FEMINIST APPROACHES TO MANGA
BETWEEN THE 1970s AND 2000s

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The aim of this thesis is to present how Japanese manga were presenting female heroines during the 1970s and how they were presenting them during the 2000s and if this portrayal is representative to the changes that took place in the Japanese society. This is examined by analysing the two most popular manga of the 1970s and 2000s and the covers of nine other popular manga from the time period between 1970 and 2010. The analysis which was used was a mixed research method which combines a quantitative research for the four most popular manga and a multimodal text analysis of a sample of them. This analysis is supported by a semiotic analysis of the nine popular manga.

This thesis is divided in five main chapters. The first one is the introductory part, followed up by the literature review where basic terms such as gender representation, manga and the role of women in Japan is presented. The third chapter explains the methodology that was followed. The methodology chapter is followed by the analysis, which in turn ends up with the conclusions that were derived from the research.

Interestingly enough, although the manga in question were timely, meaning that they were dealing with issues that they were actually taking place in society, they did not follow the trends. For instance, in the 1970s, 40% of the marriages were arranged, a fact that we did not encounter in any of the investigated manga. Hence, they are not representative to the actual position women held in the society but they are acting more as a means of inspiration and empowerment.
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## Contents

1. Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 1  
2. Literature Review ............................................................................................................... 4  
   2.1 Manga ............................................................................................................................... 4  
   2.2 Feminist Approaches ........................................................................................................ 13  
   2.3 The Status of Women in Japan ......................................................................................... 15  
   2.4 Gender Representation in the Media ............................................................................... 20  
3. Methodology ....................................................................................................................... 29  
   3.1 Manga Characteristics and Analysis ............................................................................. 29  
   3.2 Study Design .................................................................................................................. 32  
   3.3 Data Collection and Analysis ....................................................................................... 35  
   3.4 Reliability and Validity of the Research ....................................................................... 43  
4. Analysis ................................................................................................................................ 45  
   4.1 Quantitative Analysis ..................................................................................................... 45  
      Glass Mask (1976) ............................................................................................................ 45  
      Crest of the Royal Family (1976) .................................................................................. 47  
      Nana (2000) .................................................................................................................... 49  
      Nodame Cantabile (2001) ............................................................................................. 51  
      General Quantitative Analysis Conclusions ................................................................... 53  
   4.2 Content Analysis ............................................................................................................ 55  
      Glass Mask (1976) ............................................................................................................ 55  
      Crest of the Royal Family (1976) .................................................................................. 62  
      Nana (2000) .................................................................................................................... 66  
      Nodame Cantabile (2001) ............................................................................................. 73  
   4.3 Popular Manga Semiotic Analysis ................................................................................... 74  
      Analysis of the Manga Covers: Conclusions ................................................................... 98  
5. Conclusions ........................................................................................................................ 100  
6. References ............................................................................................................................ 106
Images

Image 1: Maya and Masumi ............................................................. 57
Image 2: Maya is trying to learn Naginata ................................... 58
Image 3: Maya is getting sentimental forgetting that she is acting ... 59
Image 4: Maya is getting shy with Satomi .................................. 60
Image 5: Ayumi’s acting skills ...................................................... 61
Image 6: The “saved by the male character” trope ....................... 62
Image 7: When Carol is asking for her help, it is from her brother ... 63
Image 8: Carol thinks of her mother but asks help from her brother ... 64
Image 9: Carol’s self-blaming attitude ....................................... 64
Image 10: Memphis breaks Carol’s arm ....................................... 65
Image 11: Izmir beats Carol with a whip ...................................... 66
Image 12: Nana Komatsu is thinking how to leave Takumi .......... 68
Image 13: Nana Komatsu is wondering if there is a job that can suit her ... 69
Image 14: Nana Oosaki explains to Nobu why she did not follow Ren ...... 71
Image 15: Rose of Versailles’ all Volumes’ Covers (1-10) ............... 75
Image 16: Rose of Versailles’ cover of Volume 1 ......................... 75
Image 17: Rose of Versailles’ cover of Volume 3 ......................... 76
Image 18: Candy Candy’s covers of Volume 2 and 7 ..................... 77
Image 19: Wata no Kunihoshi all Volumes’ Covers (1-4) ............... 79
Image 20: Wata no Kunihoshi’s cover of Volume 2 ..................... 79
Image 21: Wata no Kunihoshi’s cover of Volume 3 ..................... 80
Image 22: Tokimeki Tonight all Volumes’ Covers (1-16) .................. 81
Image 23: Tokimeki Tonight’s Cover of Volume 3 ....................... 82
Image 24: Tokimeki Tonight’s Cover of Volume 12 ....................... 83
Image 25: Yukan Club’s Cover of Volume 4 ................................. 84
Image 26: Yukan Club’s Cover of Volume 115 .............................. 85
Image 27: Sailor Moon all Volumes’ Covers (1-18) ....................... 87
Image 28: Sailor Moon’s Cover of Volume 4 ............................... 87
Image 29: Sailor Moon’s Cover of Volume 12 .............................. 88
Image 30: Boys Over Flowers all Volumes covers of (1-37) ........................................ 89
Image 31: Boys Over Flowers’ Cover of Volume 1 .......................................................... 90
Image 32: Boys Over Flowers’ Cover of Volume 29 ....................................................... 91
Image 33: Skip Beat’s Cover of Volume 28 ................................................................. 92
Image 34: Skip Beat’s Cover of Volume 30 ................................................................. 93
Image 35: Covers of all Volumes of Lovely Complex ..................................................... 94
Image 36: Lovely Complex’s Cover of Volume 4 .......................................................... 94
Image 37: Lovely Complex’s Cover of Volume 16 ......................................................... 95
Image 38: Kimi ni Todoke’s Cover of Volume 7 ........................................................... 96
Image 39: Kimi ni Todoke’s Cover of Volume 17 .......................................................... 97
Figures

Figure 1: The ratio between male and female characters in “Glass Mask”...................... 46
Figure 2: The ratio of the characters’ types in “Glass Mask”.................................... 46
Figure 3: The ratio between male and female main characters in “Glass Mask” .......... 47
Figure 4: The ratio between male and female characters in “Crest of the Royal Family” .... 48
Figure 5: The ratio of the characters’ types in “Crest of the Royal Family” ............... 48
Figure 6: The ratio between male and female intermediate characters in “Crest of the Royal Family” ........................................................................................................... 49
Figure 7: The ratio between male and female characters in “Nana” .......................... 50
Figure 8: The ratio of the characters’ types in “Nana” ............................................. 50
Figure 9: The ratio between male and female main characters in “Nana” .................. 51
Figure 10: The ratio between male and female characters in “Nodame Cantabile” .... 52
Figure 11: The ratio of the characters’ types in “Nodame Cantabile” ....................... 52
Figure 12: The ratio between male and female main characters in “Nodame Cantabile” ...... 53
Figure 13: All manga’s main characters in numbers ................................................. 54
Figure 14: Hair colour ratio of the female characters between 1970s – 2000s.............. 55
1. Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the changes in Japanese society regarding the representation of women through the medium of manga. In particular, this thesis answers the question how female characters are portrayed in manga in the 1970s and how in the 2000s. Is there a difference? If so, does this difference reflect the changes in cultural values in Japanese society?

My inspiration for this master thesis came after my encounter with the genre of shoujo manga. I belong to the generation which grew up with *Sailor Moon* airing every weekend, while when I was younger, teen girls at my school were imitating *Candy Candy*. It took me some years though to learn that these world known anime were coming from Japanese manga. As I grew up I started reading a lot of shonen manga, having Toriyama Akira’s *Dragon Ball* as background. I liked shonen manga because of the action they were showing, but the female characters were usually presented as side characters that they were never really strong. Even the strong characters were having a weakness when it was about a male character. In Masashi Kishimoto’s *Naruto*, Sakura Haruno, the main heroine, goes to the extent of ending up with Sasuke Uchiha, a boy who have tried to kill her before. Sakura was unconditionally loving Sasuke throughout the manga and he didn’t even paying attention to her. The readers at the forums where mocking behaviours like hers and mentioning how annoying a character she is. But to me, Sakura was a typical shoujo heroine in a shonen manga. I strongly believe that this was what Masashi Kishimoto had in mind when creating her character, to create a shoujo heroine who unconditionally loves the male character without ever doubting him.

My first encounter with shoujo manga was with *Kaichou Wa Maid Sama* (2006) by Fujiwara Hiro, where a girl (Misaki Ayuzawa) that she is the School President and almost perfect in everything she tries, she has to work at a Maid Café and she hides that secret. I found it interesting and I started reading more shoujo manga. What I noticed though was that Misaki Ayazawa is one of the few exceptions in the world of shoujo manga and there were some repeating patterns regarding the female characters. The main idea was that in a shoujo manga, the female lead is or
ends up being in love with a male character and she loves him unquestionably. In their majority the shoujo romance plot revolves around love. Some other patterns were also repeating. Then I came up with the idea of studying those patterns and see where they are coming from. Could it be that they were representative of how girls in Japan are thinking about themselves or how the society is expecting girls to be and behave?

Manga have a huge impact on Japanese culture since they are accounting for more than 21% of all the country’s publishing industry (Japan Book Publishers Association, 2012) and have helped the country’s culture to spread globally (Wong, 2006). While studies about manga and their relation to Japanese culture or to women have been conducted, such as female subjectivity in shoujo manga or female representation in shonen manga, this study is different because it focuses on female representation in shoujo manga in particular. Also, the English literature regarding shoujo manga studies in general is limited (Shamoon, 2012). In addition, manga is an interesting topic to study because they are not only popular in Japan but their popularity is increasing also in Western countries, which has in a sense undermined the Western / US dominance of global cultural industry.

