the last chapter, it is significant that the vast majority of the bodies of power in *Sailor Moon* are female. In every season, except the second part of Season Two where Wiseman wreaks havoc on Earth, the overarching enemy is a woman. So too, almost all of the powerful minions are women. While there *are* male generals of evil, their commands come from a female source and they are obviously weaker than their commanders. Queen Metalia (Queen Beryl), The Tree of Life,

Mistress 9, Queen Nehelena (Mistress Zirconia), Sailor Galaxia—all of these archenemies and their powerful servants exist within bodies that wield unimaginable power. It is important that both good and evil bodies of power are female, and that they are not an exception. The Sailor Scout team is comprised of girls, with Tuxedo Mask as the only exception. Still, he does not have any magical powers, and is even absent in the last season as he dies in the first episode. Many of the side characters in the show, such as the females that the Scouts rescue from time to time, are all accomplished businesswomen, popular icons, artists, doctors, and agents. Their successes are what make them targets for the bad guys. The enemy of the season is always in search of ambitious people to steal energy from because the more powerful, determined, and successful the victim, the better the energy. And while the female victims may need rescuing from otherworldly forces, they are independent outside the realm of the supernatural. What this indicates is that, unlike post-feminist narratives, particularly those of the 60s and 70s, the strong female is not an exception to the rule within the *Sailor Moon* universe. The females in *Sailor Moon* construct a new cultural ideology, one in which autonomy, power, and action are universally available to girls.²

Even though Sailor Moon may not be attacking patriarchy in an overt way in every episode, her defiance of a traditionally passive female role allows her to attack ideological constructions of the weak female other. Dawn Heinecken, author of *The Warrior Women of Television: A Feminist Cultural Analysis of the New Female Body in Popular Media* states that “while all television female heroes remain white, pretty, thin, mainly straight, and not particularly muscular, they still offer hope of a different way of seeing” (152). Heinecken extends on this hopeful note: “The female hero is a great place to investigate the meanings of

² I recognize that the *Sailor Moon* universe privileges the affluent white body, and ignores the lower class or racialized body. This is undeniably a problem for claiming power for the female body as a whole, but the text is doing more in terms of rewriting the rules of female power and access than previous heroine narratives.

female power circulating in society because she so visibly assumes a role defined as masculine and powerful. As the 'star' of the series the female hero not only assumes the central role but destroys conventional ideas of the female body as passive, as to be looked at as controlled by men. The female hero *takes up space*" (21). Even if space is taken up by a liminal body, the body is active and is seen as moving within the landscape and not a static part of it, or seen as separate from the active world (26). The fact that *Sailor Moon* is not a show about a dominantly-male group of super-heroes with a token female demonstrates how the female body takes up space in this narrative. Rather than seeing a screen peopled with gruff, muscular male bodies, most of the camera shots are jammed with the feminine bodies of the Sailor Scouts. However, unlike pornography (or any run-of-the-mill mainstream TV show, movie, ad, etc.) that can also be considered jammed with female bodies, the Scouts are not passively waiting to be acted on, or penetrated. They are the penetrators: Sailor Mars burns holes in the bad guys, Mercury freezes them with her ice blasts, Jupiter electrocutes them with her lightening, and Venus shackles them with her chains. The other Scouts line up the villains so that Sailor Moon can knock them down; this is a recurring element in the series, and it highlights their active bodies taking up space in the public sphere. They do not simply take up space; they dominate it.

Heinecken further articulates that *Buffy*, which is similar to *Sailor Moon* in many ways (and very different in others), functions like a male-centred text in that the series "shows the subject's power to affect her world; yet the series' focus on consequences and the construction of an identity formed through a web of relations means that as Buffy acts she is also acted upon. This view acknowledges the ways that we are often contained in the world but at the same time acknowledges the power of individual action" (130). The Sailor Scouts, like Buffy, develop both their civilian and heroic identities through their relationships with one another, and the growth

that occurs affects their capacity to change the world. As the Scouts act, outside forces inevitably attempt to counter their actions, but as their enemies try to turn the Scouts into passive objects, the power of the Sailors' individual actions demonstrates their subject position despite the contained space of adolescence and the sexualized schoolgirl. In this regard, while it may be true that the male gaze is at work, this does not limit their ability to act, and they are able to demonstrate girlhood power within this voyeuristic sphere. Their individual action, in many ways, works against this containment, countering it through their active identities and the strength derived from their friendship. The Scouts are often seen running towards the enemy, rather than from them, demonstrating their active heroic state. Even Sailor Moon, who is a crybaby, runs to the scene of the crime and stays to fight despite her whining. And while the screen is also full of flashes of Sailor bum, thigh, and breast, these flashes only emphasize what type of body is occupying the screen—not a muscled hero, but a visibly soft, feminine and empowered body.

Gazing At the Female Body: Watching the Sailor Scouts Perform

It is important to recognize, of course, that the female hero still functions as a sex object, in the East as well as in the West, and her objectification hampers her ability to be taken as an unproblematic vessel for female empowerment and the Western concept of girl-power. Laura Mulvey's influential theory on the male gaze is often applied to images of the white female body in popular Western media. Her significant text, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," provides a lens from which to read the female hero in Western culture. While her commentary addresses the women of classic cinema, such as those from film noir, her notion of a threefold effect of the male gaze that objectifies and fragments the female body into passive pieces of

viewing pleasure is still appropriate in modern criticism. There are three gazes according to Mulvey, all of which are gendered male: one is the camera's (most commonly controlled by a man or in *anime*'s case, produced, drawn, and directed by a man); another gaze belongs to the hero within the narrative; and the last to the audience. The gaze of the spectator is directly influenced by the interaction of the first two gazes (1180). The woman is thus considered the passive receiver of the active male gaze. Moreover, women are also objectified in film by the camera's focus, particularly when directors use the effect of editing females in fragments, for instance, focusing on a leg, a foot, or breasts (1176). Quite obviously, *Sailor Moon* caters to this sort of fragmentation and voyeurism. As I have mentioned, when Rini transforms into Wicked Lady, the camera focuses on her lengthening thigh and her developing bust. The Sailor Scouts also transform nude, and reveal upper thigh, panty shots, and ripped clothes as they fight battles. They are, indeed, on display and idealized (1177). This constitutes much of the ammo critics like Mary Grigsby use when analyzing *Sailor Moon*. Such critics narrowly focus on Sailor Moon as the perfect representation of a character who performs for the pleasure of the male gaze.

For example, Victoria Anne Newsom and Grigsby describe the Scout body as "fetishized by the clothing that the Scouts wear" (Newsom para.27). Grigsby acknowledges the connection between the sailor suits and the Catholic schoolgirl uniform in pornography both in the East and West in which the schoolgirl's uniform is eroticized and fetishized; she quotes George Lewis in her article: "Japanese male sexual fantasies do run around sailor suit fetishes and sexual encounters with young girls. *Sailormoon* in this respect is a natural on both counts!" (197). Newsom confirms Grigsby's observation by discussing the series in terms of its female creator, Naoko Takeuchi, and her admission about the Scouts' sexualized look. Newsom states:

The production of this cartoon appears to be affected by the fact that men produced it. Takeuchi suggests that there is a male perspective: this perspective can be easily interpreted in terms of Mulvey's "male gaze" that gives visual priority to the male viewpoint. In particular, Mulvey's suggestion that woman is displayed as spectacle on screen seems evident in the presentation of Sailor Scout bodies in the *Anime*. These Scouts are clearly [...] depicted as sexually attractive creatures. (para.38)

However, unlike Grigsby who firmly maintains the diminished status of the Sailor Scouts because of this sexualization, Newsom insists that while "the physical appearance of the Sailor Scouts certainly could capture and hold the attention of the male viewer [...] it would be a mistake to relegate these animated characters simply to sex-symbol status, because their actions and hero qualities indicate that this extreme femininity is only part of a complicated female character" (para.8). The actions of the Scouts deserve more attention than the fetishized clothes that adorn their powerful bodies. Newsom also makes the point that Takeuchi is delighted with the way her characters look because her intention was to make them appealing to young Japanese girls, with a hope that her creation would also be absorbed into the Western market. In this way, even girls can reproduce the male gaze by accepting the Scouts' bodies as pretty and alluring. However, critics like Newsom argue that the Scouts are doing much more than sitting pretty as passive objects. If Sailor Moon and her friends were merely eye candy her value as an individual and as a heroine would be moot.

While the Scouts are obviously objectified as sexual objects, they are also the action makers in their plot, a role which grants them a subject position, for they act just as much, or perhaps more than, they are acted upon. Containing the female body means to fetishize her

feminine parts so that she is unable to make up a whole; such a component could be a body part or a clothing style, like the sailor suit. However, this fragmentation is countered by the fully developed identities of the Scouts. More emphasis is placed on the development of their personalities—their likes, dislikes, fears, achievements, strengths—than is placed on the visually alluring clothes that they wear. The bright colours of the sailor suits reflect the very different and vibrant personalities of the characters, and like the multi-coloured Powerpuff Girls, “each expresses femininity and power in differing ways” (Hains 29). After all, Sailor Moon’s uniform changes many times and into many colours as she matures; wings are added, more elaborate bows appear, and her jewelry gets bigger. Her costume gets more elaborate as she herself becomes more elaborate, as dimensions are added to her personality. The costume is as much a part of a Scout’s character as is her flesh. It materializes from within her body, reflecting the source of her power, which is not necessarily gathered from her baubles (a tiara, a choker, earrings, a brooch, and red knee-high boots). Therefore, the sailor suit is revealed to be more than an appeal to male titillation, as discussed in Chapter One, her costume is re-inscribed to represent the power of the girlish. The costume is indeed feminized, but that is the point. The frilly pink, albeit skimpy, sailor suit plays up the heroine’s feminine attributes in a reclamation of the girlish and girlhood as a site of power.

Mulvey, responding to psychoanalytic theorists such as Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, argues that, within a psychoanalytic framework, a female body represents a castration threat; only through objectifying her body is the threat dismantled, or eased (1175). Sailor Moon and the Sailor Scouts complicate the notion of the male gaze through their roles within the narrative as bodies of action. The Scouts are the makers of meaning (1173) because of the way their girlish performance rearticulates the schoolgirl body as powerful, and they see their

surroundings through a female gaze as they gaze back at the world with their large eyes.

However, critics sometimes superficially focus on the group as vapid and girly, dismissing the Scouts as makers of meaning. Frances Gateward, author of “Bubblegum and Heavy Metal,” observes that it is important that the Scouts demonstrate “the ability to be physical while retaining traditional femininity;” and she acknowledges the importance “of the power of collective action” (277). However, she also asserts that

[t]he potential radical impulse of “Sailor Moon” is never realized [...] because the girls are too highly sexualized. They are presented as immature. Their favourite activity when not crime-fighting is shopping, and, as many have noted, they obtain their power through the use of jewelry and makeup. They transform from ordinary schoolgirls into their super-heroine personae by holding jewelry in the air and, in the Japanese version, yelling “Makeup!” (During the conversion process, fingernail polish and lipstick magically appear on their nails and lips.) (277)

While the Scouts are forced to grow up faster than expected of other girls, they do not abandon their childhood completely. This immaturity helps to remind the audience that these are not adults. The Scouts’ penchant for jewelry, makeup, and silly crushes mark them as girlish, and the emphasis placed on these things ensures that their girlish bodies and interests are assigned value, which reveals the fallacy that power can *only* be found in adulthood or performed masculinity.

When the Scouts *do* perform masculinity, the feminine realm is not portrayed as inferior. The Scouts undermine gender stereotypes by adopting heroic behaviours originally considered solely available to men. They are, in some regard, a military force, not always organized, but

incredibly efficient and effective. According to Sherrie Inness, these authoritative roles are “still strongly coded as male in our society” (21). However, the Scouts, and other similar girl-power heroes, “openly show that they are more than capable of taking over men’s roles, even the toughest of them” (21). For instance, Lita (Sailor Jupiter) is a martial arts champion. She relies on her magical power, but generally as a last resort or in a long-range attack. Otherwise, she kicks, punches, and lunges at her enemy. Her discipline and resolve are strengthened by isolated retreats where she can meditate on her powers, such as in the episode “People Who Need People.” She recognizes that, in battle, “usually [she] takes over when [physical] strength is needed” (3.16). This type of preparation and focus are characteristic of traditional male icons of martial arts like Bruce Lee, Jet Li, Jackie Chan, and also the wise warrior found in narratives like The Karate Kid. Lita’s character brings to mind Buffy’s in terms of physical skill. I am reminded of the episode in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* where the heroine hears a commotion in an alley, sees a boy about to be eaten by a vampire, and quickly dispatches the enemy. The boy gawks at Buffy, mystified: “How’d you do that?” Buffy: “It’s what I do.” Boy: “But you’re...you’re just a girl.” Buffy: “That’s what I keep saying” (5.22, “The Gift”). Buffy’s performed masculinity astonishes the boy she rescues in the same way Lita’s startles her enemies. Buffy and Lita are *just* girls, and that is the point. Their visible girlishness gives them an advantage in battle, for the feminine realm is often dismissed as ineffectual. While their performance seems unnatural to the male audience, the heroines do not see themselves as anything more than girls, as if it were perfectly natural for their bodies to be as powerful as they are. Lita trains rigorously to be as physically, mentally, and emotionally powerful as she can be while still existing within a girlish space. Her transformation into a Sailor Scout does not give her these skills; they are honed through self-motivation and practice.

