Little Girl: The Weaponization of Infantilized and Roboticized (Hyper)femininity in Postwar Japanese popular culture

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ABSTRACT

Atomic bombs Little Boy and Fat Man left postwar Japan in deep trauma and loss of national identity. The nation's ultimate way of compensation for its defeat in World War II led to a redefinition of Japanese self-realization from a "masculine" state to a "feminine" one. This research paper explores the ways in which Japanese artists and creators interpreted what they saw as the nation-state's 'castration' and shift to a 'little boy'. Postwar Japan consequently embraces *kawaii* culture to compensate for its lost status through soft power with the development and transnational influence of its animanga along with its new fashion and toy industry. My focus on the manga *Sailor Moon*, the anime *Violet Evergarden*, the Lolita fashion aesthetic and finally the Sanio Co. toy Hello Kitty demonstrates this embracing of *kawaii* culture and its infantilizing and roboticizing hyperfemininity, which, I argue, allows for the overcoming of American hegemony and the embracing of a new transnational soft power for Japan.

Keywords: postwar Japan, *kawaii*, American hegemony, roboticization, infantilized femininity

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Introduction

When we think about powerful nations, often the first ones that come to mind are the United States (U.S.), the Russian Federation (Russia), and the People's Republic of China (PRC). In particular, the U.S. has asserted their power over many countries in recent decades and continues to do so through military intervention and in some instances, following World War II (WWII), occupation. One of their many targets was Japan as a member of the Axis, especially during and after WWII. The bombs dropped over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, respectively, represent the American revenge over the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor; however, I will demonstrate that these two air raids, along with the politics of the subsequent occupation of Japan, also reflect Western hegemony and American hypermasculinity resulting in a 'castrating' effect on Japan following the latter's ultimate defeat. These events left behind a deep trauma in Japan's national memory and numerous Japanese artists have tried their hand at identifying what these bombs and the supreme loss of power mean for them as a defining aspect of their national identity.

One famous Japanese artist who took on this challenge is creator and graphic artist Takashi Murakami. In his curated artwork *Little Boy*[1] the third and last exhibition in the *Superflat*[2] series, the title refers explicitly to the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima by the U.S. military. It is a series of exhibitions he has organized since 2000 that "explored the origins of contemporary Japanese art and its fluid exchange with the realms of manga and anime" (244 Munroe). Murakami

[1] Murakami embodies both a "mirror and critic of the cultural, political, social and economic trends that have given rise to Japan's *otaku* subculture and its related Neo Pop movement in art" (Munroe 243). *Little Boy* invites consumers into Murakami's vision of (postwar) Japan today.

[2] The postmodern *Superflat* art movement, or as Murakami says *Super flatness*, is an original Japanese concept of art that has been completely Westernized. The word itself "denote[s] a flattened surface, the working environment of computer graphics, flat-panel monitors, or forceful integration of data into an image" (Murakami 153). Murakami coined the term *superflat* to emphasize how Japanese society, customs, art, and culture became two-dimensional. In art, it is apparent that this sensibility has been flowing consistently beneath the surface of Japanese history. Today, it is pertinent in Japanese games, manga and anime, which have equally become powerful elements of world culture.

situates both elements of Japanese popular culture as a site for self-infantilization and equally argues that the nation's soft power[3] resurrects them to new global heights in an adultlike manner. He appeared on the scene in the 1990s and, upon his debut, "was labelled a Neo Pop artist by the art magazine *Bijutsu techō*, due to his recognition of the insulated *otaku*[4] subculture as a part of 'art' as reinterpreted by the postwar subculture generation well versed in manga and anime" (Murakami 14). In April 2005, Murakami curated a significant exhibit of *kawaii* ("cute" in Japanese) and cool art entitled *Little Boy* at the Japan Society in New York.[5] Murakami's choice emphasizes his belief that Japan—as a result of U.S. intervention—became a "forever-emasculated 'little boy' by virtue of Article 9 of Japan's postwar constitution, which denied Japan the right to a military force" (Yano 686), just like Germany until the 1950s. While Murakami believes Japan's defeat in WWII led to the country becoming a 'castrated nation-state,' I argue that postwar Japan embraced *kawaii* culture as well as infantilized and robotized femininity through the world of animanga.[6] By analysing the anime *Violet Evergarden*, the manga *Sailor Moon*, and select expressions of Japanese popular culture (such as Hello Kitty and the Lolita fashion subculture), I contend that postwar Japanese popular artists challenge Western hegemony and disrupt the 'new'

[3] Joseph Nye coined the term soft power. It refers to the ability to attract and shape one's views of a country or entity through appeal and attraction, mainly in the context of international politics. I will touch on this further in my paper, in Chapter 3.

[4] The term *otaku* is conflicting as its meaning varies in different societies, mainly from Japanese to North American societies. In Japanese society, *otaku* literally signifies "your home"; however, it often carries the negative connotation of obsessed manga and anime fans that remain *at home*, with overtly ridiculed personalities that have been exiled or isolated into the far corners of the social Japanese fabric (Murakami 132) Murakami posits that "[a]fter Japan experienced defeat in World War II, it gave birth to a distinctive phenomenon, which has gradually degenerated into a uniquely Japanese culture" (165). In the West, however, *otaku* is a Japanese loanword possessing a positive meaning. It simply describes people as knowledgeable or hardcore fans of anime or manga (182). It is nearly impossible to avoid the topic of otaku in contemporary discussions of Japanese culture, but it will not remain a central theme in this research paper.

[5] Japan Society is an American non-profit organization founded in 1907. It is the leading U.S. organization committed to deepening mutual understanding, appreciation and cooperation between the United States and Japan globally. The Society serves worldwide audiences through innovative arts and culture, public policy, business, language, and education to exchange ideas and knowledge, primarily between the U.S. and Japan.

[6] Abbreviated term encompassing both anime and manga.

social order imposed by American politics and hypermasculinity in occupied Japan. Their postwar state was under immense pressure to compensate for the loss of a hypermasculine culture. In response, feminine attributes were embraced in the face of hegemonic masculinity, especially given that the U.S. was reigning—and still is—as the most powerful country in the world, both politically and economically. I will ask the following question: How does postwar Japan weaponize *kawaii* culture or infantilized femininity as soft power in artistic subcultures to reclaim a positive image on an international scale and compensate for its defeat?

OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this research paper is to address how Japanese creators of various backgrounds—primarily artists, writers, animators, mangakas[7]—have continuously attempted to redefine and reclaim the Japanese national and cultural identity through art to compensate for the physical and mental trauma of their postwar nation. Their creative outputs interpret Japan's defeat, trauma, compensation efforts and gradual rebuilding of its cultural identity. I conceive this research project with the objective of understanding how embracing the feminine—contrary to popular belief that permeates all patriarchal societies—can benefit a nation or even overpower the 'evil' we so often see in these creators' work. Their artistic outlets, that encompass notions of conflict and compensation, partake in the constant feat of understanding their nation's trauma. This trauma remains relevant in Japanese society and is also important to better understand the reception of these works of popular culture in American culture.

For decades, consumers of Japanese popular culture in the U.S. have witnessed Japan's growth through their mass production of manga, anime[8], and other artistic subcultures. Growing

[7] Mangaka is a manga artist.

[8] "Statistics bear further evidence of anime's growing popularity among different age groups and sexes. According to the Japan External Trade Organization, 60 percent of all TV cartoons worldwide are anime. Children's anime programs, such as *Yu-Gi-Oh* and *Pokémon*, rank in the top ten of American children's programming (third and sixth

up in Canada, my siblings and I watched anime shows that presented Japanese people as strong figures conquering evil forces. Their plight—which is now accessible for people to consume in diverse forms—provides North American academics with the opportunity to explore more deeply how the Japanese cultural reaction to WWII's outcome impacted their comportment as a people for nearly eighty years. I see this fascination of American audiences with Japanese popular culture as stemming from their rhythmic narratives of "good vs. evil," and how it often comprises a hypersexualized or even infantilized feminine figure. The topic has been relevant in Japanese and international academia beginning in the 1990s. The shift from hypermasculine themes to *kawaii* feminine tropes directly responds to the 1970s heroines who worked within a male-dominated system and challenged gender power dynamics. Hypermasculine Japanese figures like the samurai were once praised, but this image fell along with Japan's defeat in the war. Instead, infantilized and even roboticized femininity has penetrated Japanese art and, ultimately, influenced American consumers as well. Their stories either involve a character enduring an identity crisis which ends with the 'good' as victor or said character experiencing a metamorphosis and eventually reigning supreme. I argue that all these 'good vs evil' narratives and dynamic characters exemplify the Japanese post-WWII national identity crisis while gendering the cultural products as feminine.

Literature Review

As previously mentioned, Japanese creators have demonstrated different ways to address their interpretation of Japanese history and consequently their definition—or rather, their redefinition—of the Japanese national and cultural identity. The creators I will focus on are Taichi Ishidate, Naoko Takeuchi, and Yoko Shimizu (in association with the Sanrio Company). Ishidate directed

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respectively). Even home-grown American cartoons, such as *The Power Puff Girls* and *Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi*, show clear anime inspiration" (Napier 10).

the 2018 anime *Violet Evergarden*, originally based on Kana Akatsuki's Japanese light novel *Violet Evergarden*. Mangaka Takeuchi created one of the most popular animes in the world, *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon*. Finally, I must include one of Japan's most emblematic "figures"—Hello Kitty, the little cat, created by Shimizu. In addition to these primary sources, I will also be heavily focused on Takashi Murakami et al.'s exhibition catalogue *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture* as this work inspired my deep dive into this area of study.

Takashi Murakami and *Little Boy* [9]

Various scholars have studied the matters at hand, however, Takashi Murakami and his work in *Little Boy* together with essays by Alexandra Munroe, Katy Siegel, Tom Eccles, Noi Sawaragi and Midori Matsui address head-on the different layers of late twentieth and early twenty-first century Japanese popular culture.[10] They cover various visual narratives like manga, anime, toys and Lolita-like sexual fantasies that have become integral themes of a "dense and interconnected world of media, entertainment, and consumption" (Munroe 242) in Japanese and American culture. This book was a major contribution to the field of study because it materializes how the U.S. nurtured postwar Japan into a new, more feminized global entity. In *Little Boy*, Murakami posits:

> Our [Japanese] society and hierarchies were dismantled. We were forced into a system that does not produce "adults." The collapse of the bubble economy was the predetermined outcome of a poker game that only America could win. Father America is now beginning to withdraw, and its child, Japan, is beginning to develop on its own.

[9] This title refers to Murakami et al's book *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture*, and indirectly to the Little Boy the atomic bomb.

[10] All contributors were integral to the creation of *Little Boy*. Takashi Murakami begins by contextualizing the various elements of this 'exploding' Japanese artistic subculture, the *Superflat* series, a discussion on the presence of *otaku* in Japanese society and abroad. Noi Sawaragi continues by narrowing his analysis to postwar Japanese art and, more specifically, Japanese Neo Pop. Midori Matsui alternatively focuses on the transformations of cute subculture and femininity in the Japanese nineties. Munroe and Eccles take a deep dive into Murakami's *Little Boy* exhibit as well as his Manhattan Project to display more significant artwork. Finally, it concludes with Katy Siegel's article about animanga's growing pertinence.

> The growing Japan is burdened with a childish, irresponsible society: a system guaranteed to thwart the formation of super wealth; and a pervasive anti-professionalism. (152)

This value system was ultimately based on an infantile sensibility, and it was this exact sensibility that began to flow steadily beneath the surface of Japanese history. Today, it is mostly present in Japanese games and anime, which have had lasting effects on American culture. Their presence allows room for researchers to assess how both nations view one another, beyond a simple adult-child relationship. Japan's complicated infantile sensibility is shared by different artists, such as Noboru Tsubaki, who address these important realities. For example, Tsubaki made a grand appearance in the U.S. with his monstrous, odd-looking sculpture *Fresh Gasoline* (see Appendix). This "brightly [coloured] assemblage of bulbous, organic forms was, in [Tsubaki's] own words, 'a yellow [i.e., Japanese] mutant loaded with conflicting feelings of love and hate toward American culture" (qtd. by Murakami 31). His interpretation of this dynamic encompasses the lives of many Japanese natives and reinforces the child-adult relationship, in addition to the feminine-masculine relationship explored by other scholars. In the following section, I will focus my review on Takashi, Munroe, Matsui and Siegel's work.

Little Boy and Co.

Alexandra Munroe, one of the contributors to *Little Boy,* focuses on analysing Murakami's work. She posits that "to most Japanese, the term 'Little Boy' conjures up memories of catastrophic defeat and represents a narrative of national humiliation… [t]o Murakami, its meanings and imagery also suggest the culture and politics of infantilization" (Munroe 246). I have included Munroe's contributions because she asks herself important questions, such as "how can a nation that cannot defend itself achieve 'manhood'"? (246).

