

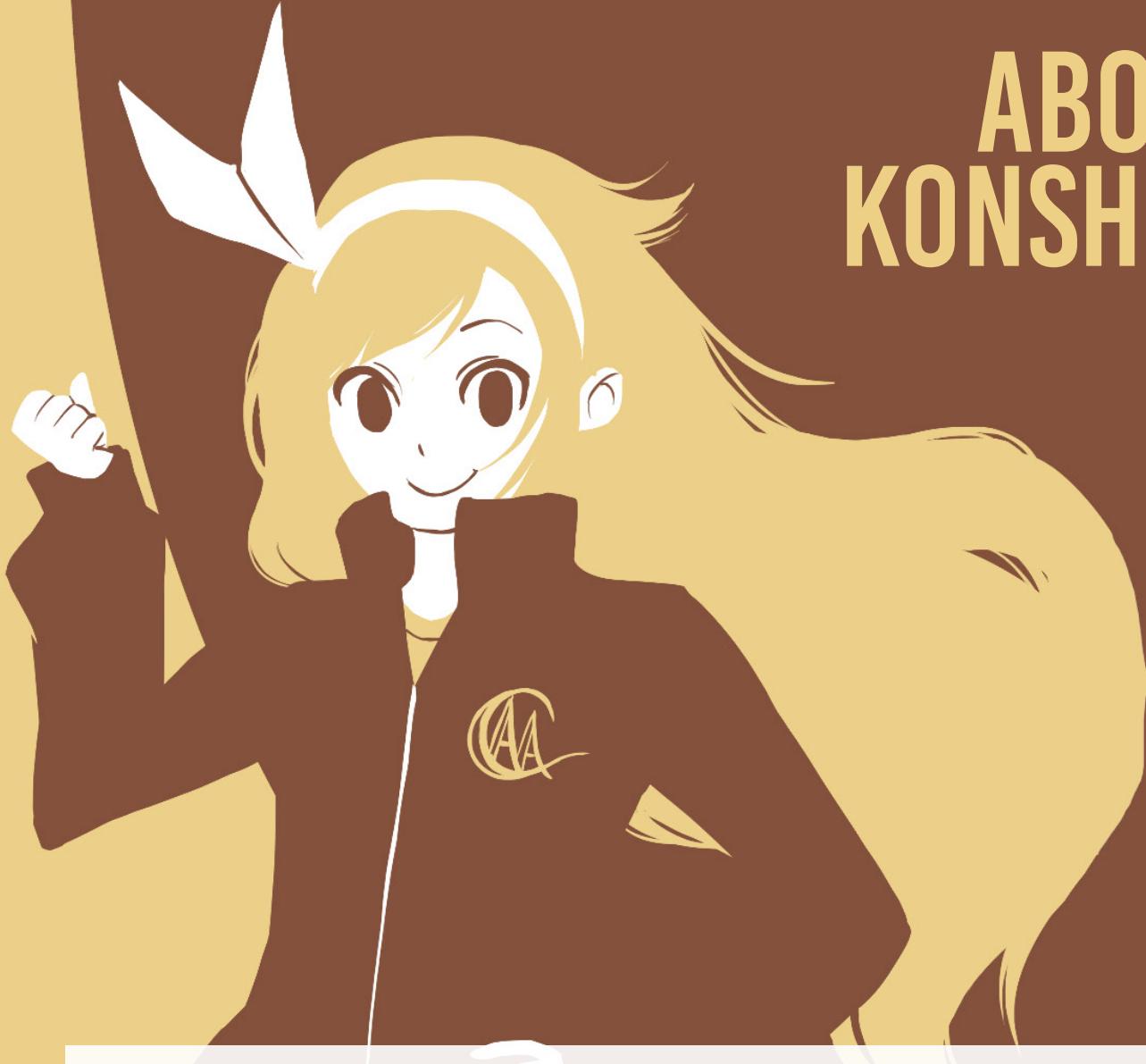
CAL ANIMAGE ALPHA presents

Konshuu

ANTHOLOGY



ABOUT KONSHUU



Konshuu is a weekly publication created by Cal Animage Alpha, a student-run organization at the University of California, Berkeley.

Cal Animage Alpha (CAA) was established in 1989, and additional Cal Animage chapters were formed at other universities in the following years. Notably, our alumni founded Anime Expo, the largest anime convention in the United States. Other CAA members have gone on to co-found local conventions like Fanime and Animation on Display, as well as the international streaming service Crunchyroll.

We remain an active club on the UC Berkeley campus with weekly showings and game nights on weekdays, and special events in the Bay Area on weekends; these range from social gatherings to tours of local companies in the anime/manga/video game industry. Cal Animage Alpha is comprised of students at UC Berkeley along with a growing network of alumni spanning multiple generations. We strive to maintain and strengthen a community for fans of Japanese popular culture and media. In fact, most of our events are open to the general public. Above all, Cal Animage Alpha aims to be an inclusive social club for the Berkeley community.

Our most prominent event is **Anime Destiny** (AD), an annual convention hosted on UC Berkeley's campus. Each year, we invite local artists to promote and sell their artwork, bring dealers to sell merchandise, host panel events and discussions, and prepare a variety of fun activities catered to attendees. Visitors from around the world come for a full-day experience involving anime, manga, games, and more, hosted and staffed by the officers of Cal Animage Alpha.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Dear Readers,

Welcome to the *Konshuu Anthology*! I am *Konshuu*'s current Editor-in-Chief, Josh. It is a great honor to present our publication's hard work from the past few semesters.

I joined *Konshuu* in Spring 2015 as its fourth/fifth member alongside one of our current Layout Editors, Edward Hong. It is now our last semester as students of UC Berkeley, and consequently, our final semester working in *Konshuu*.

Konshuu was started in 1995, six years after the creation of Cal Animation Alpha. Sadly, much of *Konshuu*'s history has been lost to dead servers and missing print archives.

When Edward and I joined *Konshuu* in 2015, it had since moved from publication as an online blog to being printed weekly for Cal Animation Alpha's members, with summaries and articles contained in a four-page booklet. At that time, I became *Konshuu*'s second active writer and Edward became the sole Layout Editor on the team.

Konshuu experienced massive growth from 2015 to 2018, from the eyes of a new writer turned Editor-in-Chief. Thanks to the dutiful steering of our two previous Editors-in-Chief, Tina Nguyen and Austin Tai, *Konshuu* evolved from a four-page booklet, with no cover art and a single weekly article, to an eight-page publication with new cover art and multiple articles every week. Staff size increased from four in 2015 to twelve in 2016, then sixteen in 2018.

We now print eight-page newsletters each week throughout the school year, which features new art from our multiple artists, weekly articles from a rotation of writers, and creative designs for the final product from our three layout editors. Today, *Konshuu* is introducing a full-sized magazine for our readers.

For me, *Konshuu* has always been a story of growth, and it continues to be one. As I prepare for my own graduation from UC Berkeley, and as I step down from the position as Editor-in-Chief, I view *Konshuu* in retrospect as one of the most important steps I took to get where I am today. I was once just a curious freshman looking to join the anime club—now I am one of the graduating Heads of Cal Animation Alpha, surrounded by my friends and talented peers alike.

Konshuu helped me grow as a writer, as a leader, and as a person; my only hope now is that the newsletter helps future generations of students find their place on campus, find their friends, and, most of all, find themselves doing what they love, surrounded by what they love—whether that's anime, manga, video games, or working with like-minded folks.

Thanks for all the memories, *Konshuu*.

JOSH ROQUE
Editor-in-Chief (2016-2018)



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konshuu

A N T H O L O G Y

Highlights

Curated articles from the past three years of Konshuu, touched up for this Anthology.
Contains articles originally published in Volumes 43 to 46 (Spring 2016 to Fall 2017).



ANIME DESTINY 2016

-second season-



ZIANA DEEN
Writer

To make me feel better about my first year attending UC Berkeley, my sister bought tickets for us to attend Anime Destiny. This was the first convention I'd ever been to! On the morning of Anime Destiny, I wore a black lace dress, a black masquerade mask, and an adorned circlet of flowers. People stared at me and complimented my outfit as we walked toward MLK. After we received our badges, my sister and I spent hours going through Artists' Alley, watching Coast in the Clouds perform, and taking pictures with cosplayers. I freaked out when I saw Ladybug and Chat Noir cosplayers! I bought cute character magnets and developed a fan crush on Yuumei, buying only three of her artworks (I wanted all of them). At the end of the day, my sister and I collapsed in my apartment, and I looked at the three prints, the pictures of my first anime convention on my phone, and my AD registration badge. "Today," I thought to myself, "is the best day I've had at Cal so far."



JOSH ROQUE
Editor-in-Chief

This will be the fourth Anime Destiny that I've attended. In 2014, I was covering the convention as a member of the press. At the time, I didn't expect that I would become a staff member for the next two years and act as a Department Head in my final year of college. I experienced Anime Destiny as guest and coordinator, and each convention has only gotten better. Better venues, more artists, more events, and more staff have painted a picture of Anime Destiny as a constantly evolving convention. Each one has always been a unique experience. During my first year, I realized how wondrous it can feel to be at an anime convention (it was the first one I had ever attended). I felt comfortable with my interests for the first time. After joining Cal Animage Alpha, I felt the sweat that goes down the backs of staff members months before the actual convention. And now, as one of the Heads of CAA, my relationship with Anime Destiny is nothing but love.