In order to investigate how women are presented in the manga of the 1970s and 2000s, four manga were chosen, two from each decade. In particular, the manga “Glass Mask” by Miuchi Suzue and “Crest of the Royal Family” by Hosokawa Chieko were chosen for the decade of 1970 and the manga ”Nana” by Yazawa Ai and “Nodame Cantabile” by Ninomiya Tomoko were chosen for the decade of 2000. The main reason behind the choice of these manga is their overall sales in Japan.

1.1 The Structure of the Thesis

This thesis consists of five parts, with this introductory part being the first. The second chapter consists of the literature review. In this part, basic terms which will be used for the analysis - such as manga, gender and in particular female representation in media - are described. This part uses Johnson-Woods material as its basis, combined with other authors. It is referring to post-war Japan, to manga characteristics and to the emergence of the shoujo genre during the 1972 by the Year 24 group, a group of mangaka who had as a common characteristic the fact that they were born at or near the year 1949 (Showa 24).
Shoujo means the girl, so a look at girls’ magazines from 1910s to 1970 is
taking place. The chapter continues with a look into the basic terms of gender, sex,
feminism and femininity to be followed by a short presentation of gender roles in
Japan. Japan's feminism history is followed by the gender representation in the
media.

The third chapter of this thesis is presenting in detail the methodology that was
used and the reasons why it was chosen. For this work, a mixed research method was
used, meaning that there is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The
quantitative part is related to the frequency a “phenomenon” was appeared and for the
qualitative the basics of multimodal text analysis and the reasons it was chosen as the
basic method of analysis are presented.

The fourth section of this thesis is the analysis. This chapter is divided in four
parts. The first part is the quantitative analysis. The results of the quantitative analysis
are presented in charts. The quantitative part is followed by the results and the
observations from the visual and textual analysis. The third part is consisted of the
semiotic analysis and the fourth and last part of the analysis is a summary of the
conclusions derived from the analysis. This master thesis finishes with the
conclusions that arose from the analysis in comparison to the literature review and the
perspectives for further research.
2. Literature Review

For better comprehension of the study, some basic terms need to be defined. In order to investigate how women are presented in shoujo manga, we should have an idea on how women are presented in general and what are the gender roles, what is the gender representation and what were the historical changes that took place in Japan and affected the culture of manga.

This chapter offers theoretical discussion on feminist theories in general and feminist theories in media in particular. The goal of this chapter is to inspect femininity and how it is depicted in media, to explore what is a stereotypical depiction of women in the media and to discuss how these depictions have changed over time. The chapter starts with a look to the manga. The definition of manga and shoujo manga is presented, along with a basic history of the medium. The chapter continues with the history of women in Japan and finishes with the characteristics of manga.

2.1 Manga

Manga can be understood as the equivalent to western comics in Japan, but they follow a different aesthetic approach with black and white frames –instead of being colourful- that are read backwards (right to left) due to the difference in the Japanese writing system (Schodt, 2014, p. 13). Each manga story is featured in a magazine. After some time, the published chapters are collected to form a volume. The amount of chapters that form a volume is not standard, but usually each volume consists of 5-10 chapters, with each chapter containing 15-20 pages if it is renewed on a weekly basis or 30-60 pages if it is renewed on monthly basis. The term manga is attributed to woodblock artist Katsushika Hokusai, who used the term back in 1814 in order to describe “whimsical sketches” (Schodt, 2014, p. 34, p. Ingulsrud, & Allen, 2010) or in other words funny sketches that made spontaneously (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 22). Although the term existed, it was not until the 20th century that it obtained the notion it has today (Schodt, 2014, p. 34). According to the Japan Book

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1 When we are referring to manga sales, we are using the sales per volume.
Publishers Association (2012), manga not only constitute a major part of Japanese culture but are also a big player in the country’s publishing industry, accounting for over 21% of all publications in Japan. Manga have also gained significant world popularity (Wong, 2006) and there are references from them in films, music clips and art (Schodt, 2011).

There are a lot of categories of manga genres according to the age and the gender of the reader. The basic categories of manga genres are: kodomo, shounen, shoujo, seinen and redisu. Kodomo manga are targeting children under 10 years old. Shounen are the manga which target young boys aged between 10-18 years old. Seinen target adult men over 18 years old.

Shoujo manga target young girls, while redisu or josei target adult girls (Ingulsrud, & Allen, 2010; Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 34). It should be mentioned that the age limits or the genders are not followed strictly, so seinen can target men between 15-40 years old (Schodt, 2011) but they might be read by 15 year girls as well. Shoujo manga in particular are the manga that their target is female audience between 10 and 18 years old. What is interesting is that 99% of the shoujo manga artists are women (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 100). This way the shoujo manga industry itself is shaped by gender (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 101). Shoujo manga have a more girlish than adult or erotic nature. Girlish can be defined as a childlike stance which implies vulnerability and seeks for approval. The girlish idea does not apply only to young girls or children but also to adult women. (Maynard & Taylor, 1999).

The origins of manga are still under debate but the prevailing theory is that their roots can be traced back in the painted narrative scrolls (e-makimono), especially the four Chô-jûgiga (the Animal Scrolls, 12th century) by the abbot Toba Sôjô (1053–1140), which are kept in the Kôzanji shrine near Kyoto (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 17). These scrolls were depicting in black and white the life of people of high status, disguised as animals. Even if some theorists disagree with that, the fact that these scrolls had great impact in the graphic narration of Japan is undeniable (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 18). Johnson-Woods (2010, p. 21) believes that the manga have not only one specific origin, but they borrow characteristics from different arts and also took their contemporary form after the encounter with the West (Johnson-
Another form of arts that the manga can be related to is the Zen painting (Zenga) which appeared in the beginning of the 14th century and used both calligraphy and drawing (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 19). Manga owes also to the arts of woodblock prints (ukiyo-e), Kabuki theatre, popular illustrated novels and flashy "pleasure quarters". The woodblock prints in specific, due to the space limitation, they were exaggerating the characteristics of the drawn persons and they looked almost like caricatures (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 19), something that we meet a lot in the today's manga.

Neil Cohn and Schodt argue that the manga as we know them today wouldn't have had that form, if they had not encountered the American comics (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 200; Schodt, 2014, p. 21). I believe their argument is valid, since every form of art has different inspirations and by people adding more to it, it becomes something totally new. In 1890s American magazines and newspapers start using the “thought or speech bubbles” that it was soon transferred into Japanese magazines (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 22). The word manga itself made officially its first appearance in 1900, when the leading reformist Fukuzawa Yukichi added to his newspaper named *Jiji Shinpô* a weekly supplement titled *Jiji Manga*. The Jiji manga was the first to have comic illustrations in strips and the artist was Kitazawa Rakuten. His story was entitled *Tagosaku to Mokube no Tokyo kenbutsu* (Tagosaku and Mokube Sightseeing in Tokyo), and it was consisted of six-frames. The plot was focusing on "two country bumpkins who discover the modern world, running water, and gas lamps” (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 22).

Until 1950s, manga were used both as means of political influence and entertainment (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 22). A lot of the themes were inspired by American comics but they were fused with Japan's tradition and this can be characterised as an effort of Japan to define itself in the western international environment (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p.24). But, what is known as manga today started post-war, when Tezuka Osamu published the *Shin takarajima* (The New Treasure Island). The 400.000 copies that were sold, were enough to give him the nickname god of manga (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p.25; Shamoon, 2012, p. 8). At this point, manga started to differentiate from American Comics by having a more complex plot and by being more concerned regarding the future of mankind in general.
The trauma that the mangaka experienced during the Second World War gave birth to four elements that gave the manga their unique character. These four elements were: the destruction of the world due to adult failure and the surviving of only few people who are bound by friendship, the saving of Japan by robots (this pave the way for the mecha genre), the scientific adventure and the new morals a country like Japan had to face after its occupation (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 25).

Two were the main genres after the war: the ones targeted for children and the akabon which were addressed to adults and included even taboo themes such as necrophilia (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 26). But in 1959 all these children, who until then were reading the children's manga, had to enter high school and consequently they would stop to read manga. Hence, the first shonen manga for teens made their appearance (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 26), so those children could keep on reading manga. Manga started expanding with different genres such as mystery or adventures (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 28). This view is interesting, because it regards the evolution of the shoujo manga and manga in general as the aftermath of the first post-war readers, from children to teens and to adults and the consequent attempts of the mangaka and the publishers to catch up with them.

Shoujo manga followed a similar pattern. During the beginning of 1970s the Hana 24-nen gumi or Year 24 group, a group of women manga artists in their 20s started writing manga targeting teenage girls and giving the shoujo manga its contemporary form (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 27). Those artists were born at or near the year Showa 24 (1949). Main representatives of the group include artists such as Moto Hagio, Riyoko Ikeda, Yumiko Oshima, Keiko Takemiya and Ryoko Yamagishi (Gravett, 2004, p. 78). These manga were dealing with more serious matters like sex, rape, pregnancy or death (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 27). These artists, where trying to capture their readers feelings (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 95).

Shoujo means girl in Japanese, but it is not only that. It is a further connotation which is related to the ways a girl in Japan should behave (Shamoon, 2012, p. 2). Shoujo was the girl that should be free of any sexual desires and fantasies. In fact, the initial use wasn't gender related but age related. Even if it was sexual mature, the shoujo was considered as sexually immature from the society, while the word shonen
(which is now used for boys) was used to describe children in general (MacWilliams, 2008, p. 115). Shoujo manga usually have romantic themes and have a more psychological approach, contrary to more adventurous shonen manga which emphasize friendship, comradeship, winning and insistence (Ingulsrud & Allen, 2010). The protagonists of a typical shoujo manga are usually in their teens, like the idea of the shoujo schoolgirl that start appearing on the 1880s but at that point the presentation of it was from the viewpoint of the males (Shamoon, 2012:12).