Midori Matsui surveys the major changes that occurred in the *kawaii* subculture between the 1980s and 1990s. He argues that "Japanese culture abounds in cute products" (209). Their presence has increased and broadened beyond characters of Japanese animation and the *otaku* subculture through a continued child, teen and even adult (mostly in Japan) consumption. Consequently, these products and subcultures have a major impact on the Japanese psyche. Arguably, "prolonged infancy or adolescence is a defining characteristic of contemporary Japanese society" (209). Although this way of life challenges conventional social constraints, it equally entails a level of unwavering dependency. Moreover, along with the "cute" products, emerged the *shōjo.*[11] Eiji Ōtsuka argued "that *shōjo* (or the "adolescent girl")—the female suspended temporarily from the reproductive function—as a social category emerged with the rise of modern leisure culture is the epitome of what may be called the 'pure consumer'" (qtd. by Matsui 210). This perspective is integral to understanding the consumption of Japanese popular cultures. As cute culture particularly came about during the 1970s, *shōjo* became a central target of consumer goods, by both empowering and, unfortunately, over-sexualizing girls and women. Matsui's contributions to this evolution of consumerism, however, mainly highlight how the deformation of a child's body—mainly a young girl's body—captures a collective longing of one's inner child.

Matsui's research equally presents a shift in artistic paradigms which eventually favoured and "embraced the innocence of adolescent sensibility and childhood memory as spiritual regeneration" (216). With the emergence of female creators and audiences, Japan experienced a shift in the meaning of childlike sensibilities beyond what was nurtured by men and stories like *Astro Boy.*[12] At this point, both boys and girls were created as victims of Japanese national trauma

[11] *Shōjo* has various possible meanings in English, including 'little girl,' 'maiden,' 'virgin' or 'young lady,' none of which completely encapsulate its many nuances.

[12] Back in the 1950s, as Japan continuously pondered the nation's defeat, they placed their faith into nuclear power. Consequently, writer Osuma Tezuka's magnum opus, *Astro Boy* (the first popular Japanese animation)—whose

in artistic creations. These authors "resort[ed] to a story of an imaginary past to restore their lost sense of belonging… creating a fiction that feels 'more real than reality'" (Ōtsuka qtd. in Matsui 220). Memory becomes an important element here because it allows for a repression of trauma or a continuous traumatic acting out, both representing different coping mechanisms.

On the subject of memory in postwar Japan, Dolores P. Martinez makes an important point through Philip Seaton highlighting that a citizen's memory and a nation's official history are two different realities. More specifically, "[t]he former is often personal and varies across generations, genders and class; the latter speaks to the official acts, actions and the political positioning of Japan in East Asia and the West, where it is remembered, in turn, as an aggressor" (qtd. in Martinez 24). Ultimately, this perspective paints the Japanese people as victims and the Allies as enemies. It plays an integral role in Japanese art because much of their existence since WWII remains a source of motivation to prove their worth. However, this rather one-sided view of history fuels their emphasis on being postwar (*sengo* in Japanese) as it involves personal and national progress for a global future to transcend their conquerors. All their efforts to become a globally respected country once again came to a head with the creation of animanga and how its *kawaii* imagery penetrated American culture, which I interpret as a manifestation of soft power.

In particular, one feature that seems to draw in both Japanese and American crowds, as consumers of animanga, are eyes. Katy Siegel, another contributor to the *Little Boy* exhibition catalogue, specifically sheds a light on this aspect of Murakami's work as he uses large, goggling, round eyes that Siegel describes as "a caricature of Occidental features that comes from manga and anime" (282).[13] The original motivation for these exaggerated eyes, however, are left unclear

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Japanese title, *Tetsuwan Atomu*, literally means "Mighty Atom"—is appropriately named as a defender of justice who embodies a bright future. This name purposefully reflects the strength of Little Boy, the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima as well as the grueling road from war to recovery for Japan.

[13] Please refer to the Appendix.

and widely debated. Siegel questions: "Are the Japanese self-loathing or imitative? Is anime about unification of East and West, and so on?" (282). On the one hand, the self-loathing stems from the Allies' racism and even anime scholar Sandra Annett posits how "whiteness is foregrounded and made to signify something associated with an 'enemy' ideology of white supremacy (though white supremacy was not an ideology foreign to the United States)" (61). This singular adoption of large eyes represents both a mockery and admiration of Western eye shapes to equally challenge their discriminatory practices and contend with broadly imposed European beauty standards. On the other hand, one might question if the globalization of animanga is a matter of unifying both the East and the West to move forward and embrace a better future for generations to come. Siegel does not go too deeply into the debate and explains that Tezuka, creator of *Astro Boy,* watched Disney productions of fairytales such as "*Bambi* and *Snow White* time and time again in occupied Japan, and had created *Astro Boy* at least in part on the model of those Disney cartoons" (282). I argue that by embracing this minute aspect of American pop culture, Japan was able to gradually reinstate itself as a powerful nation—at least through soft power—to ultimately influence and counteract the unwavering influence of Western hegemony and American hypermasculinity.

Hypermasculinity

Western hegemony is rooted in legacies of patriarchal structures and colonial expansion of West European powers. In the 20th and 21st centuries, the U.S., in particular, acquired a front of hard power in relation to Japan that eliminates or even entirely disassociates from the *kawaii* culture adopted by Japan. According to Sukey Fontelieu, the psychological state of hypermasculinity holds three key components:

> One is that it emphasizes physical prowess such as a modern self-absorption with male body size, fitness, and the sculpted or armored body look. It is also

> dependent on dangerous action for excitement, as can be seen in current fascinations with extreme sports, action films, and violent video games. (…) Hypermasculinity in a culture, it will be shown, promotes a barely repressed excitement at the prospect of going to war. Finally, hypermasculinity encourages callousness toward those who are different than oneself, seeing them as inferior, and so it encourages xenophobia. This disregard for the fundamental rights of others illustrates how hypermasculinity is a state in which a person is cut off from their feeling function. (3)

These three components—physical prowess, going to war and inferiority—play a vital role in Japan's adoption of the cute, infantilized feminine culture. As the first aspect addresses masculine physical ability and appearance, the importance of *kawaii* culture's overall presence challenges the notion that one must look strong and powerful to *be* strong and powerful. In this way, Japan's embracing of an almost hyperfemininity builds on its deep-seated insecurity. This emphasis on hyperfemininity serves to counteract a hypermasculinized American culture to gain international influence through soft rather than hard power.

Building on the second point made by Fontelieu, the idea that hypermasculine culture promotes the prospect of going to war works in Japan's favour of their nation's 'rebranding' of cute. As Japan is the only country with a Constitution promising not to engage in war—compared to its American counterpart's violent undertakings[14]—Japan uses this new ideology of a cute, gentle and peaceful space to make itself appear as overall kinder and more spiritual. This ideology equally strengthens Japan's global position as it rejects the third point raised by Fontelieu that

[14] Article I, Section 8, Clause 11 of the U.S. Constitution, often referred to as the War Powers Clause, vests in the Congress the power to declare war: "The Congress shall have Power To… [declare] War, grant Letters of Marque and Reprisal, and make Rules concerning Captures on Land and Water."

those who are different are considered inferior, adopting xenophobic predispositions.[15] This xenophobic perspective inherently rejects the *kawaii* culture and instead endorses alienation and self-centred behaviour. Such anxieties give rise to conservative political movements based on hypermasculinity, a phenomenon we can very well observe in present-day U.S. as it became particularly manifest in a large part of the population supporting (even after his defeat) former president Trump. Fontelieu further explains that hypermasculinity and its veneration in the U.S. "can be better understood as protective armor for the vulnerable fears and anxieties at the wounded core of a cultural complex, which resides within Americans who identify with the inflated idea that America is the greatest nation in the world" (4). This is not to say that all Americans embrace these attitudes. There is a quite a following of Japan's *kawaii* for those who embrace it as they descend into the world of fantasy and cuteness to avoid violent realities within their own nation.

Kawaii

Cute culture, or *kawaii* culture, speaks to some of our contemporary world's most potent needs and sensibilities. Although this notion can be seen as superficially pink and missing in actual substance, it actually reveals depths of meaning that are not obvious at first. Simon May believes that cute culture is not simply about the perception of powerlessness and innocence, "but also plays with, mocks, ironizes the value we attach to power—as well as our assumptions about who has power and who [does] [not]" (2-3). Japan's power began to rise again through 'weakness' in defeat. The nation embraced this new fantasy of cuteness and feminized and roboticized infantilism to confront its trauma. Certain expressions of Japanese popular culture now present themselves as harmless, innocent, and cuddly, but they are the ultimate weapon to counteract Western hegemony.

[15] In comparison to nations like the U.S., Japan is also guilty of xenophobic tendencies; however, the country tries to shift their international recognition from this isolationist perspective to an open-minded one. Due to their inferiorization by the U.S., the Japanese attempt to present themselves as diametrically opposite of their former occupants with the *kawaii* culture.

As the West continues to contribute to violence and wars in the world, Japan's perpetuation of cuteness and hyperfemininity, in contrast, creates an escape to a world presented as peaceful. Japanese artists find strength and supreme power nationally and internationally through the distortion of reality. Their cute objects can mend any ugliness around the world, especially their own as Japanese citizens. They confront the boundaries of life and human anxieties by opposing any wrongdoings or past atrocities with wholesome innocence (May 3). What becomes central is that Japan's *kawaii* lightheartedness has gained immense popularity in recent decades as children, teenagers, young adults, and even some older adults in different parts of the world, primarily the U.S., heavily consume these Japanese forms of escapism.

From the early 1970s, people in Japan clung to a lightheartedness that could only be satisfied by few things. According to May, one particular notion that burst onto the scene was "the 'girl culture' of the shōjo: young, often adolescent, unmarried females; then taken up by women of various ages; and after the late 1980s, embraced by increasing numbers of young men" (61). He also refers to Sharon Kinsella, a well-known scholar of Japanese popular culture, who believes that men idealized this movement as "cute fashion represents freedom and an escape from the pressure of social expectations and regulations," and who "fetishize young women—either real [girlfriends] or syrupy sweet little girl heroines depicted in Lolita complex comic books for adolescent boys" (qtd. in May 61). Consequently, *kawaii* as a sensibility began to transcend its initial postwar manifestation as helpless and vulnerable to encompass global Japanese girl culture.

This girl culture embodies *kawaii* aesthetics to portray oneself as seemingly weak or in need of protection; however, in contrast to American hypermasculinity's adoption of one's physical prowess and desire to fight, this childlike embodiment defiantly symbolizes a self-sufficient individual or entity. This duality goes on to redefine postwar Japan as equally

unthreatening both to outsiders and in its perception of its infantilized self, but ruthless about their nation's preservation (62). In this way, cute culture in Japan supersedes the mere "escapism into 'feminized' self-images and social networks; or into infantile or adolescent behaviors, trinkets, cartoons, and language codes" (63). Instead, it has become a whole new world—in some cases, a parallel universe. These new spaces allow the Japanese to show a face to foreigners—and, even most importantly, to themselves—that is all at once reassuring and quirky, transparent and yet baffling. In other cases, it is more than a face and becomes an important figure, which I will demonstrate through *Violet Evergarden* or Hello Kitty. Globally, cute culture materializes a part of the Japanese spirit—as it is manifested today—to where this escape becomes an inner reality. Our outer and inner realities reflect two conflicted notions—*tatemae* and *honne*—in Japanese culture that May highlights in his work: "[*t]atemae*, how you show yourself to others, or how you think they want to see or hear you, has, in this respect, gone a long way to becoming *honne*, how you actually feel" (62). As the Japanese use *kawaii* culture to restore their national identity and compensate for their defeat, it equally aids them in utilizing anime, manga, and other Japanese artistic subcultures to advertise passivity and harmlessness, entrenching national self-enfeeblement (70). However, this embellished cuteness does not prevent Japan from expressing its strength in unsolemn, unthreatening ways like the realm of animanga.

The Realm of Animanga

Japanese anime and manga—shortened as animanga—have grown to be some of the most significant global identifiers for their nation. Kinko Ito states how they are closely connected to Japanese "politics, economy, family, religion, and gender" (26). Let us start our discussion with manga as it came before anime. Beáta Pusztai posits that "[w]hat makes manga so attractive in [Japan's] eyes … is the generic and thematic diversity of products—as opposed to their American

and most European counterparts, Japanese comics are targeting readers from all age groups, males and females alike" (144). Manga, also referred to as Japanese comics or comic art, has equally been a critical component of Japan's history and culture for centuries, dating back to the 12th and 13th centuries. Their influence reflects Japanese realities and fantasies while shaping their modern nation for both themselves and outsiders.

Anime—which refers to Japanese animation—, on the other hand, was a term forged by Osamu Tezuka only before WWII; however, both anime and manga have quickly become one of Japan's kawaii culture's most prominent emblems. Manuel Hernández-Pérez believes that "[a]nime is defined in relation to other Japanese national branding components such as manga, J-Pop [Japanese pop music] or sushi" (4). It is most common that "[t]he stylistic characteristics that define anime, including its serial character and its visual style, find their origin in adaptations inspired by the original manga" (6). In this way, animanga prospers collectively and, during our globalized times, animanga—along with the steady rise of Japanese light novels—have penetrated North American media indefinitely, though to a much lesser extent in Canada than in the U.S.