In addition, before Sailor Venus was part of the Sailor Scouts, she was a solo heroine called Sailor V. There are countless videogames starring her and there are movie posters advertising her feats plastered all over Tokyo. Serena initially looks up to her as a role model for heroism, “wish[ing] she could be like Sailor V” (1.1, “A Moon Star is Born”). Sailor V is a vigilante hero, seeking justice over bank robbers and muggers. Before she was linked with the femininity of her sailor namesake, Venus, Roman goddess of love, she was the masked heroine who terrorized Tokyo’s seedy underground, actively seeking out bad guys in less than desirable places.

Furthermore, one of the most noticeably masculine performances on the show is Amara’s. She not only ascribes a powerful role in terms of her heroic abilities and agency, she also looks and acts the part. She is a tall, lean blonde with short hair. Her passion is racecar driving, and she is content while driving anything fast. However, unlike the muscular body of Sarah Connor in *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991), Amara’s is soft and graceful. When Serena and Mina first meet Amara, they do not know she is female. They form a crush at first sight, and both hope to be his girlfriend. Amara’s beauty is such that even Serena, destined to be with Darien, forgets about her relationship status. The title of the Japanese episode where Amara is introduced is aptly called “A Wonderful, Beautiful Boy: The Secret of Haruka Tenoh,” because that is how the two girls first describe the newcomer (3.3). The emphasis is placed on Amara’s beauty, a word choice that is never made in terms of Darien; the description works to privilege Amara’s softer body.

Heineken indicates that the “‘hardness’ of the hero’s body reflects his mastery of himself and others. Though told through the medium of the body, male-centered texts repeatedly establish the primacy of the will and mind, consequently offering a rejection of the realm of the

flesh at the same time they punish or repress other aspects of the feminine” (35). Amara’s body may be in better shape than the rest of the Scouts’, but I believe the intention is not to efface femininity; rather, Amara’s performance provides an alternative perspective to what constitutes a valuable female body, one that can visibly ascribe masculinity and femininity simultaneously. She does not enter onstage with phallic guns blazing and a ton of ammunition on her back in order to assert herself. Her performance is not as exaggerated as Sarah Connor’s, and it certainly is not meant to undermine the importance of femininity in the show. For instance, although pantsuits and bulkier clothing often hide Amara’s chest, her bust is quite prominent when she dresses in her skin-tight racing suits. In this way, her racing pastime does not eclipse her femininity; rather, it emphasizes her feminine body.

Amara’s existence seems to highlight that femininity exists along a continuum, and that her gracefulness, despite liking stylish male attire and fast cars, resides in the realm of the girlish. Her passion for the raceway need not be gendered male in the same way Lita’s passion for martial arts need not be. This sort of mindset is affirmed by the show in the Japanese episode “Save Friends! Moon and Uranus Join Forces.” In the episode, Amara is confronted by a group of male racers after beating them all in a motorcross race. They sneer at her: “You won and you’re a *girl*.” Amara angrily replies: “It doesn’t matter if you’re male or female. Whoever is the fastest wins!” (3.9). Amara encroaches upon the masculine sphere of racing in order to claim the sport for the most capable body, regardless of sex. Interestingly, when Amara transforms into Sailor Uranus, she dons the same sexy sailor suit and makeup that the other Scouts do. This aspect does not devalue her civilian identity that is less girly than the rest of the Scouts because it plays with the idea of gender fluidity and performance. Amara is comfortable in her sailor suit as much as she is in her racing gear. Both professions are her passion, and both are significant

parts of her identity. She is comfortable while battling evil in a skirt, and does not consider the wardrobe change as an impediment to her heroic duty or an aspect that diminishes her skill as a racecar driver. These examples demonstrate how the Scouts perform masculinity, assuming powerful roles originally reserved for male heroes.

The idea of taking over these masculine roles may imply appropriation, a term saturated with negative connotations. In terms of girl heroes, the fact that the Scouts do so much more than the men in their texts while assuming these roles suggests more than a simple appropriation. The Scouts work fluidly inside their authority roles, demonstrating the ability to adapt and improvise when situations get tough. On behalf of the girlish, the Scouts solve their problems, but in a manner that differs from a traditional preference for male violence and force. The Scouts' methods and execution of those methods sets aside a valid space for their masculinized roles of power and autonomy while decentering essentialist gender categories by using feminine methods of combat like forgiveness, healing, and compassion. These emotions are not a weakness as they are for traditionally masculine heroes. Sailor Moon's emotions act as a well of power, and they ensure her success. Again, I wish to borrow from *Buffy* because I believe the writers for the show have done a wonderful job of articulating the merits of femininity and girl-power. For Buffy too, her emotions give her strength; they are what ensure she does not die like all the other Slayers.

In the two-part episode where Buffy meets the other Slayer, Kendra, for the first time, Kendra reveals to Buffy that family, friends, and school are all distractions, and that "[e]motions are weakness." She reprimands Buffy, telling her that she "shouldn't entertain them." Buffy's reply summarizes the power of the feminine realm of emotion: "my emotions give me power—they're total assets" (2.10, "What's My Line?- Part Two"). It is this privileging of the emotional

realm that allows Buffy to be the incredible fighter and hero that she is because she attributes her imaginative and adaptive fighting to her emotions. Kendra's steely and isolationist mindset reflects a preference for traditionally masculine values, which relegates feminine emotions to the realm of the weak. This response mirrors that of the male enemies in *Sailor Moon*. In "Too Many Girlfriends" Malachite calls the next Negaverse victim "beautiful;" this compliment evokes Zoysite's jealousy, infuriating her (or him depending on the version). Malachite chastises his lover: "Shhh. Don't be mad. Queen Beryl will see your anger as a sign of weakness" (1.25). Alternatively, for Sailor Moon, her emotions give her the same imagination allowed to Buffy. Both heroines trust their intuition instead of relying entirely on their physical senses. In "Jupiter Comes Thundering In," Zoysite has started collecting Rainbow Crystals imprisoned in Negaverse monsters who were changed into innocent humans by each crystal's good power. Once the crystal is removed, the monster is free, and the human is no more (1.21). Despite this fact, Sailor Moon looks beyond the monster, considering an alternative scenario to elimination. In this story arc, the newly transformed enemies are relentless in their attacks against her, but she refuses to destroy them. Instead, she uses her Crescent Wand to heal them; the monsters then revert back to their human state. If the crystals instill humanity in Negaverse monsters, then Sailor Moon's emotions and love are enough to substitute and reinstate the very same humanity. Sailor Moon does not currently know that once the seven Rainbow Crystals are collected they will form the Silver Crystal, Sailor Moon's most powerful weapon. The Silver Crystal belongs to her because it is a part of her; it simply harnesses the power of her heart, her humanity, which is why its smaller components have the humanizing effect on the monsters they reside in.

This same humanizing power is evident in the final episode of the series where Sailor Moon must face Galaxia, the universe's most powerful enemy. All of the other Scouts have been defeated while trying to kill Galaxia, but Sailor Moon refuses to harm her, risking herself to heal Galaxia's corrupt body, as she senses something beyond her evil exterior (5.34, "Usagi's Love! The Moonlight Illuminates the Galaxy"). These examples demonstrate that even though they often use violence to destroy their enemies, the emotions of the Scouts—their alternate feminine weapons—are no less effective than traditionally male weapons. For Sailor Moon, there are no causalities of war. The preservation of life is paramount. The Sailor Scouts can perform masculinity by inserting themselves into roles of power while maintaining the traditionally ascribed feminine values of harmony, nurturance, and forgiveness.

These girlish heroines are different from traditional heroes because they value femininity *and* masculinity instead of privileging only the masculine. Alternatively, a heroine who seems to privilege only a masculine performance like Sarah Connor, and who is tougher than tough, functions retrogressively as a female role model because "the image of heroines wielding guns and muscles can be conflated within the binary gender codes of the action cinema to render these women as symbolically male" (Brown 53). These images do not actually do anything new for the female body if the performance is so exaggerated that it is still culturally coded as completely masculine. In "Gender and the Action Heroine: Hardbodies and 'The Point of No Return,'" Jeffrey Brown quotes Jeanine Basinger on her idea of the anti-feminine, hardbodied action babe: "Putting women in traditional male action roles, without changing their psychology, is just cinematic cross-dressing" (53). Brown extends on this point by pointing out that the muscled heroine "work[s] for many critics to efface femininity altogether" (59). For the girl-power hero, femininity is not a weakness. This substitution of feminine values while assuming a position of

power originally reserved for masculinity demonstrates a challenge to “the notion that there is a ‘natural’ connection between women and femininity and between masculinity and men” (Inness 21). Because masculinity and femininity are ways of acting, guided by a set of social constructions, and are indicative of an impossible ideal, everyone can only ever poorly imitate either gender category. The Scouts have access to “a shifting, plural, socially constructed body with multiple potentialities” (Holland et al. 21). The masculine signifiers of the girl-power heroine disturbs mainstream society, and her feminine signifiers demonstrate an identity that works within traditional femininity while working towards stretching those boundaries to reflect value.

The whole point of reclaiming the girlish is to use the power embedded in femininity to work *for* the heroine to rearticulate the concept of the hero, who has historically existed in the masculine realm. “In a culture where women are often considered the ‘natural’ victims of men, tough women rewrite the script” (Inness 8) because they embody the qualities of both genders, demonstrating an optimized identity. The heroine is not victimized because of her femininity; she becomes empowered by it. The Scouts effectively “[police] those who prey upon the feminized” (Susan Owens qtd. in Magoulick 733). I do not mean to suggest that femininity has anything to do with being female as is evident by many of the effeminate and powerful male bodies in the show, but that the Scouts use the stereotype of femininity to prove its value in general, for any body. Their complex identities demonstrate a “carefully choreographed performance that either a man or a woman might engage in” (Inness 179). The Scouts can look pretty and cute, care about fashion and makeup, and still have energy left over to perform masculinity through the independent and authoritative roles they assume.

The Sailor Scouts may wear pretty clothes, sparkly jewelry, and makeup, but they are not one-dimensional sex objects. Within a Western context, the acceptance of a heroine like Sailor Moon helps to

articulate the ways that media representations of women are changing and are suggestive of cultural changes in regard to women's public power. They provide useful models for helping us understand the social meaning of the female action hero. Above all they point to the ways that there is no singular 'meaning' of the female action hero. She is frequently a contradictory figure, functioning simultaneously as eye candy, and as a figure of power, reaffirming the notion of strength as a 'masculine' quality at the same time that she reveals the fallacy.

(Heinecken 29)

We can accept that strength is a masculine quality, but it can be arbitrarily applied to any body, male or female. The fallacy is accepting that only a male body has claim to such a quality.

While the work of critics like Butler and Halberstam identify the fallacy that masculinity is superior to femininity, and therefore more deserving of power, it cannot be disputed that Western culture values masculinity and ascribes it power. Halberstam attributes this ascription to the indifference to female masculinity, stating that "this widespread indifference [...] has clearly ideological motivations and has sustained the complex social structures that wed masculinity to maleness and to power and domination" (2). In this regard, Sailor Moon *does* reaffirm the notion of strength as a masculine quality, but she also reveals the fallacy by demonstrating that her female and feminine body can ascribe that power. That is not to say that she appropriates the power of masculinity, which would indicate a borrowing of its power. The series dispels the notion of the "privileged reservation of masculinity for men" (Halberstam xii). Sailor Moon and

the Scouts demonstrate that anyone has access to the power of masculinity *as well as* the power of femininity because strength exists here too. Their feminized bodies are necessary to solidify their female bodies' right to realize their potential, for although "they act as males, they are not 'representative males'" like earlier comic book heroines appear to be (Newsom para.49). The Scouts' performed masculinity is not so overt or privileged as to diminish the value of their femininity.

While many feminist critics believe that mainstream society is resisting alternative gender identities (Inness 21), contemporary media appears to be fascinated by gender fluidity as it is performed in girl-power texts like *Sailor Moon*. The message in such texts stresses the need for female youth to

develop and exhibit attributes traditionally associated with femininity *and* masculinity to survive in today's society[.] [The] representations of teenage girls subvert the two-gender system that grounds the ideologies of not only patriarchy and heterosexuality but also liberal and cultural feminism. In doing so, such [texts] signify an important turning point not only in the media's representation of girlhood and female empowerment but also in our society's understanding of gender and subjectivity. (Kearney 140)

That the other Scouts refuse to be pacified by rigid and traditional ideas of femininity or masculinity indicates their agency in the production of meaning; they are the makers of their own identities, a fact that lends itself to both Butler and Halberstam's idea of gender fluidity and the myth of male power as natural.

The Naked Body: Sailor Moon's Most Powerful Suit

Sailor Moon presents audiences with an image of aggression, beauty, brains, courage, compassion, strength, and innate power all focused into a hyper-feminized package: “Sailor Moon is popular for both the female and the superhero parts of her character. As such, she is something of a hybrid, embodying conventions both of boys’ culture– fighting, warriorship, superheroes– and *shōjo* (girls’) culture– romance, friendship, and appearance” (Allison 259). The Scouts’ power does not come from skills learned from a man, technology designed by a man, or given to them by some patriarchal god. Their awesome power comes from within, supplied by their own training, the cosmos, and the forces of nature. This innate link to nature, as if the girls themselves were natural forces, suggests a form of feminism that basks in the powers of the nature goddess and the regenerative and extensive powers of the natural world. The notion of this inner power amplifies the appeal of girl-power narratives, which recognize power, agency, and strength as natural to the female body and a right, as the Scouts indicate. It is not something to be allowed to them or given to them by men.