In order to understand girls' culture, a good way is to look at girls' magazines (Shamoon, 2012, p. 8). During 1910s and 1920s, in the magazines the artists started drawing some depictions of the shoujo (MacWilliams, 2008, p. 117). One of the first artists depicting the shoujo was Yumeji Takehisa (1884–1934). His depictions of the shoujo were portraits of thin, frail-looking women with pale faces. These illustrations named jojou-ga, which means lyrical painting/illustration. One other characteristic of the jojou-ga and the presentation of the shoujo was that all of them were daydreaming and they had a childish innocence. Another important illustrator of this pre-war decade were Kashou Takabatake (1888–1966) and Kouji Fukiya (1898–1979). The trend changed during World War 2, since shoujo should stop daydreaming. The illustrations during war were girls as soldiers (MacWilliams, 2008, p. 119). The jojou-ga was revived after the end of the World Was 2 by Jun'ichi Nakahara. His illustrations were depicting the shoujo with elegant bodies and big exaggerated eyes and dreamy expressions. Although Nakahara -who had studied both arts and fashion design- changed a lot of times the clothing of his illustrations, he didn't change their exaggerated eyes (MacWilliams, 2008, p. 120). Another addition by Nakahara was the background, which was usually flowers which were depicting the inner personality of the shoujo (MacWilliams, 2008, p. 122). The use of flowers in the background is used until today in shoujo manga. Another artist who also helped in the development of the genre was Makoto Takahashi who illustrated a shoujo manga named Shoujo. He also followed the pattern of overly big eyes and the background of flowers and hair waves (MacWilliams, 2008, p. 122).

Despite the fact that Tezuka Osamu is regarded as the one who made the first shoujo manga, his reference like that, leaves with least credits the rest of the mangaka of the same period who influenced the future mangaka (Shamoon, 2012, p. 9). Tezuka
was usually drawing shonen, but his manga *Princess Knight* in 1953 paved the way for the development of the genre. Tezuka didn't make that much use of Nakahara's drawing style, but he used plots like gender bender and foreign settings which they would later become popular in manga (MacWilliams, 2008, p. 128). Tezuka also used a cinematic way of transiting between the panels, something that influenced a lot of mangaka. Even so, the genre as we know it today, started developing in 1970s (Shamoon, 2012, p. 9), which will be the first decade of our analysis. Shamoon (2012, p. 9) also mentions that shoujo manga should not be understood by age boundaries, but by a state of transition from childhood to womanhood.

In pre-war Japan, the educational system was promoting romantic relationship between girls in the form of a spiritual platonic love and in order to avoid heterosexual relationship. A very interesting theory is presented by Johnson-Woods. Back then, homosexual relationships did not have the same meaning that they have today. A homosexual relationship wasn't seeing as a deviation of the norm and did not necessarily prevent heterosexual marriage. The girls that were having same sex relationships were not doing it because it was a way of life or because they wanted to rebel against the patriarchic status and the norms, but it was actually very acceptable and a way to prevent girls from heterosexual relationships until they are ready to get married (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p.140). This pre-war culture paved the way to the shoujo manga of the 1970s who were based on homosexual romance between boys, such as *The Heart of Thomas* by Hagio Moto (1974) (Shamoon, 2012, p. 12). Even in the case that there was a heterosexual relationship, the characters were drawn in a way that they were resembling each other (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 27). Also, girls were feeling anxiety associating themselves with an heterosexual relationship. That is why a lot of the manga of that time were using either same sex relationships or the idea of the transvestite like Ikeda Riyoko’s Lady Oscar in *The Rose of Versailles* (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 27).

Shamoon (2012, p. 107), believes that mangaka were also using love between boys because it was more usual for boys at that time to have pre-marriage relationships and also because they were out of their bodies, meaning that since they were not writing about girls being in love, female readers would not have to feel embarrassed or uncomfortable. Some experts claim that the mangaka of the time were
choosing the love between boys as a way to deny their own lesbian desires. This view disregards the fact that the women during these times were coming from a same sex relationships literature. According to a survey the readers preferred manga about “boys love” because if the relationship was heterosexual, then they had to relate themselves with the female protagonist, while if both the protagonists were boys, they could read the plot without having to think that much in terms of gender.

Heterosexual love was in a way representing the familial love. Candy Candy (1975) by Mizuki Kyoko and Igarashi Yumiko follows the norms of the familial love. In the end Candy Candy ends up with an older man who we do not know if he is her his partner, husband or father. This manga shows the difficulty and complexity of those times for an heterosexual love to be presented (Shamoon, 2012, p.109). In general, a shoujo manga was consisted from the main heroine and her friends. Every friend had a different characteristic. The smart, the beautiful etc. (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 95).

Until the end of 1990s the sexuality of women was repressed. Being unable to have a good contraceptive method, sex was almost limited before marriage and a lot of foreigners were participating in adult films (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 58). When the contraceptive pill became legal in 1999, sex stopped being regarded as taboo. In the early manga of 1950 and 1960 kissing scenes were rare (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 95), while from the early 1970s, the first sex scenes start making their appearance, but in different form than the one that they are presented today (Shamoon, 2012, p. 109). Also, since then, the genre of the “boys love” manga has shifted from the spiritual love which was representing during the 1970s to hint some form of sexual act. (Shamoon, 2012, p. 113).

As far as the design is considered, the shoujo of the 1970s followed the preexisting drawing pattern with big eyes, willowy bodies and complicated panel designs. Although the style was accused for being poorly artistic, Takahashi (MacWilliams, 2008, p. 122) argues that the point was to show the complexity of the inner state of the character and not focusing on details. Although the artists of 1970s headed to discover new and more complex plots, the design followed the same pattern, where the head was unproportionally big comparing to the rest of the body and the eyes had a ratio 1/2 comparing to the rest of the face. The trunk, arms and legs
were elongated. Takahashi mentions that the way every mangaka was choosing to draw the eyes was their trademark (MacWilliams, 2008, p. 125). A star in the pupil was considered the trademark of the genre for many years (it was used to imitate glowing eyes). Furthermore, the era between 1970s and 1980s is characterized as the era of high cuteness (instead of being sexy) in Japan, when it comes to fashion trends (Miller, 2006, p. 25).

After the breakthrough of shoujo manga during the 1970s, the 1980s were the decade that the genre was expanded with more complex stories. The setting changed from Europe or some other “exotic” place to Japan (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 95). Gradually the josei genre was established and a lot of subgenres start appearing. From the beginning of the 1990s the drawing style became clearer and instead of layering, a different arrangement in the pages appear. Despite the changes, some characteristics still remain the same such as the huge eyes, the use of open frames, the interior monologue and the emotive backgrounds (Shamoon, 2012, p. 139).

Besides that, from the 1980s and afterwards the shoujo manga start importing characteristics from other genres (Shamoon, 2012, p. 139), but this happened also with other genres that borrowed some characteristics from the shoujo genre. One of the most popular examples is Sailor Moon by Takeuchi Naoko (1992), which paved the way for the “Magical Girls” genre and it was characterised as a shonen manga for girls, since the story could be used for a typical shonen manga (Shamoon, 2012, p. 103). From 1990s onwards, the trends for shoujo manga start focusing mainly in romance contrary to what someone might expected (Choo, 2008, p. 280).

There are some manga characterizations (words in Japanese) that are used as a slang in order to show the character of a heroine, based on specific traits. The problem with these characterizations is that they derive from manga readers and consequently not enough research has been carried out for them. The ones they that they are used the most are: Tsundere, Yandere, Kuudere and Dandere. Tsundere usually refers to female characters, but sometimes it can be used to characterize males as well. A tsundere is a character who is seemingly cold and gets angry easily but she is loving and caring in reality (Amit, 2012; Chen, Li, Zheng, Zhang, He, Li & Pan, 2012). A yandere is a female character who is usually mentally unstable and violent but, on the other hand, she is loving and caring, and she sacrifices everything in order to gain or
not to lose her love interest (Knuuti, 2012), even to the point of kill someone. A Kuudere is a seemingly cold and cynical person who seems like she does not have feelings at all. She is different to the tsundere because she is always like that. A Dandere is a character who is silent and usually shy.

Regarding manga and its relation to the Japanese society, in Japan, manga are on par with other popular media like cinema, TV and books (MacWilliams, 2008; Schodt, 2014, p. 19). This study examines manga as a medium and as a carrier of cultural meaning and representation. Manga do not depict reality necessarily, but the overall Japanese aspiration and its cultural beliefs (MacWilliams, 2008). Schodt (2012) notes that reading manga is like peeping into the reality of the Japanese mind. Ito (2005) believes that manga reflect the reality of the Japanese way of life and society as well as other social phenomena such as hierarchy, sexism, racism. Matt Thorn (2004), Associate Professor in the Department of Manga Production at Kyoto Seika University's Faculty of Manga in Japan, mentions that the nature of shoujo manga has changed over the passage of time, reflecting the historical changes of the country. He also mentions that manga helped girls to define their individual identity. Contacting interviews with Japanese teen girls regarding the gender, he realised that girls copy the reactions of manga characters in real life. But at the same time he recognises that the artists themselves were previously readers who were influenced by that and thus a circle of life influencing art is born.