Girl Power

Building on the secondary sources outlined above, I argue that animanga has played significant roles in further disseminating Japan's post-WWII national and cultural identity as *kawaii* or perpetuating the infantilized feminine imagery in the U.S. The animanga that I will analyze are the 1990s *shōjo* manga of *Sailor Moon* and the 2018 anime *Violet Evergarden* (based on the Japanese light novel *Violet Evergarden*). In particular, as an older animanga, *Sailor Moon* is one of the most well-known manga and anime in the world. The main reason for this popularity is that *Sailor Moon*'s fame rose as the Girl Power movement began in both Japan and North America during the 1990s. I would even consider it a more diminutive form of soft power presented by Japan to reach

wider audiences in a relatable fashion. This movement, Victoria Anne Newsom argues, "is the most visible incorporation of third wave feminism into popular media" (58), especially since characters like Sailor Moon had direct impacts on today's view of female empowerment.

Scholars of Girl Power address its effects on the young female demographic in North American contexts. Newsom focuses specifically on how *Sailor Moon* empowers the young female body after a hero's critical transformation and defines the notion through the lens of third wave feminism of the 1990s:

> [G]irl power [is] the ability for young women to achieve personal empowerment while maintaining a distinctly "girlish" style, in a U.S. context. In this context, "girlish" refers to a style of personal expression that both promotes and reclaims traditional feminine stereotypes, co-opting them as sites of empowerment, particularly personal empowerment. The personal empowerment of the Girl Power character is an ability to find both personal pleasure and success simultaneously. (57)

Alternatively, fellow scholar Joanette Quenby claims that *Sailor Moon*, "as a 'girl-power' text, demonstrates alternative gender identities that were largely ignored in American popular culture texts during the early 1990s" (2). This concept confronts the reality of 1970s superheroines who were forced to work within patriarchal systems—under the guise of Western hegemony and American hypermasculinity—until the embracement of *kawaii* culture and hyperfemininity took over. Girl Power is another element that epitomizes how infantilized feminine figures like Sailor Moon began to occupy all spaces—both private and public—despite the limitations put forth on young women by patriarchal societies. As Sailor Moon starts the trend that empowers the feminine body to enact personal pleasure and success through manga, this cultural shift transcends all of

society's associations of empowerment with the masculine and even begins to create modern narratives of war and the feminine.

Although there is a place for men and boys to find themselves in animanga, the overall idea of *kawaii* subcultures in Japan and abroad caters to girls and women, consequently overpowering any 'masculinity' with femininity in the public sphere. With this in mind, the following primary source in my research is Ishidate's anime *Violet Evergarden*. Violet is a girl-soldier who wins a fictional war for the Leidenschaftlich[16] Army. This victory is integral to the story because she exemplifies a medium for feminization to become a weapon and overshadow the significance of the term 'little boy,' which was initially part of Japan's trauma. These representations reconstruct our understanding of femininity and masculinity, which disrupt conventional ideas that are associated with masculine figures, like the once reputable samurai.

Kawaii and Narratives of War

While many Japanese artistic subcultures and animanga narratives put forward *kawaii* aesthetics to further compensate for their nation's defeat, they also play a vital role in the fictional retelling—or the Japanese remembering—of history, or more specifically, post-WWII war narratives. In particular, Eldad Nakar states that Japanese creators began portraying war narratives—between 1957 and 1977—with "cover artwork [that] offers dramatic battle scenes embedded with pictures of courageous pilots and shiny warplanes in desperate dogfights" (180). They often emphasize the allegorical relationship between Japan and the U.S. as the Japanese were rebuilding their country and economy. As these war themes were present in art, animanga and other Japanese artistic subcultures across the nation began embracing the feminine with the rise of female creators in the 1980s and grew further as we hit the twenty-first century. This embracing, once again, led to an

[16] Leidenschaftlich is a German adjective meaning "passionate." Although we are dealing with Japanese history, this is a clear connection to Japan's past alliance with the Axis—namely Nazi Germany.

even higher consumption rate of animanga because they were hitting all demographics across gender and age barriers. The once male warrior—or even an army soldier figure—contended with the rising powerful *kawaii* superheroine. In this way, I will argue—through the characters of Violet Evergarden and Sailor Moon and by touching briefly on *Saikano,* another important *kawaii* war manga—that the power of animanga is linked to its versatility and allows for Japan to compensate for its defeat both commercially and figuratively. As it provides a political and social commentary on Japanese national and international relations, the artists use animanga to educate others about their national trauma and reflect upon everyday life in the fantasy worlds they create.

Methodology and Theoretical Approach

Given the focus on the 'feminine' materialization throughout much of this paper, the theoretical framework I will apply is rooted in feminist theory and trauma theory because they both allow me to assess and deconstruct elements of roboticized and infantilized hyperfemininity present in the narratives under scrutiny. While I believe that *kawaii* culture, animanga and Japanese artistic subcultures are all indirect responses to Japan's defeat in WWII, I want to focus on creators'—mainly Murakami, Ishidate, Takeuchi, and Shimizu—materializations of Japan's national trauma through self-infantilized and roboticized hyperfemininity. By drawing on concepts from trauma theory applied in a postwar context, my analysis will demonstrate that both posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and posttraumatic growth (PTG) were critical for the Japanese to progress. Much of the work under scrutiny stems from repressed memories and a denial of their part in the war, which led to aesthetics of self-infantilization and renewal through roboticization. The indirect responses to the end of WWII allowed the Japanese to redefine themselves and utilize art to explain their side of the story about this war, which translated into the creation of infantilized and

hyperfeminized yet strong figures in popular cultural expressions, such as anime and manga, as I shall demonstrate in my analysis.

I will define PTSD as a response to a violent event in which a person experiences, witnesses, or is confronted with a threat of death or serious injury to oneself or others, while experiencing intense fear, helplessness, or horror (Gordon and Szymanski 250). PTSD became integral to the Japanese nation because many individuals and families were impacted by the destruction and aftermath of the atomic bombings. While a survivor may remain impacted by PTSD for the rest of their lives, for many the aftermath of trauma can also lead to PTG. PTG "describes the experience of individuals whose development, at least in some areas, has surpassed what was present before the struggle with crisis occurred" (Calhoun and Tedeschi qtd. in Szymanski and Rosenfeld 265). It is important to note, however, that "the presence of growth does not mean the absence of pain and distress" (Szymanski and Rosenfeld 266). Thus, in the wake of trauma, newfound personal—or in this case national—strengths can be made while still carrying the pain. In this way, the hope for redemption is a vital way to cope with said traumas. This is crucial to the Japanese psyche and progression of their popular culture as it advances the narrative that although they were defeated in the war, they have ultimately been able to begin growing from this defeat. The Japanese artists understand that their own sense of agency comes from controlling their narrative as strong individuals which they express through infantilized and roboticized feminine and cartoon-like figures. This growth becomes a form of reconstruction in the wake of crisis and ironically leads to the progression of the Japanese psyche that has infantilized itself to address said trauma and consequently produce new art that can help to understand why they have found themselves in this position.

I am using the term self-infantilization in this paper because it addresses not only Japan's traumatic relationship with itself and the U.S. but also the way it has been projected in animanga to capitalize on their experience with the U.S. Jean-Michel Rabaté believes that infantilization causes a dichotomy because "on the one hand, one needs forms to express oneself, while on the other these have to be constantly debased by ludicrous strategies of … unleashing immaturity, shameful inferiority and deliberate formlessness" (123). I will specifically utilize the elements of shameful inferiority and deliberate formlessness, in certain areas, in my analysis as it pertains to the imagery of animanga as an expression of Japan's trauma. This formlessness occasionally seeps into the creation of feminine bodies in animanga, to which I must add the term hyperfemininity, as I take one step further in deepening the relationship between this formless, infantilized feminine body and its relationship with the masculine.

Patriarchal societies like Japan and the U.S. often measure women's gender roles by the degree to which they embody the narrowly defined societal expectations of femininity. Johanna M. F. van Oosten, Jochen Peter, and Inge Boot define hyperfemininity as "the adherence to stereotypical feminine sexual beliefs" (Murnen & Byrne qtd. in van Oosten et al 307). These stereotypes merge three interrelated concepts: "the fundamental importance of having a relationship with a man …, the use of physical attributes and sexuality to attract men and to maintain relationships with them; and … the expectation that men are dominant, and sometimes forceful, initiators of sexual relationships" (Murnen & Byrne qtd. in van Oosten et al 307-8). My analysis will focus on the first two interrelated concepts of having a relationship with a man and maintaining a relationship with said man through physical means. This focus is crucial to my analysis because, although Japan shifts its defining figures from one of a samurai to one of an infant through the world of animanga and other Japanese aesthetic subcultures, these infantilized,

hyperfeminine figures still endure the male gaze and misogyny, such as sexual subordination and objectification. Even though the fall of the hypermasculine soldier-like figures is compensated for with powerful, even roboticized girls, these are easily malleable for the benefit of the former.

The roboticization of the human body becomes another way to compensate for Japan's defeat. Murakami highlights that "Karl Capek first coined the word "robot" to describe an artificial human in his 1920 play, *RUR Rossum's Universal Robots*" (142). This artificiality has allowed humankind to improve their everyday lives through roboticization. A variety of robots have been produced for all systems, but ultimately Leopoldina Fortunati states scientists' "[a]ttempts to enhance the body include exoskeletons, suits to improve muscular strength, prostheses potentially made using 3D printers" (2684). I will apply this concept, mainly the use of suits and prostheses for muscular strength, in relation to Violet Evergarden's character given that her character is roboticized through her prosthetic arms. After suffering an injury during the war,[17] she must redefine herself beyond the life of a soldier and rehabilitate herself in a space that leaves her feeling utterly weak and seeking guidance, which can be interpreted as a parallel to the Japanese nation and body as a whole. As the Japanese reconstruct and reinvent their country from the rubble, this character reflects a rehabilitation of the Japanese body and mind in an attempt to address their trauma.

[17] Their war is fictionalized and never specified whether it alludes to WWI or WWII.

Chapter 1: Historical Context

Japan as a nation has endured many changes in the past century. In particular, the country's defeat by the Allies in WWII was a major hit to their global presence and national identity, ultimately leading to a retreat into childlike sensibility and regression, as previously discussed. From 1939 and into the early 1940s, the Japanese government took it upon itself to eradicate foreign influence, mainly through the rejection of Western culture, with a nationalistic and fascistic approach. The Japanese military regime's fervent nationalism tried, rather unsuccessfully, to eliminate the English language and Western influence in Japan. It was one of several attempts in Japanese history to redefine Japanese cultural and national identity in the face of Western hegemony.

Violence Against Its Neighbours

Although my analysis addresses Japan's postwar trauma and pursuit of compensation for their defeat, it cannot be ignored nor left unmentioned that their war crimes were some of the most hideous atrocities in WWII. Some call it the "Asian Holocaust," and others call it the "Forgotten Holocaust" of the Pacific War. Already starting in 1931—exactly eight years before WWII officially started—Japan, and more specifically the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA), launched the first of many cruel attacks in East Asia. They invaded Manchuria and, by 1937, began their pursuit of Northeast China, in Nanking, which resulted in what has been called the "rape of Nanking," a massacre and rape of hundreds of thousands of civilians.

Iris Chang, a major contributor to Chinese historical scholarship, wrote *The Rape of Nanking* to address the horrors committed by the IJA. Many of the poor, elderly or orphaned Chinese inhabitants of Nanking were deserted by their rich and powerful counterparts who escaped the Japanese invasion. Chang posits that "before the war, the native population of the city exceeded 1 million people, and by December it had fallen to about half a million" (81). As a result, many

Chinese tried to embrace and welcome the Japanese invaders upon arrival by "hanging flags from their windows while others cheered the Japanese columns as they marched through" (82). Evidently, this 'celebration' was short-lived because the Japanese ruthlessly looted, murdered and raped people, mostly women, at every chance. The Chinese tried their best to survive by "laying buried for days under the corpses of friends before dragging their bullet-ridden bodies to the hospital… [and] [t]here were women who hid in holes or in ditches for weeks, or ran through burning houses to rescue their babies" (83). Other Japanese-led atrocities were against the Koreans, and more specifically Korean women.

Chunghee Sarah Soh explores the brave contemporary Korean struggles over historical injustice against "comfort women," which has become an international issue in the nation's unsettling colonial history. Today, "comfort women" are mainly represented as military sex slaves of wartime imperial Japan, referring "to young females of various ethnic and national backgrounds and social circumstances—including Japanese—who were forced to offer sexual services to the Japanese troops before and during the Second World War" (17). Other women enslaved by the IJA were from the Philippines, Taiwan, Burma, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia and East Timor, with a small number of women also originating from Australia and Europe (Lee 63). The one-dimensional view of this issue as a Japanese war crime does not emphasize the multifaceted historical and social truth of this complex problem. Soh argues that "the Korean comfort women tragedy is a prominent case of 'gendered structural violence' under colonialism and patriarchal capitalism" (Soh 18) and highlights the emerging women's human rights movement.[18] These events are emblematic of turbulent Korean political history—along with Japan's colonization of

[18] Patriarchal capitalism played a huge role in the women's rights movement, especially in relation to animanga, because much of the 1980s and 1990s led to a shift in the representation of superheroes. In particular, a wave of creators began a narrative that empowered female heroines instead of simply making them damsels in distress.