JAMIE YOU
Artist/Writer

Armed with cough drops and an Arataka Reigen cosplay that involved bleaching my actual hair, I shuffled over to the ASUC Student Union. I had never been to an anime convention before and was unsure what to expect. I also wasn't used to getting up so early. But the "Staff" badge bouncing on my chest reminded me of my duty. I'll be real, that day was hellish. I was running a fever, hacking up phlegm, and tripping over my too-long suit pants. But it was worth it. Getting that free Reigen sticker for my cosplay was worth it; meeting Yuumei in the flesh was worth it. Passing by the myriad tables and artists, each with their own creative vision and voice, was worth it. Seeing my banner (albeit shrunken) at the top of the MLK stairs was absolutely worth it! Being able to help guests and watch their faces light up with joy as they found the perfect piece—that was the reason I was there. For a first con experience, Anime Destiny was solid. Even though it should be renamed "Anime Density."

GAME SHOW GOVERNMENT

The Garish Dystopia of **Kokumin Quiz**

JAMIE YOU



Written by the otherwise unknown Reiichi Sugimoto and illustrated by Katō Shinkichi, *Kokumin Quiz* was totally unrelated to any of the shōnen manga I obsessed over in 2013. I have no idea how I found it. I'm glad that I did, though, because it's become one of my favorite titles, with an especially memorable premise and main character.

Containing a single arc and spanning less than fifty chapters, the whole manga can easily be read through in one sitting. I'm convinced that it's the best way to experience it. Taken in all at once, the manga reads like a fever dream, a bizarre alternate universe that manages to seem a shade too real.

Kokumin Quiz is set in a dystopian future where Japan controls the world and a game show controls Japan. The titular National (kokumin) Quiz trumps all other forms of Japanese government. Entrants, if they make it through rounds of grueling trivia, may have one wish granted. All public resources are but tools to fulfill the wacky winner's wish, no matter how unreasonable, unethical or grandiose.

The manga focuses on the game show and its host, Prisoner KK47331. Better known as K-i K-ichi, our protagonist is an actor who once lost the National Quiz. As punishment for losing, K-i now hosts the very show that imprisoned him. Readers start out knowing nothing about K-i except his game show persona: bombastic and utterly devoted to the morally bankrupt Quiz. His development revolves around the struggle, by both him and others, to maintain, control, and balance this role.

Unpredictable, conflicted, and a genius at what he does, K-i is a joy to watch. He drives the story forward. K-i's influence on the world, however, is tempered realistically by the rest of

the cast, considering its political leaders, hardened extremist groups, and middle managers.

Overall, *Kokumin Quiz* is riddled with moral ambiguity. Every character, no matter how twisted, has a chance to justify themselves; the manga spoofs human nature, yet gives no clear instruction on how to improve it. Clearly, the world of the Quiz is crap. But the authors refuse to offer a simple or easy way out.

Despite the goofiness *Kokumin Quiz* radiates, this manga treads water at the deep end. Death, torture, corruption, depravity—the uglier parts of human nature unfold chapter by chapter, fried in dark satire. Like K-i's theatrics, the overblown quality of the manga's premise and cast deliberately highlights the wretchedness of what's really going on. *Kokumin Quiz* pokes fun at the stupidities of contemporary society while demonstrating how they can, nevertheless, overpower and trample legitimate opposition. Most threads are wrapped up by the end, and while I found the epilogue shoehorned and rushed, the climax itself is a delicately wired pipe bomb of subplots.

Likewise, in terms of art, every stray, "ugly" line in Shinkichi's art is masterfully placed, with a clear purpose. The composition and expressions contained in many panels, especially towards the end, have remained in my mind for years and strongly influenced my own writing and artwork.

Boasting definite influences from US and UK underground comix, *Kokumin Quiz* looks nothing like most manga on the market today. In terms of character development, art direction, pacing, and sheer fun, it's more than worthy of a one-night binge.



KIZUMONOGATARI

A Bloody Masterpiece

EDWARD HONG

Last year, I had the privilege of watching the second and third *Kizumonogatari* films in Japanese theaters. As a long-time *Monogatari* fan who attended the premiere of the first film in San Francisco, I was ecstatic to fulfill a dream five years in the making. The gorgeous animation, all-star voice cast, and poignant soundtrack answered my prayers for the films to be just as exceptional as their source material. I cannot recommend this series enough.

"Kizu" is an animated film trilogy based on a light novel of the same name. Originally announced in 2012, complications within the animation studio sent *Kizu* into production hell for four years and split it into three parts: first came *Tekketsu* (Iron Blood) in January 2016, then *Nekketsu* (Hot Blood) in August 2016, and finally *Reiketsu* (Cold Blood) in January 2017.

To those who have read the original novel: good news, the films are largely faithful to NISIOISIN's writing. While some details have been exaggerated, as per tradition of the anime, many scenes depict an emotional depth not present in the text. Watching the impressive fight scenes play out on the big screen was especially satisfying; the talented staff at Shaft have truly done this story justice.

To those who have yet to see *Kizumonogatari*: I urge you to watch it soon, even if you've yet to embark on the 94-episode journey that is the *Monogatari* series. *Kizu* is an artistic tour de force even as a standalone film series. As a prequel, it depicts the "hellish spring break" that permanently traumatized series protagonist Koyomi Araragi.

The premise is as follows: high school senior Araragi is walking home one night when he encounters Kiss-Shot Acerola-Orion Heart-Under-Blade, a beautiful vampire who has lost all four of her limbs. As she bleeds to death, she begs Araragi to let her suck all of his blood in order to survive.





Out of pity and self-loathing, Araragi agrees. But instead of taking his life, Kiss-Shot turns Araragi into a fellow vampire. She then presents him with an ultimatum: if he can reclaim her limbs from the three vampire hunters that stole them, she will turn him back into a human.

After *Tekketsu* introduces us to the cast and plot, *Nekketsu* throws us right into Araragi's struggle against the vampire hunters. He squares off against Dramaturgy, a muscular vampire who dual-wields flambeuge blades; Episode, a half-vampire half-human who carries a giant silver cross; and Guillotine Cutter, a cunning human said to be the most monstrous of the three. Through these fights, Araragi grows accustomed to his newfound powers as well as the burden of having friends. He also begins to ask all the right questions—ones that surely haunt the viewers as well.

Ultimately, *Kizu* is a masterfully woven tale of friendship and humanity. As a prequel to the TV series, it introduces audiences to two fan-favorite characters, Tsubasa Hanekawa and Meme (pronounced “meh-may”) Oshino. Both characters play a central role in Araragi’s quest to restore his humanity, and also serve to highlight the deeper themes of the *Monogatari* franchise.

Hanekawa is a classmate who tries her best to befriend Araragi, an infamous loner at their school. Though their playful banter is a joy to watch, a sense of unease permeates their moments together. For some reason, Hanekawa has an aversion to going home. And when she goes through great lengths to preserve her relationship with Araragi, her actions come across as frightening. It is these nuanced emotions that have made *Kizu*—and *Monogatari* as a whole—so beloved by fans across the world.

Meanwhile, Oshino is a shady vagabond who offers his services to Araragi and Kiss-Shot at a steep price. A self-proclaimed “balancer,” Oshino’s job is to foster benevolent relations between humans and supernatural beings. While he negotiates with the vampire hunters to schedule duels between them and Araragi, his methods remain a mystery. Oshino also gives Araragi advice containing hidden messages; when watching *Nekketsu*, pay close attention to the phrases “use your head” and “give up on being human.” You’ll be rewarded with an appreciation for *Monogatari* creator NISIOISIN’s trademark wordplay and philosophy.

In *Tekketsu*, the omission of certain scenes but extension of others led to awkward pacing and confusion over characters’ motives. Part I parsed over some novel scenes that I thought were indispensable to the story, namely Araragi’s internal monologues. However, I have very few complaints about *Nekketsu* and *Reiketsu*. Parts II and III were everything I wanted this adaptation to be: face-paced, action-packed, and thrilling from start to finish.

I found the *Monogatari* series at a point in my life when I had grown tired of traditional shounen tropes. It quickly became my favorite anime of all time due to how it plays with the audience’s expectations and how it tackles prevalent social issues with style and wit.

Even if you’re turned off by the extensive monologues, abstract imagery, and perverted elements of the TV series, I urge you to give the *Kizumonogatari* films a try. It takes the best aspects of *Monogatari* and channels them into an immersive, thought-provoking visual spectacle that will be remembered for years to come. Warning: there will be blood, there will be laughs, and there will be tears.