Manga owes its influence to its ability to keep pace with new developments in society and attitudes (Johnson woods, 2010, p. 29). It is interesting that Takahashi (MacWilliams, 2008, p. 132) believes that even women Japanese experts on matters of feminism, regard manga heroines as their alter ego who mirrors their lives as modern women. In fact, Rika Yokomori, a very influential author regarding female oriented self-help is mentioned as having written a book where she analyzes how manga influenced her ideas about love. From the above, we can assume that manga indeed depict -at least to an extent- the role of women in the Japanese society.
2.2 Feminist Approaches

Before exploring how female characters are depicted in manga, a short look into the basic related term of feminism is needed. First of all, the depiction of female characters is related to gender representation in media, while gender representation itself is related to feminism. The term feminism is credited to the French philosopher Fourier, who was the first one that used the word “féministe”, but even before him, the ideas of social equality for women were already mentioned by Henri Saint-Simon (Goldstein, 1982). According to Campbell and Wasco (2000), the term feminism has not only one definition, but it rather implies the way women experience their lives and the limitations and oppression they face in different cultures. (Campbell, & Wasco, 2000). The oppressed women’s right seems to be found among most feminist researchers (Harding & Norberg, 2005).

Historically, three waves of feminist movements have been observed. All three seem to have western societies as their starting point while eastern societies follow a while later. The first wave expands from late 19th till the early 20th century (Goldstein, 1982; Kroløkke & Sørensen, 2005, p. 1) with Europe and the US as their starting point (Kroløkke & Sørensen, 2005, p. 1). The second wave is placed at the late 20th century (Goldstein, 1982; Kroløkke & Sørensen, 2005, p. 1) and particularly in the decades of 1960 and 1970 in western post-war countries (Kroløkke & Sørensen, 2005, p. 1). The third wave of feminism emerged at the 1990s and continues until today (Kroløkke & Sørensen, 2005, p. 1) with its roots in the girls-only punk bands in the US of the early 1990s. The first wave of feminism focused on women rights and consequently equality in legal and political rights, while the second wave focused on women’s liberation (Goldstein, 1982). The first wave of feminism is usually related to the right for women to vote. Among the first wave feminists, there were those –such as Rosa Luxemburg, Alexandra Kollontai and Emma Goldman- who paved the way to the second wave feminists, which is focused on the rights such as abortion, birth control, divorce, non-marital relationships (Kroløkke & Sørensen, 2005, p. 7).

During the second wave of feminism the focus was on the objectification of women, along with the interest towards other oppressed groups, such as black women (Kroløkke & Sørensen, 2005, p. 8). The third wave of feminism which is the one
occurring now in western societies is related to the internet and the networked era and it focus on more opportunities and less sexism (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2005:15). The third wave of feminism is opposed to violence against women, trafficking and the general pornofication of the media (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2005, p. 17).

There are different categorizations of feminism, but in general we can follow the categorization given by Cambell and Wasco. According to them, feminism can be categorized in four forms, liberal feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism, and womanism (Campbell & Wasco, 2000, p. 774). According to liberal feminism, it is the society who constructs the notion of inequality between men and women. Wollstonecraft (2004) believes that women are taught by their mothers and by their patriarchal societal standards to act the way they act. Liberal feminism is related to the theory that the gender is constructed. Simone de Beauvoir, (1953) makes the distinguish between sex and gender, noticing that the latter is a social construction and it is the society and the environment that forms a woman’s identity and not biology. Thus, women are trapped in what Betty Friedan (1963) calls “mystique”, an idea that the woman has a preordered identity who should maintain. As a solution to this, liberal feminism suggests a network between all women, so they can have equal access to societal resources. This approach does not share the idea that equality between men and women in all sections requires a radical transformation in the basic structures of society, such as the economic system or the family (Campbell & Wasco, 2000, p. 776).

Contrary to liberal feminism, radical feminism suggests that equality can only be achieved by radical changes in the basic societal structures (Campbell & Wasco, 2000, p. 776). The key concept of radical feminism lies in the assumption that women form an oppressed sex class (Madsen, 2000). It is the patriarchal society which sets standards and oppresses women. Therefore, there is a continuous struggle between women and men, who are two poles, which are fighting for the survival by trying to destruct each other (Dworkin, 1974). At this point, radical feminism can be compared to Marxism, since there is this continuous struggle between the dominant men and the oppressed women. Men can be compared to Marxism’s elite while women to Marxism’s masses. It is the social power which shapes the inequality between men
and women, and it is the fact that since this inequality is maintained that social power stays as it is (MacKinnon, 1989).

Socialist feminism does not see only the patriarchy as the cause of women’s oppression but also mainly economic factors. Socialist feminism focus on the forms of inequality created by capitalism and class structures. Building affiliations with other groups that criticize the capitalist system is the main solution suggested by socialist feminists (Campbell & Wasco, 2000, p. 776).

Womanism follows the structure of radical and socialist feminism, but it focus on the alienation women from different races or groups are encountering (Campbell & Wasco, 2000, p. 777). The term is accredited to Alice Walker who introduced it in her essay volume under the title “In search of our mother’s gardens” in 1983. It seems that womanism was born, because there wasn’t any feminist approach to describe the difficulties faced by women of other races. Womanism has also been called black feminism by some scholars including Walker herself (Collins, 1996, p. 10).

2.3 The Status of Women in Japan

Gender roles are defined by culture (Sugihara & Katsurada, 1999, p. 635), while if we take into account the constructivist approach, reality is socially constructed (Cambell & Wasco, 2000, p. 780). The distinction between gender and sex was mainly emphasized during the second wave of feminism (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2005, p. 14). As a general rule, the more economically and technologically advanced a country is, the more egalitarian should be. Japan is considered as an economically and technologically advanced country in many rankings. For example, it ranked 16th in the Global Innovation Index (Dutta, Lanvin, & Wunsch-Vincent, 2016, p. 20) and Tokyo ranked 8th in the Most Technologically Advanced Cities in the World in the Pricewaterhouse Coopers Cities of Opportunity 7 Report (PRICEWATERHOUSEECOOPERS, 2016, p. 34). Yet, it seems that it does not follow the aforementioned pattern of equality, since it is a male dominant society, where women hold a more traditional role (Sugihara & Katsurada, 1999, p. 636).

Gender roles in Japan started to become more rigid, especially when it comes to attitudes towards sexuality, when the country became a modern western nation.
from 1860s onwards. By combining the western ideas of gender with the old Confucian teaching, men eventually became the ones who support the business section, while women ended up having more traditional roles (Brenner, 2007). Also, according to Hofstede’s masculinity scale (2001), Japan rated at the top (95), a fact that indicates gender role differentiation (Cooper-Chen, 2011). At this point it should be mentioned that Japanese culture differentiates from western cultures in the fact that it sees the relationship between people as a “subject to subject” relationship and not a “subject to object”, regardless the gender, while in the western cultures there is a seeking for equality and independency, something that leads to the notion of the individual self (Maynard & Taylor, 1999). Sugihara and Katsurada (2006) tried to investigate if the gender differentiation is still present by applying the BSRI scale in 1,227 Japanese college students.

Until the Meiji era, women in Japan had a more submissive role than women in western societies. During the 1850s, women were forbidden to be present at a western dinner, a fact noticed by the American Consul General Townsend Harris much of his dismay. At the same time, when Japanese men were visiting western countries like US, they were surprised to see that American men are treating women as Japanese are treating their parents (Bardsley & Miller, 2011, p. 97). In Japan, it was unusual to see even a married couple to walk together, not to mention a woman accompanied by men, while women after the age of seven stopped to associate with male that they were not related to. The etiquette of the era commanded women not to appear with their husband or with men at public. Unless the man was wishing to get married and hence started searching for a wife, women and men were not allowed to mingle together in social interactions. The marriages at that time were arranged, consequently women start knowing about love, after their marriage (Bardsley & Miller, 2011, p. 100). In contrast to American women, Japanese women were shyer and less strong willed. What is interesting though, is that Japanese women had all the power at home, by making the decisions for the household, raising the children and even having the financial management. Even if the wife had to serve her husband first, in the end she was the one that had the final word and she could let her husband without food if she was not satisfied with him (Bardsley & Miller, 2011, p. 97).
The ideal woman of that era was the geisha (Shamoon, 2012, p. 10), who was regarded as the epitome of femininity not only in appearance but also in behaviour (Bardsley & Miller, 2011, p. 67). Geishas were trained in order to achieve this perfect feminine behaviour and they were a lot of codes that they were predicting how geishas should act. For instance, geishas were responsible for pouring alcohol in the glasses of the table, and unless there was a serious medical problem, geishas should keep up with the drinking habits of the men (Bardsley & Miller, 2011, p. 70). Geishas in Kyoto were considered as rude since they did not follow the general conventions and they were nodding in order to greet their customers (instead of bowing) or they were putting makeup in front of them (Bardsley & Miller, 2011, p. 70). It seems that in general, putting makeup in front of the public is considered as bad etiquette in Japan, even today (Bardsley & Miller, 2011, pp. 139, 219, 142).

As far as samurai women are concerned (8% of the population) the decisions were made by a hierarchy based on age and gender, while the Tokugawa law could sentenced them to death in the suspicion of adultery (Sievers, 1983). Although having samurai as women is a form of equality, more than the western societies could imagine at that point, Seth Friedman (1992) believes that it was the combination between the religion (Confucianism and Buddhism) with the Samurai code that changed the role of women in society. Confucianism stressed how women should obey their father as daughters, their husbands as wives and their sons as aged mothers and Buddhism was stating that women should not expect salvation.