Korea, the country's division into two nations, and the 1980 Kwangju Uprising—which is characterized by politics of animosity and resistance. Consequently, the Koreans suffered resentment of victimhood and sought justice. The 1993 democratic civilian government in South Korea encouraged activism to redress past wrongdoings. For this reason, many American, European and Asian leaders believed that the Japanese did not endure harsh enough punishments. Of course, this is not how the Japanese experienced these humiliating consequences.

Japanese Collective Amnesia

Throughout the decades, Japan's vehement denial of these atrocities led to distortive representations of their part in the war; however, this distortion ultimately became their 'truth.' This is a common occurrence when addressing a nation's history. Michael Billig posits that collective amnesia is one aspect of collective memory. Collective memory and collective amnesia play an integral role in defining Japan's national and cultural identity. Billig explains that "[e]very nation must have its history, its own collective memory… [however], [t]his remembering is simultaneously a collective forgetting: the nation, which celebrates its antiquity, forgets its historical recency" (2). In particular, this collective 'forgetting' is a notion which depends on the nation's "continued existence upon a collective amnesia" (2). Collective memory is a complex theory because not only is the past forgotten, but it can be recalled inaccurately or 'presumably' by the nation. Ultimately, the parallel of forgetting the past and remembering the present is a cause for concern as it falsely defines nations. For instance, national identities are often remembered through embedded routines of life that 'flag' us to remember our nationhood, even if depicted through an 'imagined' sense of community. Postwar Japanese creators construct Japan's collective memory by conveniently 'forgetting' the Pacific War's atrocities and even contemporary political

issues with their Asian neighbours and Indigenous peoples, the Ainu.[19] The subsequent push towards cute motifs absolves itself of any evil deeds and creates new values that made Japan one of the most aesthetically pleasing nations, especially to the U.S. The two atomic bombs, however, still loom large as one of the most devastating events in contemporary Japanese history.

Little Boy, Fat Man and national trauma

Japan capitulated following the throwing of two atomic bombs made in the U.S., named Little Boy and Fat Man,[20] respectively, that wreaked havoc upon Japanese civilians and infrastructure. The bombing began on August 6, 1945, at 8:15 a.m., when "Little Boy exploded 580 meters above the western port city of Hiroshima, where the Fifth Divisional Headquarters and other military facilities were located" (Murakami 19). This attack led to half the population within a kilometre radius to perish on that day. More specifically, by the end of 1945, an estimated 140,000 people of the 342,000-population present at the time of the explosion died of bomb-related causes. While Hiroshima's population has by now recovered from this traumatic experience, many survivors continually suffered and even died from the after-effects of radiation. On August 9th, "Americans dropped a second atomic bomb [Fat Man] on Nagasaki and killed another 60,000 to

[19] The Japanese used to refer to the Ainu as "the Eastern Barbarians." Their efforts to 'Japanize' the Ainu were constant throughout the centuries. They believed their clothing, food, housing and morals were poor and uncivilized. Similar to what happened to the Indigenous peoples in Canada, the Ainu had Japanese authorities sent to their communities in hopes to "enlighten and educate them, gradually bring them to adopt Japanese customs, and make them gratefully submit to us" (McClain 133). Moreover, they were coercive in their assimilation efforts. It all began when the Japanese shogunal officials banned the Ainu traditions by instructing them to worship the Japanese *kami* ("god"), to adopt Japanese dress, to discard their habit of eating meat, told the men to cut their hair in the style of Japanese commoners—something very similar to abuse found in Canadian Indian residential schools. Finally, to encourage the Ainus' compliance, the Japanese authorities gifted the cooperative members with ceremonial banquets and "assimilation medals" as acknowledgement. The prejudice and contemptuous attitude against their Indigenous peoples in the early modern period congealed into a pattern of discrimination that still endures today.

[20] *Little Boy* and *Fat Man* have garnered attention throughout the years for their seemingly humorous names. Physicist Robert Serber named the first two atomic bomb designs during World War II based on their shapes: Thin Man and Fat Man. The "Thin Man" was a long, thin device and its name came from the Dashiell Hammett detective novel and series of movies about The Thin Man. The "Fat Man" was round and fat, so it was named after Kasper Gutman, a rotund character in Hammett's 1930 novel *The Maltese Falcon*, played by Sydney Greenstreet in the 1941 film version. Little Boy was named by others as an allusion to Thin Man since it was based on its design.

70,000; in all, nearly 500,000 civilians now had perished in the bombing of Japanese cities" (McClain 514). Through all that agony, it still took until August 14th for the army to endorse Japanese Prime Minister Kantarō Suzuki's pleas of surrender. Thus, these two atomic bombs left a deep scar and trauma in Japanese national history and cultural memory. These devastating explosions resulted in physical, social, and economic harm in addition to the immediate severe psychological traumas on the population. Not only was the country forced to unconditionally surrender but it also "faced foreign occupation and sweeping reforms of its domestic institutions, or 'nation-building,' which proceeded on an unprecedented scale except in post–World War II West Germany" (Kage 14). Japan's demilitarization and consequent trauma are some of the many reasons to seek PTG and overcome these obstacles.

Japanese society sought to redefine itself globally to compensate for the defeat, while still displaying a solid connection to traditional values. However, these efforts did not hold the same significance as before. Various literary movements—namely *Nihonjinron*[21]—encouraged a newfound appreciation for Japanese cultural practices and overall 'Japaneseness,' but nothing stuck the same way as their exploding artistic ventures did. In particular, what saw a real boom in popular culture was Japanese animation. Originally, tensions grew between the local industries and global distributions as animation expanded in the 1930s because "animation audiences were exhorted to embrace national patriotism, which included fixed ideas of identity, ethnic community, and belonging" (Annett 50). However, what people often do in moments of traumatic change is find, or even invent, something familiar to create an imagined political community, something

[21] Stemming from the 1960s and 70s, *Nihonjinron* exhibits vast literature about 'Japaneseness.' For people who live and teach in Japan, one is often immersed in prevalent discussions on the Japanese or, as previously mentioned, discourses on Japaneseness. As a way to repair their national identity, "these discourses construct the Japanese people as both homogenous and culturally unique" (Shani 1119). These teachings also contributed to some of Japan's own isolationist ideologies with regards to foreigners, addressed on page 15.

Benedict Anderson classifies as both "inherently limited and sovereign" (6). John W. Dower also posits that the Japanese needed to use everyday language as a bridge to enable the shift from "war to peace without experiencing complete psychological disorientation—for many totemic words, catchphrases, even texts that had been popular during the war proved perfectly adaptable to radically altered interpretations and objectives in the postwar years" (30). However, it was not nearly enough to counterbalance the layered discrimination and oppression from the American occupation, especially after the Tokyo Tribunals in 1946.

Racist Trauma of Foreign justice

The judicial proceedings mirrored the harsh realities of race, power, and powerlessness present in the treatment of Asian nations by the Western Allies (USA, Britain and France). The 'international' composition of the tribunal, which included mostly white European and American men, reflected the colonial circumstances of Asia during this time. Although Japan had invaded and occupied solely Asian countries, only three of the eleven judges were Asian, which exceeded the victors' original intent (Dower 469). The tribunal envisioned nine justices, with only one Chinese representative; however, two additional Asian judges—one from the Philippines and one from India—were specifically chosen to appease their countries' agitation.

The Allies' initial unwillingness to include these people stems from their imperial power relations. For instance, "The Philippines, an American colony since 1898, had been promised independence in 1946… [and] India, long the crown jewel of the British empire, was to become independent in 1947" (Dower 470). Although these countries received some representation, they were still unliberated nations. In addition to the West's control over these countries, many Asian nations that suffered terribly at the hands of the Japanese, including Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaya, Burma, and particularly Korea, had none of their own representatives. It shed light on the tribunal's

hypocrisy as the Pacific War[22] did not occur among free and independent nations but rather on a map devastatingly defined by colonialism and the Cold War. This is especially crucial to the Korean plight as the Korean people were used as 'comfort women,' labourers and conscripts in the Japanese army, and, moreover, their country was under American and Soviet occupation during the trials. They did not have the opportunity to address their oppressors. Ultimately, Korea's state was "emblematic of the larger anomaly of victor's justice as practiced in Tokyo" (Dower 470). While the tribunal accused the Japanese of destroying "democracy and its essential basis—freedom and the respect of human personality" (471), only one judge, Justice Pal of India, addressed the victors' hypocrisy. The Allies, and this included the Soviet Union, were mainly interested in maintaining and reimposing their colonial interests and control in East Asia.

Throughout the Tokyo tribunals, hundreds of thousands of Japanese prisoners were being kept in the Soviet Union; however, their circumstances were unknown. Over time, "the number of Japanese prisoners who would die in Soviet hands was much larger than the number of American and British Commonwealth prisoners who perished so miserably as prisoners of the Japanese" (Dower 472-3). The atomic bombs thrown at Hiroshima and Nagasaki were a war crime and a huge hypocrisy by the Americans, but this act is still to this day considered justified to end the Pacific War. Although some believe the atomic bombs were comparable to Nazi atrocities, most disagree. Dower explains that some judges and, of course, the Japanese themselves agree that these bombs violated the laws of war (474). This perspective highlights the West's neo-nationalist thinking and authority to assert dominance over whichever nation they please. The Japanese were left with no choice but to endure the consequences of the war, in whatever form they came. The

[22] Historians refer to the Pacific War, sometimes called the Asia–Pacific War, as the theatre of WW II that was fought in Asia, the Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean, and Oceania. It was geographically the largest theatre of the war, including the vast Pacific Ocean theatre, the South-West Pacific theatre, the South-East Asian theatre, the Second Sino-Japanese War, and the Soviet–Japanese War (Murray and Millet 143).

victors determined that the Japanese government should be eradicated in what they termed a 'New Order' established instead (Dower 471). The initiative for a new social order—through Article 9 of the Peace Constitution—led to the Japanese becoming an emasculated nation.

Article 9 of the Japanese constitution

On November 3, 1946, General Douglas McArthur's allied forces promulgated Article 9 of the current Japanese Constitution—also known as the Peace Constitution—which provided the foundation for Japan's 'castrated' (Murakami) and disempowered postwar position. More specifically, in Chapter 2, the Japanese Constitution reads as follows:

> Article 9. Adjusting sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.
>
> (2) In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized. (Murakami 22)

While this article was a significant hit to Japanese politics, it had a major impact on the Japanese psyche and resulted in a major deconstruction of its cultural and national identity. Both an American-made constitution and the U.S. occupation of Japan led to a certain mindset of dependency on American powers. More specifically, "it cast Japan in the role of a 'child' obliged to follow America's 'adult' guidance" (22). Unfortunately, Japan could do nothing but abide by these rules as the country had no means of enduring any further physical or psychological trauma. Japan's embracing of the feminine consequently challenged the U.S.'s newly imposed social order. I argue that this manifested also in the production of "cute" (*kawaii*) manga, anime, and other artistic forms. The Japanese felt the need to fight this sense of racial, cultural and national

inferiority both locally and internationally to reconstruct and reclaim their image of a once-powerful nation. The first step was to understand how Japan took it upon itself to remain connected to its masculinity and, therefore, its power on an international scale, directed more specifically against Western hegemony and American hypermasculinity. The loss of this power led to a gradual infantilization of Japan; however, their measured shift towards femininity, or more specifically, embracing an infantilized and roboticized femininity, actually brought them more power than ever before as they began to penetrate the Western world through their artistic ventures. Before we reach the point of understanding Japan's shift to the feminine, let us first address how feelings of inferiority led to Japan's need to compensate for their 'castrated' nation-state.

