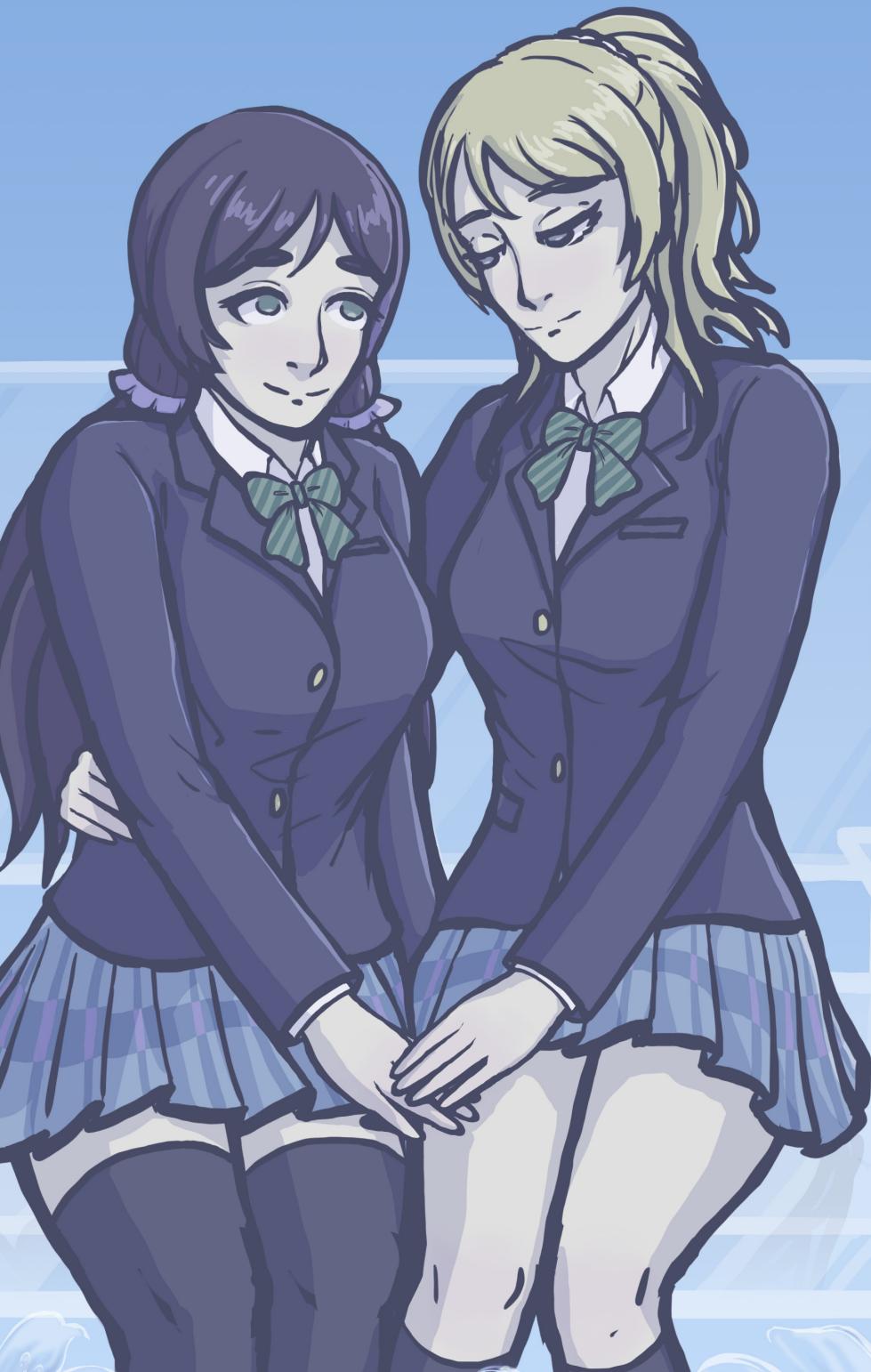


vol.50 #05

Yuri

KÔNISU



Nozomi Tojo and Eli Ayase
Love Live! School Idol Project

art by Athena Chen

CENTERING GAY GIRLS: IT'S THEIR STORY



JAMIE YOU

4TH YEAR, COGNITIVE SCIENCE

ARTIST

'Tis the season for bronchitis, and boy howdy I'm not loving it.