IN PRAISE OF POMPADOURS

JOSHUA SIADOR

Mild Spoiler Warning: *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure*

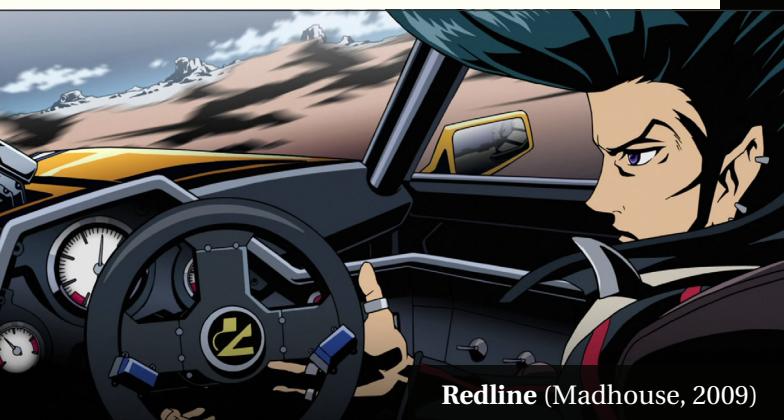
When I think of the word “pompadour,” I think of middle school and high school delinquents with this outrageous hairstyle in anime, manga, and video games. Words that I associate with the word itself are “pompous,” “posh,” and “popular.” I don’t know what is so appealing about this hairstyle and how it became so popular in fashion and media, but it is indeed worthy of praise.

Here are true facts about the pompadour. In the 18th century, Madame de Pompadour was the mistress of King Louis XV. However, the main fashion legend we have to thank for the advent of the imitable pompadour is Madame de Pompadour’s hairdresser and stylist, Legros de Rumigny. Madame de Pompadour was the model for experimental hairstyles, which were recorded in fashion templates by Legros de Rumigny. Because Madame de Pompadour was the Maîtresse-en-titre (Chief Mistress), other French women in the royal courts admired her hair and adopted the pompadour. This led to a French fashion revolution. During this time, pompadours were considered a feminine hairstyle.

Of course, the 18th century pompadour does not resemble the pompadour that we are familiar with. The modern version was popularized by “greaser subculture” and rock stars, primarily Elvis Presley. One of this period’s highlights was the iconic act of slicking back one’s hair to obtain that perfectly voluminous “poof” of hair. Also, don’t forget the leather jackets, jeans, and Converse sneakers.



That brings us to modernity, when manga and anime entered the mainstream. Some mangaka were fascinated and influenced by Western culture, subcultures, and fashion, which explains why some works feature characters with pompadours. This also explains why there is a correlation between delinquent characters and the greaser stereotype. The best result from this fusion of sorts is the “delinquent with a heart of gold” trope: a character that appears to be a delinquent but subverts the character archetype by behaving altruistically. When it comes to manga and anime, imagination is the limit to how beautifully pompadours can be depicted and the characters who cultivate them.



Redline (Madhouse, 2009)

JP (*Redline*)

His pompadour is a work of art. Just look at it! How much pomade or styling wax is even needed for that hair to maintain its composition? Throughout the film, it never came undone, even though one character kept on punching the hairdo. It was also unscathed by the explosions in the film. The pompadour has no weakness; it's invincible against the elements!

Not a single time in the film does JP ever restyle or fix his pompadour. In terms of “styling his hair,” he takes out a comb that opens like a small knife to comb the sides of his hair. There is a notable scene where he pulls out his switchblade comb to fix his hair in a bar and a character stepped back, thinking it was an actual knife. JP’s attention to detail with regard to fashion and his hair creates an aura of intimidation and elegance.

However, one flaw about JP’s ridiculous yet oddly captivating pompadour is its inexplicability. In the film, there is no specific reason why he sports a pompadour. In fact, he developed it over the years, as shown through the numerous flashbacks to his younger years.

But in the end, does there really have to be a reason for someone to look the way they want?



Diamond is Unbreakable (David Production, 2016)

Josuke Higashikata (*JoJo's Bizarre Adventure*)

The one thing you should never do around Josuke is insult his amazing hair. Unless you have a death wish. Just what about his hair makes Josuke suddenly snap when people insult it?

Well, that’s explained in the series, but Josuke mainly shows that a character’s eccentric appearance can be meaningful. Even if there wasn’t any legitimate reason for Josuke to have a pompadour, I’d still be fascinated by it, as was the case with JP.

Similarly to JP, Josuke is injured multiple times, but the pompadour remains intact throughout the series. Josuke’s pompadour exhibits an element of realism: pompadour physics. Rohan Kishibe, a mangaka in the series, takes advantage of Josuke’s “weakness” by deliberately insulting the glorious pompadour.

Rohan even goes so far as to poke the pompadour with his finger, causing the pompadour to jiggle. It is in this moment that the witnesses, Okuyasu Nijimura, Koichi Hirose, and the viewer, know that a battle to the death is about to follow. Never insult someone’s appearance and expect to walk away unscathed.



Space Dandy (Bones, 2014)

Dandy (*Space Dandy*)

It’s Dandy, an incompetent space hunter who hunts unregistered aliens for bounty—in style! His pompadour doesn’t completely roll all the way back into his hair; instead, it sticks out a bit, forming quasi-hair spikes. Unlike the previous characters, Dandy’s pompadour comes undone a few times. He still looks amazing when his hair is down, unstyled, and messy. That’s just the charm of a dandy guy in space.

To summarize, the pompadour hairstyle has been in fashion since the 18th century and has evolved over the centuries. It was widely popularized by American rock stars, who donned modified versions of the hairstyle and paved the way for the greaser subculture and subsequent stereotype to develop. These trends have been adapted into multiple media, not limited to anime, manga, and video games. We must now wonder: what will be the next iconic hairstyle?

FANDOM

Pop Culture Experiences in the Digital Age

—
KATRINA LUQUE

Fandom. A word that evokes Tumblr memes created by overstimulated fujoshi and hysterical debates over whether *Naruto* has too many filler episodes (it does). According to Wikipedia, the official definition of "fandom" is "a term used to refer to a subculture composed of fans characterized by a feeling of empathy and camaraderie with others who share a common interest." While empathy and camaraderie are not always present in fandoms, harboring a passion for the subject material is a given for those who form fan communities.

Interestingly enough, the first modern fandom formed around the original *Sherlock Holmes* mystery series created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. As early as 1897, fans of the enigmatic detective were writing fan fiction and holding assemblies to theorize about the *Sherlock Holmes* universe. In the 1970s, fandom experienced a resurgence in the pop culture world with the advent of science-fiction features such as *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*. Today, fandoms play a prominent role in all aspects of popular culture, especially Japanese popular culture.

If you have the slightest experience with anime and Japanese culture in general, you will have encountered a fandom. Fandoms are integral to the anime community, due to the impact of the World Wide Web, which allows any weeb with internet access to disseminate their opinion and, more importantly, express shipping preferences to interested parties.

Because fandoms form the backbone of the internet discourse concerning anime, manga, visual novels, etc. they can alter the perception of the material they are involved with, either fostering a negative or positive image of the subject matter. Fandoms often generate damaging opinions of an anime

or manga, typically caused by the vitriolic opinions that members of the fandom espouse when discussing topics such as shipping wars and canon vs. non-canonical plot and character interpretation.

However, there are positive aspects to fandoms, such as abridged videos, YouTube reviews, and productive discourse that result from the combined efforts of individuals who share an interest in specific anime/manga. This article seeks to explore contemporary fandom culture and the effects that



Wotakoi (A-1 Pictures, 2018)



Re:CREATORS (Troyca, 2017)

fandoms have on different forms of Japanese-centric media. Since it is impossible to overlook the influence of modern fandoms, it is necessary that rabid fans and casual participants are aware of the impact that fandoms have when it comes to the interpretation and perception of Japanese media.

Die For Our Ship

One of the integral roles of a fandom is to encourage debate over shipping, which is the process of matching two anime characters romantically regardless of the show's canon. Some fandom subgroups have an OTP that the majority of the fandom agrees on. However, there are usually disagreements over which characters should be shipped together.

Shipping wars can be a productive way to engage in character analysis and promote a personal viewpoint of an anime or manga, but they often degenerate into shallow arguments about "best boy" and "best girl," leaving little room for thoughtful commentary about the work. The level of indignation individuals have towards certain ships is astonishing, as evidenced by Disqus user SimplySam, who incited a three-page long shipping war over Otonashi and Kanade from *Angel Beats!*, stating that: "Otonashi x Kanade is the worst f*cking couple in anime. It killed the ending for me seeing how incompatible they are and Kanade is the worst written character in anime."

Many shipping wars become highly personal when the integrity of a commentator is questioned due to their affinity for characters or their preference for a minority ship. Case in point, when an anonymous 4chan user responded to fans of Asuka x Shinji on a "Rei or Asuka?" board stating that "if I

had a chance I would kill every single one of you as brutally as I could," with another anonymous commentator claiming that "Eva's fanbase is cancer." When shipping wars escalate to the point where interlocutors are maligning one another and providing absurd evidence to back up a ship, the fandom in general is discredited and the series is dismissed by individuals outside the fandom for having unbalanced fans.