Newsom articulates that the Sailor Scouts have “a natural (and supernatural) right to power” (para.51). This point is supported by Sharon Ross, author of “Dangerous Demons: Fan Responses to Girls’ Power, Girls’ Bodies, Girls’ Beauty in ‘Buffy the Vampire Slayer,’” who discusses the female heroine’s right to power in relation to Buffy, who shares Sailor Moon’s penchant for the girlish: “Young girls today are still largely encouraged to focus on their status as objects of the male gaze, and to not threaten that status by ‘appropriating’ male physical prowess. Buffy offers the message that [...] physical prowess is not masculine and therefore it is a right of females rather than something to be appropriated” (para.26). The Scouts have a natural-born right to their powers, which has been theirs throughout countless rebirths.

However, they do not just fight back as victims, often they seek out confrontation and initiate aggression in their fight for a safe universe.

Female bodies in mainstream media are often represented as white, thin, and sexualized, meeting “contemporary standards of female beauty” (Heinecken 133). However, a female body like Sailor Moon’s offers a disruption from “traditional representations of female bodies and female power” (133). Sailor Moon’s body is a body that matters. She is depicted in the last episode of the series completely nude and presumably vulnerable. However, it is in this natural state that her female body has the most power. Yes, she plays to the male gaze, but she also affirms that once her baubles, pretty clothes, and makeup are stripped off, underneath is a more powerful vessel, unadorned and naturally powerful. Her most significant feat while in this state of awesome power is in the final episode in Season Five when she fights the most powerful, but corrupted, Sailor Scout: Sailor Galaxia. The universe is full of Sailor Soldiers of planets, moons, and stars—all of who protect their portions of the galaxy. In fact, “Sailor roles are created to exclude males; only females can succeed in their jobs” (Newsom para.49). That the Sailor Soldiers of the galaxy are all women is significant; it suggests the military might and power of the female body. Sailor Galaxia’s body is the most powerful body in the universe, and she has been infected by Chaos. Long ago, the universe and its Scouts fought Chaos, but most Soldiers perished in the battle. Galaxia imprisoned Chaos in her own body, as it was the only prison that could hold its negative energy, which in itself speaks to the power of the female body and its capacity to contain a living force. Millennia pass until finally Chaos completely overwhelms Sailor Galaxia; she travels to Earth to destroy the remaining Scouts and take over the universe once and for all. It is significant that the final showdown in the *Sailor Moon* universe transpires between two female bodies of immense power. The world, the universe, depends on the

outcome of the fight, which suggests that the most powerful attribute in the whole galaxy rests within the activation or embracing of the feminine and the girlish because the Scouts are the sole heroes in the universe with the power to stop Chaos.

In *Sailor Moon*'s Japanese series finale, "Usagi's Love! The Moonlight Illuminates the Galaxy," Galaxia destroys Sailor Moon's star seed, which is essentially her soul or her essence, rendering her incapacitated and unconscious. Her sailor suit melts away, and her naked form falls to the ground, covered by only the tattered ribbons of her costume. Her nails lose their polish, her lips their sheen, and her tiara, choker, and earrings fade. Serena gains consciousness, however, because her love for the world will not let her die. Serena is confronted by an ethereal vision of herself as an angel, who declares that she is The Light of Hope, which shines in all humanity (5.34). This vision returns her star seed to her and she transforms into Princess Serena, complete with the flowing white dress and the royal jewelry. The Sword of Sealing materializes for the empowered princess to use. The sword is supposed to trap Chaos once it kills Galaxia. However, Serena takes the phallic symbol of hostility reluctantly and awkwardly. In the process, angelic wings spread out from her back. It does not automatically dawn on her that she requires a weapon to save the world. Her confused look and utterance, "Sword?" seem to indicate this. The vision's voice tells her to "Please defeat Galaxia with this, the Sword of Sealing." Her reluctant "But" is cut off by the voice's urgent demands. Galaxia attacks her, and Princess Serena loses the sword, refusing to pick it back up.

While Serena dons a pair of pure white wings, demonic black wings open up from Galaxia's back, and her outfit turns the same colour; this is an obvious representation of evil. Galaxia takes on Devil-like characteristics. That Sailor Galaxia was once the most virtuous Sailor in the galaxy is fitting since she is corrupted by Chaos, which is akin to Lucifer's

corrupting pride and fall in Christian theology. In this way, the fight for heaven and hell is feminized. As well, because the two participants symbolize the magnificent battle of one of the world's most popular meta-narratives, the point is driven home that *Sailor Moon* is just as epic; the battle is for the entire universe and the souls of all living kind. And when the battle begins, unlike in male action narratives where one girl exists amongst a group of men, there is no token female; there are *only* female bodies in this fight akin to the biblical narrative where there are *only* male bodies in the fight for human souls.

Princess Serena uses the ideal of communal values to fight Galaxia. She only picks up the Sword of Sealing once it is knocked from her hands to defend herself from Galaxia's sword, not to attack. Sailor Moon pleads with Galaxia: "There's no reason to fight. Nothing is gained by fighting." Galaxia shatters the Sword of Sealing. She sneers: "You don't have a Soldier's courage or pride, do you?" (5.34, "Usagi's Love! The Moonlight Illuminates the Galaxy"). While Sailor Moon's refusal to fight may make her appear passive, resorting to traditional feminine notions of preserving harmony, the narrative suggests that it takes more courage to forgive evil than it does to mindlessly fight it. Over the course of the series, Sailor Moon evolves to the point where she can do more than fight evil; she can transform it. She is not the Rambo character that thunders in, but the intuitive heart ready to redeem. However, as much as Sailor Moon's ball gown is representative of her femininity, she cannot save the world in this frilly form; she requires a stronger suit. As Sailor Moon repeats her plea that fighting only hurts people, her princess garb disintegrates, leaving her body naked. Only Serena is left, not a Sailor Soldier. Her makeup, nail polish, and accessories are gone. She declares that she loves the world despite its cruelties and sadness. In this state, Serena accepts the negative blasts of energy Galaxia hurls at her without complaint. Galaxia screams that the "world can't be protected by

someone who won't fight. It's because of [her] weakness that all [her] friends are gone!" Serena acknowledges that only when she truly gives up are her friends gone.

In this scene, Serena foregoes physical violence in favour of compassion and possible redemption, which frees her from the accusation of merely mimicking heroic masculinity. Soft spoken and calm, Serena declares she will never give up. In this moment, the Silver Crystal, representative of her human heart, materializes in her chest. She flies towards Galaxia, without armour or a weapon, taking numerous painful blasts of negative energy. Serena swears she will save Galaxia by embracing the world despite its sin—despite the chaos that resides in everyone's heart. Again, Galaxia accuses Serena of giving up her Soldier's pride, believing that only Sailor Moon can potentially win, not Serena. Serena is the only one who sees the "small hope left in [Galaxia's] heart" and she perseveres to transform her back to her original state of purity. With her wings back and her body open, there is nothing shielding Serena's obviously girlish body, vibrant with power. A presumably vulnerable state is her most powerful one. "I don't want to lose you or anyone!" yells Serena as she reaches out to grab Galaxia's hand, initiating and preserving the idea that there is great strength in female relationships and that they are necessary for female well-being. As Serena grabs Galaxia, Galaxia's darkened exterior cracks away, revealing the beauty underneath.³

It is significant that Sailor Galaxia's rebirth is as naked as Serena's saviour-form because it affirms the idea that the female form is powerful, regenerative, and indestructible. Serena accomplishes what Christianity's patriarchal God could not do; she saves the truly fallen.

³ I have already acknowledged how Sailor Moon takes steps to protect/perpetuate the patriarchy in Chapter One. By destroying or saving the monstrous woman, Sailor Moon only dismisses the career woman, and the show participates in the misogynist dialogue that considers the ambitious woman as dangerous. When Sailor Moon neutralizes the female monster she paves the way for becoming the traditional, conservative figure of femaleness that patriarchy privileges (she becomes Darien's Queen). In this way, Sailor Moon's power is both transgressive and conservative.

The two girls hold hands as Galaxia relates her gratitude in a feminine moment of love and companionship. It is also important that this moment, despite their nudity, is not sexualized. The removal of the sailor suit actually diminishes the protagonist's sex appeal, as does the homosocial nature of the scene. What is left is a female gaze, one that sees the female form as innately powerful, wielding power as a subject, rather than merely observed and powerless as an object. The two girls discuss where Chaos has gone, Serena believing that both Chaos and the Light of Hope exist equally in people's minds and that humanity can save itself with the tools they are given, allowing all girls to essentially be Sailor Soldiers. Serena ends the Sailor Wars that have been repeating since the creation of the galaxy by being herself, which instills in a female audience the idea that girls can do anything, including saving the world—maybe not magically, but perhaps politically, ecologically, or socially. This is the essence of girl-power.

The Lived Experience of the Heroine: Serena's Humanity

It is important here to recognize the difference between a male and female body of power within American popular culture. Heineken reveals the importance of the mind and spirit in male-centered action movies; the hero must break away from the pain inflicted on his material body. In this way, he can transcend the inferior realm of the body; he is "independent of the experiences of his body and the world around him" (230-1). She recognizes the difference within heroine narratives in which a super-heroine like Buffy constructs her identity through "process, relationship, and the physical sensations and experiences, both positive and negative, of being in the world. Whereas in traditional texts the body is a means to an end, in *Buffy* the experience of the body is the end itself, a move that works to valorize the 'feminine' realm of the body. Heroic transcendence for Buffy is inextricably linked to a sense of bodily continuance"

(231). Like Buffy, Sailor Moon's experiences of the body are what give her power, and its indestructible quality is a testament to the strength of her spirit and mind. For Buffy, just like for Sailor Moon, most episodes focus not on the physical prowess of the hero, but on the "lived experiences of her body" (138). Sailor Moon's struggle is grounded in her body—in being in the world, in loving her life in the world so completely that she endures its pain. Ultimately, her task is to save the world, to put herself between the enemy and its destruction, effectively taking the blows for its salvation, accepting the pain and grief so that others might live. Buffy also does this in every episode, but it is emphasized more so at the end of Season Five when she jumps to her death to save the world, although she is fully clothed. While this is self-sacrificing, harkening back to traditional beliefs about the female role and the feminine, Sailor Moon is placed in a position of power in *choosing* to be the world's defender, essentially willing to die for the sake of the world, and in her most vulnerable state—without clothes, weapons, or her friends. Moreover, her great expanse of wings (a part of her and not her costume), symbolizes her link to the heavenly. However, unlike Christ, she does not die; her body remains because its strength and its pain, or lived experience, reflects the power of her immortal soul and human heart. That she remains in the material world, rather than dying as a female martyr, empowers the feminine body and celebrates its value.

Newsom discusses how Sailor Moon's translation into American television ensured that audiences saw "a powerful and feminine character whose power is dependent on her femininity; femininity is a literal requirement of being a 'Sailor Scout'" (para.2). Therefore, the traditionally feminine characteristics of empathy, compassion, and trust are deemed valuable, as it is not Sailor Moon who saves the world, but Serena, who believes in humanity, even at the heart of Chaos. For all of Serena's foibles (being a crybaby, eating too many dumplings, sleeping in late,

failing at school), she succeeds at being human, at seeing the humanity even in the most corrupted bodies. This is her true strength, which is why it is important that she be stripped of her super-heroine markers in fights such as in the series' finale, so that the audience recognizes Sailor Moon as Serena, as a girl in the world—someone young girls can relate to. The title of the last episode is called “Usagi’s Love! The Moonlight Illuminates the Galaxy,” which hints at who and what saves the world—not physical force or magic, or even Sailor Moon, but rather, Usagi’s—Serenas’s—love for the world. And while critics like Newsom claim that “Sailor Moon has abilities and strengths Serena does not associate with herself” (para.32), I suggest that stripping off the sailor suit does not diminish Serena’s power; instead, it only emphasizes powers she always had and will always have. In this regard, her powers are not an exception to the rule, as many other super-heroine shows seemed to suggest, but the rule itself. The female body—the feminine body—is powerful, and Serena need not be performing masculinity at all times for it to be as such.

In the next chapter, I expand on some of the concepts and situations raised in this chapter, focusing on gender and sexuality, and how the show deals with the gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality. *Sailor Moon* can be considered largely a heterosexually romantic text in that the love between Darien and Serena takes precedence over many of the other relationships; however, there are resistive elements embedded in both main characters’ interactions with other characters that help to highlight the subversive aspects in the program, and I wish to flesh these out, particularly in regards to the Japanese original that does not ignore alternative gender identities or orientations. My focus is on female homosociality as a major component of the Sailor Scouts’ power. I will be highlighting the importance of the all-girl group in terms of the female space it creates within the text, one that values the feminine and

female experience. This over-arching emphasis on women who love women in the series helps to rearticulate the influence of patriarchal, hetero-normative society, revealing the ways in which the text internally and externally resists and accepts dominant ideologies.

Chapter Three

“My Only Love:” A *Sailor Moon* Romance

Deep in my soul,
 Love so strong
 It takes control.
 Now we both know;
 The secrets bared,
 The feelings show.
 Driven far apart,
 I'll make a wish
 On a shooting star.
 There will come a day,
 Somewhere far away,
 In your arms I'll stay,
 My only love.
 Even though you're gone,
 Love will still live on.
 The feeling is so strong,
 My only love.
 You've reached the deepest part
 Of the secret in my heart.
 I've known it from the start,
 My only love.
 My only love.