Inferiority and Compensation

Occupied Japan's psyche—and the state of postwar Japan as a whole—held the shame of defeat for years until they could face the world once again. A few decades after the Tokyo Tribunals, demilitarization, psychological and physical damage, and economic disaster, the Japanese were left feeling inferior. Such feelings of inferiority typically arise out of an infant's smallness and helplessness in face of life. Robert Lundin posits:

> The child realizes at an early age that bigger people are able to satisfy their needs more completely, to better prepare them for life. It is said that the little toddler lives in a world of big legs: legs of people, chairs, and tables. Some children will attempt to model adults directly in order to satisfy their own needs. Others will accept their own weakness and helplessness. In either case, feelings of inferiority, inadequacy, and uncertainty arise which give rise to a need, sooner or later, to compensate for the difficulties in the environment. Every child is

> faced with innumerable obstacles in life. Adler wrote, "Every voluntary act begins with a feeling of inadequacy" (1927, p.38). (14)

It is imperative to emphasize the term 'infant' here as it relates to Murakami's work in *Little Boy.* Japan's *kawaii* culture and ultimately 'cool' achievements in the eyes of Western consumers signify the revenge of Japan's "little boy" nation, "as it crawls out from under the hegemony of the West and asserts its own 'exploding subculture' soft power" (Yano 686). *Kawaii* subculture equally stresses the use of "sado-cute" (cute mixed with sadomasochism) and overt hypersexualization, as depicted in some of Murakami's works.[23] Whereas the sado-cute ideas bleed into the *otaku* identity found in some "uncool indigenous Japanese culture" (Murakami 132), the overt hypersexualization plays into the importance of Japan weaponizing infantilized femininity against aspects of American hypermasculine ideas that encourage overt rape. As Yano posits, "here is cute/cool as the 'bomb' of global pop culture, as a wink with a large-scale neo-nationalistic, sexualized punch" (686). Ironically, Japan 'remasculinizes' itself as a nation specifically by utilizing infantilized and feminized visual language of cuteness, often conveyed through Japan's popular toys like Hello Kitty from Sanrio Company, Ltd. Along with Murakami's, various interpretations of Japan's cute and cool subcultures push the narrative of postwar Japan as nothing other than *postwar.* In this way, Japan solely presents itself as a resilient nation that has come out of this defeat unscathed and better than ever. The embracing of this *kawaii* culture challenges any use of American hard power—specifically after rejecting the designation 'Occupied Japan'—by embracing political and even sexual undercurrents. Japan aggressively deconstructs its appearance as a 'weak' little boy and instead constructs a powerful 'cute' little girl to appeal to a global audience. This approach further allows the nation to heal from defeat.

[23] Refer to Appendix.

Moreover, the utilization of the feminine comes in different forms, but I will specifically cover the Japanese superheroine and soldier-like images.

The defeat remains a permanent scar on the nation, simply patched up to look much happier through the *kawaii* pink globalization. Rieko Kage explains how defeat following conflict contributes to psychological trauma among the affected citizenry that withdraw from civic life (75). All of Japan was defeated in war; however, Hiroshima and Nagasaki ultimately experienced much higher levels of destruction than others. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the elements of defeat assert that the trauma suffered was more severe in regions that were subjected to more significant physical damage. Kage further argues that with deeper roots of trauma from the war, less civic engagement comes as a consequence (75). The reduction in civic engagement reflects the Japanese sense of powerlessness or sense of inferiority of being a 'weak' child, or suffering from bodily deficiencies. Lundin elaborates that "infants enter the world as the weakest things in their surroundings… [therefore], [their] [b]ody movements are uncoordinated and undeveloped" (14). These little children become utterly dependent on those around them for the maintenance of their existence. The U.S-Japan relations mirror this dependency. Japan exemplifies the dependent child with a weakened and growing body as the nation relies heavily on the U.S. until the end of their occupation in 1952. Only then does Japan begin to reject the world's perception of the nation as vulnerable and insecure. In this case, the child—or Japan— "begins to master their environment and models those in the surroundings" (14). Often these inferiorities lead to years of rivalries, hostilities, and disappointments, but Japan took this sentiment and began to compensate for the nation's defeat with the first step being an unprecedented economic boom.

Japanese Economy

A comparison between Japan's economic conditions in the 1950s with those in the 1980s startles the imagination—and stunts the 'adult-child' relationship they had with the West. In the 1940s, Japan—like many other countries after the war—was devastated and, a decade later, their efforts to compensate economically still had not yielded much result. In the mid-1950s, Japan's Gross National Product (GNP) was only one-fifteenth that of the U.S. and wages were only slightly better than during the prewar years (McClain 571). In 1957, Edwin O. Reischauer, a Harvard professor known as the top Western scholar on Japan—also later serving as the U.S. ambassador—discouragingly observed: "'The economic situation in Japan may be so fundamentally unsound that no policies, no matter how wise, can save her from slow economic starvation and all the concomitant political and social ills that situation would produce" (qtd. in McClain 571). However, to the shock of many and against all odds, Japan began to cross the threshold into an epoch of economic growth that would astound the world—and particularly the U.S.

Throughout the 1960s, massive Japanese capital formation accelerated investments in industrial plants and equipment, and participation in competition for international markets had made the nation's GNP the fifth largest among the world's capitalist economies (McClain 571). By the mid-1960s, the country's pace of high-speed economic growth continued to amaze the world. McClain states that Japan's "economy expanded at an average rate of more than 10 percent a year, and before the decade was over, Japan's output of goods and services surpassed that of West Germany—and every other free market economy in the world except that of the United States" (572). Only a few challenges hindered Japan's economic growth—namely the 1973 "oil

shock"[24]—but they ultimately recovered a measure of their former dynamism: "from 1975 through the 1980s the GNP grew a very enviable 3.5 to 5.5 percent a year, and in 1987 per capita GNP overtook that of the United States" (572). Regardless of who won or lost the war, a considerable success of Japan's postwar history is that for the past seventy-five years, they have been a testing ground for an American-style capitalist economy that expanded to the point of explosion (Murakami 14). The Japanese were ultimately able to utilize their defeat and eventually capitalize on this trauma through artistic expression to eventually trump the U.S. internationally.

From the Masculine to the Feminine

One of the oldest images we associate with Japanese popular culture is that of the samurai—the historical figure of the fearless male warrior that took off in representing Japan internationally[25] before more feminine figures were commercialized. Sometimes Japan and the samurai are even considered synonymous because the samurai was—at least earlier in history—"the finest flower of Japanese civilization, a class of professional fighting men devoted to the awesome ethical principles of their bushido[26] code" (Bolitho 1). The propagation of this image in film and the media worldwide categorized the samurai into a stereotype that disallowed the Japanese to grow beyond a particular narrative. Japan as a whole could not change this narrative, especially after the war. In this way, they were stuck in a past that constantly reminded them that they had to compensate for said failures. The Japanese samurai's reputation of devotion and honour was meant to be restored, but not in what was expected of the nation.

[24] When the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries increased crude oil prices by nearly 70 percent, Japan's economy contracted temporarily before recovering.
[25] Refer to Appendix.
[26] Bushidō, the code of the samurai, would seem to lie at the very core of the Japanese psyche, generating all sorts of extraordinary phenomena, from war crimes to economic growth.

The samurai possesses a complicated history in Japan which goes against the popular belief that these men were solely highly regarded.[27] By the late 20th century, in contemporary Western terms, the samurai is no longer associated with an altogether attractive image or reputation as it emphasizes irrationality, violence, and the extinction of self. Nowadays, some devotees of mixed martial arts find some charm in this concept, but it strikes most as forbiddingly remote and almost alien (Bolitho 1). This shift in perspective explains "[h]ow indigenous Japanese imagery and aesthetics changed and accelerated after the war, solidifying into the current forms" (Murakami 101). This significant change from the samurai to *kawaii* culture fits Japan's historical position after the defeat and consequent demilitarization. May posits that "where, today, Germany does remorse, Japan does Cute" (62) to compensate for the nation's part in WWII. It is crucial for understanding that, although the samurai once defined the Japanese people, the entertainment industry has shifted to adopt anime films[28] to redefine Japan in today's world. This shift is not a specifically 'sweet' approach because it would look pitiful, and that would not allow Japan to absolve itself of its tarnished reputation. Instead, the Japanese approach is robust and playful. However, it is put forth through an indirect and impenetrable spirit of *kawaii*—a spirit that can magically make vanish everything aggressive and threatening (May 63). This spirit began with the Girl Power movement from the late 1980s, as Takeuchi's *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* manga took Japan and consequently the U.S. on a ride for a new powerful figure.

[27] More specifically, from the ninth century to approximately 1580, the samurai symbolizes the start of great epics, military engagements, and honourable family status through land instead of glory. These realities kept medieval Japan in uproar as the devotion of the samurai was never truly rewarded (Bolitho 2). The 'fighting' narrative upheld through literature was one used to glorify the past during the following centuries, as the Tokugawa family reign began between 1603 and 1868. Fighting was not an unusual occurrence, and the literature that developed around the samurai—military epics like the Hōgen Monogatari, the Heiji Monogatari and the Heike Monogatari, all products of the thirteenth century—tended to be about fighting (Bolitho 4).

[28] Ghibli Studio films, in particular, are famous and among Japan's highest-grossing films in their screen history. Examples include *Spirited Away* (2001) and *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004).

Chapter 2: Infantilized and Roboticized Women in Animanga

Sailor Moon: The Magical Girl

Takeuchi's character Sailor Moon, also known by her human name Usagi Tsukino, is the first of many superheroines that shifted the realm of animanga into a space where women and the feminine could contend and arguably overpower their male counterparts as reigning figures in Japanese, and eventually U.S., popular culture. Usagi is a teenage girl, approximately fourteen years old, who is labeled as "a bit of a crybaby" (Takeuchi 9) from the start of the series, in the manga and the anime, respectively. This element of the series sets a precedent of her childlike, or rather infantile, behaviours before she becomes a grown, powerful adult woman. Despite her preoccupations with daydreaming and avoiding the responsibilities of a young girl, Usagi's hidden identity is that of the reincarnated princess of the Moon Kingdom, "an actual extraterrestrial empire destroyed 1,000 years ago by an evil empire known as the Negaverse" (Newsom 59). It is equally important to note that Usagi herself is the daughter of Queen Serenity, from a land called the Silver Millenium. Although my analysis will not focus as much on *how* Usagi fights evil, I will shift my attention to the parallels between her character's life and the depiction of Japanese internal and global relations. In the following sections, I will address how she fits into a hyperfeminine figure and embraces *kawaii* culture in Japan and internationally to reign as one of the most significant superheroines.

Sailor Moon and the Infantile Chibiusa

Much of the start of the *Sailor Moon* series is spent with Usagi being preoccupied with boys, playing video games and eating (Takeuchi 21; see Appendix) rather than studying or being a so-called responsible student. As previously mentioned, this aspect of her identity plays an integral part in her character development of a once immature teen to an adult woman. However, I will

focus on the way her more mature, adult-like characterization in juxtaposition with Chibiusa [29] (Takeuchi 192; see Appendix), her daughter from the future, adheres to the U.S. relations with Japan, allowing for a retelling of history and imminent compensation for their defeat in warfare.

In Volume 3 of *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon*, we are introduced to Chibiusa, who is Usagi's future daughter with Tuxedo Mask, or under his human name Mamoru Chiba (also a reincarnated Prince of the Moon Kingdom, alongside Usagi). I will address both Sailor Moon and Chibiusa's relationships with him in the next section, but firstly, it is crucial to understand Chibiusa's role in saving the Moon Kingdom and Silver Millenium, which I argue is a parallel to the necessary saving of post-WWII Japan. Usagi and Chibiusa found themselves in these circumstances due to the Negaverse's attack on the Moon Kingdom and Silver Millenium in Volume 2 of the series. This attack, just like the atomic bombs, led to the destruction of many lives and homes (Takeuchi 158-9; see Appendix). For this postwar Japanese manga, Takeuchi took inspiration from her own experience growing up in a time when Japan was rebuilding and redefining its own cultural and national identity to the world. Usagi and Chibiusa are both vital in identifying how the Japanese viewed the relationship between Japan and the U.S. For instance, Chibiusa can only seek help from her elder Usagi to help with the Kingdom's challenges since they are left with zero resources to improve their current state (Takeuchi 203-4; see Appendix). She exemplifies the self-infantilization that the Japanese experienced while receiving help from the U.S. to rebuild their country after the war and their economy after the American occupation.

[29] Chibi is an informal Japanese slang term for "small" or "short." It is typically applied to objects and animals, but also people (i.e., a short person or a small child). Chibiusa's name is the same as her mother's, Usagi Tsukino, so they essentially call her little or small Usagi with the nickname Chibiusa. Chibi characters, just like Chibiusa, aesthetically possess disproportionately large heads, small bodies, and wide eyes. While it is rather cute to use in animanga, the term actually holds a rather offensive or negative connotation when used in real life.

Even the way Takeuchi drew Usagi and Chibiusa are important in the way we interpret their relationship to one another. On the one hand, Usagi is a blonde, blue eyed young girl who incorporates the desirable Western or European beauty standards from the past century. Even her sailor outfit is red, white and blue, like the American flag (see Appendix). She embodies the strength—arguably a masculine energy at times[30]—that was once synonymous with American heroism. Consequently, Usagi personifies the U.S. and its beauty standards along with its ideology of a more "masculine" behaviour, and even delimits herself within a restrictive patriarchal construct. Fusami Ōgi argues that certain Japanese literature "written by and for women, created a style erasing … Japaneseness and replaced them with feminine, beautiful Westernized images" (100). Chibiusa challenges this concept. By contrast, she empowers herself through a realm of possibility that was given to the Japanese through *kawaii* culture. Her character is a short, wide-eyed girl with pink hair and red eyes.[31] Chibiusa consequently globalizes the aesthetics of cuteness and works in a space where victories are achievable against all figures. She is the future—a future in which Japan will set the standards. Both figures compensate for their downfall with the soft power that emanates from them and penetrates American culture. However, while Chibiusa represents Japan in a positive light, Sailor Moon (Usagi) herself occasionally falls short with her relationship to men, more specifically her future husband, Mamoru.