During the Meiji era, women were the subject both of the emperor and of their husbands (Mackie, 2003, p. 6). But Meiji era brought some reforms in favour of women. Compulsory education for women as well was established in 1872. In this way, women would be ready to train their sons, but in the beginning parents did not want to pay for both boys and girls (Mackie, 2003, p. 25). By 1879 girls and boys were in separate classes, while the object of girls going to school was to become good wives and wise mothers (MacWilliams, 2008, p. 116). At the same time while men could go as far as university, female education was restricted to high school (Mackie, 2003, p. 26). But, the reformation that opened the doors to the education for women, simultaneously shifted the ideal from the geisha, to the schoolgirl (Bardsley & Miller, 2005, p. 58).
In 1885, Ueno Tsude gains a government position, being the first woman in such a post. Women did not get any credit for attending public universities. By the end of 19th century, women started gaining other positions and could contribute to public debates. The mixing of classes and the ability to go to school started spreading different images regarding masculinity and femininity than those they were already existing (Mackie, 2003, pp. 26 - 27).

In a country where women were subject to taxes like men, they did not have the right to vote (Mackie, 2003, p. 34). During the beginning of the 19th century and while the majority of the feminists in the rest of the world were fighting for the right to vote, Japanese feminists except from suffrage were also mentioning monogamy, abortion and contraception (Mackie, 2003, p. 48).

Although they had managed to gain the right to attend and speak at political gatherings, they did not have the right to vote before December 1945 where the country revised its Electoral Law (Mackie, 2003, p. 6). It is worth mentioning that the government was already discussing limited voting for women (Mackie, 2003, p. 64).

During the Pacific war, the state wanted to present femininity with pure images. They wanted the women to be faithful, pure and not influenced by western trends, such as curly hair (Mackie, 2003, p. 110). World War 2 and American occupation changed the way Japanese society was working (Friedman, 1992). The 50s and the post war period found the whole Japan and its women in particular wishing of peace and democracy while a lot of women were demanding equality in work. By now women could vote and be elected. (Mackie, 2003, p. 136).

In 1970, Tanaka Mitsu wrote a manifesto according to which, women are thought either as mothers or as whores (Mackie, 2003, p. 144). Tanaka is trying to imagine a world where women are not seen as an object but sex is a mean of communication. By that time, sexuality had already made its appearance in popular culture as a commercial commodity (Mackie, 2003, p. 144).

The 1970s are marked by the women liberation movement in Japan (uumen ribu). A lot of classic feminist books were translated in Japanese such as “The Second Sex” by Simone de Beauvoir and “The Feminine Mystique” by Betty Frieda (Mackie, 2003, p. 157). At a similar time when women were protesting by throwing their bras in the “Miss America 1968” beauty pageant, Japanese women during the 1970s were
protesting naked in a liberation weekend camp (Mackie, 2003, p. 157). The right to abortion and birth control along with local political issues was once again in the centre of the protests (Mackie, 2003, p. 157).

One of the most notable journals of these times is “women, eros” (onna erosu), which was published between 1973 and 1982. The first issue of the journal was challenging the notion of marriage. Other issues discussed in that journal were abortion, women's liberation in workplace, prostitution and sexual liberation (Mackie, 2003, p. 159). Regarding language, the feminists of the 1970s got back on the use of the word woman (onna) instead of lady (fujin) or female (josei) (Mackie, 2003, p. 159). Interestingly enough, the manga purported for adult women are called josei.

Another important journal of the 1970s, the “New Bluestockings”, was presenting the woman as the sun, contrary to the representation of the woman as the moon in the old “Bluestockings Journal”, 66 years ago. The object of the New Bluestockings was to observe the conditions of women in Japan and in other countries (Mackie, 2003, p. 161).

The book quotes an article from Tanaka Mitsu who was participating in the liberation weekend camps. From her sayings, in 1970s it was "proper" to sit with the legs not crossed, especially if a male person was in the room (Mackie, 2003, p. 157). Tanaka describes this contradiction between herself and her body. There was one self who rejects femininity and one who wants to sit properly. Tanaka described her experience in the weekend camps saying that on the one hand she wanted to protest but on the other she did not want to get naked. On the one hand she wanted to sit comfortably instead of properly, but if an attractive man was present she would have sat properly in order for her to look more feminine (Mackie, 2003, p. 157). The value of virginity is also described as a superficial trait, which is related to appearance. Hence, a woman did not have to be virgin in reality, but to look and act like virgin (Mackie, 2003:157). In this essence, all it matters is what people will think and not the truth.

In the 1980s, equality does not seem to be the main focus and in fact neither men nor women defined it as a positive goal, because they recognized it as a threat to the institution of family (Maynard & Taylor, 1999). But, according to Elisa Timpton, the liberation movement in USA had impact to Japan as well. In 1985 the women
Equal Employment Opportunity Law was passed and the women started entering the workforce and the tertiary education. It is estimated that more than half of all married women were now a part of the paid workforce (Edwards & Roces, 2000). Women by now could choose their own husband. In fact, a lot of women started working in order to be able to do so. But even so, until 1982, 40% of the marriages in Japan were arranged. Despite the high percentage it was still better than the 81% of 1955 (Friedman, 1992).

The 1990s was characterized as an era when great independence concerning women was achieved (Edwards & Roces, 2000). Yet, it seems that both women and the society were still holding to the traditional values. For example, although women did have the right to work, Japanese laws were made in a way which implied that men should chase a business life while women should focus on the household or the raise of children or just doing a part-time job. Even though more and more women desired to chase their dreams, younger women were more ambivalent towards that. As a result, women still remained focused on their traditional roles, but at least, there was a raise in the female workforce (Maynard & Taylor, 1999). It was also during the 1990s, when the last obstacles concerning the use of contraceptive pills were removed (in September 1999), almost thirty years after the matter was first raised. Contrary to that, Viagra use was approved almost immediately (Mackie, 2003, p. 193). Despite all the problematics, the 1990s marked the beginning of a new age in Japanese history of feminism and shaped women’s social roles towards what they are today.

### 2.4 Gender Representation in the Media

This part presents an historical overview of the dominant trends in theory and research on gender and the media as they have developed since the emergence of the so called gender studies in the 1960s until today’s post-feminist era and some examples of women ‘s representation in the media.

Gender studies and the representation of women in particular in the media emerged during the 1960s triggered by the second wave of feminism (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004, ix). Media are considered to be one of the most powerful means when it comes to the way we perceive gender roles (Wood, 1997, p. 31). The
representation of women in media is of major significance, since the audience tends to create prototypes and consequently something that it is different from these prototypes can be regarded like it is out of normal (Wood, 1997, p. 34). Wood (1997, p. 31) mentions three ways of representation of women, firstly women are underrepresented, secondly, they are represented in a stereotypical way and thirdly, the relationship between men and women is often depicted in a more traditional way which can lead up (even) to encouragement of violence against women. The second and the third way of representation can sometimes intertwine and overlap.

By underrepresentation Wood (1997, p. 31) means that in media, women are outnumbered by men on purpose, which could give the audience the idea, that women are in fact less than men. For example, it seems that women are underrepresented in video games in western cultures and it is unusual the main character of the video game to be female, something that does not correspond to the actual distribution of population (Wohn, 2011). Even if the main character is playable (i.e. Lara Craft) it is over sexualized by giving emphasis to specific characteristics like big breasts, light clothes etc. Another example is the is the news (Who Makes The News, 2010) where only 24% of the people heard are female and from those 18% are portrayed as victims in comparison to 8% of male.

On the contrary, 52% of stories on television and 45% of those on radio are presented by women (Who Makes The News, 2010). Women are also presented in a lot of films, shows and they have an active role in the internet (in western media). This might mean that women just do not make the news and might not be related to a discriminatory factor. In addition to the news, despite the fact that in the majority of video games the main characters are male, the case in casual games is different with the women to be over-represented (77, 1%) something that may derive from the fact that a lot of casual game players are women (Wohn, 2011). Wohn’s survey about gender representation in media, points out to that direction, but she mentions that she only studied western video games but the state might be different if she had studied the video games in Japan (Wohn, 2011). Consequently, maybe the idea of underrepresentation was valid at some point in time, but it has changed.

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2This report was created by analyzing reports of 108 participating countries
Regarding the stereotypical representation, Wood (1997, p. 34) notices four kinds: women are less independent (i.e. little mermaid), they are incompetent (usually seen on Fairy tales i.e. Snow White, Sleeping Beauty), they are usually caregivers (while men on the contrary are breadwinners) and they are usually depicted as victims or as objects of desire. For instance, concerning the American society, most TV shows depict women as young, beautiful, thin, submissive who care more about the way they will get rich rather than their career. On the contrary, women who are not passive and are independent, are usually the women who play the part of the villain. (Wood, 1997, p. 31). Also older people and minorities do not appear so often. This might be related to the fact that the people high in the hierarchy of media are usually men and not women (Wood, 1997, p. 31). In contrast, men in western societies and particularly in American television shows are usually represented as dominant, aggressive, powerful with control in their emotions. The general idea which is dominant in the west is that more scientists are men and in fact women cope better with theoretical studies rather than maths or physics, something that became apparent in 1992 when the first talking Barbie mentioned, “Maths class is tough”.

Another approach regarding women representation in the media is the ideological analysis which is largely based on Luis Althusser’s work (Fiske, 1990, p. 173). Luis Althusser combined Karl Marx’s notion of ideology with Saussure and Freud’s ideas for the subconscious and structure (Fiske, 1990, p. 173) and defined ideology as “the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” which has also “a material existence” (Althusser, 1971). Hence, ideology refers to the conceptions and images of reality any society assumes (Kaplan, 1990, p. 13). In other terms, ideology can be defined as an ensemble of ideas that reflect the social needs and aspirations of an individual, a group, a class, or a culture (Giannetti, 2008, p. 448). A film presents the viewers with role models, morals, positive and negative traits, based on the filmmaker’s ideology, his own idea of what is right and what is wrong. Hence, every film contains a given ideological view which represents specific ideas, characters, institutions and behaviors as attractive or unattractive (Giannetti, 2008, p. 448). The ideological approach aims to prove how meanings that
support the dominant ideological state apparatus (ISA) \(^3\) are produced. Based on the concept of ideology, these theorists are focusing on how the media produce meaning for women. Using the ideological approach, women in the media are presented from a male's point of view and not from how they are in real life, but from how the patriarchic society perceives them (Fiske, 1990, p. 178).