~ English Dub: Song: “My Only Love” from “A Crystal Clear Destiny.” Season One, Episode Thirty

In the previous chapter I discussed the significance of the Scouts' femininity, and what constituted bodies that mattered within the *Sailor Moon* universe. What I wish to focus on now is how these powerful female bodies, and other bodies of interest in the series, engage in and resist normative gender relationships. The show, particularly the Japanese original, presents the audience with alternative ways of constructing romantic and erotic relationships, which is predominantly evident through various queer identities. The subversive and resistive strands in the narrative are reflected through the treatment of hetero-normativity and homosociality. In Eve

Kosofsky Sedgwick's influential text, Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire, the term homosociality "describes social bonds between persons of the same sex[.]" detailing the "structure of the continuum of [...] 'homosocial desire'" (1). Sedgwick's text largely discusses male homosociality; she asserts that male homosociality focuses on "male friendship, mentorship, entitlement, rivalry, and hetero- and homosexuality" (1). That is not to say that male homosociality is synonymous with homosexuality. Sedgwick argues that homosociality tends to breed homophobia. This assumed connection is Sedgwick's focus in terms of why there is such a stark and necessary division between male homosociality and male homosexuality in Western culture. It is the inclusion of women that ensures the heterosexual nature of these male relationships. An example would be a father agreeing to give his daughter to a particular man in marriage, or in the situation of rivals competing for a woman's affection. In terms of marriage, Sedgwick cites Levi-Strauss: "The total relationship of exchange which constitutes marriage is not established between a man and a woman, but between two groups of men, and the woman figures only as one of the objects in the exchange, not as one of the partners" (26). Sedgwick identifies that "the true *partner* is a man" (26). In a way, homosociality promotes hetero-normativity because it ensures the success and perpetuation of patriarchy, as a woman is generally used as property to be exchanged between men, solely promoting male interests. Without the presence of the woman, male bonding threatens to be homoerotic, and as such, in many societies, becomes socially inappropriate.

Homosociality is a part of patriarchy, as it entails "men promoting men's interests" (3). Sedgwick explains this point by quoting Heidi Hartmann's definition of patriarchy: "relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women" (3). But what

does it mean for women who wish to promote the interests of women? Can women establish interdependence and solidarity in the same capacity? Are women operating within a patriarchal structure, or can they exist/operate outside of it? *Sailor Moon* demonstrates the ways in which girl-power functions as a powerful tool of resistance, dismantling gender ideologies within patriarchy by refuting the importance of compulsory heterosexuality. The Scouts' homosociality does not function on the same level that male homosociality does in terms of the exchange of men as property or sexual commodity, but it does highlight the importance of female interests, independent of male influence and control.

Female Homosociality and Hetero-normativity: Resistance and Compliance to Hegemony

A prominent reason I was attracted to the *Sailor Moon* series as a child was because of the elements of fairytale romance. The first season of *Sailor Moon* is predominantly a love story. The season revolves around the mystery of Tuxedo Mask discovering who he is and the secret identity of the Moon Princess. His amnesia makes him forget his past life with Princess Serena as part of the Moon Kingdom; however, he still knows he is Tuxedo Mask and can transform, though he does not know why. Serena, too, does not fully understand who she is, and still cannot believe she is Sailor Moon. Serena, the other Scouts, and her guardians (cats Luna and Artemis) have all forgotten that she is the Moon Princess, the only one capable of harnessing and wielding the Silver Crystal (the most powerful artifact in the universe). Eventually, the truth is discovered; unfortunately, Queen Beryl (the archenemy of the season) kidnaps Prince Darien and feeds him evil energy. The remainder of the season focuses on Sailor Moon's attempt to reverse Beryl's brainwashing so she and her prince can finally be together. The first half of the following season, *Sailor Moon R* (the R is for romance), again focuses on Serena returning

Darien's memory to him so that they might again be together. The series no doubt perpetuates dominant ideology by representing the heterosexual romance "as the great female adventure, duty, and fulfillment" (Rich 31). However, resistance to the same ideology is evident in the series, and it is not limited to subtext.

As an adult, I came to see other romantic relationships present in the series beyond Serena and Darien's heterosexual romance. However, these alternative relationships can only be observed in the original Japanese *anime*. The most obvious example is the love that Amara and Michelle share. Amara (Sailor Uranus) and Michelle (Sailor Neptune) are in a lesbian relationship, and all of the other Scouts accept their relationship and are often jealous that they make such a beautiful and graceful couple. In Season One, the effeminate Zoysite and virile Malachite are both very much in love with each other, and this aspect, in some regard, redeems their evil existence as generals of the Negaverse. In the US, however, these diverse bodies are denied power entirely by catering to and encouraging a strictly hetero-normative gaze. Biological sex and relationship status are changed to suit this model, devaluing and overlooking even the existence of these alternative identities. In the English dubs, Michelle and Amara are made to be cousins; this type of familial relationship attempts to explain away their closeness. And because Zoysite's feminine performance is so convincing, American producers of the series hired a female voice actress to neutralize the threat of seeing him and his lover kiss and hug on screen. The same can be said for Fisheye in Season Four. He is a member of the Amazon Trio, a group of evil henchmen, and was also castrated in the English adaptation because his penchant for fashionable girlish styles and his crush on Darien were too threatening to an American audience.

More transgressive still are the bodies of the Sailor Starlights in Season Five (*Sailor Moon Sailor Stars*). The Starlights are girls outside their transformation, and boys when transformed. Interestingly, they don even skimpier costumes than the Scouts, showing off an even more developed female body. As boys, they are members of a band called The Three Lights, who croon love songs about their beloved to masses of crushing girls, but as girls they are vessels of extraordinary power, rooted in feminine reproductive attributes. For instance, their titles—Sailor Star Maker, Sailor Star Healer, and Sailor Star Fighter—represent the reproductive powers of nature in the universe, which is channeled through their female bodies: the maker creates, the healer preserves, and the fighter destroys. These attributes replicate the ordered and chaotic powers of nature. So too, some of their attacks have interesting names, like Star Gentle Uterus, which centers on female reproductive powers.

The bodies of the Starlights are fascinating because they can be viewed as transgendered or hermaphroditic; this association projects power onto such a body. As males, they can exist as famous pop icons, wielding power outside the feminine in the public sphere, which seems to separate them from Sailor Moon's team. I admit that the gender dynamic demonstrates an interesting interpretation of the gender dichotomy. The Starlights perform masculinity in both their disguised male states and their transformed female states, which, like Sailor Uranus, bridges the divide between masculine and feminine, as their noticeably feminine bodies perform masculinity according to traditional models better than some of the men in the show. Their performance demonstrates Butler's concept of drag and Halberstam's idea of multiple masculinities. Drag queens and kings can be very convincing while performing gender because they recognize mainstream models and idealized constructions, and the Starlights are no different. Their no-nonsense, rational and practical approach to fighting and life is in stark

contrast to the playful, boy-crazed antics of the inner Scouts. Does this difference admonish femininity, treating it as a weakness? I believe, like Amara's character, that the Starlights' bodies function as a demonstration of the gender continuum—that female bodies are just as powerful and valuable while performing in a largely masculine manner as they are when performing aspects of normative femininity.

The Starlights' transformation from one sex to the other also demonstrates the fluidity of gender, shedding light on its inability to be fixed to a certain body. These identities highlight gender's performative nature and the arbitrariness of biological sex. And like Amara who falls in love with another woman, one of the Starlights, Sailor Star Fighter, falls in love with Serena, which further complicates the hetero-normative text in the series. Despite the fascinating gender constructions of the Starlights, it is easy to see why their story was avoided. Many believe that the American producers of *Sailor Moon* did not dub the last season because of its controversial nature. There really was no way to alter the Sailor Starlights in a way that could accommodate a hetero-normative ideology. Watching the Starlights transform, seeing their flat, muscular bodies morph into curvaceous and busty ones is quite the visual treat—one that cannot be explained away or dismissed.

It is important to realize that these alternative identities are “deeply embedded in Japanese traditions,” and can be found consistently in *anime* and *manga* (Cornog and Perper 5). For the Japanese, these alternate ways of existing do not tend to be a plot point, and are often only addressed in passing (Solomon para.3). Instead, Japanese *anime* demonstrates the value of these different bodies as they exist normatively in the narrative. The queer relationships between men in *shōjo anime* like in *Sailor Moon* are rather popular in Japan, and are called *YAOI*. Erotic relationships between women are called *yuri*. *YAOI* is created by “women for female audiences,

especially adolescent girls[,]” which is exactly what *Sailor Moon* is—a female-created text (Solomon para.5). Because these homoerotic relationships are created by females for females, it can be suggested that such alternatives to hetero-normativity help to destabilize the binaries between male and female, masculine and feminine.

Once I had access to the subbed episodes, I was able to take these alternative bodies and relationships into consideration, particularly the romance between Sailor Uranus and Neptune, the complex identities of the Starlights and Sailor Star Fighter’s interest in Serena, and the group dynamic of the all-girl fighting team, and observe the structure of a rigid hetero-normative story dissipate to reveal far more fascinating things beyond the surface narrative. The queer and homosocial aspects of the show demonstrate a dimension not particularly discussed in *Sailor Moon* scholarship. I argue that it is the non-hetero-normative and homosocial aspects of the program that situate the show as a girl-power text and that are responsible for the narrative’s function as a site for exploring the girlish, the feminine, and the female body. Beyond Serena and Darien’s relationship are the true tenets of girl-power, subtly hidden in the American dubs, but far more accessible in the Japanese original.

While Sedgwick’s theory is important in terms of analyzing male bonds, it can also be used in terms of analyzing female relationships and the social bonds formed in all-female groups, as in *Sailor Moon*, *Charmed*, *The Powerpuff Girls*, or *Xena, Warrior Princess*. Sedgwick acknowledges the female dynamic, stating that the structure of sexuality in women demonstrates the diacritical opposition between the “homosocial” and the “homosexual”[; it] seems to be much less thorough and dichotomous for women, in our society, than for most men. At this particular historical moment, an intelligible continuum of aims, emotions, and valuations links lesbianism with the other forms of women’s

attention to women: the bond of mother and daughter, for instance, the bond of sister and sister, women's friendship, "networking," and the active struggles of feminism. [...] [W]omen in our society who love women, women who teach, study, nurture, suckle, write about, march for, vote for, give jobs to, or otherwise promote the interests of other women, are pursuing congruent and closely related activities. Thus the adjective "homosocial" as applied to women's bonds [...] need not be pointedly dichotomized as against "homosexual"; it can intelligibly denominate the entire continuum. (2-3)

In this manner, the close social bonds of the girls in *Sailor Moon* demonstrate a restructuring of the patriarchal order; they are dependent on themselves for survival, and the inclusion of a man is not necessary. However, unlike male homosociality, female bonds do not necessarily breed homophobia, as the series demonstrates with Amara and the rest of the girl group. Amara's queerness does not expel her from the group, and it even allows the other girls to explore their sexuality and the possibility of homoeroticism; each girl has a crush on Amara and actively seeks out play dates with her even after they know he is a she (3.7, "Lita Borrows Trouble," 3.10, "Mixed Emotions," 3.19, "Everything's Coming Up Rosy"). Hers and Michelle's presence does not threaten the dynamic of the group the way it would with close male relationships.

For the girls of *Sailor Moon*, Amara and Michelle demonstrate a suitable alternative to heterosexual romance in which boundary crossing is not taboo; rather, it is empowering. Michelle and Amara have crossed over from friendship, slipping easily into a queer space. In fact, as Sedgwick suggests, it really does not entail boundary crossing at all, for the relationships of women demonstrate "the relatively continuous relation of female homosocial and homosexual bonds" (5). The relationship between Amara and Michelle is empowering because it is not based

on power relations present in a gender hierarchy; Michelle and Amara are not considered property to one another, or to be given away by anyone else. To this effect, all of the Scouts have absent parents, except Serena whose parents disappear from the narrative as the show progresses. This is an element that effectively does away with any father figure that may threaten this self-possessing freedom.

Moreover, Amara and Michelle's romantic relationship, and even the subsequent interest in Amara by the other Scouts, does not particularly promote or entice a male gaze. Although Amara and Michelle are sometimes sexually suggestive, their relationship is based on love and mutual respect, a plot development that may very well ensure a resistance to a hetero-normative viewing, which contrasts to the sexual relations between women in pornography who are very rarely displayed for the pleasure of women. Women in pornography function as "objects of sexual appetite devoid of emotional context, without individual meaning or personality—essentially as a sexual commodity to be consumed by males[;]" even "[s]o-called lesbian pornography" functions in the same manner (Rich 20). According to Martha Cornog and Timothy Perper, "*anime* and *manga* represent living evidence of what nonwestern, erotophilic, and female-positive sexuality can look like" (4). While the two are not overtly sexual in the narrative, their sexual encounters are hinted to off-screen.

One of the most amusing suggestions can be seen in "The Glitter of the Stars That Call Each Other! Haruka and Michiru Join in the Battle," in which Michelle has just finished playing her violin for an audience and is undressing in her change room. When Amara enters, Michelle asks Amara to unzip her. Amara's face reddens and the audience is kicked out of the room (5.14). Amara and Michelle's relationship is a representative characteristic of girl-power narratives. It is the strength of the homosocial bond that they share that elevates their

relationship from purely male fantasy to a relationship that is naturally powerful, mirroring the over-arching and dynamic power of all the relationships in the girl group. Much of the Sailor Scouts' strength and power can only be tapped when combined, and sometimes their greatest difficulties can only be fixed when their relationship focuses on the love they all share for one another. This male-free relationship demonstrates a female continuum nicely in that it makes visible the interrelation, connection, and equality within the Scouts' homosocial bonding.