Sailor Moon's Hyperfemininity and the Masculine

As previously defined, hyperfemininity is the way in which a female character assigns high importance to having a relationship with a man as well as the use of a woman's sexuality to attract and maintain relationships with said men. Although the romanticization of relationships is a huge

[30] As superheroes were once a purely hypermasculine American creation, some scholars, such as Victoria Newsom, argue that these girls are "able to fight in a capacity associated with male heroes without necessarily 'becoming' male" (59).
[31] One may argue that Chibiusa's eyes even look like the Japanese flag, but this may be only my interpretation.

selling point in literature and film entertainment industries, they often come at a price of women becoming an object of misogyny—by both men and women—and the male gaze.[32] For instance, although Usagi's relationship with Mamoru is fated, Usagi's dependence on Mamoru for her strength and will to fight demonstrates an extension of what might be useful to Japan in winning more consumers, but becomes ultimately damaging to women overall. The perpetuation of this narrative does not allow women to truly gain their independence as they expect men to 'complete' them in one way or another. From the first volume, Mamoru—as Tuxedo Mask—always comes to Sailor Moon's rescue when she finds herself in battle (Takeuchi 43-44; see Appendix). In volume 12,[33] Usagi demonstrates this dependence on men and masculine figures when Mamoru, her lover, is nowhere to be found, and she finds solace in Seiya (Takeuchi 223-4; see Appendix). Seiya's character is androgynous and challenges gender performativity by disguising as a man in their everyday life and fighting evil as a woman; however, the only time Usagi benefits from their relationship is when Seiya is in their male form and temporarily replaces Mamoru as her ally.

By highlighting Usagi's hyperfemininity, we find ways in which this image of *kawaii* culture as an embracing of the feminine still does not fully empower women, conventionally or unconventionally. Instead, while Japan's realm of hyperfeminine animanga continues to penetrate the American scene and consequently fights on a certain level their hypermasculine energy, we are left with a similar conflict of being at the mercy of men within a patriarchal system. Both extremes of hyperfemininity and hypermasculinity lead us to wonder whether the manga *Sailor Moon* really

[32] Usagi and the other Sailor Scouts who fight alongside her (Takeuchi 4; see Appendix) fall victim to the male gaze mainly in the anime adaptation of *Sailor Moon* as it was directed by a man, Junicho Sato, and admittedly hypersexualized to fulfill entertainment needs of a certain audience. For example, Usagi and the girls' transformations into Sailor Moon and the Sailor Guardians are notably elements of the anime that hypersexualize and objectify their premature female bodies in juxtaposition to the manga. I will not be addressing this matter in my paper, because I am only discussing the manga and they do not match the representation in the anime on all fronts.
[33] This is the final volume of the series, with the exclusion of two Short Stories manga that follow.

provides Japan with more soft power and, to take it one step further, whether it empowers girls around the world.

Sailor Moon as part of World Cultures

While Sailor Moon's story both challenges and reproduces misogyny, it is mainly famous for empowering girls worldwide and furthering the Girl Power movement around much of the U.S. and Japan. This transnational effect allows series like *Sailor Moon* to run both the manga and anime concurrently, which is a first in the Japanese popular culture world (Misiroglu 411). Overall, *Sailor Moon* is one of the most popular manga series of all time and enjoys high readership (and viewership) worldwide, being translated into 17 different languages (Mohajer-Va-Pesaran). In 2012, during the series 20th anniversary, the manga had reportedly sold over 35 million copies in over fifty countries and generated $13 billion in merchandise sales by 2014 (*Kodansha*). David A. Roach and Misiroglu even recognize Sailor Moon, as both a character and franchise, as one of the most significant, powerful and popular superheroines of all time, alongside her male counterparts (711). In the U.S., *Sailor Moon* even holds the title as the first successful English adaptations for both a manga and anime (Thompson 309). This popularity is only continuing to rise since its first release in the 1980s, as the manga is being updated and the anime is equally in the midst of being revamped. It is a multimedia franchise that demonstrates Japan's ability to spread its *kawaii* culture as soft power and reclaim its influence as a nation. In comparison to *Sailor Moon*, the story of *Violet Evergarden* has not experienced the same amount of international acclaim; however, it depicts an intricate war narrative that touches on trauma and the ultimate redemption arc, which is another representation of Japanese creators' use of popular culture to retell Japanese history and redefine themselves on this front.

Violet Evergarden

Violet Evergarden is a robust feminine figure weaponized to win a war alongside the Leidenschaftlich Army. As previously mentioned, this army name comes from the German word "passionate." This word is indicative of Violet's relationship with her Major, Gilbert Bougainvillea, which I will address in one of the following sections. While in battle, she loses both her arms and finds herself in recovery for months after they have eventually won said war. The anime switches between wartime and post-wartime to create and reinforce the narrative that Japan is in a postwar space. They depict themselves in this manner to offer the appearance of a strong, powerful country. To compensate for their past failures, Japan must show itself in a constant state of progress; however, it remembers history inaccurately because the nation spent the postwar years under American occupation attempting to regenerate their economy. Often this progression manifests itself in the creation of both an inner and outer world that reflects the *kawaii* culture of escapism, which encourages Japan's self-infantilization and consequent descending into an ever-present world free of danger. *Violet Evergarden* as an anime does not necessarily fit the same level of infantilization as *Sailor Moon*. This narrative works more on the level of posttraumatic growth and roboticization that was utilized by the Japanese to compensate for their defeat.

PTG as a Challenge to *otaku* Culture

Violet's characterization is a manifestation of the Japanese plight. As she lost both her arms in war while trying to save her Major (Ishidate 22:53-22:55; see Appendix), she endures and represses much of trauma she experienced during this time. As previously mentioned, the anime's narrative and storytelling style goes between wartime and post-wartime scene sequences. This is Ishidate's use of fleeting memories and varying timelines to exemplify Violet's fragmented memories, which are a symptom of trauma. Trauma makes one feel powerless and, initially, hopeless since one loses

agency over a disruptive and violent event beyond one's control. Essentially, Violet experiences intrusive thoughts, specifically about the war, that stunt her efforts to heal, which is a manifestation of PTSD. She is a survivor struggling to understand how she can repossess her damaged body. The intrusive thoughts equally exemplify the power of Violet's voice as she uses it to come to terms with her difficult memories and move on with her life.

Her missing limbs directly respond to the war that temporarily leaves her in conflict with herself and the world before she can redefine her purpose and restore what is left of her honour as a soldier fighting for her people. This is a strong, shared sentiment in Japan. When they were defeated, it felt like they no longer had their arms and were left mutilated (Murakami 148)—just like Violet did even after winning the war. To a degree, her changed body paints a picture of Japan's demilitarization and consequent removal of weaponry, as a result of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution. It is a constant reminder of their failure and gradual loss of self. In particular, Violet's missing arms are a reminder of the war that remains etched onto her body, and equally a forced remediation to Westernization after a traumatic defeat. The acceptance of one's missing limbs forces people—namely the Japanese—to acknowledge their physical inadequacies. Any shortcomings they endure deepen their sense of inferiority and feelings of an infant because they are left needing to rely on an adult, which encapsulates the relationship between Japan and the U.S. This inferiority complex of Japan is often paralleled to the life of an *otaku*.

Although *otaku* culture is not integral to my analysis the way it is to Murakami's research and idea of Japan as a "little boy," the *otaku* lifestyle in Japan mirrors the loss of a limb. As previously mentioned, the term *otaku* literally signifies "your home" in Japanese; however, it carries the negative connotation of obsessed manga and anime fans that remain solely in their homes, with ridiculed personalities that have been exiled or isolated in Japanese society

(Murakami 132). Without a shared interest with their nation as materializations of their identity, they do not associate with reality, i.e., their missing limb. In Japan, however, they "all are ultimately defined by their relentless references to a humiliated self" (Murakami 132). Their rejection of *otaku* is "[b]ecause Japan didn't want to acknowledge its missing arm… [they] didn't want to accept that [their] bodies were inadequate" (141). In a sense, *otaku*—like Violet—are accurate reflections of the Japanese plight as well. They are imaginative and obsessed with a groundless optimistic attitude toward the future, nourished by their internalized trauma. They revert to a childlike state instead of addressing their inferiority, once again, like the missing arm.

While *otaku* culture finds itself at odds with the challenge of confronting one's trauma, Violet's PTSD gradually gives way to PTG as she uses her time away from the war to learn more about herself and bring purpose to her life beyond defending her country. Her missing limbs also become replaced by prosthetic ones, which helps her regain her physical abilities. In particular, she becomes an Auto Memory Doll who helps people write letters to those they love. She even becomes the best one at her job and is requested by some authors and princesses across the nation (Ishidate 3:47; see Appendix). In this way, she is in a constant state of progression—just like Japan. Like Violet, one of the many ways Japan has used to further its national progress was through the development and use of technology and roboticization.

Robots and the Feminine

Murakami posits that "humans regard robots as extensions of themselves" (144); however, robots are equally considered a super-race. The age-old misogynist argument also considers women as extensions of men, so one could argue that women, too, could be considered a super-race. Either way, Violet manifests this duality because her body materializes both the robotic and the feminine (Ishidate 10:01; see Appendix). She presents a refined level of strength and ability that

compensates "for the inadequacy of human communication, expand[s] human capabilities, and even possess[es] self-consciousness" (148). In this way, she evolves toward a new post-humanity and consequently, signifies a new start for Japan. The robotic feminine energy in animanga, while it projects a vision of a peaceful future, also manifests a sense of infantilization through its subversion of humanity. Similarly, the creation of robots inherently undermines the human race and its feelings of superiority in the world. As the Japanese are driven to create robots, they follow the same pattern as Violet when she, in an attempt to overcome her PTSD, uses her prosthetic arms and engages in PTG. However, her growth remains limited because Violet's sense of agency remains limited by a patriarchal system such as the army. This theme encourages the empowerment of women in these male dominated spaces, but Violet and other female characters equally force us to acknowledge that women still must earn respect in these spaces through their bodies.

While it is common to find images of roboticized women across animanga, the overt abuse of their bodies is inherently misogynistic. For example, in the manga *She, The Ultimate Weapon* (also known as *Saikano*) (Takahashi 60-61; see Appendix), Chise—a young schoolgirl—works for the Japanese Self-Defence Forces (SDF) after being the best match for a roboticization effort. Both Chise and Violet are endowed with *kawaii* features—mainly large eyes, hyperfeminine outfits—and limbs that are roboticized as weaponry. These female bodies are meant, once again, to benefit Japan, but it comes at the cost of women's agency. I mention the subjugation of these women's bodies because it is a large theme in *Violet Evergarden.* As she is brought into the war, Major Gilbert's brother, Dietfried, reduces her state to that of a 'weapon' or "tool" (Ishidate 11:57) to be utilized without any consideration or care. He feels no shame in objectifying her; therefore, as the only female soldier, her sole purpose is to kill and follow orders. Unfortunately, Violet falls into the trap of the extreme hyperfeminine narrative because she bases much of her army life on the

relationships she possesses with her (male) superiors. In her world, combat and warfare are largely seen as hypermasculine duties and women, unsurprisingly, find themselves in more domestic roles—as extensions of men. However, when Violet is discharged from the army and goes into the Auto Memory Doll business, she finds herself in a feminine space but is subjected to neither hyperfeminine nor any hypermasculine narratives that reduce her to a weapon or to the relationship she has with men. Instead, she becomes an independent and emotionally intelligent girl who embarks on a path of PTG. In the following and final section, I will rely on the concept of PTG to argue that Japan uses their *kawaii* culture and pink globalization wisely to promote their soft power and as a way to compensate for their defeat and reign in one of the biggest North American markets—with clothes and toys.

Chapter 3: Japanese Fashion and Toys Subcultures

Lolita Fashion Aesthetic

The definition of Lolita, also known as "Loli," varies based on where you are in the world. On the one hand, it began in the West, where the name "Lolita" is primarily associated with the titular character in Vladimir Nabokov's 1955 novel *Lolita*, an adolescent girl who has a sexual relationship with her middle-aged stepfather. On the other hand, Lolita (Roriita) in postwar Japan referred to "young women and men who dress as anachronistic visual representations of Victorian-era dolls, covered from head to toe in lace, ruffles, and bows" (Winge 47; see Appendix). They represent "an ongoing narrative stemming from pre-World War II *shōjo* culture and [postwar] kawaii culture" (Nguyen 2). Over time, by the 1980s, the term "Lolita" gained new traction within fashion subcultures. In particular, now "Japanese Lolitas are usually young women (not girls), who dress in cute, childlike, and modest fashions without the overly sexualized appearance typically associated with Nabokov's *Lolita*" (Winge 48). Moreover, they also address how this fashion aesthetic led to the "Lolita complex," which refers to older men attracted to young girls. I will argue that the Japanese psyche welcomes this Lolita aesthetic as a form of self-definition. Their efforts to self-identify encourages them to envision a utopian space that revitalizes a prewar and, consequently, a pre-trauma Japan, which is what my interpretation will focus on.