Neon Genesis Evangelion (Gainax, 1995)

An especially notorious shipping war originated from *Durarara!!* where Namie x Izaya shippers are crucified by Shizaya fans for mentioning that Izaya is Namie's boss. The fandom is so vicious that they have an entry in the "Ship to Ship Combat" page on TV Tropes, with a blurb stating: "some Shizaya (Izaya x Shizuo) fans will rip out the throat of anyone who mentions Namie or Vorona, while Mikado is just torn to pieces between everyone who wants him as their OTP uke." This contention over shipping impairs intelligent analysis of the series, and reduces the *Durarara!!* fandom to a battleground between delusional yaoi fangirls and trolls.

Sometimes shipping itself becomes problematic, especially among a majority of the *Killing Stalking* fandom, which insists that the manhwa explores a romance between a stalker with Borderline Personality Disorder and a serial killer.

The Dark Side of Fandom

When mentioning fandom, it is important to explore the infamous *Naruto* fandom that has embodied the textbook definition of an unreasonable fanbase. On the Reddit page “Why is Naruto so hated within the anime community?” user pmitch94 attributes the general dislike of *Naruto* to its extremist fanbase: “I don’t want to inflame people here, but the fanbase. the fanbase can be really, really rabid. people talk about Naruto as if it’s one of the greatest animated series of all time, I’m sorry its not. objectively it is not... but the fanbase gets really defensive about the show. Anytime someone has a complaint I see comments trying to explain it by using the very thing the person is complaining about.”

Pmitch94 indicates an interesting aspect of fandom culture: the myopia that many fans display when faced with criticism about their fandoms. The foremost purpose of fandoms is to promote a diversity of opinion or criticism to the work at hand, but blind defense of a piece of media renders criticism and a multiplicity of opinions untenable. Moreover, fandoms like *Naruto*’s perpetuate the hellish cycle of media abuse when people criticize a work because its fandom is overdramatic, or argue that fandoms in general are unnecessary due to the zealotry of a few avid participants.

Everyone is Jesus in Purgatory, or Crises of Interpretation

Contention concerning interpretations of a manga/anime is a hallmark trait of fandoms. Typically I would cite *Neon Genesis Evangelion* as the subject of an interpretation crisis, but due to recent trends I prefer to focus on *Killing Stalking*, the manhwa taking the Asian pop culture world by storm.

Killing Stalking has created a veritable colossus of interpretation. Within the panoply of opinions plaguing the fandom, there are two central factions vying for dominance. As Is, a commentator on Goodreads proposes: “*Killing Stalking* is a psychological horror/thriller webcomic that features heavy violence, gore, and immensely flawed and well written characters. Although the comic has an abusive gay relationship, it is never romanticized or seen as healthy within the perspective of the comic.”

However, not everyone in the faction agrees with Is’ opinion, promoting the theory that *Killing Stalking* is a story about two dysfunctional people who find love in an unlikely place (i.e. Sangwoo’s basement). Despite the inflammatory claims pertaining to the nature of the main characters’ relationship in this particular fandom, overall a diversity of opinion in fandom should be encouraged since it leads to an examination of the work at hand.



Love, Harmony, and Participation

Despite the less than savory aspects of certain fandoms, there are multiple beneficial aspects of fandom culture. YouTube phenomenon TeamFourStar is an apt example of the joys of fandom. Their highly recommended abridged version of *Hellsing Ultimate* both celebrates and satirizes the anime, displaying the ridiculous-yet-entertaining quality of the anime and progenitor manga. YouTube reviewers are another bonus of fandom, especially the YouTuber GlassReflection, who has excellent anime recommendations and a wonderful summary of *Serial Experiments Lain*.

My personal favorite features of fandom involve analytical blogs, such as “The Garden of Proserpine,” which provides an exquisitely detailed account of the manga *Monster*, including a comparison of the titular character’s poses to the vengeful archangel Uriel and relating the discovery that the monster’s love poem, “I was born to smother you with flowers” is an allusion to a Roman emperor’s homicide attempt by smothering his guests in a deluge of roses.

Despite the constant conflict that fandoms engender, they act as binding agents, bringing individuals from diverse backgrounds together. A poignant example of the cohesive power of fandoms was related to me by a fellow member of *Konshuu*, who met their partner during a shipping war. Harnessing the globalizing appeal of the internet, fandoms can create empathy between people who are divided by space and time.

Fandom is important because it has the ability to make people feel less alone in a world that is inherently lonely; the next time you cringe over the antics of a group of fans, remember that it is wonderful that these communities exist to entertain, challenge, and bring us together.

A PLATFORM FOR SEXISM

ZIANA DEEN

For all intents and purposes, manga is pretty great. From its extravagant story lines to detailed artwork, inspiring characters to valuable morals, manga can be amazing. It can teach us to work hard in everything we do, to be strong in the face of adversity, to have hope in the trials of love, and to accept the harder truths of life. But if there's one complaint I have about manga, it's that it's pretty goddamn sexist.

As a feminist, I've often rolled my eyes at doe-eyed characters who trip over themselves for guys, or growl in disgust as yet another boob-heavy heroine fights, scantily dressed. Over and over again, I've encountered the typical tropes of girls acting like lovesick romantics, weak-willed submissives, and idiotic troublemakers.

As a woman, I find this sexist portrayal of the female gender not only offensive but demoralizing. For all of its pros, manga's biggest problem is its perpetuation of sexism and the way it teaches, subtly, how women should act and how women should be treated. While there are many genres of manga, the ones I will focus on will be shoujo and shounen, as these two are often targeted towards young adolescents who more subconsciously soak in the gender roles in manga.

Shōjo manga are usually targeted towards young girls and often follow the journey of a girl in love. The main characters are often Mary Sues whose stories begin with the introduction of a love interest. If the character is intelligent (for a change), she'll often degrade as she falls for her man. Take for example *Kaichō wa Maid-sama!* The main character, Misaki Ayuzawa, is the student council president at a former all-boys school and rules with an iron fist. She's tough, confident, independent, and smart—all as a result of hard work and determination.

But when a hot guy comes along and challenges her in every aspect, she begins to lose the personality that made her so endearing in the first place.

Shōnen manga can sexualize women to a ridiculous extent. In popular manga like *One Piece* and *Beelzebub*, women are often dressed with their breasts popping out and their clothes getting ripped to shreds by the end of battle scenes. Apparently, in order to fight, women are required to shed their clothes. Such displays of women are fanservice, used to make the manga more popular for young boys. But why do women need to suffer at the expense of making boys happy?

The problem with portraying women like this is how they influence readers. Young girls who read manga that idealize romantic relationships grow up with sexist ideals of how they should act in a relationship—that falling in love is defined by giving up your independence. Young boys start to think that women should be submissive and weak willed. Shounen manga teaches girls to criticize their own bodies and that women cannot fight without showing nudity. It also leads boys to fetishize women in an unhealthy way that can be carried into reality.

If anything, the portrayal of women as either weak idiots in the face of romance, or sexual beings in the midst of a fight, is sexist. It degrades women, perpetuates sexism, and enforces existing prejudices of gender roles and behaviors.

Manga is fun; it's great. But at the moment, it needs work on how it represents women. Young girls and boys should read manga that exemplifies female strength without taking off their clothes and without the existence of men.

Maid-Sama! (J.C. Staff, 2010)





THE HERO APPEARS!

ANDREW OEUNG

Spoiler Warning: *Ping Pong the Animation*

The Hero Appears! Chant these words thrice, and the hero from Planet Ping Pong will come to you! But you might be thinking, "What kind of hero plays ping pong?"

The hero's identity in *Ping Pong the Animation* has a clear thematic and symbolic meaning. *Ping Pong* ostensibly appears to be a standard shounen sports anime, but under the surface lies a tale of character growth with an entertaining coming-of-age plot and a profound message.

Enter Makoto "Smile" Tsukimoto, a quiet and apathetic introvert, and Yutaka "Peco" Hoshino, a boastful bubble-gum blowing prodigy. Peco sets his sights on becoming the ping pong world champion, while Smile quietly tags along as a

gifted player who plays for sport rather than competition. Peco and Smile have taken down many opponents, but Smile always loses on purpose against Peco, as if he's holding back against his friend. Among his high school teammates, Peco's ping pong prowess is unrivaled; he considers himself unbeatable.

However, Peco wakes up to reality once he plays against a wider range of opponents. When Peco and Smile spy on their rival high school, they meet Kong Wenge, a Chinese ping pong savant that wipes the floor with Peco. Kong is a transfer student who was shamefully kicked off of China's national ping pong team. He wishes to return to China after proving himself in the Japanese competitive circuit, even though Japanese players are mere ants in his eyes. He vents his frustration by ruthlessly defeating Peco and shattering the boy's pride. After yet another miserable loss in the following interschool ping



pong tournament, Peco begins to lose sight of his dream to become a ping pong master.

Peco is reduced to an emotional wreck and smoking addict. As a good-for-nothing, he loses all of his stamina and drive for ping pong. Luckily, with some encouragement from his childhood friend Manabu Sakuma, he steels his resolve and begins training for next year's interschool tournament.

Meanwhile, Smile's coach suddenly forces him to undergo intensive training after an impressive run at the interschool tournament. Smile appears to have no motivation for ping pong, claiming that "he has no interest in the sport" and that he could never see himself in professional play. But in order to push Peco towards success, Smile hones his rallying skills not for himself, but rather for Peco. Later on, it's revealed that Smile's coach also holds personal regrets that motivate him to make Smile the "best of the best."