Perhaps the most interesting relationship is that of Seiya (Sailor Star Fighter) and Serena. Seiya is a Sailor Soldier from another galaxy. On stage, The Three Lights sing love songs to a mass of girls who pine for them; however, their songs are secretly addressed to a woman, Princess Kakyuu, who they have come to Earth to find. They hope their princess can hear their love song and return to them. Sailor Star Fighter's love and devotion to her princess is mimicked in her admiration of Serena. Seiya instantly falls in love with Serena, setting up a unique relationship situation because of the instability of Seiya's gender. It is not likely that the Starlights transform into men on their own planet; this aspect seems particular to their situation on Earth, as is inferred in "The Holy Battle in the Galaxy: The Legend of the Sailor Wars," when their princess returns to them and inquires about their *new* identities (5.28).

Seiya is not typically transgendered; he is almost hermaphroditic. However, in both Seiya's male and female body, his character performs masculinity. In fact, none of the Starlights engage in the feminine pastimes of the Sailor Scouts, such as gossiping or playing. In particular, the *anime* focuses on Seiya, who is not only the lead singer of The Three Lights, but also the center of attention and skill when it comes to all sports. Seiya is often seen playing basketball, baseball, and football. He is aggressive and competitive. In "The Power of the Glittering Stars! Chibi Chibi's Transformation," we see Seiya enlisting Serena's help in a softball tournament

where losing is not an option (5.21). Seiya is similar to Amara in his hobbies, abilities, and traits. However, when they are put side by side, Amara is still *always* biologically female. This mirror imaging of characteristics has an interesting effect. While the characteristics that both Soldiers have are traditionally thought of as masculine, the series indicates that the female body can ascribe such traits, as demonstrated by the similarities in Amara, the girl and Seiya, the boy. Neither performance is superior. What this demonstrates is similar to a character like Zoysite in the Japanese original that identifies as feminine, reclaiming the girlish as a site of power in general. In this instance, Seiya reclaims power for the female body in all its forms, and not just for feminine ones. Moreover, the Starlights do not shift between traditionally feminine and masculine characteristics upon transforming, an aspect that helps to blur normative gender categories. Because of this unique blurring of gender, the hetero-normative gaze loses power because there are no solid gender markers to identify in Seiya or in any of the other Starlights. Their personalities remain stable, while only their bodies change.

Sherrie A. Inness, author of Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture, quotes Pamela S. Boker in her work: “Between the covers of [heroine] action comics we encounter a group of extraordinary women characters, women who not only traverse the schizophrenic disparity between a woman’s wielding of power and the acknowledgement of her innate sexuality, but in many ways eliminate completely the cultural divisiveness between genders” (142). Inness takes a less optimistic standpoint than Boker, questioning “the ability of women in comic books to eliminate the divisions between the genders because [...] such books often emphasize the distinct *differences* between men and women, rather than the similarities” (142). I disagree with both critics. On one hand, I do not believe the gender divide can ever be done away with completely, although girl-power narratives do help to ascribe value and power to

the female body, and in this way “women heroes, no matter where they might appear, are performing important cultural work” (Inness 142). On the other hand, a girl-power narrative like *Sailor Moon* does well to show the arbitrary nature of gender in many ways, as many characters identify with genders and sexualities that are not the norm, highlighting the similarities evident in either gender performance, as Seiya and Amara demonstrate. However, I concede that such girl-centered texts tend to demonstrate the *difference* between male and female relationships, valuing one over the other, and I think this is an important development because it moves away from the privileging of hetero-normative relationships and the belief that power belongs to a boys’ club. I would also agree that, for the most part, both male and female heroes demonstrate a body ideal, because although the Starlights are first male, their bodies *do* morph into a curvy feminine ideal. This metamorphosis participates in the valuation of the feminine and acknowledges the inherent power in such feminized bodies.

In terms of Sailor Star Fighter’s interest in Serena, her queering does not seem to be new territory. In the episode “The Holy Battle in the Galaxy: The Legend of the Sailor Wars,” Princess Kakyuu asks Seiya to sing her a love song. As Seiya gazes lovingly at the princess, he fantasizes that Kakyuu morphs into Serena (5.28). Sailor Star Fighter’s homoerotic desire for her princess, presumably evident on her home world, is exchanged on Earth for Serena. However, that she still possesses an actual penis when transformed is a problem. As a boy, Seiya can penetrate Serena, diminishing the power of the feminine in lieu of patriarchal power, and in this way, the relationship is similar to the heterosexual one Serena already has with Darien. Interestingly, when Serena thinks of Seiya, he is often superimposed onto the figure of Darien. At one point, Seiya, in his suit and tie, intervenes in a fight, throwing a rose at the enemy in the same manner Tuxedo Mask does. And, just like Darien, he nicknames Serena “Dumpling.”

When the Sailor Starlights appear, castanets can be heard in the background in the same manner as when Tuxedo Mask makes his entrance. This pairing seems to solidify Seiya in a male role for Serena. In her eyes, she sees a boy who tempts her. In the episode “Seiya and Usagi’s Nervous Date,” an episode full of sexual tension, Seiya holds onto Serena during an attack by an enemy. Serena feels something in the embrace, stating: “Mamoru’s [Darien’s] warmth but a different scent...I don’t know...different from [Darien]’s sweetness” (5.15). The show subtly points to a potential relationship between the two. The different scent Serena recognizes could very well be referencing the scent of a woman; she certainly recognizes a difference in the relationship—a different “sweetness,” perhaps only possible with a woman, although she is unaware of this fact. Serena does not find out who the Starlights are until episode twenty-two, a revelation that does little to alter how Serena sees Seiya—as competition for Darien. She continues to treat Seiya as a boy. Because Serena does not know Seiya as a girl, their relationship takes on the same dynamic as a heterosexual one. In some regards, it seems as though the show is more focused on testing Serena’s loyalty to Darien and her worth as a wife than experimenting with a homoerotic alternative. In this way, the program tends to eclipse their female relationship, presenting it as non-threatening.

Moreover, Sailor Star Fighter’s only romantic interaction with Serena is as Seiya, the boy, whether he is saving her or confessing his feelings; this suggests a desire to be with her as a boy. His omission about his alternate identity is significant because it may suggest that he feels more comfortable if Serena identifies him as a boy, or alternatively, he believes his only chance with her is as a male, knowing that she already has a heterosexual relationship. Alternatively, it would also be fair to say that Sailor Star Fighter is only protecting her secret identity. Seiya admits to waiting for the right time to tell Serena, a time that may have never come if not forced

by an attack. It is important that Darien is absent for this season because it allows for the development of an alternate relationship for Serena, one that is not necessarily hetero-normative. Seiya and Serena's relationship is the site of tension for the last season, and its development reveals much about Serena's character. When Seiya first displays interest in her, Serena is appalled because she loves Darien and cannot fathom a relationship outside of the monogamous one she shares with him. This hetero-normative and monogamous pairing contains Serena's body within traditional gender roles. However, what would be her reaction to Sailor Star Fighter, the girl, telling her the same thing?

It never comes to pass that Sailor Star Fighter declares her love for Serena, though Serena is made aware of Fighter's male alter ego. When the Scouts find out The Three Lights are girls in the episode "An Invitation to Horror! Usagi's Night Time Flight," their reaction is immediate disappointment. They are later seen discussing the revelation. Mina (Sailor Venus) states: "It's shocking that The Three Lights are girls! It's like my love has disappeared!" (5.22). This statement is indicative of the hetero-normative ideology that still exists in the text. However, for Serena, her love has not disappeared, and she continues to see Seiya as a boy, referring to her as a him. The inner Sailor Soldiers then tell Serena she can no longer see Seiya because he is also a Sailor Soldier from outside their star system and cannot be trusted; Sailor Star Maker and Healer say the same thing to Sailor Star Fighter. This command affects Serena and Seiya in a painful way, and actually functions to perpetuate a hetero-normative gaze. Serena tells everyone to keep out of her relationships, but it appears there is more at stake than just the threat of harm to Sailor Moon. Preventing her from seeing Seiya ensures that Serena stays loyal to Darien and she fulfills her destiny to become Queen of Crystal Tokyo. Her faithfulness to heterosexual love ensures a kingdom and, ultimately, a patriarchal institution.

Without Serena, there is no future and no heir to the throne. Despite the consequences, however, Serena and Seiya find ways to secretly see each other, an act that Serena knows threatens her future kingdom. During one secret encounter, Seiya tells Sailor Moon he wishes to replace Darien and asks if he is not good enough for her. This question does not seem to suggest a comparison of characteristics; rather, it is a question of why his love is not as good as Darien's. I surmise the question also hints at whether or not Sailor Star Fighter's love is inferior in comparison to a heterosexual love shared with Darien. Serena has no reply. Later, Serena is shown contemplating the proposition. It is not a problem that Sailor Star Fighter is a girl; Serena *does* love her, regardless of sex; the dilemma is not homoeroticism, but her loyalty to Darien. Both relationships are valuable, but only one can exist at one time. This may very well contain homosexuality by making a case for heterosexual love and loyalty, but at the same time, the issue of homosexuality is not overtly dismissed as inappropriate. If anything, the show presents the possibility for an alternate context where such a relationship is validated—a context that examines Serena's heterosexuality and questions whether she “would choose a heterosexual coupling and marriage” (Rich 13) if she had not been destined to be with Darien. This notion of destiny, of a predetermined sexuality, is problematic in its own way, but Serena's temporary resistance to this destiny is at least promising. When the rest of the Starlights and Sailor Scouts discover this secrecy, they police the two even more, effectively severing any romantic progression. The return of Darien in the final episode also adds to this termination. That Serena contemplates an alternative to being married to Darien signifies a deliberate defiance to compulsory heterosexuality, if but for a brief moment.¹

¹ It is worth noting that Rini has a close relationship with young Hotaru (Sailor Saturn) that also has an air of homoeroticism, although not explicitly stated. Rini's relationship with Pegasus prevents this homosocial relationship from maturing and turning into a lesbian one. His presence creates a non-threatening space between the two.

Moreover, the way Seiya communicates with Serena in “Princess Fireball is Destroyed! Galaxia Descends” the day after his reveal, is far more tender, and touches Serena far more deeply than I have observed with her and Darien. This interaction seems more familiar in female relationships than it does for hetero-normative ones. Seiya’s dialogue is as follows: “About yesterday, I meant it. [...] Don’t feel bad that I’m in a one-sided love. I’ll carry you off right after the concert. I’m joking, but I’ve fallen in love with you without realizing it. I wanted to tell you my feelings because Seiya’s time is short” (5.34). As Seiya speaks, the camera continues to cut to Serena’s tear-stained face, a face that shows no disgust at what or who Seiya is, but instead only obvious love and sadness that their love cannot be realized. So too, the possibility that Serena could be with Seiya as a boy is no longer an option, for Seiya is only a mask on Earth meant to help the Starlights find the princess, which they have. Its use is no longer necessary, which is why Seiya states that his “time is short.” Only Sailor Star Fighter, the girl, is left.

The closure to this relationship has always angered me in that Serena’s role as dutiful girlfriend and wife to Darien is set, which, regrettably, resigns her to a traditional female role despite her subversive gender performance. However, I do think it is important that Serena admits her love for Seiya, who is a transgendered and queer identity, because it does not dismiss a homoerotic relationship as abnormal or wrong. Seiya does not represent a hermaphroditic monster. If anything, the relationship comes at a bad time and too late. What is more, as a potential lesbian relationship, the scene does not play to a hetero-normative gaze in the same fashion that Amara and Michelle’s relationship does not. Seiya is tender, loving Serena for the compassionate, forgiving, and courageous person that she is. While not entirely a subversive relationship due to Seiya’s male form, it is not strictly normative either, as the *anime* explores

and still values alternative relationships along the homosocial continuum. They cannot be lovers, but they do agree to remain friends and in each other's thoughts, a promise that slides them along the slippery homosocial continuum into a realm Serena's other friends occupy.

It is true that the Scouts stand for love and justice, and often giggle about cute boys and their dream wedding, but their interactions do not preclude the homoerotic, as Serena and Seiya's relationship demonstrates. And Serena and Seiya's interaction does not constitute the only homoerotic instance amongst the other heterosexual Scouts. The homosocial relationships of the Scouts are similar to those of men in Sedgwick's theory in that the girls gossip about boys, and this is the necessary hetero-normative component that acts as the buffer along the homosocial continuum. According to Rene Girard, "*any* relation of rivalry is structured by the same play of emulation and identification, whether the entities occupying the corners of the triangle be heroes, heroines, gods, books, or whatever" (qtd. in Sedgwick 23). For instance, Raye (Sailor Mars) and Serena fight over Darien in Season One, before they know Serena and Darien's romantic destiny. This represents what Sedgwick calls an erotic triangle, but with the substitution of women. She explains the dynamic of this triangle by using a study done about men in European novels by Girard:

in any erotic rivalry [...] the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved: that the bonds of "rivalry" and "love," differently as they are experienced, are equally powerfully and in many senses equivalent. [...] Girard seems to see the bond between rivals in an erotic triangle as being even stronger, more heavily determinant of actions and choices, than anything in the bond between either of the lovers and the beloved.

(21)

While the girls *do* have a rivalry, Raye cares deeply for Serena and vice versa, as they both declare the other their best friend in successive episodes. Raye proves Girard's point in terms of the actions and choices she makes in relation to Serena; she sacrifices herself for Serena in "Day of Destiny," the final episode of the first season, instead of trying to rescue a brainwashed and dying Darien (1.40). Raye and Serena are always at each other's throats, and it is Darien who acts as the buffer between them, preventing the realization of anything romantic. Darien ensures that the heterosexual norm is maintained, much like with Sailor Star Fighter. In this situation, Serena, again, remains devoted to a man.