Tamen de Gushi (*Their Story*) is a slice-of-life manhua by Chinese cartoonist Tan Jiu. Published on Chinese social media website Weibo since 2014, it's relatively old, and I've been seeing memes of it since... well, forever, it feels like. It's also physically published under the title SQ: *Cong Ni de Mingzi Kaishi* (SQ: *Begin W/ Your Name*).

What's made *Tamen de Gushi* a fan favorite despite its irregular update schedule? Moving at a brisk pace and tapping into the funny side of everyday situations, *Tamen de Gushi* doesn't try to manufacture drama so much as let conflict happen, then let its characters deal with the aftermath. This often means foreclosing plot points before they can reach a satisfying conclusion, then moving on to the next scene, leaving the question hanging and the dynamic open.

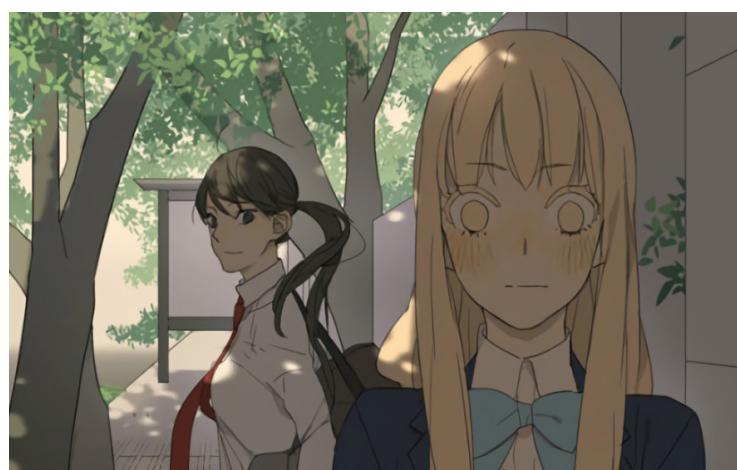
That main dynamic between Sun Jing (black hair) and Qiu Tong (blonde) is nuanced and fun to read. Sun Jing's possessive and protective over Qiu Tong; while it stems from genuine feelings, she's also clearly trying to fulfill a heteronormative role in order to validate their romance. Qiu Tong, deceptively oblivious, is tough in her own, quiet way. She's got Sun Jing wrapped around her little finger, but is also falling fast herself. Thankfully, while the energetic and goofy Sun Jing comes on a bit strong, she's also willing to give Qiu Tong space, and the romance proceeds more along the latter's terms as she slowly learns to reach past her own defenses.



Qiu Tong and Sun Jing are the flagship blonde/"brunette" couple, but the manhua doesn't skimp on the rest of the cast - there's a slapstick "no hetero" bestie, an intimidating upperclassman, random adults, cute girls, delinquents, a goody-two-shoes class rep, and various other odds and friends. You get the sense that the story is less tracking the development of our leading ladies' romance so much as following them through their daily lives - lives that so happily happen to be spent with each other.

One theme that I particularly appreciated is how hard it is to discern the platonic-romantic boundary in a budding gay relationship, particularly in China where platonic same-sex physical affection is especially common. This is played with throughout the comic, as Sun Jing and Qiu Tong wrestle with the added meanings behind simple public interactions like hugs, hand-holding, and roughhousing as their feelings evolve - What does it mean to be doing these things? What does it mean to the other girl? And what does it mean to everybody else?

Overall, it's a great read if you're looking for something light, breezy, sunny without being syrupy. *Tamen de Gushi* doesn't shy away from uncomfortable topics - misogyny and homophobia, for example, are present and addressed - but the story doesn't like to dwell in them, either. The messages can get heavy-handed, but they aren't harped on.