As the second interschool tournament rolls around, a fearsome player named Ryuichi "Dragon" Kazuma appears, who eats, sleeps, and breathes ping pong. As captain of the best ping pong team in the country and the heir to a giant sports apparel corporation, Kazama has immense pressure on his shoulders to remain undefeated in ping pong.

In the second interschool tournament, Peco finds himself placed in the toughest possible bracket. First, he must face his demon: Kong Wenge. Beyond Wenge lies Ryuichi Kazama. If he somehow manages to best Kazama, Peco must face the strongest opponent of all in the finals.

We begin to see the fruits of Peco's labor as he defeats Kong with his evolved style: the reverse penhold backhand. Peco also manages to defeat the juggernaut known as Ryuichi, despite all odds. Finally, he comes face to face with his long-awaited

final opponent: Smile. The climax between Smile and Peco is beautiful to witness and holds a lot of symbolic meaning. You'll have to find out the winner on your own.

Ironically, the show speeds through the actual ping pong matches. This anime focuses less on the actual matches and more on each player's mental state. Players without conviction crumble like a chocolate chip cookie, while those with passion overcome all odds.

Interestingly, *Ping Pong the Animation* goes against the conventional mantra that "hard work surpasses talent." There are multiple instances in which Peco defeats opponents with countless more years of experience in an almost deus ex machina fashion. However, the overall intended message is that passion can truly yield success.

Ping Pong the Animation's music is extremely catchy and meaningful. You'll find yourself chanting "The hero appears! The hero appears! The hero appears!" more than once as the hero theme begins playing in each episode. Kong Wenge's theme "Like a Dance" exudes his fiery passion when he rallies in ping pong matches. These theme songs serve as motifs for the characters as they develop their motivations for playing ping pong.

In *Ping Pong the Animation*, no character is truly "minor." Almost every opponent that Smile or Peco faces has a unique motivation, whether it be returning to China, becoming the best of the best, or settling an old score from years ago. Each player's passion and drive for the sport clashes with one another on the court. In this way, *Ping Pong the Animation* truly succeeds in giving each character a sense of importance. In the end, *Ping Pong the Animation* is not really about ping pong. It is about how sports irreversibly shape each player's life and future.





KATAWA SHOUJO

An Introduction to My Favorite Medium

BOGEUN CHOI

This may be an article for an anime club's magazine, but I have the nerve to call visual novels my favorite medium. Without them, I wouldn't be here today watching anime instead of doing real work. It all started in a hospital lobby...

I was volunteering at my local hospital's information desk. I worked Sundays from morning to noon, and the shifts were always slow. One, because no one wants to wake up at 8am on a Sunday unless they were going to church; and two, because a lot of clinics are closed that day. Since it was so slow, I had nothing job-related to do. So 14-year-old me browsed the internet for the majority of the shift. One Sunday morning, I was browsing Reddit, and I saw an image with an unfamiliar anime girl:



I was vehemently opposed to anything anime at the time. When I thought of "anime," I thought of the negative stereotypes: the slob who owns ten body pillows and never goes outside, the nerds in school who wear *Naruto* headbands and insert random Japanese into their normal English conversations. I didn't want to be associated with that, so I never really watched anime, even though there was a little part of me inside that was interested in it.

That small interest, along with the laugh I got from the image, made me go through the comments of the post for a source. From there, I found out about this game called *Katawa Shoujo* (Disability Girls). Apparently it wasn't really a game, but something called a "visual novel." "Huh," 14-year-old me thought. "That's interesting. Let's learn more about it."

For those of you unfamiliar with visual novels, think of it as a combination of a book and an anime (yes, that is crude, but it basically boils down to that). Visual novels are a very text-driven medium; though it is technically considered a video game, the only player interaction involves clicking through text and making narrative decisions through choices given by the game. Most visual novels have branching routes, meaning different endings, both good and bad. In a way, it's like those Choose Your Own Adventure books, only with additional elements like music and visuals. Usually, most visual novels have anime-style visuals, hence the anime part in my horribly generalized explanation. As you can probably guess, most visual novels come from the Land of the Rising Sun, good ol' Japan. However, *Katawa Shoujo* is one of the few visual novels that is not; instead, a couple of people on 4chan came together to create a "disabled girls dating simulator" which in the end became less "dating sim" and more "feels factory."

The story features a high school student named Hisao Nakai who has a heart attack, learns he has a rare heart condition called arrhythmia, and enrolls in a school for the disabled, where he proceeds to woo every girl that gets significant screen time, one by one.



Back to the hospital where I worked. After finding out what exactly a visual novel was, I was interested in *Katawa Shoujo*. I watched “Let’s Play” videos of it on YouTube during my shifts without sound, since I didn’t have access to headphones (and didn’t want to broadcast it to people visiting their loved ones). It was a nice waste of my time, and I was so invested in it that I decided watching volumeless videos on YouTube was ruining the experience. So I finally downloaded the game and finished it within a week, having changed for the better (or worse).

One thing that I really love about visual novels these days are that they can be as long as they want to be. There’s pretty much no limit on their length, which is a boon that media like anime and manga don’t really have. What that means in a nutshell is that the story can be more fleshed out.

Katawa Shoujo is not considered a long visual novel, but it still sets up its world and story very nicely. I felt like I was Hisao, going through my days with my heart condition, worrying about every day while slowly making new friends who all happen to be cute girls.

The story did a great job describing the troubles of Hisao’s life, making me aware of all his struggles, both from his past life and his new life. Most anime can’t pull this off, mainly because of the limited amount of screen time, but also because endless self-narration would be boring to watch. In other words, it’s the nature of the medium: anime is a highly visual medium, which means animation is a huge part of how the story is portrayed. The script is important, but not as important as it is in visual novels, where it’s literally everything. Although visuals are a big factor in visual novels, they don’t play a role in the story; it is the words on the screen that matter the most.

It’s not just the story—you can’t have a good visual novel without some good characters. And boy, was *Katawa Shoujo* full of them. Featuring heroines such as Emi, the girl without legs who ran track; Rin, the girl without arms who paints; Shizune, the student council president who’s deaf; Lilly, the girl who’s blind and is a class representative for the vision-impaired; and Hanako, the crispy bacon girl (I am so sorry). By the time I finished reading, I never thought of the characters through their disabilities. Emi was not just a girl without legs—she was a hyperactive, positive girl who always faced the main character with a smile. In fact, I could say the same for all five of the heroines.

The point isn’t that you shouldn’t judge people by their disabilities, although that is certainly an important point and something that *Katawa Shoujo* frequently emphasizes. While reading *Katawa Shoujo*, the characters did not just feel like walking tropes; they were well-developed characters with their own motivations and life stories. Not all visual novels have good characters, of course, but the way the medium works allows more time to get to know characters and to develop them.

One last little thing I loved about *Katawa Shoujo* was the branching routes. If one of the routes is boring or the relationship is stupid, that’s okay! Just go to another girl’s route, and hopefully it’s better! You aren’t stuck with whoever is chosen as the One True Pairing: you have the power to follow the route of your favorite girl (provided she has one). Just be ready for the arguments with people who disagree with you.



Whether you’ve read a visual novel before or not, read *Katawa Shoujo*! It’s a great visual novel for newcomers to the medium. Or just read any visual novel. At the end of the day, visual novels are great mediums that tell a story, develop characters, and allow the player to feel immersed. Visual novels are the ideal combination of a book and an anime.



四畳半神話大系

THE TATAMI GALAXY

Studio | Madhouse
Released | Spring 2010
Length | 11 eps

THE DEFINITIVE COLLEGE ANIME

JOSH ROQUE

I have never written about *The Tatami Galaxy* (known as *Yōjōhan Shinwa Taikei* in Japan) because I believed that I could never do it justice in words.

A college anime should, by definition, represent college life. The definitive college anime, then, should be able to speak about college life in a way that thematically encompasses as much about it as possible; going on diets, partying, managing romance, schoolwork, extracurriculars, fun escapades, and everything in between—and how this is all impossible.

College can be summed up in one statement for the majority of students: you can only get what you want, sometimes, no matter how much you want it or deserve it. Reality is inflexible.

The Tatami Galaxy is about a college freshman who refuses to accept that he cannot get what he wants. Our protagonist is a student halfway through college reminiscing about his past two years, which he believes he wasted by joining the wrong clubs and meeting the wrong people. He has no name and other people refer to him with generic honorifics such as "senpai"; in general, fans call him "Watashi," which refers to the pronoun "I" in Japanese. The everyman of the story, he is meant to represent the troubled college student in all of us, fresh out of high school and wondering how to mold their life.

This protagonist narrates the entire story. He talks about how life should be, and how he imagined his ideal college career would be: what he calls the "rose-colored campus life," which involves making many friends, finding a girl to fall in love with, and finding a place to belong.