Another approach is the psychological approach. Psychoanalysis was used very broadly back in 1970s and 1980s in order to understand how media images are used to construct meaning by letting the viewer become a subject and enter the protagonist's position. So, instead of only analyzing how the text is presented, like the two previous approaches suggested, this approach entails the viewer. But, according to Laura Mulvey, there is only the male gaze which is the male gaze (1975). Consequently there is an optical pleasure only for the male. According to the male gaze approach, traditional Hollywood films objectify women. Women turn to images and men are the gazers, the bearers of the look (Mulvey, 1975, p. 347). Women are usually presented as passive objects of desire for men. But, on the other hand, the presence of women in the patriarchic subconscious is regarded as a threat and an enigma since she connotes the absence of the phallus and hence the fear of castration (Mulvey, 1975, p. 348). This threat is encountered by the control of female body with the gaze. Men are either substituting the lack of the phallus with phetishistic objects, such as exaggerated features or high heels. At this point, it should be noted that in the early era of American comics, since their main idea was to be funny, the main characters were children or small monsters presented in a comical way (Robbins, 2002). In 1909 a new model made its appearance by the hand of George McManus, the beautiful woman and the funny looking guy. This pattern continued till 1930 although there were cartoonists that did not follow the example of McManus (i.e. Popeye). At the end of the 1920s cartoonists started to exaggerate some women characteristics (i.e. eyelashes) and in this way the gender became apparent even if it was for comic animals (i.e. Minnie Mouse has huge eyelashes while on the other hand Mickey does not have eyelashes at all). The tradition McManus started extended to

\(^3\) The ISA is Louis Althusser's term to describe institutions which do not belong to a state but they transfer the ideas of the state such as schools, churches or media.
male characters. But what it was observed was that women cartoonists drew both male and female characters as attractive, while men cartoonists drew only women as attractive. After that there was a wave of superhuman heroes who were usually flawless and at the end of the 1880s there was a new wave where the characteristics on both male and female characters became more exaggerating. Men depicted more muscular, while on the other hand women were thin, with long legs, slim waist and huge breasts. An earlier theory, similar to Mulvey’s, came from John Berger who observed that men act while women are depicted in a way just to please men (Kosut, 2012:xxvii).

The problematic with these kinds of approaches thus, it is that they are focused only on men viewers and do not take into account female viewers at all. When it comes to comics, the audience of women readers is small and also women comic artists are only a small portion (Robbins, 2002). But this comes in contrast with Japan where there are a lot of women mangaka and as mentioned before, 99% of the shoujo mangaka are women. Wonder Woman appeared in 1941 (Kosut, 2012, p. xxvi, Encyclopedia of Gender in Media), while the fighting girl in Japan will come years later (sailor moon).

The need for taking into account the female viewers, led to a turn to study women’s films. Doane moved the subject of the gaze from male to female. Kaplan (1990, p. 2) agrees with Mulvey that the dominating male gaze succeeds in repressing women by controlling the female discourse and desire, but still there is a gap which is not colonized by men and through which a woman can create a place for herself as a subject. Both of the above theorists analyzed a series of classic Hollywood 1940s films. Doane (1987) made a categorization of four subgenres in the women’s film and found out that all of them have as a common element the fact that the woman desires to desire and in the end is punished because she is active and has desires. Thus, in these kinds of movies, women usually end up being the victims. Molly Haskell, is more optimistic when it comes to the female representation in the films of 1930s and 1940s in her work "From Reverence to Rape", one of the very first works regarding the image of women in the movies (Kosut, 2012, p. xxviii). She sees the woman in the center of the universe where she acts as she pleases and only stops when she dies. The male point of view, in the form of a screenwriter for example, is rare and if it happens
it reconciles with the female point of view (Thornham, 1999, p. 21). Haskell finds three types of women, the extraordinary woman, the ordinary woman and the ordinary who becomes extraordinary (Thornham, 1999, p. 23). The extraordinary women are portrayed as singular entities who are exceptional but very unpopular to both men and women. The ordinary women who are usually portrayed as victims, their point of view is plural instead of singular and they embrace their audience by triggering a pity. Finally, the third category comprises of women who starts as victims but manage to take their fate in their hands and master their fate. But even so, despite the kind of heroine, almost every heroine ends up sacrificing either herself or her beliefs or the film will end up in a tragic way. This sacrifice reminds us that you cannot “you cannot have your cake and eat it too” (Thornham, 1999, p. 26).

VanZoonen (1994, p. 40) finds two problems in these kinds of analyses, one regarding the communication and one regarding the idea of gender. Regarding communication, the problem lies on the fact that the subject of the movie is not related to the subject in real life. The lack of this separation leads to the assumption that the experience of the real men and women viewers does not exceed the scope set by positions - subject of the text (of the film). Another problem is also that the gender is taken as a given and leads to generalizations, that the same movie will have the same effect even if it is seen by women from different status, nationality, abilities etc. According to vanZoonen (1994, p. 40), the gender should not be seen as stable and easily identifiable. For instance femininity is linked to women while masculinity is linked to men.

Concerning the way in which gender is conceptualized, earliest theorists of liberal feminism were focusing on the inequality between the sexes. At this point the difference was only based on biological factors and it was referring to two categories of persons, males and females. Later this was divided to sex, which entails the biological characteristics and gender which is socially constructed by socialization and experience (Clegg, Clegg & Hardy, 1999, p. 213). Earliest studies were suggesting that sex is something you are born with but gender is something you achieve in society. (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 126). VanZoonen (1994, p. 40) defines the gender as discourse, a set of overlapping and maybe even contradictory descriptions referring to sexual difference. Gender is understood as a fluid social,
political, cultural and historical construction which is indirectly formed through its intersection with other factors such as age, class, ethnicity, race in ongoing processes of identity construction. Such gender conceptualizations have also led to a reevaluation of the relationship between gender, body and sexuality, and in particular to questioning the assumptions that anatomical reproductive characteristics are unavoidably and naturally either to a male or female gender or to heterosexuality (Butler, 1990). Usually the ideas of sex, sex category and gender overlap each other, but it is not the normative, something that is being demonstrated in the cases of hermaphrodites or to Agnes, a person with male genitalia but with the status of female gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 131). But in everyday life, it seems that we live in a world of only two sexes that they are defined by other social and cultural perceptions that they are tight to each sex. For instance, we do not see other people's genitalia (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 133), but someone with a dress and make up should probably be female. In this essence, manga have a whole subgenre called gender bender, while it is very usual to see characters cross-dressing.

Some feminists believe that technology can be used to erase social phenomena related to discrimination, such as racism or misogyny (Kosut, 2012, p. 60). For instance, Haraway believes that communication and biotechnologies can contribute in the restructuring of existing social structures and power dynamics for women. The alternation of one’s body, entails in a way, the alteration of one’s world (Kosut, 2012, p. 61).

As already mentioned, latest feminists called attention to how sex (as the biological factors that define the male or female) is usually assumed to define the person’s gender as well. Harraway (1991) introduced the idea of the cyborg as a liberatory concept, suggesting that someone can escape issues of sexual inequality by escaping the idea of sex itself, presuming a posthuman or cyborg, body that cannot be categorized into clear binaries (Kosut, 2012, p. 60). The idea of the Cyborg is very popular in media, especially in films with movies such as Blade Runner, Terminator or Star Wars. There are different representations of the cyborg women. They can be presented as the sexual object of men, like in Blade Runner, but they can also be very strong such as the Bionic Woman. But, there are also portrayals where the female cyborgs succumbs to the patriarchal society such as in The Stepford Wives (1975),
where smart and independent women are replaced by subservient and submissive gynoids (Kosut, 2012, p. 60). The idea of cyborg is popular in manga as well, but usually they support the idea of the kuudere heroine who usually does not have feelings. In shonen manga they are usually fighting girls.

In the aftermath of “traditional” feminism a world where feminism can be seen as "undone" described. One of the characteristics examples is Bridget Jones (McRobbie, 2004). Similar the contemporary shoujo seem to undone feminism. Gill (2007) in the Postfeminist media culture tries to establish a sensibility for postfeminist theory. There, she discusses among others the notions of empowerment and choice that women have in the postfeminist era. The notions though, are going in a way as going against the second wave of feminism. Women choose themselves to be the object of scrutiny of the male gaze, they chose white weddings and to go to a level of an overextended femininity. Interestingly enough, there is a trend towards pornography from women and there are hentai manga made by women mangaka where the subject (heroine) is being raped.

This ideology of choice though, gave women a false idea when they comprehend matters like domestic violence as a choice. The participants in a research seem to believe that in the western societies women have a lot of choices comparing to the past. But it seems that choices that go under the norm, choices that women struggled to achieve in the second wave of feminism are regarded as strange. Moreover, it seems that some women are hostile towards other women. For instance women who choose not to have children or women who do not dress up feminine enough (Baker, 2008).