The art matches the writing - the clean, thin-line, full-color (as typical of manhua and webtoons) style has plenty of environmental shots to lend the figures a sense of place. It's easy to track what's going on in a scene, who's going where and when and why. The characters of *Tamen de Gushi* feel like they inhabit the space, situated neatly within a world that exists alongside them. As a work that normalizes sapphic relationships, this is no small feat.

BLOOM INTO YOU: THE QUEST OF IDENTIFYING THE SELF



NICHOLAS WONOSAPUTRA

STAFF WRITER

1ST YEAR, INTENDED MCB NEUROBIOLOGY

Might've gotten a bit too ambitious this time--after all, how well can one summarize the themes of a 46 chapter manga?

Major Spoilers for the *Bloom Into You* manga, and by extension, the anime. Before reading, give the series a shot, and then return if you need more convincing.

It's been less than a month since *Bloom Into You*'s manga completed its run. So, to celebrate the end to this amazing journey, and as we wait for confirmation for a season two of its anime adaptation, I'd like to take some of your time to reflect on the central themes presented in the series.

Now, *Bloom Into You* is undeniably a yuri manga in that it features blooming romance between a pair of girls, but to assume that its main theme is the discovery and embracement of one's sexuality is to ignore its broader philosophical thesis, which explores the concept of the self and how love and change are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

While there is a subplot dedicated to one of the characters, Sayaka, confidently embracing her homosexuality, the main pair of characters, Touko and Yuu, are far less concerned by the gender of their partner and are more interested in exploring the paradoxical nature of how they define their sense of self through their respective concepts of love.

As far as the self is concerned, Touko's character arc takes center stage as the first half of the manga is dedicated to Touko's obsession to become her sister. In Touko's mind, her life is not her own, and she hates her "real self." Thus, she falls in love with Yuu because Touko believes that Yuu is both asexual and apathetic.



Touko thinks Yuu is the only person she can fall in love with, as Touko "can't love someone who loves what [she] hates." However, Yuu, who had been playing the role of the passive, apathetic observer all her life, openly rejects Touko's self-destructive behavior in the form of changing the ending to the in-universe play, and says, "don't disregard what you've been given." Yuu's point is that everyone in Touko's life only know--and only have feelings directed towards--Touko, not Touko's sister. Yuu asserts that it's okay to want to be like someone else, but to try to wholly become another person means to disregard the self and all the things attributed to that self.



Yuu's character arc is a bit slower-paced in that she expected love to be something sudden, a feeling that would sweep her off her feet as soon as she felt it. But love never came suddenly to her, and thus, she initially believes she is incapable of love. There's a certain emptiness within Yuu, as she is someone who seemingly lacks personal interests and allows people to tell her what to do and manipulate her, and she's fine with that. However, throughout her time in her seemingly one-sided relationship with Touko, she starts to take control of her life and chooses to fall in love with Touko. It is in this choice that Yuu attains selfhood and defies her passive nature.

Thus, the pair individually change to the point where they are very different people than when they met, when Touko initially fell in love with Yuu. The final act can, therefore, be summarized in Touko's own words: "It turns out that 'I love you' doesn't mean 'don't ever change.' It isn't a shackle."

Bloom Into You asserts that the self is but an ever changing thing and that love isn't specific to a certain aspect of a person; it is a bond between two ever-changing selves and is thus paradoxically defined by its inability to be defined.

BAKEMONOGATARI: A KANBARU INTERPRETATION OF YURI AND ROMANCE

RACHEL MIN

1ST YEAR, INTENDED COMPUTER SCIENCE

imo Kanbaru funniest character in series

STAFF WRITER



Spoilers for Suruga Monkey/third arc in *Monogatari* if watched/read in order of release (also the rest of her subplot but it isn't the focus of the story so should be peachy)

The word 'yuri' is derived from lily, a flower commonly associated with innocence. Perhaps it's because of this that yuri stereotypically depicts an innocent, shy, severe blush-inducing love, which like most fictional romances, ultimately ends up in a happily ever after.

So, what happens when you turn the stereotype on its head? Kanbaru Suruga.