As this subculture goes beyond the simple consumption of animanga, the role of infantilized femininity throughout the West and *kawaii* culture at large is a significant part of the Lolita aesthetic and identity. Of course, by exploring the connection between Lolita and *kawaii*, it is crucial to highlight those aspects of Lolita that transcend the Nabokov character, i.e., the image of a living doll, the sexual fetish, or even the transnational object for worldwide consumption. Japan's obsession with self-infantilization and cuteness in its various forms allows Lolitas a

reconnection "to childhood through the use of kawaii objects, which embody and visually communicate much more than 'cute' or 'feminine/cute'; they also represent a desire for empathy, infantilism, compassion, and (dis)approval within the understood and hierarchical power structure" (Winge 59). As the Lolita clothing aesthetic derives "from an idealized interpretation of Western history and historical costume," it is "also about creating, living, being and challenging a certain sense of girlhood or 'shojohood' … that developed from the context of Japan's modernization since the Meiji [34] era" (Nguyen 2). Their unique patterns often depict sweetness, fairy-tale motifs, art or floral prints that recall an imagined girlhood interpreted by Japanese designers for the entire world to partake. The numbers of wearers of Lolita fashion aesthetic have grown globally with Lolita communities in various cities across North America, Europe, and Asia.

Transcending Pink Globalization: Gothic Lolita

Although we often picture these Lolitas as pink and *kawaii*-looking young girls and boys, one of the most popular forms of Loli-fashion is Gothic. This category of the aesthetic subculture began in the late 1990s, with young women in their teens and early twenties dressed in an abundance of girly, starkly black-coloured or white-coloured oversized bows, platform Mary Jane shoes and petticoat skirts. They stood out as defiantly out of place and time on the Tokyo street scene, but they also overwhelmingly represented how *kawaii* culture was making waves from different toys, shows, and now everyday clothes and costumes—and not only in pink. More than twenty years after the initial demise of Harajuku[35] fashions, "the [new] [G]othic [L]olitas have persisted and even multiplied, thanks in large part to the Internet, which has helped muster an army of misfit girl aristocrats not just in Japan but around the globe" (Carriger 122). Consequently, the Lolita fashion

[34] The Meiji Era lasted between 1868 and 1912.

[35] Harajuku fashion was once popular among the youth aesthetic subculture in Japan, dating back to the 1960s. In modern times, it is making a comeback in the fashion industry worldwide but has not gained the same trendiness it once had.

has grown into a culturally hybrid hyperfemininity as a vehicle for group identification (Carriger 123), no matter the national, racial, gender or sexual adherents. This aesthetic allows for a perpetuation of *kawaii* and an even stronger connection to mainstream Japanese popular culture, penetrating further into American culture through sought-after soft power.

Through the nation's need to compensate for their defeat, Japanese Lolis and Lolis across certain parts of the world wear or even embody *kawaii* objects that allow them to communicate their childlike perspective toward the dominant outside culture non-verbally. This subculture plays into the infantile and parental roles, building initially on the Nabokov novel, but mainly through the Japanese interpretation which allows one to essentially reject their trauma and escape into an alternative world—similarly to what is depicted in the animanga. In essence, Lolis project a cuteness and lightheartedness that indicate a need for a past era—or rather utopian, prewar Japan—and the ultimate desire to escape the adult responsibilities of redeeming and compensating for what became post-WWII reality. In all forms, the use of *kawaii* always attempts to prolong one's childhood, Japan's continuous self-infantilization and longing for innocence against the brutality of today's world. These efforts have ultimately led to their growing soft power.

HELLO KITTY

Sanrio, a company at the forefront of the *kawaii* character business, developed Hello Kitty in 1974. Going by the name 'Kitty White,' the renowned cute white cat wearing a famous red bow on her head is the ultimate symbol of Japanese *kawaii* culture worldwide. She is the most treasured of Sanrio's characters, generating the most considerable portion of the company's profit, transforming young girls and children everywhere into avid consumers at a time when Japan enjoyed material wealth after their miraculous economic growth in the 1960s. They produce "[a]pproximately fifty thousand Kitty products—ranging from little girls' purses, toys, and clothing to stationery, foodstuffs, and electric appliances— [that] have been sold in some sixty countries worldwide by

Sanrio, and by several hundred licensed companies in Japan and abroad" (Murakami 44). Christine R. Yano explains that "[n]otably, Hello Kitty was always intended as a global product… [a]ccording to Sanrio's founder, Tsuji Shintarou, this was supposed to be the Japanese cat that would overtake the American mouse [Mickey Mouse]" (683). Of course, there is also Minney Mouse; however, American culture does not inherently identify with her as they do with a masculine figure like Mickey Mouse. Hello Kitty's ubiquitous presence on the global market signifies a successful act of compensation to challenge American dominance. For the twenty-first century Japanese national, she provides a positive vision of the future that draws attention to other cute products that culturally, nationally, transnationally and corporately make Japan utilize infantilized femininity to achieve global power.

In the 2000s, Japan's embracing of and consequent booming exports of *kawaii* popular culture also led to a rising favourable international profile—namely animanga, fashion, J-pop music, video games, and related brands, including Nintendo. In addition, there were large consumer technology brands including Sony, Panasonic and Sharp, among others, that equally caught traction. According to Groot, "both within and outside Japan, it seemed that this rising popularity also meant a concomitant rise in soft power and hence, somehow, also more Japanese political influence around the world" (16). They sought to build on this momentum of Japanese *kawaii* and cool culture as a bridge to the world they were hoping to build since their defeat. With the success of hit games like Pokémon, or even Ghibli Studio films like 2001's *Spirited Away*, it gave the impression that these booming cultural industries would stunt Western and American domination of the world's cultural markets and uplift Japan.

Mickey Mouse: Fighting American Hard Power with Japanese Soft Power

Unlike characters like Sailor Moon and Violet Evergarden, Hello Kitty "was developed expressly as marketable icon unconnected to the world of manga and anime" (Murakami 44). Japan's approach in adopting such a 'cute' feminized figure while experiencing economic prosperity did not merit the same level of attention that a masculine figure like Mickey Mouse would. He fits into the patriarchal image of Western hegemony more than an infantilized Japanese feline; however, Hello Kitty gained the same if not more traction than Pikachu, the Pokémon monster; E.T., in its shrunken form; Cabbage Patch Kids; and Mickey Mouse, especially post-WWII (May 1-2). With all these famous characters, May quotes Konrad Lorenz to explain how we veer toward qualities of the infantile:

> [A] head large in relation to the body; an outsize, protruding forehead; large eyes set relatively low in the head, compared with adults (in adult humans, the eyes are positioned about halfway down the head; in infants, they are about two-thirds of the way down); round, bulging cheeks; plump, rounded body shape; short and thick extremities; soft body surfaces that are pleasurable to touch; and helpless and clumsy movements. (50-51)

Adopting these qualities has created an interest in studies for the strange flight towards the embracement of infantility in the development of Mickey Mouse, Hello Kitty, and other characters from the late 1920s to the late 1970s. It is easy to see how both Mickey and Hello Kitty epitomize these childlike characteristics and perpetuate lightheartedness in a world of constant danger. Yano explains how certain journalists, such as "Douglas McGray, helped frame the phenomenon with his catch phrase 'Japan's gross national cool' in 2002, referring to the popularity of manga (comics), anime (cartoons), and other elements of youth culture from Japan that have gained

significant cachet elsewhere" (683). Although the phrase has been overused by now, Japan's 'gross' coolness still holds our interest decades later.

Joseph Nye's soft power theory can be seen as the basis on which Japan's cute and "cool" aesthetics stands. The concept of soft power has been around since the term was first coined in 1992. In 2004, Nye famously summed up his idea in the following words:

> ... [A] country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries—admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness—want to follow it. In this sense it is also important to set the agenda and attract others in world politics, and not only to force them to change by threatening military force or economic sanctions. This soft power, getting others to want the outcomes you want—coopts people rather than coerces them. … Soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others. (qtd. in Groot 18)

Soft power does not mean that femininity or infantilization are "soft;" arguably, they are more powerful given the subtle changes they are capable of engendering. Therefore, "the Japanese cute—whether approached straight on or ironically—becomes a benign agent of neo-nationalistic fervor entering the global market" (Yano 686). Hello Kitty's seemingly innocent appearance opens up that door for Japan. It is also a representation of how far Japan has come since the occupation. At one point in time, Japanese toys "carried the obligatory label of 'Made in Occupied Japan' until 1952, when Japan regained sovereignty" (Murakami 34) after the U.S-Japan Security Treaty took effect in 1951. Regaining said power was precisely what they needed to begin their self-enfeeblement and change in national and cultural identity. As Japan was once "epitomized by sober, warrior-infused masculinity accompanied by gracious kimono-clad women in an

atmosphere of high aestheticism, then this newly promoted Japan may be epitomized by pink-clad girls, animated fantasies, and winking Kitty logos" (Yano 684). The previous masculinized image of Japan at work—including the samurai, wartime sacrifices, high-yield productivity, and intellectual growth—has given way to the feminized and even infantilized Japanese figure at play. Japan has become a significant player that conveys this message. Their 'play'—primarily linked with infantilized feminine culture—serves as a benign framework. Japan performs its own kawaii, cool and fashionable stance as a winking logo through Hello Kitty. The performance as a corporate, feminized wink highlights how their stance can be interpreted as equally harmless and threatening—one of the most powerful positions of all.

Conclusion

At the start of this essay, I queried: How does postwar Japan weaponize *kawaii* culture or infantilized femininity as soft power in artistic subcultures to reclaim a positive image on an international scale and compensate for its defeat? This question stems from Takashi Murakami et al.'s contributions to the exhibition catalogue *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture* and Murakami's belief that Japan became an emasculated and castrated little boy since its defeat and imposed demilitarization. Through my analysis of selected animanga as well as other cultural expressions (Lolita fashion and Hello Kitty) of Japanese infantilized and roboticized hyperfemininity, I demonstrated that postwar Japan used these expressions of *kawaii* culture to regain its lost status of a well-respected and powerful nation.

In Chapter 1, I establish the progression of Japan's colonial conquests through their atrocious war crimes against the Chinese people of Nanking, the invasion of Manchuria as well as the Korean comfort women's struggle with structural gendered violence. Japanese collective amnesia erased these horrific deeds from the nation's recent past and disallowed reconciliation with its Asian neighbours. Instead, Japan focused on mourning its own losses and postwar challenges. This collective amnesia led to feelings of emasculation, inferiority, and a need to compensate for their humiliating downfall. In this chapter, I also demonstrate that some of Japan's postwar realities—the physical and psychological trauma left by the two atomic bombings, the hypocritical Tokyo Tribunals, and Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution—encouraged the Japanese to fight a collective PTSD and embrace PTG to regenerate their once prosperous nation. These consequences led to a self-infantilization of the Japanese mind and body in response to the occupation and dependency on the U.S. Their adult-child dynamic began during the American

occupation from 1945-1952 and ultimately led to a resurgence of Japanese art that addressed the postwar trauma and interpreted conflicting feelings of appreciation and disdain towards the U.S.

In Chapters 2 and 3, I highlight how different artistic subcultures like animanga, Japanese fashion aesthetics and toys are only a fraction of the way they manifest Japanese soft power and embracement of hyperfemininity within *kawaii* culture. I begin with *Sailor Moon,* arguably the most well-known and received female-fronted animanga in the world. In my analysis, I emphasize the dynamic between the characters of Chibiusa and Usagi as reflective of the U.S.-Japan relations during occupation and how Japan, as the child (Chibiusa), seeks help from their adult counterpart (Usagi). The self-infantilization of Chibiusa through her name, physical attributes, and purpose in juxtaposition to Usagi's more conventionally adult-like demeanor parallel Japan's shift from a hypermasculine samurai figure to a hyperfeminine infantilized figure that utilizes *kawaii* features to attract and influence consumers beyond Japan. Chibiusa as a whole exemplifies the retelling of Japanese history where the warriors might experience hardship, but ultimately overcome defeat. *Sailor Moon*'s worldwide recognition and its projection of an infantilized yet ultimately victorious femininity is a prime example of Japan's soft power that resurrects the nation to global heights once again.

I continue my analysis with *Violet Evergarden* by expanding it with the concept of roboticization and how it reflects the Japanese's materialization of trauma as well as the process of PTG. Japan's growing obsession with technology and roboticizing as a form of improvement comes to fruition in many animangas, but I chose this series as it focuses on a war narrative with the inclusion of *kawaii* features. Violet's wide-eyed character is used as a weapon for her nation's army to win a war, just like Japan is now capitalizing on *kawaii* and hyperfeminine characters for international recognition and the expansion of its soft power. Japanese roboticization encourages

the overall progress of a person and, consequently, the nation; in this sense, Violet embodies the postwar Japanese plight as she must heal from her trauma and use the new opportunities that her prosthetics endow her with in order to grow. The PTG in her narrative demonstrates the ultimate resurgence of strength once bound to a loss in defeat. It demonstrates her gradual regaining of strength, just like Japan's regaining of power, or rather, soft power.