Simulacrum: an image or direct representation of someone or something with intent to copy, or an unsatisfactory substitute which is intentionally distorted to appear correct to the viewer. *The Tatami Galaxy* uses of both of these definitions while ensuring that the viewer is held in suspense—is Watashi just imagining all of this, making it up each time, or is it really what has happened to him?

His first choice is the tennis club, though it does not go well for him; he quickly finds that he is not as sociable as he thinks, and his rose-colored expectations go sour. He makes only a single deviant friend named Ozu, and they instead go out of their way to bully other members of the club. Through an unexplained phenomenon involving the school's large clock tower, a regretful Watashi is able to reverse time and live an entirely different version of his own life.

This sets up the basic premise for each episode: Watashi explores an alternate timeline by joining a different club—it's a new timeline with different experiences, but the same calamity, misfortune, and dissatisfaction befall our protagonist.

While each episode usually begins with Watashi's freshman year as he joins a different club, there is a distinct continuity throughout the show. For example, Watashi encounters many omens, such as a mysterious old fortune teller on the street. One of Watashi's friends who lives in the same apartment complex also consistently warns him that "the rose-colored campus life" does not exist, and that Watashi's pursuit of happiness is exactly what is keeping him from it. However, Watashi always finds a way to dismiss these warnings.

Despite Watashi's good intentions and nature (he is a hard worker, polite to others, and has the drive to reach his goals), his obsession with living an ideal life gets in the way of the truth about himself, his college life, and his decisions: they will be imperfect no matter what he tries. Watashi is on a completely worthless quest.

Steeped in regret about his decisions, Watashi is constantly reliving his college life with different sets of memories to try and find why his ideal life has gone so wrong. Each new timeline is a new club that he joins, a simulation of another kind of college life he could have lived. He may have been a professional bicyclist, an evil prankster, a hikkikomori, a man seducing three different women, or the star of a film.

Watashi reimagines his own past each episode and the viewer is tasked with grouping stories and images between the two definitions of simulacrum: a true-to-life image, or a mocking image of college life. He gets some facts wrong, his emotions swell over the truth, and his own exaggerations get in the way of the true story behind his first two years of college. The viewer unpacks his life by carrying hidden details in each episode, and as Watashi begins to construct his true timeline, it is questionable whether some events happen, or not, because the entire story is a representation of Watashi's mind, who is reimagining the past. Each moment asks the viewer to decide

whether it is actually happening, is an abstract made up in Watashi's mind, or a combination of both.

However, its result is an astounding adventure set in college with fantastical scenes but realistic emotions. This scene at the ramen cart may have actually happened in Watashi's first year, or it may just be Watashi stuck in a reimagining of how certain events occurred. What is important to distinguish is what Watashi changes in his mind versus what always stays the same; he changes what club he joins, his decisions and other parts of himself. But what never change are his expectations of college life and his disappointment with his two years of college life by the end of each episode.

The Tatami Galaxy is a rollercoaster through different college clubs as the protagonist tries to figure out how to get to the life he wants. Sound familiar? College is hard! Sometimes, you get what you want, and sometimes you do not. Watashi works hard to afford an expensive bicycle but it gets stolen; he works hard on making movies but gets discouraged and instead makes a movie exposing the secrets of the film club's president. Does that mean that the *Tatami Galaxy* is optimistic or pessimistic? No. And that's exactly its point.

At its core, *The Tatami Galaxy* is a fun adventure full of ups and downs, and Watashi's life in these imagined clubs becomes a mix of joy and suffering. As viewers, we come to understand that his dissatisfaction and desire to choose another path is the center of the problem. By the end of the anime, we know that the heart of Watashi's problem is not in his actual college life, which is actually highly enjoyable; his constant desire for an ideal life is what makes his life appear so miserable. These opportunities that come up in every episode are difficult for Watashi to make because they would make him accept what he constantly denies: that the rose-colored campus life is not an ideal life to shape, but a mindset with which to view one's life. Watashi's mental journey is one that I am sure we have all made, will make, and will have to make.

And that's why *The Tatami Galaxy* is, for me, the definitive college anime.





konshuu

A N T H O L O G Y

Gallery

Curated artwork from the past three years of Konshuu, reformatted for this Anthology.
Contains art originally published in Volumes 42 to 47 (Fall 2015 to Spring 2018).

HATSUNE MIKU

Vocaloid

—

HELEN WANG



HATSUNE MIKU

Vocaloid

—

JACKY ZHAO

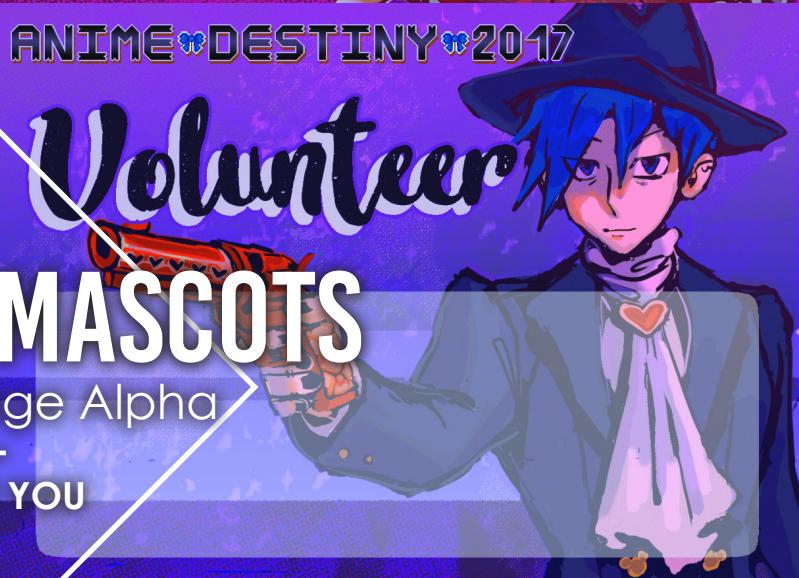


9S AND 2B

NieR:Automata

—
JACKY ZHAO





MAGICAL MASCOTS

Cal Animage Alpha

JAMIE YOU



RYUKO MATOI

Kill la Kill

—
JOSEPH CHAN



KELLY-CHAN

Original Character

— JOSEPH CHAN —



YUNO GASAI

Future Diary

—
LULU WANG

MIKASA ACKERMAN

Attack on Titan

—

LULU WANG



ANNIE MAY AND CAL

Cal Animage Alpha
—
DON ARBOLEDA

Originally published in Volume 43, Issue 1.



MEGUMI TADOKORO

Shokugeki no Soma

— DEBORAH LIM —





CORA PEPPER

Undeclared

— DAVID CHANG —

A dark, rainy cityscape at night. In the foreground, a large, detailed robot girl with purple hair and a white and pink suit stands under an umbrella, looking off to the side. The background shows tall buildings with glowing windows and streetlights reflecting in the rain.

CODE:015(ICHIGO)

Darling in the Franxx

DAVID CHANG

ダーリング・イン・ザ・フランクス



konshuu

A N T H O L O G Y

Originals

Brand-new articles written specifically for this Anthology.
That's right, no dust or cobwebs here; just nice, shiny exclusive content.



ENGRISH IN ANIME

ANDREW WING

Engrish is a phenomenon ubiquitous in media and entertainment. Engrish is a slang term used to describe the misuse of the English language by native speakers of Asian languages. It can refer to two categories: written Engrish, consisting mostly of poor grammar and misspellings; and spoken Engrish, referring to mispronunciations and accents. Common examples of Engrish in Western media are seen in heavily caricatured Asian characters, such as Chow from *Hangover*, Short Round from *Indiana Jones*, and Mr. Lu Kim from *South Park*, who speak with heavy Asian accents and broken English.

Engrish can also be found in Japanese media, including anime, video games and music. This comes as no surprise, because Japan is actually the origin for Engrish. In Japan, English is used as an aesthetic that is considered to be sophisticated and modern, just as how Japanese characters are used in Western fashion. Shirts in Japan will say things like "Come over exhilarate kitten" and "Precise dwarf bravery." For decorative English, there often isn't a conscious effort to get it right, since most Japanese wear English for the aesthetic and not for the meaning. It is used in the same way for spoken English; people sprinkle in English phrases in their speech in order to sound sophisticated and modern. English is primarily used in Japan to sound or look cool, without a regard to accuracy. This leads to English's misuse and its descent into Engrish.

In anime, many characters speak in Engrish either to sound cool, or because they are foreigners. One example is Mari, a half-Japanese, half-American idol from *Love Live! Sunshine!!* Her catchphrase is "It's joke." "It's joke" is improper grammar because it is missing an article (a). One big tell that a character is speaking in Engrish is when the viewer is provided with English subtitles when characters are speaking in English. Normally when there's spoken English in anime, there's no need for accompanying subtitles, but in Mari's case, "It's joke" is translated to "It was a joke." More examples of this type of Engrish in anime can be seen in TK's "Get Chance and Luck," and Okabe's "Hey, mister... I am mad scientist! It's so cool! Sonuvabitch." from *Angel Beats!* and *Steins;Gate*, respectively.