Kanbaru Suruga exudes a sense of confidence and has a general disregard for what people think of her--being a high school's star basketball player who pulls a D3 women's basketball team to national champions does that to people.

While romances in high school settings are typically handled as an embarrassing, taboo subject, Kanbaru is off almost flaunting her sexuality and romantic interests. In fact, in one of her first encounters with Araragi, the main character, she tells him that not only is she lesbian, but that she's also had a crush on Senjougahara, his girlfriend since she was in middle school. Kanbaru even proudly claims that their middle school's nickname for them, a ship name if you will, was her own creation.

Araragi is understandably dumbfounded, especially since Kanbaru had led him into the conversation like it was a trivial matter. In her defense, she had woken up with a monkey's paw for an arm, so her romantic interest seems like the least of her worries.



Speaking of Kanbaru's crush on Senjougahara, it isn't viable for obvious reasons. Senjougahara's not available; she's already seeing Araragi. *Monogatari* does something not commonly seen in romances in the young adult genre--handling a broken heart, and we're not talking about that convenient plot point that ends up deepening characters' feelings for each other.

A clear, unfulfillable love. One that forces you to move on.

At first, Kanbaru is extremely jealous of Araragi, so jealous that she makes a wish to a monkey's paw that she could date Senjougahara. Unbeknownst to her, she subconsciously makes a wish for Araragi to disappear, and the monkey's paw turns her into a monster that attacks Araragi.



At the end of the day, Araragi, with copious help from Senjougahara manages to stop Kanbaru from attacking him, and Kanbaru's arc comes to a close. Normally, this would be the happily ever after. From Araragi's perspective, it probably is, but just because Kanbaru is freed from the monkey's paw doesn't mean that she's able to let go of her feelings. They didn't die with the monster. Thus begins her long struggle to move on.

One might expect Kanbaru to avoid Araragi, but she actually follows him to a temple in the next arc. Being the quirky character she is, she proactively copes with her jealousy by making Araragi as uncomfortable as she can. She embarrasses him, harasses him, and even tells Araragi that if Senjougahara were to dump him, she would be the first in line to confess to Senjougahara.

As the story progresses, Kanbaru and Araragi manage to become friends, and though she continues to be jealous of him, she eventually moves on.

Kanbaru Suruga, the confident, occasionally inconsiderate, occasionally jealous lesbian, who strays far from typical yuri romances. *Monogatari* is about her love just as much as it is about how she has to move on from it.



WHOLESOME YURI (WHERE MEN ARE VAPORIZED)

JET SITU

STAFF WRITER

1ST YEAR, ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING AND COMPUTER SCIENCE

If wholesome yuri vaporizes all males, does wholesome yaoi vaporize all females? :thinking:

"Now hold on," you might be thinking. "Wholesome yuri? After Citrus, that still exists?"

Heresy. Most probably heresy. I mean, if you take lewdness out of yuri, then where does the yuri come from?

I mean, you're not half wrong. Yuri in anime has undoubtedly changed, far from the initial hints and over friendliness that never went anywhere, into something far more mainstream and common, accepted. Less concealing. More romantic, and definitely, more showing. In more than one way...

Back to the topic. It turns out that among the slew of changes is a general growth in wholesome yuri. Yuri where it's just romance, or at least really obvious hints of romance, and the wholesome stuff, where kisses are rare, and even rarer is handholding.

"Wait", you might ask. "What happens if it's so wholesome that there's no real defined relationship? What happens if a guy's there to mess with

my ships? If a guy's there, where did my yuri ship go?" You don't need to worry about that, because some mangaka are already one step ahead, with the perfect solution. No men.

Just vaporize all the men. Nah, they don't exist, not even as background characters.

We can start off lightly with *Gabriel Dropout*. In the entire run of the series thus far, there are only 2 men in the entire anime – a teacher and the owner of the coffee shop. Or, take a look at *Slow Start*. There are 120 (named!) characters, most of whom are high school freshman. Out of everyone, only one man exists – Hana's dad. For something more recent, go with *Watashi ni Tenshi ga Maiorita*, where there are three moms, whole classrooms of children and teachers, and the grand total of zero men. This lack of males is so common that even *New Game!* makes a meta joke about it. There are no visible men in *New Game!*, with Aoba's dad referenced tangentially and Naru's dad so antisocial that his only communication is through shooting arrows with notes attached to them. I'm pretty sure the cat's female too, so no dice there.