Unlikely in the United States, Japanese advertisement do not see the fact of being girlish as a matter of contradiction. It seems that Japanese women do not desire equality in the way that women in the western societies do. In this way, girlish characteristics not only are acceptable but also desirable, in Japanese culture. For this reason, girls in Japanese advertisements show more girlish characteristics like smiling cutely. In contrast, teenage girls in the United States’ advertisements are more rebellious or mysterious and use poses and language that sometimes can even be provocative, something that is on par with the seeking for equality of the women in western cultures (Maynard & Taylor, 1999).
In Japan there is another kind of video games that they are not widespread in the west, the so-called Erogē (abbreviation to erotic games), although little research is made to this field. There are over 200 Erogē’s makers and their market value is estimated at 25 billion yen annually (192 billion euro). The most popular Erogē are the so calledbishojo which focus on interaction with beautiful girls. It is usual that if an Erogē is popular it will be merchandized and expand to other section like manga and anime. The representation of women in the Erogē is considered as “unstable”, meaning that the female characters of these kinds of video games are closer to what we previous characterised as yandere. (Galbraith, 2011).

Although Sugihara and Katsaruda (1999) found insignificant gender role differences between male and female, Brenner (2007) sees a difference between manga heroes and heroines whether they appear in shoujo or shonen manga. According to Brenner (2007) the traits that characterised a cool hero such as sensual or mysterious, rarely would characterise a heroine, but they are characteristics usually met in antagonistic characters. As a general frame, Brenner describes manga heroines as pure, determined and cute. The exclamation kawaii which means cute, it can be seen a lot of times in manga. For example, a typical female protagonist in a shoujo manga in usually cute and not sexy, as usually sexiness is a characteristic of the antagonist but can be found in female shonen heroines (Brenner, 2007).

From the current researches, it is unknown whether Japanese girls are associating themselves with their heroines or if they see them as a prototype and we do not know what kind of heroines they do like. A recent online questionnaire by the Japanese Website Navi Women (2014), Japanese website My Navi Woman made a poll on which manga heroine girls would have liked to be. Due to the fact that the majority of the women that answered were just employed, meaning probably at about 25 or so, the answers included manga heroines from the years between 1992 - 2005. The top four includes Sawako Kuronuma from Kimi ni Todoke which was the most recent manga in that research, Tsukigō Usagi from 1990s’ Sailor Moon, Midori Saejima from Tenshi Nanka ja Nai (I am not Angel) and Tsukushi Makino from Hana Yori Dango (Boys over flowers). The author of the article commented the lack of strong characters from shonen manga.
3. Methodology

This chapter describes and explains the methodology used in this study and analyzes my choice of methods. As already discussed in the previous chapter, this study tries to answer the following questions:

- How female heroines are portrayed in shoujo manga at the decade of 1970 and how at the decade of 2000?
- Is there any difference? If so, does this difference reflect the changes in Japanese society?

The most popular (by sales) manga from these two decades were chosen as well as the manga covers of some manga that are considered influential. The most popular manga were chosen, since they are probably indicative to what Japanese women enjoy to read and probably reflect their characters too. For this research, multimodal text analysis was used.

This chapter is divided in four parts. The first part focus on the manga characteristics and the way they can be analyzed. This part is essential in order to get a general knowledge on the ways manga can be examined. This part is followed by the second part where basic methodological terms used in the research are analyzed along with the way this research was designed. The third part presents the way the data were collected and analyzed. The last part of this chapter briefly discussed the validity and reliability of the research.

3.1 Manga Characteristics and Analysis

This part presents the characteristics of the manga which are essential for the study design. In order to analyse manga, as a form of art and as a communication medium, principles from the world of comics can be applied. Comics, which constitute a combination of words and images – although it is not necessary to include images (McCloud, 1993, p. 8) – can express a wide range of human experiences and emotions. Therefore, comics have been related with storytelling. (McCloud, 1993, p. 5). Schodt (2011) mentions that Japanese artists convey meaning and depict emotions
by using the least possible effort. For instance, a scratch in the back can summarize a whole paragraph.

McCloud (1993:20) characterizes comics as "sequential art", meaning a type of art which includes sequences, images and words. McCloud categorizes the combinations of words and images to a panel sequence to word specific, image specific, duo specific and additive. In word specific, words are used to convey the meaning, in image specific combination images are used as a primary tool of conveying the meaning while words are playing a supportive but secondary role, such as sound effect. In the duo specific, both words and images play an equal role in the meaning conveying while in additive, words are used as an amplifier of what the image wants to convey (McCloud, 1993, p. 153).

There is also parallel, montage and interdependent combination (McCloud, 1993, p. 154). In the parallel combination the words are not related to the images. For instance, when a character is shown walking and the words describe his thoughts. In the montage combination the words are fundamental to the picture. In the interdependent combination, the words are used in liaison with the image to provide a meaning. In other words, the words are used in order to describe the image. If the words were absent, could have meant something totally different. For example, an image of a guy who is emitting bad odor along with the words, "Does he look like CEO to you?". When it comes to form, manga are similar to comics, except from the fact that they are black and white instead of colorful.

McCloud (1993) mentions that comics can produce meaning either by analyzing them textually or visually. Not only comics include storytelling, but also, a lot of things can be analyzed such as the way the panels are placed, the way time flows and how the words are correlated to the pictures. Comics is a medium that it can become a vessel of keeping ideas and images together. What McCloud means is that the message is of great importance and should never be skipped.

McCloud (1993, p. 44) mentions some visual characteristics manga have in general, for instance, the characteristic of objectification. According to this, heroes are usually drawn in a simple manner, in order to be identifiable by the readers. But, when the mangaka wants to point out a specific attribute, then the heroes or the objects are drawn in extreme details. For instance, the sword the hero holds usually
looks normal but if there is something need to be shown like a scratch, then it needs to be objectified so it is drawn by using extreme details.

McCloud considers images as received information and words as perceived information. By received information he means that the message is instant and no further reading is required. By perceived information he means that more effort is needed in order to decode the meaning. But of course, if the images are complex, then they might turn to perceived information and the opposite, when words and sentences are too simplistic, they can be treated as received information.

McCloud’s analysis of comics is very interesting and as already been told, some of the strategies he suggests can be applied to manga as well. Everything is important for analyzing comics according to him, such as the colors used, the lines used, the background, the frames and the transitions between the frames. Emotions and senses can be made visible (McCloud, 1993, p. 121). I believe that some parts of the character can also be made visible by images (i.e. blushing or nervously playing with the fingers are traits of a shy person). Lines sometime can become a symbol which transfers linguistic meaning (i.e. lines above a garbage can transfer the meaning of the odor). Neil Kohn (as cited in Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 192), makes a distinction between conventional and non-conventional symbols. Conventional symbols are the ones that they are generally recognized and they are not correlated only with a particular context such as the lines to show movement or the speech bubbles. Shoujo manga make use of a lot of nonconventional visual symbols such as sparkling or flowers in the background. Conventional depictions can include fangs or fire in order to show anger. One of the most conventional depiction is the nosebleed to show lust (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 192).

The basic form of manga is four panels in a page, reading from right to left, from top to the bottom. The most useful information is on the bottom of the page, which means that if the artist wants to give emphasis on a theme, he will put it on the bottom of the page (Ingulsrud & Allen, 2010). At this point it should be mentioned that in a lot of manga if the artist wants to give emphasis on a scene, she devotes a whole page to it. Additionally to the panels, symbols which indicate movement, action, sound effects and emotions are used (Ingulsrud & Allen, 2010).
Last but not least, there should be a note on the heroines’ character is defined. There are three ways of understanding or evaluating the character of the heroine, but most of them derive from the manga itself. Sometimes the mangaka provides a description for the main heroine, which is how the others are thinking of her. For instance, in *Kaichou Wa Maid Sama* (2005 – 2013) by Hiro Fujiwara the heroine is described by others as a scary character who excels at everything and boys fear of her. At the same time, there is the characterization of the main male character who sees her as a caring person who cares about others and he is not scared of her. And then, there is the readers’ viewpoint who see the heroine as “tsundere”, a girl who gets easily irritated but she is a loving person. The above theories and observations were used in order to come up with a study design that would be suitable for the analyzed topic and which can be used for future purposes.

### 3.2 Study Design

This part presents the set of methods that were used to design the study in a way that the research questions would be answered effectively. As it was mentioned in the previous part, comics and consequently manga constitute a medium where the combination of image and words is needed in order to fully understand the message the writer wants to convey. Thus, I believe that it is difficult to arrive to a safe conclusion analyzing the manga only textually or only visually. Takashi (as cited in MacWilliams, 2008) mentions that in order to analyse and study manga someone needs to focus not only on the plot but also on the visual. In this particular research, what I wanted to extract comes mainly from the overall understanding and evaluation of the characters. For example, there are manga where some of the characters are expressionless. These kind of characters are not easy to decode just by analyzing the images. On the contrary, there are cases where there is a panel with the heroine just blushing or just crying. At this point, the reader could not decode what is happening if there wasn’t this combination between images and words.

This thesis is using two parts for its analysis, a quantitative and a qualitative. It is worth mentioning though, that the quantitative parts works as supplementary to the qualitative. The method I applied is multimodal text analysis, which in this particular
case is a combination between textual and visual analysis. Liu (2013) mentions that multimodal texts transfer information by means of different modes, like images, written language or other semiotic resources. According to him, multimodal texts are more complex than written texts.

Multimodal text analysis is used in order to analyze every form of communication that includes two or more semiotic resources. (ÓHalloran, & Smith, 2012, p. 2). For instance, speech does not include only the analysis of the audio but more elements such as the voice, the intonation, and the pauses of the speaker. According to Liu (2013), multimodal text analysis is used to analyze the way some or all of the different semiotic modes entwine together to shape a unified text or a communicative event.