While it is true that Tuxedo Mask intervenes in most episodes to lend some advice, his powers are limited to the rose he throws at the enemy and his cane that can magically extend. He cannot wield any real magic as the Scouts do and does not have the weight of the universe on his shoulders. Just as in other heroine narratives, no one can understand the life of the chosen one, the life of a Sailor Scout. Darien is excluded from this all-girl cause. However, Serena does lament his loss during the last season because she *does* love him, and she even thinks she cannot fight without his presence and love, but she proves that she can and wins against Sailor Galaxia. If anything, she is more powerful during the last season because of Darien's absence. She becomes closer to her female friends in this absence, explores alternative love-interests, and forms even stronger homosocial bonds with the Sailor Scouts. These occurrences are empowering and turn her into a self-reliant and more powerful heroine. It is not her heterosexual bond with Darien that allows for these changes, but the strength and love evident in her homosocial bonds. Therefore, *Sailor Moon* showcases a group of girls who fight not just for humanity, but also for the maintenance of female strength and solidarity; they fight for the possibility that they may forge other such bonds. Tuxedo Mask's presence is not necessary for

the success of the Sailor Scouts. Despite Darien's presence and the girls' crushes on other guys, the girls are mostly seen together in the thick of lethal battles, comforting, helping, and saving each other. When worse comes to worse, and Tuxedo Mask is either dead, bound, or unconscious, Sailor Scout power comes not from the maintenance of hetero-normative relationships, but from the intimate connection the Scouts share with each other.

The Group Heroine: Homosociality and Girl-Power

On every occasion, when it comes down to the world or her friends, Serena always chooses her friends, which may seem selfish in a heroine, but it does demonstrate the role her friends play in her life—they are the reason she fights. Sailor Moon is not like Buffy who is the only one who has the power to save the world. This heroic isolation affects Buffy psychologically, emotionally, and physically, and it frequently effects her decisions and relationships. For Sailor Moon, without the powers derived from her female relationships, she has nothing to fight for. In the Japanese episode “Labyrinth of Mirrors! Chibi Moon Captured,” Serena tells an enemy her motivation for being a Sailor Scout: “When I was a child, it was fun because I was free. But, I was able to find friends who I could share my pain with. I don't regret anything about who I am now” (4.36). If her friends are in trouble and the enemy demands she give up her magical tools, she does; and her friends would gladly sacrifice themselves for her.

In the Japanese *Sailor Moon S* series, Sailor Saturn is taken over by Mistress 9; instead of killing the vessel like the Scouts demand must be done to save the world, Sailor Moon chooses to save Sailor Saturn, risking the fate of the world. In the following episode, “A New Life! Time for Separation of the Destined Stars,” Sailor Neptune and Sailor Uranus decide to punish Serena for risking the world, but Serena maintains that she has not done anything wrong: “Sailor Saturn

may have been the Sailor of Destruction, but she is still one of us Sailor Soldiers! I was happy that we could understand each other, to feel each other's warmth!" (3.38). Even in the English dub of the *Sailor Moon R Movie*, Serena demonstrates her dependence on the love of her friends in the face of death. The enemy in the movie demands that Sailor Moon relinquish her magic scepter to him in exchange for her friends who have been captured and tortured: "It's your call: your scepter or your fellow Scouts. You gonna abandon them again?" Sailor Moon relents without hesitation: "Never! [...] I'm sorry, I can't turn my back on them; without them it's not the same. I give up. [...] (To her friends) I know I can beat him, but then you'll get hurt and I couldn't bear that" (Promise of the Rose). The valuing of her homosocial relationships takes precedence over the saving of a world that does not particularly value such female bonds. If we follow the tenets of the lesbian continuum in Adrienne Rich's influential essay, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Sailor Moon* "depicts woman bonding and woman identification as essential for female survival" (Rich 12).

Rich extends that women often find strength through other women, through homosocial friendships in the midst of patriarchal oppression of all sorts, including economic, racial, religious, sexual, etc (25). She identifies close female bonds as part of a lesbian existence, or a lesbian continuum, which is similar to Sedgwick's idea of the female homosocial continuum. That is not to say that all women are queer, but it does suggest a particular and exclusive "women-identified experience" (27) that encompasses all interactions with other women; Rich cites examples like breast-feeding, social networking, and midwifery. Keeping these experiences in mind, Rich surmises that "[i]f we consider the possibility that all women [...] exist on a lesbian continuum, we can see ourselves as moving in and out of this continuum, whether we identify ourselves as lesbian or not" (29). *Sailor Moon* functions inside the realm of this lesbian

continuum to reverse the stigma attached to these female-only relationships, assigning them value. Female relationships are in the foreground of the *Sailor Moon* text, fully visible, and definitely not ignored or erased. Because the entire Sailor Scout team participates in this “lesbian existence,” their highlighted relationships resist being seen “as a marginal or less ‘natural’ phenomenon” (13). In the series, the way the Scouts protect and respect one another is, I think, the show’s most significant feminist aspect despite its overarching post-feminist treatment of heterosexual relationships.

The girls involved in this showcased continuum are many, which seems to indicate that these relationships are not an exception to female experience, but the norm in the *Sailor Moon* universe, much like the powerful and independent female bodies in the series. When each girl enters into the Sailor group, each Scout immediately assumes a position along the lesbian continuum, investing their energy in loving, protecting, and supporting one another. This automatic disposition toward the homosocial suggests that it is intrinsically embedded into each Scout’s female persona; this tendency demonstrates a resistance to compulsory heterosexuality. By broadening the range of females who can exist within the lesbian continuum, Rich asserts that a new idea of female eroticism is discovered, one that is not defined by compulsory heterosexuality and the patriarchy that institutes it; rather, it is an eroticism that is defined by women for women (28). This female eroticism is not perceived in a conventional manner in terms of hetero-normative sexuality; instead, Rich describes it as “unconfined to any single part of the body or solely to the body itself;” it is a potent “energy” (28). She cites Audre Lorde in her description, identifying this female energy as a universal “sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, [or] psychic” (28). This female and traditionally feminine realm of experience is empowering and “makes us less willing to accept powerlessness” (Lorde qtd. in Rich 28). Not

only does the homosocial bond of the Sailor Scouts promote this empowering female experience, it also validates their different bodies and identities along the lesbian continuum, suggesting that none of their performances are deviant because they all partake in women-identified experience. In terms of Lorde's idea of sharing joy in the physical, emotional, and psychic realm, the Scouts undoubtedly embody this new female erotic perspective, which is evident in the extension of their homosocial bonds after death.

Even in death, the Scouts can feel and hear each other, a plot element that occurs frequently in the series, particularly during final battles. For instance, in "Day of Destiny," after all the Scouts have been picked off and only Sailor Moon remains, Serena needs the support of her girlfriends to defeat Queen Beryl. Hearing her plea, the Scouts' ethereal forms hold onto the hand of a now transformed Princess Serena, lending her their power, which is still strong, even in death (1.40). This ability to overcome death, even briefly, out of love for Sailor Moon reflects the raw power of their homosocial bond; it reflects the love of women for women. That this theme is repeated in every major battle sequence highlights the power of female relationships, emotion, lived experience, and the unstoppable force that is girl-power. Without men to hinder them, the Sailor Scouts reclaim both the heroic and the girlish for the female body.

What the Sailor Scouts possess is the power of a unified force, of comrades and friends, unlike the isolation heroines like Invisible Woman or Supergirl experience in their respective worlds as the token female in their heroic group. For instance, Sherrie A. Inness observes this female absence in traditional heroic troupes on television, in comic books, and on toy shelves:

Very often male characters such as Batman, Superman, Spiderman, and G.I. Joe have the prestige of being the "star" characters of a complete miniature universe.

Although female characters do crop up fairly frequently in groups of superheroes

and supervillains, the female group members are always vastly outnumbered by their male counterparts. [...] Among groups of action figures, Ultraforce had seven men and one woman, and Exosquad Jumptroop had three men and one woman. [...] The Fantastic Four had seven action figures, all male except for Invisible Woman[.] [...] G.I. Joe's Ninja Force had seven figures, all male except for one female[.] [...] Similarly, the Mortal Kombat team of eight action figures had one female figure, Sonya Blade[.] (2-3)

Even Wonder Woman was the sole female amongst the Justice League, and she had her *own* comic book and TV show, but in her universe, she leaves the Amazonian Paradise Island, entering a world where she is an exception to the norm (“Wonder Woman Comes to America”). So too, in most of the other male-hero based fighting groups, the woman reflects the exception to the rule. What these numbers demonstrate is not only the stark contrast of female to male heroes, but the complete isolation of the heroine, who, unlike her male comrades, has no way to experience the value of homosocial bonding evident in the girl-power narratives of the mid-to-late 90s. Her perspective is marginalized and more or less absent from these fictional worlds. In this regard, the women of heroic narratives before the 1990s, aside from the Angels, seemed to represent the buffer between the rest of the male team; if each is a man's man, the inclusion of the female may ensure a hetero-normative gaze, as both the audience and the male group members can be preoccupied with her scantily clad body (Brown 52). By herself, the heroine must engage in compulsory heterosexuality because the options available along a homosocial continuum are made unavailable.

According to Butler, “[g]ender operates by requiring the embodiment of certain ideals of femininity and masculinity, ones that are almost always related to the idealization of the

heterosexual bond” (Bodies That Matter 232). To idealize this heterosexual bond is to normalize it. But this is not entirely the case in modern girl-power texts like the ones I continue to reference, the ones that are a part of the gamut of 90s popular culture. For earlier heroines,

tough women in the popular media rarely [had] close female friends. [...]

Friendships are rare for tough women because such relationships can undermine

the cool, aloof attitude of the tough hero. A heroine like Xena shows that

toughness in women does not have to be antithetical to friendship. The result is a

new vision of the tough woman hero that emphasizes both her physical toughness

and her connection to other women. (Inness 168)

While this may not always be the case, as with post-feminist creations like Captain Janeway who is distanced from her female crewmembers in *Star Trek: Voyager*, or with Scully from *The X-Files* whose only friend is Mulder (Inness 168), a majority of 90s girl-power narratives demonstrate a powerful alternative.

According to Mary Celeste Kearney, author of “Girlfriends and Girl Power: Female Adolescence in Contemporary U.S. Cinema,” the 90s saw a drastic change in how female adolescent girls were portrayed in popular culture. Many texts highlighted spaces where

teenage girls no longer ground their themes of transformation in an ideology of

heterosexual romance. Instead, such [texts] incorporate[d] contemporary feminist

themes, especially the need for girls to develop confidence, assertiveness, and

self-respect apart from boys and through same-sex relationships. Moving beyond

the depiction of girls’ heterosexual awakenings in order to explore their

homosocial experiences, these [texts] significantly challenge[d] the conventional

female coming-of-age narrative upon which previous films about adolescent girlhood were based. (125)

In these texts, the coming-of-age story is portrayed as a homosocial process, empowering girls through the self-reflexive aspect of same-sex bonds. The heroines come to know who they are by knowing each other, and this is particularly evident in Japanese *anime*, more so than in American cinema. Frances Gateward, author of “Bubblegum and Heavy Metal,” confirms that

[i]t is precisely *anime*'s concentration on relationships that makes it so compelling. Rather than pitting girls against demons, alien species, or corrupt transnational corporations, the primary battles that take place within *anime* are struggles to construct identities that allow them to be true to themselves and to each other, recognizing and realizing their potential. This is accomplished most often as the girls negotiate the complex and sometimes puzzling nature of relationships between them and [...] other girls[.] (281)

Although it is true that the *Sailor Moon* universe is full of demons that need vanquishing, the real tension in the show comes from how the girls, particularly Serena, negotiate their relationships with each other. Serena begins the series as a whiney and lazy child and does not want to be the chosen one; she claims it is too hard (1.31, “A Reluctant Princess”), but her progression into a true superhero takes place because of her interaction with her girlfriends, because of their support and love. No doubt Serena is often puzzled by her relationships, for instance, the one she shares with Seiya, but they are all necessary to form Serena's identity, and it does allow her to realize her true potential in light of Darien's absence, as evident when Serena saves the universe from Sailor Galaxia.

And while a show like *Sailor Moon* portrays the “transformative power of female friendships, most mainstream representations of female adolescence suggest that girls must leave their same-sex friendship behind as they enter womanhood (a position naturalized in such [texts] as heterosexual)” (Kearney 133). For *Sailor Moon*, the series *does* highlight Serena’s entrance into womanhood via Darien, marriage, and pregnancy; however, her homosocial relationships never cease to have value to her. Serena’s heterosexuality does not diminish the importance of her female friendships.

Female bonding is the focus in girl-power narratives. Strong characters like Buffy, Willow, Xena, and Gabrielle are not stand-alone heroines. Many of these heroines’ greatest achievements are the result of the strength derived from their same-sex bonds. This homosocial strength is reflective of what the Sailor Scouts do in every episode. They demonstrate the value of their bonds daily, and it is the faith, love, and hope in each other that is the source of their powers. As I have stated before, it is only when the Scouts work together as a team, lending their love and strength to Sailor Moon, that evil is vanquished. However, in many cases, this demonstration of homosociality may be seen as merely another means to stereotype the female hero. The Sailor Scouts rely on their friendship with one another to gain power; their friendship demonstrates many aspects of what is perceived as normative femininity, as they share emotions, hopes, and fears to empower themselves. I have already demonstrated how these feminine values are not weaknesses. Their homosocial bond is so strong that together they possess attacks that are phenomenally powerful, that can bend time, space, and matter. Only together can they use their most powerful attacks like Cosmic Moon Power, Sailor Teleport, or Sailor Planet Power. Their love for one another is what keeps the universe in check.