The one time Narumi confronts her dad

But Jet, you might ask, "If all the dudes are gone, what's the tropes? What happens when you vaporize half the planet?" Once again, the mangakas have the answer – just have one of the female characters absorb the male tropes. You're missing harem anime? Well, Eiko from *Slow Start* is your substitute package – pulling four girls a day with an agenda stuffed with dates and still has the density of Masamune from *Eromanga Sensei*. Kou from *New Game!* isn't messing around either, pulling half of the people she meets and also being called out in the anime for being so dense. Want a pure angel to become a yuri harem goddess? Bocchi from *Hitoribocchi no Marumaru Seikatsu* is slowly friending all 29 members of her classroom, in a world where it's easier to get over social anxiety considering that everyone (in the manga) is female.

It seems fairly ridiculous to rebuild the world like this. But if multiple seasons of pure whole yuri anime exist this way and are also enjoyable, it's fine to take a backseat and trust in the mangaka to handle it.

From *Wataten*: Three moms, three kids, dads have embraced the void.



STAFF PICKS

FAVORITE YURI PAIRINGS

Homura and Madoka (Puella Magi Madoka Magica)

Nerissa Hsieh

Although well known, when you think of star-crossed tragic lovers Homura and Madoka are the first to come to mind.

Byleth and Edelgard (Fire Emblem Three Houses)

Marc Castillo

The power duo that destroyed racism, social hierarchy and the iron-clad grip of the church--what else can I say? We stan these queens!

Aoi Asahina and Sakura Ogami (Danganronpa)

Athena Chen

These Ultimate athletes are strong, independent women who don't need any men. They do everything together, from swimming to having tea. Even in the dire situation of the Killing Game, these two stuck together and vowed to protect one another.

Misaki and Kokoro (Bang Dream!)

Nerissa Hsieh

Who isn't a sucker for a relatively disgruntled tsundere and a happy-go-lucky goof? Their interactions are incredibly fresh and pure, and never fail to warm my heart.

Tomoka Kase and Yui Yamada (Asagao to Kase-san)

Abeer Hossain

Saw this cute as balls OVA at Anime Expo a year ago. These two are so cute and play really well off of each other's personalities.

Commander Jupiter and Commander Mars (Pokemon Diamond/Pearl/Platinum)

Jamie You

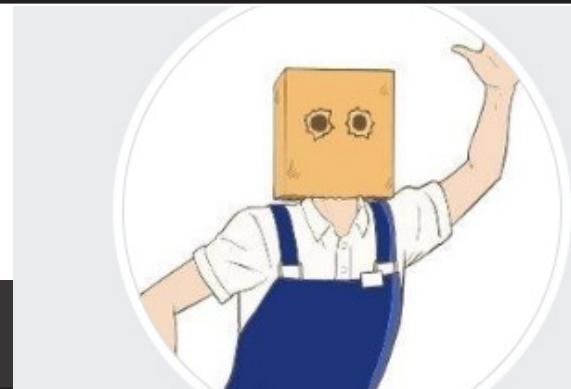
Underneath that bitter rivalry is a flame just waiting to be (re?)kindled. Seriously, they can be and occasionally are good for each other, Pokemon's writers just have heterovision. Girls who scheme together and meme together

UPCOMING EVENTS



November 3rd
10 am - 8 pm
Pauley Ballroom
[Squareup.com/store/AD2019](https://squareup.com/store/AD2019)

Details
Coming Soon



BAY AREA ANIME AND GAMING MARATHON



November 12
7 pm
Regal/AMC
Bay Street

KONO SUBA! MOVIE TRIP

VOLUME L, ISSUE 05 — OCTOBER 24, 2019

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QIU TONG AND SUN JING
Tamen de Gushi
Art by Nerissa Hsieh