Love Live! Sunshine!! (Sunrise, 2016)

English is often inserted into Japanese songs to make them sound cool and sophisticated; for example, the music of the *Persona* video game series, which features many songs in a highly stylized Engrish. My personal favorite is "Shadow World," the opening song for *Persona 4 Golden*, which is performed entirely in English. It is a great song, but it's incredibly hard to understand at first listen. The singer, Shihoko Hirata, sings in a heavy accent, making the lyrics difficult to comprehend. Another thing that makes the song so hard to understand is that the lines do not always correspond to complete sentences or complete thoughts.

In music composition, lines are the building blocks of a song. They last for a consistent amount of measures, and when grouped together, they form verses and choruses. In terms of lyrics, lines are written much in the same way as in poetry, where each line is usually a complete thought, ending with a punctuation mark. Often times in "Shadow World," a line break will chop a sentence into pieces. For example, "Yeah, the truth can never be written / down, it's not in any magazine, you can't see / it on your TV screen." If you look at the second and third lines in isolation, they are sentence fragments that don't make sense.



Persona 4 the Golden Animation (A-1 Pictures, 2014)

This style of line break in music is an indicator that the songwriters weren't focusing on trying to get the English right. Perhaps they were under the assumption that most Japanese people don't understand English anyway, so good line breaks have less priority so long as the song has cool sounding English. Another theory is that the songwriters wrote the English lyrics for the song with little knowledge of English flow and grammar, so when it came time to break the song into lines, they chopped their sentences into pieces.



Rainbow (Madhouse, 2010)

Anime music also has an Engrish phenomenon. Some of my favorites include: "We're Not Alone" from *Rainbow*, featuring heavy metal Engrish; "My Hero" from *Inuyashiki*, featuring "HIT ME ON THE GROUND"; and "History Maker" from *Yuri!!! on Ice*, featuring "Tired of fearing / Never enough." "History Maker" in particular demonstrates the same problem as "Shadow World," where the line breaks in the song will split up the lyrics in bizarre ways, making the song hard to understand.

Engrish music has also been parodied in Western media. One prominent example is "Let's Fighting Love" from *South Park*. The song mixes Japanese and English lyrics in a style parody of anime theme songs. "Let's Fighting Love" is a humorous imitation of Engrish music in anime, as can be seen in their lyrics. "Hey hey let's go けんかする" is a perfect example of Engrish in music, showcasing the blend of Japanese and Engrish, and can be compared to the likes of "GrungeのHamster / 大人びて / RevengeのLobster / 引き連れて" from the ending song of *FLCL*, "Ride on Shooting Star."



Engrish can also be funny, especially for native English speakers. Much in the same way we laugh at *America's Funniest Home Videos*, we laugh at anime characters butchering English. Why? Because it's funny to watch someone fail. Since we know the correct way to pronounce and word things, seeing an anime character have an epic fail is funny to us. Thus, Engrish can be seen as a comedic version of English. In "Miyo," the opening of *Kantai Collection*, the singer screams "Weigh anchor" to initiate the first drop in the song. Since the singer has an Engrish accent, the words get mashed together, making it sound like she's screaming "WANKER!!!" instead. The beat drops and a crazy instrumental starts playing, accentuating the "wanker" and adding onto its comedic effect.



KanColle (diomedéa, 2015)

One of the mysteries of Engrish is, if the characters speaking English in anime are supposed to be foreigners, why do they still speak with Engrish accents, when they should be fluent? In many cases, we can point to the voice actors/actresses (VA) of these characters. If the VA is Japanese, it makes sense if they speak in Engrish, even if their character should be fluent. This is because in Japanese schools, English is taught with an emphasis on reading and writing but not on speaking. Japanese people also use the katakana script to learn English, which in and of itself has many limitations. There's no differentiation between the R and the L sounds in katakana. Furthermore, katakana is made up of syllables which all end with vowels, except for the lone consonant N. This leads to the mispronunciation of English words. For example, it is functionally impossible for a Japanese person to say "start." Using their katakana set of syllables, the best they can do is say: "su-tā-to." Another example is the pronunciation of "love" as

"ra-bu." Looking at the VAs for the foreign characters in anime, we can see that most of them are Japanese: Aina Suzuki voices the aforementioned Mari from *Love Live!*, Kenta Miyake is the VA for All Might from *My Hero Academia*, and Junichi Suwabe voices Victor from *Yuri!!! on Ice*.



Yuri!!! on Ice (Mappa, 2016)

This brings us to the curious case of Michael Rivas and Maxwell Powers, two VAs who are foreigners and native English speakers. They voice foreign characters in anime, but instead of speaking fluent English, they opt to speak in Japanese Engrish instead. For example, Rivas voices TK from *Angel Beats!*, the blonde guy who's famous for his random Engrish catchphrases like "I kiss you" and "Just wild heaven." If these VAs can speak fluent English, why do they still speak in Engrish for their roles? My theory is that Engrish has become the norm in Japan. In American English, we have our own ways of saying some foreign words, in order to make it easier to pronounce for ourselves—examples being words like: burrito, jalapeño, chow mein, gyro, and calzone. I believe it's possible that the Japanese have gotten used to hearing the English language pronounced their own way, and would prefer to hear that version instead of a more "authentic" version. Regardless, Rivas and Powers kill it with their Engrish, and they're two of my favorite Engrish VAs.



As long as we take off our Grammar Nazi Goggles before watching, Engrish can heighten our enjoyment of a show and lighten up our day.

MOE

A Deeper Look into a Misunderstood Phenomenon

—
BOGEUN CHOI



So, you're sitting at home with nothing to do... it's the best time to start watching some anime! But which one? Like everything in life, people have different tastes because otherwise we would all be the same and life would be very boring. There are some popular examples, general genres such as shōnen or shōjo. Slice-of-life shows also come to mind—and that's where my tastes lie. Something about watching people living their daily lives is fun, though usually I need something else like a comedy or romance element alongside. Relating to that, there's a subgenre of shows similar to slice-of-life that I also find myself partial to, though it is one that probably should not even be considered a genre. That would be "moe" (pronounced as "moh-ay") shows.

I've talked about moe before in *Konshuu* (see Volume 47, Issue 4: The Moe Issue). I brushed the whole topic of "what is moe" under the rug at the time by talking about CGDCT (Cute Girls Doing Cute Things) shows instead, but now I feel like I must address the elephant in the room. Moe, for its widespread usage, is still misdefined and misunderstood by a lot of people, including anime fans. So let's change that—today's the day to find out once and for all what the heck moe is.

Chapter 1: The Definition of Moe

Though moe is used to describe a certain genre of shows, its accepted definition is actually as an adjective. According to TVTropes, moe is "the ability of a character to instill in the audience an irrational desire to adore them, hug them, protect them, comfort them, etc." Wikipedia follows the same

paradigm, saying moe is "a Japanese slang loanword that refers to feelings of strong affection mainly towards characters (usually female) in anime, manga, and video games." In other words, it is that feeling one gets when one sees something cute or charming: a desire to protect and watch it grow healthy.

"But wait, isn't that just love?" There's a fine line between the two: moe is a more toned-down version of the lust that comes from love. It's more comparable to a parental or older sibling instinct, hence the aforementioned idea of "protect."

In summary, moe = cute/charming that triggers an instinct to protect. Now that we know what moe is, let's go into how exactly it came into the world.

Chapter 2: The History of Moe

Taking a look into the history of the word "moe" itself, there are many different theories floating around. The only thing scholars know about the origins of moe is the time it was coined, around the late 1980s to early 1990s (yes, despite what you may think, anime was very much a thing around that time). There are a lot of theories as to how moe came about; one of those (the one that makes the most sense to me) is that it comes from the Japanese word *moeru*, which means "budding; to sprout or bloom."

Another theory is that moe came from the names of popular anime heroines at the time, such as Hotaru Tomoe from *Sailor Moon* or Moe Sagisawa from a show called *Kyōryū Wakusei*

(Dinosaur Planet). Similarly to that, there's the 2channel theory (2channel, or 2ch, is a Japanese textboard similar to 4chan): One day during the 90's, the members of 2ch were discussing who the ideal young woman was in anime, a topic that to this day is still one of the most important in human history. They discussed certain variations of the lolicon and bishōjo genres, and came to the conclusion that the aforementioned Hotaru Tomoe was the best example, using the "moe" part of her name to describe this ideal.



Sailor Moon Crystal (Toei Animation, 2014)

Origins of the word moe aside, it was not actually until a few years later that the idea of a moe show came about. Though the idea of moe existed, it was not very mainstream, and so the earliest show that revolved around the idea didn't come out until 2001, with a show called *Chicchana Yukitsukai Sugar* (A Little Snow Fairy Sugar). The show was about a couple of fairies and their adventures as they try to find "twinkles" to help power their magic. It used the idea of moe to its core: the characters, the setting, the antics were all cute, which triggered an instinct to protect them, to act as a sibling figure. After that, there were a few more moe shows that occasionally came out, but it wasn't until 2005 when 2 (!) moe shows aired. It all went downhill from there as more and more moe shows came out until now, when multiple moe shows grace each season (not just year). But hey, that's not a bad thing—and here's why.