I end my paper with a chapter on Japanese artistic subcultures that encompass both toys—or rather the greatest toy coming out of Japan, namely Hello Kitty—and the Lolita fashion aesthetic. Hello Kitty is arguably one of Japan's most emblematic figures, which exemplifies their pink (or *kawaii*) globalization and most important expression of soft power set against the U.S. hypermasculine figure of Mickey Mouse. Sanrio Co.'s perpetuation of Hello Kitty through film, toys, video games, clothes, cars, makeup etc. validates how their pursuit of compensation comes through *kawaii* culture. Hand in hand with Hello Kitty and the *kawaii* movement is the Lolita fashion subculture which is, on a smaller scale, penetrating more of American and even European culture with its outlandishly cute Tokyo streetwear. The Lolitas' embracing of infantilization takes their own materialization of adult-child relations a step further by creating their own escape of adulthood and 'real life' through a utopian Japanese nation. What once was a strong masculine Japan now penetrates different nations and cultures, most importantly American culture, through a "soft" feminine energy that has yet to die down in pertinence and aesthetics.

As I conclude this paper, my argument lacks a deeper perspective in the way in which Japan's shift from the masculine to the feminine actually affects Asian women and the consequences they may experience as a hypersexualized group as a result of this overwhelming *kawaii* culture. While the images created by women for women can be empowering on their own fronts, certain expressions of the feminine and *kawaii* culture are inherently misogynistic because

Japan, figuratively, uses female bodies exposed to the male gaze for their own benefit. As a patriarchal nation, they can cause more negative and damaging consequences for Asian women. The hypersexualization of Asian women has led to more abuse and expectations of them to be obedient in their relationships with others, primarily men. One can only hope that more research in this field can shed a light on both the positive and negative attributes of the Japanese hyperfeminine artistic creations and their growing influence in the U.S. and worldwide. To take it one step further, my academic contributions also highlight a means in which countries can assert themselves on a global scale without entering in violent, colonial conquests and reverting to militarization and war.

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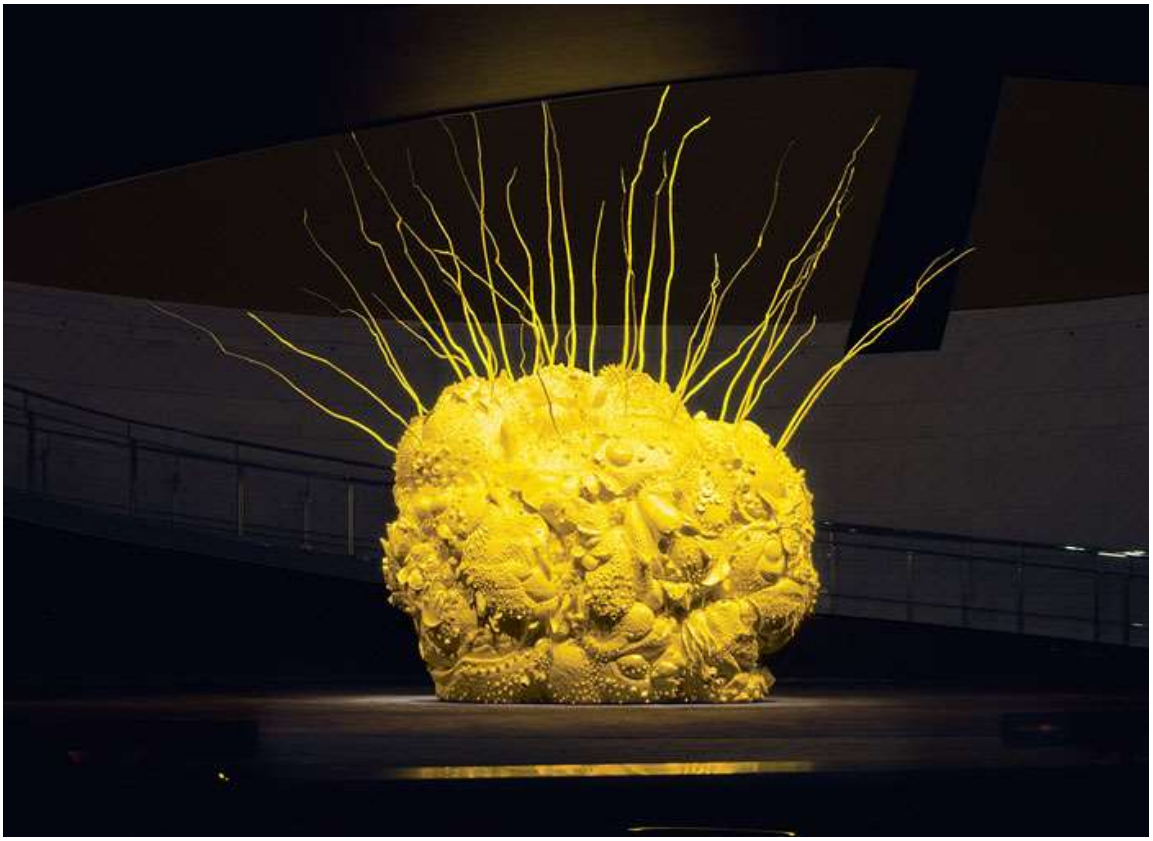
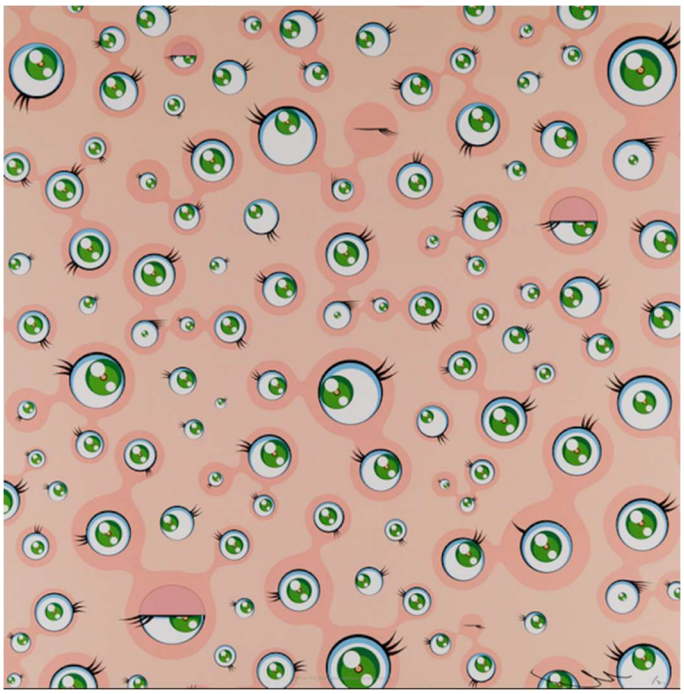
APPENDIX



Fresh Gasoline by Noboru Tsubaki (1989)



Jellyfish Eyes by Takashi Murakami (2001)

Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon, Volume 1 by Naoko Takeuchi (1991)

Violet Evergarden, Volume 1 by Kana Akatsuki (2016)

My Lonesome Cowboy (1998)

Hiropon (1997)

Miss Ko² (Project Ko²) (1997)

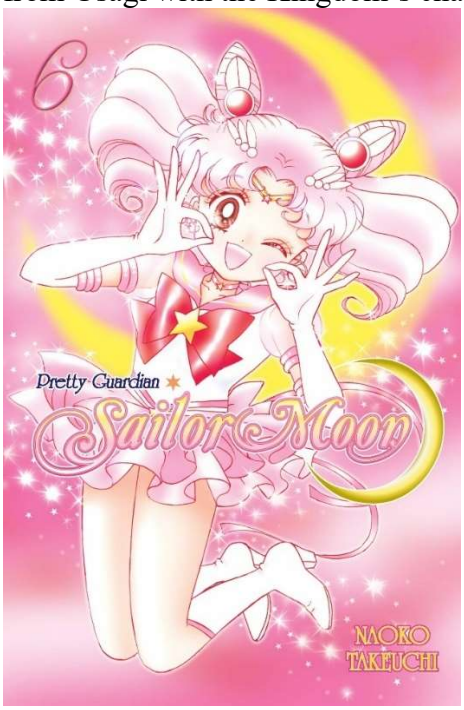
All these works are created by Takashi Murakami.

Kurosawa, Akira. *The Seven Samurai*, 1954. Toho Co., Ltd.

Chibiusa in *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon*, Volume 3.

Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon, Volume 2 by Naoko Takeuchi, pp 158-159. These images refer to Negaverse's attack on the Moon Kingdom and Silver Millenium.

Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon, Volume 3 by Naoko Takeuchi, pp 203-204. Chibiusa seeks help from Usagi with the Kingdom's challenges since they are left with zero resources.

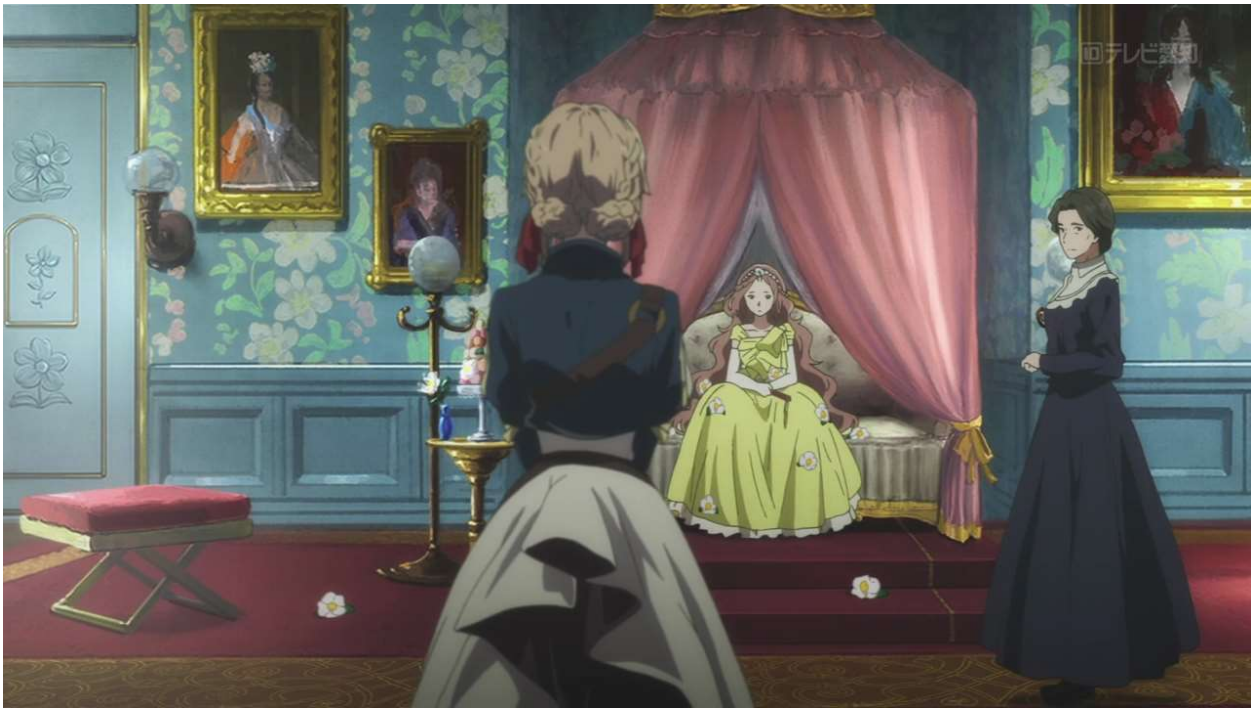


Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon, Volume 6 by Naoko Takeuchi (1994). Chibiusa, Sailor Moon's (Usagi) daughter from the future, is on the cover. This is Chibiusa's sailor outfit.

Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon, Volume 1 by Naoko Takeuchi, pp 43-44. Mamoru—as Tuxedo Mask—always comes to Sailor Moon's rescue when she finds herself in battle.

Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon, Volume 12 by Naoko Takeuchi, pp 223-224. Usagi demonstrates this dependence on men and masculine figures when Mamoru, her lover, is nowhere to be found, and she finds solace in Seiya.

"Episode 1" of *Violet Evergarden* by Taichi Ishidate. Violet loses both her arms in battle.



Violet Evergarden assisting a princess with letter writing.

Violet Evergarden reveals her prosthetic hand.

Chise in *She, The Ultimate Weapon* (*Saikano*) by Shin Takahashi. Volume 1, pp 60-61. She has just finished a battle.

Bodyline Catalog, 2006, used on Lolita History
http://www.lolitahistory.com/gallery/picture.php?/64865/category/181.

Bodyline Catalog, 2006. Gothic Lolita from Lolita History
http://www.lolitahistory.com/gallery/index.php?/category/181.

Hello Kitty, Sanrio. From company website https://www.sanrio.com/collections/hello-kitty.