In *The Powerpuff Girls*, Bubbles, Blossom, and Buttercup are a fighting trio of sisters who rely on each other for support; one girl on her own is not always enough to beat the bad guy, not only because three times the power is better, but because as a group, the girls experience purpose and have access to an inner strength that values connectivity and community. The same can be said for the sisters in *Charmed*. The series started with a trio of magical sisters, and expanded into an entire family of magical women whose greatest achievements were derived not solely from their gifts, but from their capacity to love one another, commune, and nurture those bonds. The Halliwell sisters' most powerful state is when they are together; the show identifies this union as the most connected a woman can be to herself and other women as the bond releases the "power of three." This is world-saving magic, and it belongs to them only.

And while Xena kicks a lot of ass, her greatest strength is her love for her soulmate, Gabrielle. For Inness, a character like Xena "reconceptualizes what it means to be a tough hero by depicting the close friendship between Xena and Gabrielle" (168). She sites many episodes where Xena tells Gabrielle that she loves her, but this display of emotion and valuing of a homosocial relationship does not detract from the hero Xena is, or that Gabrielle becomes. They can both be tough women while drawing power from their emotions. If anything, what this relationship, and others like it, demonstrates is the changing view of feminine qualities, a change that places value on the feminine and reclaims it as a site of power. Because these relationships are valued more highly than any other in girl-power narratives (they are usually an integral part of the series), they tend to also open the way for displays of male homosociality in a way that is non-threatening. Often, this takes place in the same series, as it does in *Sailor Moon*; both male and female characters enjoy close friendships, and they do not necessarily preclude homoeroticism.

Many popular culture texts outside of girl-power narratives “downplay, ignore, or eliminate girls’ relationships with other girls, [suggesting] an unwillingness to explore the homosociality of female youth and its possible effects” (Kearney 133). Kearney believes this is frequently the case because girls’ same-sex bonds create anxiety and fear in audiences due to the threat of homosexuality that may develop through these close relationships, and this is “offensive to conservative viewers and, more importantly, financial backers” (133). This anxiety is blatantly evident in the *Sailor Moon* English dubs where, as I previously mentioned, Amara and Michelle are no longer lovers, but close cousins; as well, an American company never translated the last season with the Starlights. The Japanese original is more dynamic in this sense, as it does not shy away from representing alternative bodies, orientations, or beliefs.

In the subbed episodes the Scouts demonstrate more overtly how they “[act] in a space not defined by male characters or by a narrative progress towards heterosexuality” (Yvonne Tasker qtd. in Kearney 134). There are no men in their all-girl fighting group; they are not the sidekicks to a male hero; they are not the token females. They threaten the norm through the “marginalization or absence of males and heterosexuality” (Kearney 134). In many cases, Darien does not completely remove the threat that the Scouts’ homosociality may slide along the continuum. Regardless, I must admit that the series’ narrative does progress towards affirming heterosexuality through Serena and Darien’s marriage, but not for any of the other Scouts. I think, as a whole, narratives like *Sailor Moon* help to normalize female relationships, suspending heterosexual bonds in favour of homosocial ones.

What is also fascinating about the homosociality in the text is how it extends to many of the male characters, demonstrating the slippage evident in the male homosocial continuum. The

negotiation between heteronormativity and the homoerotic is not necessarily clear-cut, and the program's main male character, Darien, explores homoeroticism in a way similar to Serena.

The Erotic Triangle: Male Homosociality and the Corrupting Female

In particular, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, *Sailor Moon's* first and second seasons revolve around the heterosexual relationship between Darien and Serena. Tuxedo Mask represents Sailor Moon's knight in shining armour, appearing just in time to lend that crucial piece of advice or support, and throwing that strategically placed rose. And while he is not necessary for Sailor Moon to do her job, he does, on occasion, protect her virtue, which affirms a dominant message of hetero-normativity and the power relations embedded in heterosexual marriages and fairytales. For instance, in Season Two, Sailor Moon's affections are fought over by the evil Prince Diamond and Tuxedo Mask in "Legend of the Negamoon." During one scene, Tuxedo Mask and Diamond fight, and Tuxedo Mask uses his gentleman's cane to block attacks from Diamond's third eye, which shoots white beams at him (2.36). The phallic imagery is overwhelming. It appears to be a battle of sexual virility over Serena as the epitome of reproductive and sexual desirability. In order to escape Diamond's advances, Tuxedo Mask's cane elongates to Serena, and she is meant to climb up the shaft to freedom, but she is inevitably climbing from one kind of oppression to another.

However, there is more going on beneath the surface than Serena's hetero-normativity. If we look past Serena's position as an object to be won, the method of fighting is telling. The use of phallic imagery to fight one another is a kind of cock-fight. The scene is actually pretty homoerotic in nature, and Serena is what prevents the interaction from crossing that boundary completely. If Serena is removed, the only thing transpiring is the aggressive touching of

metaphorical genitals. Serena certainly does act as the buffer between Darien and Diamond, who both seem to be battling for the role as superior male, not in terms of Serena, but in terms of their own position to one another, asserting their masculinity and manliness. In addition, American events like “goals at football games, in fraternities, [...] and at climactic moments in war novels,” as Sedgwick points out, “can look [...] quite startlingly ‘homosexual[,]’ as this scene certainly does (89). In terms of the male homosocial continuum, for “a man to be a man’s man is separated only by an invisible, carefully blurred, always-already-crossed line from being ‘interested in men[.]’” (89). A further indication of Darien’s dangerous cross-over on the homosocial continuum is evident in the dub of the Promise of the Rose that followed the conclusion of the second season.

When Darien was a child he lived in an orphanage. While there, an alien child lost in space finds his way to Earth. It is here that the alien, Fiore, meets Darien and they become fast friends. The scene cuts to Darien gazing lovingly at the alien as he sleeps next to him in a single bed. At this point, their relationship develops out of the immense loneliness they both feel; it is more familial than erotic. However, Fiore has to leave before anything actually happens between them because Earth’s atmosphere does not allow for Fiore’s kind to live very long; Fiore greatly laments the loss. Before parting, Darien gives Fiore a single rose as a symbol of their new friendship because it is all he has to offer. In reply, Fiore promises Darien that he will search the universe for a flower beautiful enough to show how he feels for him. Many years later, Fiore returns with the perfect flower.

As adult men, the renewal of this intimate homosocial bond seems less innocent, particularly because a rose is a symbol of romance, as Darien indicates every time he hurtles one at an enemy to protect his beloved Sailor Moon. However, Darien does not know that Fiore has

been corrupted by the evil Kisenian Blossom who has brainwashed him into believing he must kidnap Darien so only he can love him and in turn be loved by Darien. When Fiore first returns to Earth in the movie, he immediately finds Darien looking at flowers with Serena. The scene cuts to the two men staring wide-eyed at one another, a short distance between them, while petals fall all around them—romantic indeed. Fiore approaches Darien, takes his hand, and tells him of the perfect flower he has found. Serena's head comes into view, a worried look on her red and confused face. Serena steps up to claim her man, inciting a jealous reaction from Fiore; he forcefully pushes Serena away from him. He hits her square in the chest, an obvious area of Serena's femaleness. Discarding Serena in this manner, and hurting a powerful symbol of the feminine, is significant; it demonstrates that femaleness and femininity are unimportant and a hindrance to male relationships.

In this instance, there is no buffer between Darien and Fiore as there was with Diamond; the buffer has been willfully discarded. However, the expulsion of the woman from the relationship demonstrates an important part of Sedgwick's homosocial theory in that the woman herself is only a barrier between a pure and stable male-male relationship. The inclusion of a woman, or a male-female relationship, makes for a volatile bond, and it is the woman who ruins the man; she humiliates him by degenerating the "sum of male power" (45). Serena's potential absence allows for the realization of a crossing over into the realm of the homoerotic for Darien, into the perfect relationship. By perfect relationship, I take into consideration the belief that the masculine is the ideal, as "only men are 'persons,' and there is no gender but the feminine" (Butler Gender Trouble 27). In quoting Monique Wittig, Butler elaborates: "Gender is the linguistic index of the political opposition between the sexes. Gender is used here in the singular because indeed there are not two genders. There is only one: the feminine, the 'masculine' not

being a gender. For the masculine is not the masculine, but the general” (27). Femininity is a corruption of the ideal. The possibility of a true male bond is offered to Darien, and he is the pursued. He inevitably gets captured; Fiore carries Darien back to his lair the way a groom carries his bride over the threshold. When Darien awakes, Fiore states: “You belong here, with me, your true friend, Darien. [...] From now on, only I will give you flowers” (Promise of the Rose). What prevents this homoerotic bond from coming to fruition, however, is still the presence of female characters. Serena forces herself back into the equation, seemingly determined to nip the possibility of homoeroticism in the bud.

Before Darien’s abduction, Serena contemplates Darien and Fiore’s connection, genuinely perturbed by their apparent intimacy, an observation that threatens her own intimacy with Darien. Instead of functioning as an opportunity to resist the heterosexual norm, the movie resigns itself to compulsory heterosexuality through Serena’s perseverance to recapture her man. She and the Scouts travel to the asteroid where Fiore is keeping Darien prisoner, and she withstands his brutal attacks in order to retrieve Darien, in a sense, sacrificing her body for the maintenance of heterosexuality. That Serena accepts pain in order to keep Darien reflects the importance of maintaining the heterosexual norm.

Interestingly, the Kisenian Blossom is a small woman flower who rests over Fiore’s heart, poisoning him. She comes between Darien and Fiore by making their encounter hostile and provoking an obsessive and jealous love, a type of love that would not typically be considered a component of an ideal relationship. Feminine faults seem to be influencing Fiore’s actions, and his temporary lapse into the feminine realm of the emotional and irrational threatens to actually destroy the male bond Darien and Fiore *do* have—the presence of the woman taints

their bond. Kisenian has blurred the line in the continuum, threatening the transparent stability of their homosocial bond.

The flower itself in Western culture, whether in terms of Kisenian or Darien's rose, is a symbol of femininity, or the vagina, a symbol that threatens to devour and corrupt both Fiore and Darien. This image lends itself quite aptly to the notion that female sexuality and influence is detrimental to masculinity and to male kinship in general. It is later discovered that Serena originally gave Darien the rose, which he, in turn, gave to Fiore. As a token of Serena and Darien's relationship, the metaphorical vagina is supposed to act as the buffer between any male relationships—a token of romantic and heterosexual love. That Darien gives it to Fiore threatens this hetero-normative symbol. Fiore's dialogue continues to lend itself to this particular homoerotic reading:

Fiore [to Kisenian]: "She can't have him!"

Kisenian: "If you help me fight her, I'll make sure Darien remembers your special bond; but your friendship will never come back to life until Sailor Moon and the Sailor Scouts are dead!"

[...]

Fiore [to Serena]: "Give up your claim on Darien's heart."

Even Kisenian affirms that the absence of Serena and all other females will open the way for Fiore and Darien because female absence suggests that there would no longer be any potential buffers.

In an attempt to remove Serena, Fiore envelopes Serena in a sexualized hug; he clasps at her chest in an attempt to drain her of her energy. The scene evokes the image of rape, as an extra hand protruding from the blossom clutches her breast and a series of tentacle-like limbs

caress her entire body. As he sucks her energy dry, he neutralizes her as a threat and renders her powerless in his violation, akin to an actual rape. It is a way for Fiore to reassert his power in light of Serena's humiliating influence over Darien. Serena falls lifeless to the ground. Sailor Moon is the obstacle to them being together, and her death is necessary. When Darien finally appears he chooses to remain with Serena, protecting *her*, and, in a way, choosing to maintain the fine divide between homosociality and homoeroticism. Fiore reluctantly obliges as he fades away: "I hope you're happy with your choice!" For a moment, Fiore backs off, apparently surrendering Darien to Serena, a choice that may allow a semblance of the homosociality they experienced as children, as the ordeal has precluded the possibility of anything more.

In a sudden change of heart, Fiore decides to seek revenge instead against Sailor Moon for Darien's refusal to love him. In this instance, Sailor Moon is trying to land the asteroid they occupy safely on Earth with her Silver Crystal because the Scouts do not have enough energy to teleport off the rock. As she opens her arms to the stars, Fiore grabs at the brooch between her breasts, ravenously pawing at the flesh. Because Serena's life force is connected to the brooch, its danger is her own. Her clothes melt into ribbons, and Serena stands naked before Fiore. Fiore tries one last time to overcome the corruption of the feminine by again attacking the female form. However, as in other episodes, Serena's nude state is her most powerful; her naked body represents the raw female form. As an unbeatable force, Serena anchors her presence in Darien's life and affirms the power of heterosexual bonds and the corruption of any other alternative. This certainly does problematize *Sailor Moon* as a subversive text since it implies homophobia and seems to value hetero-normativity. This is made even more evident when Serena's crystal heals Fiore's poisoned mind; he then sees Darien and Serena's relationship as important and

permanent. He is returned to a supposedly normal state, removing the immediate homoerotic threat.