Chapter 3: The "Appeal" of Moe

As described before, moe's ideals lie in cuteness/charm and a sense of protection. It is easy to see why there has been such an appeal for moe for the past decade or so in the anime community (hint: CUTE). But what if you're one of the people who claims that moe ruined anime? One of those who states everything went downhill ever since *K-On!* became popular? One of those who says that older anime were better? What exactly is the appeal of moe, then?

Well, what if I told you I was lying to you this whole time? Because, in layman's terms, a "moe show" does not actually exist!

Before writing this article, I researched what exactly moe is, and from that I stumbled upon an interesting article called "The

Hypocrisy of Moe." The basic idea of the article is that those who hate moe are being hypocritical as moe is everywhere in anime, even in shows that aren't necessarily considered "moe." Take, for instance, *Cowboy Bebop*. Not a "moe show" for a majority of people, until the character Ed is introduced.



Cowboy Bebop (Sunrise, 1998)

Exactly. Moe exists in *Cowboy Bebop*, too. It is the same for a lot of shows out there, even those that came out before moe became popular. When most people think of moe shows, they think *K-On!*, *GochiUsa*, *Yuru Yuri*, etc. But in reality, all shows can be considered moe shows. Which in turn means moe shows don't really exist! It was all just a trick: the "appeal" of moe is that it's in literally everything.

Conclusion (and a Disclaimer)

So what started as an exploration into what moe is ended up becoming a discussion over semantics. Moe is misunderstood by a lot of people, and that once included me, before I started writing this article. Hopefully you too have been enlightened by what moe is, and fully understand what it means before you use it in daily conversations.

Even after saying all of that, I still haven't convinced myself that moe shows aren't a thing. Though moe is prevalent in everything, there are still shows out there that cater to the idea by designing characters that are meant to be "moe," while not including anything else of value like plot, setting, and so on. But that's not really a bad thing. It's not really any different from, say, a shōnen show catering to its audience by adding fight scenes, or a shōjo following its tropes to a T. Because at the end of the day, the executives are in it for the money and more viewers. As much as we want a good story, more often than not, we get the stories with tired clichés. That's not something that moe should be blamed for; we should blame the consumers for telling the execs they like that kind of stuff via watching it. In the end, it's our fault.



THE TRUE SELF

ANDREW OEUNG

Death. Truth. Justice. Recent entries in the *Persona* video game franchise have surged in popularity, but which entry is the best? Generally, fans have difficulty choosing a favorite in the *Persona* series because each entry excels at different aspects.

All of the major characters of *Persona 3* experience death. Although not as dark as its predecessor, *Persona 2: Innocent Sin* and *Eternal Punishment*, *Persona 3* focuses on how humans cope with death, anxiety, and tragedy. Its color theme is blue. We witness not only sadness and regret, but also acceptance. The protagonist's parents died at a young age. Yukari, a new classmate of the protagonist, witnesses her father die from an unfortunate incident at Gekkoukan High School, a setting that gives the game one of its greatest strengths.

School activities involving the protagonist and his classmates balance the serious nature of the plot with lighthearted events like school festivals and beach trips, a far cry from the death and tragedy coloring their blue lives. The entire cast resides in

the Iwatodai Dorm so the player gets to understand his/her classmates on a personal level. At the dorm, you chat with your party members to see their mood, unlike the main residence in *Persona 4* or *Persona 5*. Some of the party members might be outside doing night activities, adding realism to the world at Gekkoukan High School; classmates have actual lives outside of the plot of the game. *Persona 3* balances the dichotomy between school life and serious plot by focusing on school for the first half of the game and the plot for the latter half. *Persona 4* tends to sway towards the light-hearted side of school rather than its central murder mystery. Conversely, *Persona 5* spends too much time focusing on the main plot, leaving the character development of its party members aside.

In general, the *Persona* series involves uncovering a mystery and/or accomplishing a long-term objective in a single school year of the protagonist's life. For *Persona 3*, the cast assembles an organization known as SEES, the Specialized Extracurricular Execution Squad, and their main purpose is to eliminate the Dark Hour. The Dark Hour is an unknown phenomenon



that occurs at midnight every day. It is a hidden hour occurring every day that only *Persona* users can enter. A *Persona* is a manifestation of one's inner thoughts. When one's inner thoughts run rampant, that leads to the birth of a Shadow. The Shadows tend to live within Tartarus, an enormous tower that only appears during the Dark Hour. In the beginning, the true purpose of Tartarus is unknown, but its true purpose will be revealed to the player towards the end of the game.

Unfortunately, the pacing for *Persona 3*'s plot is relatively poor, and all of the story is left for the final ten hours of the story. The beginning and middle do not reveal very much of the plot, a stark contrast from future *Persona* entries which had more moderate pacing throughout. However, the final hours of the game are absolutely stellar. The battle system is challenging and unforgiving, forcing the player to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each character's skillset. The music is amazing; I still listen to tracks like "Master of Shadow" and "The Battle for Everyone's Souls." *Persona 3* can be a little rough on the edges with a repetitive dungeon, terrible party AI,

and bad pacing, but it is still playable. It may be nostalgia, but this is the strongest entry in the *Persona* series.

Thematically, *Persona 4* is the happy-go-lucky entry of the series. The game has a bright, yellow color scheme centralized on the struggle to find truth. The yellow theme signifies brightness or illumination, which perfectly parallels the main plot: Yu Narukami, a high school student, must discover the culprit behind a series of mysterious murders in a rural town called Inaba. He has just moved into his uncle's home for the year. But on every night with fog, a new dead body is discovered in this quaint town. The fog itself is a metaphor for the unknown culprit behind the killings: the main cast does not know who the killer is, but they wish to lift that fog and reveal the serial killer.

The pacing of *Persona 4* strongly contrasts with its predecessor, *Persona 3*. The player makes constant progress towards clues about potential suspects for the killer, and there is very little "downtime" in the story. There are more comedic moments

than *Persona 3*, contributing to a bright and cheerful atmosphere. But make no mistake: the game can be dark and at times shockingly tragic. A very unique quality about *Persona 4* is that the player is given an integral decision: determine who the killer is. The game does not outright state the killer's true identity. Given the clues over the course of several in-game months, you have to piece together the answer.

Persona 4 quickly addressed the shortcomings of *Persona 3*. The player is given control of the entire party, instead of just the protagonist; originally, the party members in *Persona 3* were controlled by artificial intelligence. The dungeons had an actual theme to them. The core of the formula had not changed, but within a year, the developers had fine-tuned it with some quality of life changes. For example, many believe *Persona 4* to have a well-developed cast of characters.

Persona 4 is not an improvement in every area, though. The story is not nearly as grandiose as *Persona 3*, and the impact of the story is not as poignant or significant. *Persona 3* merely concentrates on capturing a serial killer. The music is solid, but *Persona 3*'s soundtrack edges it out. Additionally, *Persona 4* still had not addressed the main problem plaguing the series: a repetitive and unfulfilling gameplay loop.

Eight years passed after the release of *Persona 4*. The development for *Persona 5* lasted so long that an entire console generation had passed. I had gone from middle school to college without playing a single mainline *Persona* game. Yet, my patience was rewarded.

Persona 5's theme is justice. Adult criminals are exposed for their heinous crimes by the mysterious group known as the Phantom Thieves of Hearts. The Phantom Thieves of Hearts are high schoolers from Shujin Academy. They are heroes fighting to make the world a better place, not for fame and glory but instead for righteousness. Each criminal that the main cast encounters represents one of the seven deadly sins: sins like greed, envy, and pride. The Phantom Thieves change people's hearts by using their Personas: they forcibly change a person's heart by internally invading their hearts and defeating them so that these villains will atone and reveal the truth behind their crimes. The player will witness the rise and fall of the Phantom Thieves over the course of a school year. Will their actions benefit or harm humanity? Is their own form of justice even correct? These questions will be heavily explored during the game, just like how past *Persona* games explored their main theme.

Persona 5 sets itself apart from its predecessors with a stylish user interface, the removal of randomly generated dungeons, and vast improvements to gameplay. The dungeons in *Persona 5* are all settings where thieves steal treasure. The main cast will explore a palace, a museum, and even a pyramid in order to steal people's hearts in order to reform them. These dungeons themselves are a manifestation of each criminal's state of mind, which is a really interesting concept that began in *Persona 4*. Once you play *Persona 5*, it will be extremely difficult to go back

to the tedious and unfulfilling dungeon-crawling of *Persona 3* and *Persona 4*. There are so many visual improvements and gameplay refinements in *Persona 5* that it makes almost every part of the game enjoyable. Even completing a battle feels satisfying and impactful: if you defeat enemies with a special attack known as an All-Out Attack, a flashy cut-in of the killing blow will appear as the enemies die a slow, painful death. This is easily the definitive *Persona* experience for a newcomer.

Overall, each of these entries hold a special place in my heart. *Persona 3* was my first entry into the series. Its battle system tested the limits of my skills and strategy as I repeatedly died to unforgiving bosses. *Persona 4* made me reevaluate the concepts of truth and trust and also gave me a plethora of studying music. *Persona 5* released as the most complete and well-polished entry in the series by abandoning procedurally generated dungeons. I cannot wait to see what the future holds for *Persona*.



EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

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