Darien and Fiore's relationship cannot be realized for the same reasons Serena and Sailor Star Fighter's relationship cannot. The narrative cannot focus on Serena and Darien's legendary romance if they are both fickle in their relationship. Granted, Sailor Moon's healing of Fiore's apparent queerness is still disturbing, but we can also see her healing of Fiore as similar to how she heals others in the support and maintenance of healthy relationships. She cures Fiore's destructive jealousy, allowing him and Darien to again bond in a way where neither desires to possess the other, but, at the same time, we must acknowledge that she also restores Fiore's health and wholeness in a manner that can be construed as fully homophobic.

Serena dies after guiding the asteroid into a safe course home, having used up all of her power. In a final act of redemption, Fiore appears as a child and gives his life energy to Darien in the form of a flower. Kissing the flower, Darien soaks up its power and proceeds to kiss Serena to administer its magic.² This scene does well to sum up the institution of compulsory heterosexuality and the homosocial continuum. By kissing Fiore's flower, the act is akin to kissing Fiore himself. That Darien bypasses Fiore and ends up kissing Serena seems like the dissolution of the homoerotic threat and the restoration of the norm. In effect, Serena saves Darien from boundary crossing, from choosing a homoerotic relationship with Fiore. Moreover, if the flower is representative of the vagina, that Fiore offers it up to Darien affirms the privileging of heterosexual relationships and Fiore's acceptance of the norm.

² In this scene, we see the power Fiore has as a child to resurrect the dead, as well as his return to childhood innocence. That we can consider Darien kissing Fiore's flower akin to Darien actually kissing Fiore the child brings us back to the culture of child molesting and such sanctioned images.

Hetero-normativity, Compliance, and Resistance: *Sailor Moon* as Pop Culture

That the *Sailor Moon* series revolves around Serena and Darien's legendary romance begs the question: Is the relationship between Darien and Serena what all other relationships are supposed to be judged against? This potential for a homoerotic relationship between Darien and Fiore must not be allowed to come to fruition because of the same reasons Serena's and Seiya's cannot. Both instances threaten the collapse of patriarchal institutions maintained through hetero-normativity and reproduction. If either main character, Serena or Darien, indulge in alternative relationships, there is no future Crystal Tokyo. The expanse of the kingdom, as demonstrated through the time travel the Scouts do and the visions they receive, is monumental. It is the center of the universe, ruling the galaxy through a traditional monarchy. For this power to exist, norms must be maintained, which is why peripheral characters like Amara and Michelle, and Zoysite and Malachite, who are not as active in the series as the inner Scouts are, can occupy these alternative positions. In this manner, the series explores resistant readings while simultaneously promoting normative ones, an occurrence which is not unusual for popular culture narratives. As Inness indicates, it is problematic to understand a program as being "entirely comfortable" with non-normative characters and situations, even if they *do* show a number of alternative orientations, such as in *Sailor Moon* (169). Inness discusses John Fiske's idea concerning the interpretive capacity of television, and the insistence on a preferred meaning; any one show has "more meanings than Hollywood can control or any one audience group can activate, [but this] does not negate television's struggle to control its meanings, and prefer some over others" (169). So while there are numerous hints at alternative sexualities for Darien and Serena, they are resigned to their heterosexual positions because they, as the main characters, must maintain a normative reading of the text, even if, on occasion, they are subversive.

Heinecken summarizes Philip Green's notion about the absorption of popular culture: "although readers from certain subcultures may appropriate texts for their own purposes, there are dominant patterns of storytelling in the media. These patterns are reflective of ideology—cultural ideals, attitudes, and beliefs that support the governing myths of our [...] culture" (15). However, this does not prevent viewers from coming to their own conclusions. Furthermore, hegemony is not a static process; it changes, and with it beliefs and attitudes about what is considered the norm. In this manner, hegemony "has to rein us [and this] shows that at least some people are resistant to the dominant ideal" (Heinecken 16). Therefore, resistant thinking *does* exist for popular texts, both internally and externally. Heinecken claims that it is the existence of oppositional thinking that makes it necessary for a text to persuade viewers (16). I am not convinced that a program like *Sailor Moon* is successful in its demonstration of compulsory heterosexuality because of how it deals with gender and sexuality as a whole. It is difficult to be persuaded by a norm that is ignored more often than it is followed. Because of this, the series is contradictory and open to many interpretations, and many ways of thinking about girl-power. While many television programs make issues invisible through nonrepresentation, *Sailor Moon* includes many alternative ways of thinking, deeming them as relevant as normative ideas, if not more so.

Afterward

“Carry On:” *Sailor Moon*, Girl-Power, and the Trends of Tomorrow

Here I'm standing in the night—
 My crescent wand the only light.
 Alone against my darkest fear,
 But I sense my friends are near.
 I'll draw from each the power I need.
 The evil queen, we will defeat.

Give me the strength to carry on.
 With all our love, we can't go wrong.
 Only together we face the fight.
 Nothing can stand against our might.
 With all our strength, the battle's won.
 With all our love, we can't go wrong.
 We have the strength to carry on.

~ English Dub: Song: “Carry On” from “Day of Destiny.” Season One, Episode Forty

Sailor Moon showcases the type of girl-power hero that is unrecognizable in contemporary popular culture. The Scouts' brand of girliness has not resurfaced in twenty-first-century American media. Gone are the all-female fighting groups, or the heroine who draws strength from the feminine realm of the girlish; in are the vain, shallow, petty, and manipulative female characters who are representative of an individualist consumer culture. Girl-power has faded away, and what remains are post-feminist texts with no additional element to counter their narrow representations of women and women's lives. Post-feminist texts tend to “hype empowerment,” but do not “sustain any easy or straightforward relationship to women's experiences and social health. Indeed, scholars, popular critics, and mass audiences often report a ‘hollow quality’ at the heart of many postfeminist media texts” (Tasker and Negra 107). This is particularly true for post-feminist narratives that focus entirely on “heterosexual femininity” (McRobbie 543) and normative desires, such as in *Bridget Jones' Diary* (2001), *Sex and the City*

(1998, 2008), *Desperate Housewives* (2004), *Gossip Girl* (2007), and the movie-remakes of Charlie's Angels (2000, 2003) just to name a few. These texts ignore the importance of women's lived experiences and the need for homosocial environments where girls and women promote the interests of other females. I recognize that there are components of homosociality in these shows, but they are not so much focused on women's lived experiences as they are about criticizing other women.

Janet McCabe and Kim Akass, authors of "Feminist Television Criticism: Notes and Queries," claim that "[p]ost-feminist series like *Friends* (NBC, 1994–2004), *Ally McBeal*, *Sex and the City* and more recently *Desperate Housewives* (Cherry Productions/ABC, 2004–) perpetuate these narratives of supposedly liberated women desiring romance—longing for a man to complete her" (115). All-female get-togethers only seem to provide the forum for heteronormative activities. These narratives lack the commitment to women that *Sailor Moon* as a girl-power text makes visible. And while some may condemn girl-power as the beginning of the end for feminism, can we really say that many of its texts did not do something different than these other hollow representations?

I lament the loss of 90s girl-power figures because it meant the end of their transformative and subversive performances. The market is currently littered with realistic dramas, showcasing shows like *CSI* with its female characters that supposedly work bloody twelve-hour shifts in high heels and white form-fitting outfits. Preceding this show on network television is a group of socially deranged and hyperactive housewives who thrive on the gossip and tragedies of other housewives, followed by a group of rich and sexy adolescents who have nothing better to do with their time than to dramatize their shallow lives in the hopes that they get face time on *Gossip Girl*'s blog. These popular programs provide no mental or emotional

stimulation for me. Granted, *CSI* is meant to make us think, but what I am really left to do is to watch sexy CSI staff and victims deliver an empty performance. The only secondary plot elements outside of the crimes deal with heteronormative drama. These are not girl-power texts.

I also acknowledge that in modern shows I do enjoy such as *Supernatural* and *Smallville* the women are given marginal roles. In *Supernatural*, the women die violent deaths, are demonized, or both; Mrs. Winchester, Sam's girlfriend, Bela, Ruby, Lilith, and the cross-roads demon come to mind. In terms of *Smallville*, Chloe, Lana, and Lois seem to mainly be defined by the male heroes in the text, and when they do break out on their own, they are often left to perform their heroism in the shadow of the greater hero, Superman. I yearn for the caliber of girl-power texts that are reminiscent of a more powerful era of story-telling. What kinds of role models are currently out there? Where are my Warrior Princesses, staff- and sai-wielding bards, female assassins, masters of disguise, defenders of love and justice, and Vampire Slayers? We cannot dismiss 90s girl-power heroines, especially since our cultural landscape is now void of such strong female heroes.

What texts like *Buffy*, *Xena*, and *Sailor Moon* do for popular culture is provide the performances necessary to fully engage a female audience. While resistive elements are not always blatant, the subtext allows for audience projection of alternative methods of reading the text, and we can see that many members of an audience engage in fanfiction, which is fan-made narratives involving the characters and fictional universe of a show. There is such a vast array of literature in cyberspace that follows every narrative strand imaginable in these popular texts. What is fascinating to see are the overwhelming volumes of non-normative stories that focus on homoeroticism and homosociality, particularly as they relate to *Xena* and *Gabrielle* and the *Sailor Scouts*. These texts are largely written by women for women. I have indeed participated

in the writing and reading of fanfiction, and have experienced how satisfying it is to be part of such a community. For the most part, fans write based on the tensions that are already embedded in the text, and, similar to scholars, tease out these meanings, bringing them into the light. In this manner, Bonnie Dow argues that criticism should be “an exploration, with the unavoidable twists and turns, towards the many, sometimes contradictory, possibilities of understanding[, and] when a critic writes as though s/he is ‘discovering’ or ‘revealing’ meaning in a text...what s/he has ‘discovered’ is the *possibility* of meaning” (qtd. in Heinecken 18). On some level, fans perform the same kinds of gender- and power-focused readings that academics do. Furthermore, these popular culture narratives that highlight the experiences of women and their bonds perpetuate the very same thing in terms of online communities and the female audiences that read fanfiction.

Texts that promote resistance to normative gender systems cannot be all bad. Fanfiction is a new form

of audience engagement made possible by new technologies. Traditionally seen as a male preserve, official (and unofficial) websites, online posting boards and Internet chat rooms make possible as never before a meta-narrative created and adapted by viewer/fans. New research points to how shows like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *The L Word* are inspiring—and even anticipating—virtual communities of women. From interactive television [...] to weblogs, new media technologies are clearly building on, and extending, existing forms of fandom (with not only local but global implications) but are also changing the ways in which the viewer engages with the text. These innovations invite further investigations in terms of gender, power and access. (McCabe and Akass 113)

Keeping this type of audience response in mind, we should recognize that 90s girl-power texts do not drastically depart from the feminism that came before if they are promoting a social transformation, rejecting the privileging of the masculine, and infusing traditionally inferior notions of femininity with the same power as masculinity and ascribing these powers to male and female bodies alike. However, they also do not mark “a straightforward continuity with it. Instead, it is representative of an uneasy middle ground that aligns it with the Third Wa[ve] and its progressive/retrogressive manifestations” (Genz 341). This will always be one of the faults of popular culture because in order to be successful, it must accept that its audience consists of both normative and resistive viewers.

According to McCabe and Akass, in terms of the “contemporary feminist debate, [...] [the] thirdwave[...] does not radically break from what went before, but rather offers another moment of readjustment, re-coding and re-writing to accommodate the new” (116). What McCabe and Akass describe is the rearticulation I have been discussing from the beginning. Girl-power texts provide Western culture with what Genz describes as a kind of “plurality” that many feminists refuse to engage with, choosing instead to relegate girl-power heroes’ various performances, representations, and identities into “easily categorized[...] contained[...]and] well-defined boxes” (336). These narrow ideas paint girl-power and post-feminism with the same apolitical and anti-feminist brush, instead of recognizing that girl-power narratives function as self-conscious and reflexive texts. Furthermore, these notions fail to give credit where credit is due, to both the audience of girls and women who watch these shows and the academics who help write them.

Sailor Moon is a conflicted popular culture text that, within Western culture, helped redefine what girl-power should mean in the 1990s. While the show does subscribe to dominant

ideology on one hand, it simultaneously and blatantly rejects this ideology in favour of resistive social elements on the other. *Sailor Moon* is part of a feminist continuum, one that addresses issues that are ignored in the current backlash movement of post-feminism. The text consciously engages in play, which is a cornerstone of girl-power texts. A text that is self-aware can participate in the production of meaning, understand the power of parody, and embrace the joys of performance. As a Japanese text adopted by Western media, *Sailor Moon* opens up the dimensions of girl-power, proving that there is more to it than the shallow demonstrations of pop icons like the Spice Girls. The show effectively creates a female-only space, forming a supportive network of girls and women who are empowered by their mutual lived experience. These relationships are highlighted, privileged, and made visible within the *Sailor Moon* universe, as well as in other girl-power texts like *Charmed*, *Xena, Warrior Princess*, *The Powerpuff Girls*, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. *Sailor Moon* played a significant role for girl-power in the West by showcasing a heroine who reclaimed the girlish as a powerful and significant component of the super-heroine identity, and I only hope that these types of heroines are revived in popular culture. Their power and influence has certainly seeped into contemporary culture, as is evident by the continued scholarship on such texts, and they are the models with which today's heroines unsuccessfully compare. *Sailor Moon's* example of the reclamation of the girlish does have the strength to carry on in popular culture if we acknowledge the dynamic heroine that we lost as we moved into the new millennium. In regards to the popular culture of the twenty-first-century, I am uncertain of the post-feminist destination and am troubled that it might very well end at a location far removed and inferior to the height of girl-power heroines in the 90s.

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