Hull and Nelson (2005), who have created a multimodal model for analyzing digital storytelling, mention that the digital transformation has paved the way for multimodality as there are more and more texts that combine image, written text, audio, design etc. Yet, multimodality existed long before the digital transformation, and they do also mention that multimodality has existed since ancient times and it is a distinguishing factor of the human communication (Hull & Nelson, 2005, p. 227). A film is a multimodal text, an advertisement is a multimodal text and certainly a comic and consequently a manga is a multimodal text. This is also supported by Chu & Coffey (2015, p. 145) who are mentioning that comics and graphic novels embrace both literary and pictorial portrayal in their narratives, hence engagement with these kinds of text forms that Kress and Jewitt characterized as multimodal literacy in 2003. Sanz (2013, p. 1) when to comics’ popularity, mentions that comics can be regarded as an authentic multimodal genre whose meaning is formulated out of combinations of different modes, where each mode has a particular task and function.

One very interesting note by Hull and Nelson (2005, p. 234) is that when someone is doing a multimodal analysis, he needs to focus on a specific aspect of analysis than analyzing everything, even though this would be the ideal. Baldry and Thibault (2006) are suggesting Multimodal text analysis as a method to analyze among other media cartoons as well. Schwartz and Rubinstein-Ávila (2006, p. 41) mention that manga demand a “unique multimodal reading”. Chu & Coffey (2015) performed a multimedia text analysis in two graphic novels of Southeastern Asian
origins. In their analysis, they used Fairclough’s model for critical discourse analysis to analyze the graphic novels. Among others they examined the panels, the transition, the narrative, the colour used, the motion lines, the translation and the characterization of the “protagonists”.

Judging by the fact that manga constitute a multimodal text and that a lot of researchers have used multimodal text analysis for examining both manga and comics, I believe that multimodal text analysis is the best method to analyze manga. Since the challenge is to evaluate a heroine’s character, a textual analysis should be made in order to get the overall meaning. But, along with this, the panels which present the heroines should be analyzed at a basic level.

Multimodality does not command for one single approach, but it is characterized by different approaches and perspectives (Baldry, & Thibault, 2006, p. xvi). As already mentioned, this study uses mixed research methods which is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. A study design can be defined as mixed if it uses at least one quantitative and one qualitative method in order to collect and analyze the data. (Greene Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989). The combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods supplement each other and leads to a more integrated analysis (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Quantitative is the type of research when statistics, mathematics or/and numbers in general are used in the examination and analysis of the data (Given, 2008). By contrast, in qualitative studies, the researcher makes use of narrative data (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). The data are usually derived from “direct fieldwork observations, in-depth, open-ended interviews, and written documents” (Patton, 2005). Qualitative researchers engage in naturalistic inquiry, studying real-world settings inductively, to generate rich narrative descriptions and construct case studies. In quantitative studies the researcher is focused on the results while in qualitative the focus is on the reasons behind the results.

Mixed methods are combining both numerical and narrative examination of the data. Mixed oriented researchers are working within different type of paradigms (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Greene (as cited in Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) believes that mixed methods research is engaging a set of paradigms and thus he does not propose a paradigm over others as more appropriate.
In a mixed methods study design, three issues should be taken into account: priority, implementation and integration (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Priority refers to the focus the research gives on quantitative or qualitative methods. Implementation refers to the collection of the data and specifically whether the qualitative and quantitative data were collected at the same time or in different phases. Integration refers to the mixing between the quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis (Creswell, Fetters & Ivankova, 2004).

The present study gives priority to qualitative analysis but makes use of quantitative elements as well. The implementation of the data took place at different times. First a quantitative method was used, to define certain traits of female heroines. This was followed by the qualitative part. The qualitative part made use of visual and textual content analysis. The integration of the data took place at the end, after the quantitative and qualitative analysis.

As already discussed in the previous chapter, comics produce meaning either by analyzing them textually or visually. Except from the fact that comics include storytelling, a researcher can also analyze other elements such as the way the panels are put, the way time flows or how words are correlated to pictures.

Thus, the method which was applied is a combination between textual and visual analysis. Since the challenge was to evaluate a heroine’s character, a textual analysis was made in order to get the overall meaning. Along with this, the panels which presented the heroines were analyzed at a basic level. Regarding their personality characteristics, Wood’s stereotypical way of representation was used to examine if the heroines were portrayed in a stereotypical way. As mentioned in the literature review there are four ways women are presented in the media: they are less independent, they are incompetent, they are caregivers and they are victims or objects of desire.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The main reason why the decade of 1970 was selected as a starting point for the research is because as it was mentioned in the literature review, the decade of
1970 is important for the history of shoujo manga since it was the decade when the genre started to develop to what it is today. The decade of 2000 is important because it is the latest decade that is completed and thus it is safe to derive some conclusions regarding Japanese society and the roles of women.

According to the Manga Zenkan website (2014), which has compiled a list of the top manga series of all time based on the publications’ number, the most sold shoujo manga of all times in Japan are:

1. *Hana Yori Dago* or Boys over flowers (1992) by Kamio Youko with sales of 60 million volumes
2. *Glass Mask* (1976) by Miuchi Suzue with sales of 50 million volumes
4. *Crest of the Royal Family* (1976) by Hosokawa Chieko with sales of 36 million volumes
5. *Chibi Maruko chan* (1986) by Sakura Momoko with sales of 31 million volumes
7. *Itazura na Kiss* (1990) by Tada Kaoru with sales of 27 million volumes
8. *Asari-Chan* (1978) by Mayumi Muroyama with sales of 26.5 million volumes
10. *Yūkan Club* (2001) with sales of 25 million volumes by Yukari Ichijo

With today’s characterizations, Chibi Maruko Chan and Asari-Chan are considered as children manga, while Nana and Nodame Cantabile can be considered as josei. Interesting is the fact that some manga which are considered to be influential for the genre and have a lot of sales worldwide, such as *Rose of the Versailles* and *Sailor Moon*, are not included on the list above. Ikeda Riyoko’s *Rose of Versailles* was so popular that when the main character died, the teachers had to suspend classes because the students were in tears (Shamoon, 2012, p. 119). *Sailor moon* is still
influential, with the main heroine being one of the four heroines that women of today’s Japan would like to be (Baseel, 2014, March 10). At this point, it should be noted that the above sales are referring to the total sales (all the volumes) the manga have sold and not the sales per volume. Meaning that if some manga have more volumes (like Glass Mask and Boys over Flowers) it is natural to be on the first places, while manga like Rose of the Versailles with only 10 volumes, might not be appeared there. But, since it was difficult to find the numbers per volume, due to the lack of sales in Japan per volume, I decided to use the overall sales of the manga. Yet, even if these manga were not included in the above list, I considered that there should have been a small analysis on the characters of those influential manga and heroines for better understanding on the context. For this reason, a small semiotic analysis of manga covers that they are considered as influential for the genres of each decade between 1970s and 2000s was also conducted.

For the main analysis, two manga from each decade were used. Due to the fact that each volume of every manga contains approximately 160 pages, this accounts for about 500 frames, which is a big amount to study. For this reason, I decided to conduct a visual analysis of some pages. The chapters were chosen by using random sampling which was limited in the decade I wanted to focus (in case where a manga expanded for more than one decade). Another option would have been to choose to analyze visually fewer manga and more chapters, but I believe it is more indicative to include a wider variety, otherwise, I would endanger to have generalized results. Due to the fact that I have read the manga in consideration, if a panel was indicative of the character of the heroine, I decided to present it in the visual analysis, even if it was not on the randomly chosen chapters.

The translations used are made by scanlation groups and they are available on the internet. The scanlation groups are groups that are taking the raw Japanese version of the manga, scan it, clean it and translating it voluntarily, and then upload it to a website. The scanlating versions over the official ones were preferred for two reasons. The first one was the availability, meaning that a lot of the older manga from the 1970s were not yet officially translated. The second reason was the so called foreignization. Official translations are trying to find equivalent words, sound effects or trying to fit the narrative into their own. Scanlators though are keeping this
"otherness" and try to explain cultural differences in footnotes. Such examples is for instance the retaining of the honorifics in the names (Johnson-Woods, 2010, p. 223). Another example is that the official translations in the beginning, they were flipping the pages in order for the readers to read them from left to right (as in the western comics), while the scanlators did not. Nowadays, even official translations do not do that either.

Based on the above, the manga that they were analyzed both quantitatively and by using multimodal mixed methods are: Glass Mask and Crest of the Royal Family from the 1970s and Nana and Nodame Candabile from the decade of 2000. Since Glass Mask hasn’t yet finished, the random sample was picked from the 13 first volumes of the story that they released between 1976-1979. The manga whose covers were examined by using semiotic analysis are: Rose of Versailles by Riyoko Ikeda (1972), Candy Candy by Mizuki Kyoko by Igarashi Yumiko (1976), Wata no Kunihoshi (Star of Cottonland) by Ooshima Yumiko (1978), Tokimeki Tonight by Koi Ikeno (1982), Yukan Club by Yukari Ichijo (1982), Sailor Moon by Naoko Takeuchi (1991), Boys Over Flowers by Yoko Kamio (1992), Skip Beat by Yoshiki Nakamura (2002) and Lovely Complex by Aya Nakahara (2001).

When it comes to manga the main difficulty is to decide whether to do a textual or a visual analysis. But, as McCloud (1993) mentions, the combination between the image and the used words is what makes it possible for the artist to convey his message. For this reason, I decided that there should be both visual and textual analysis of the manga. But, since all four manga count approximately 180.00 pages it was quite difficult to make an accurate and proper analysis since the time was limited. Therefore, there was an elimination of specific chapters and volumes and specific frames were isolated as unit of analysis.

The method I suggest is a mixture of content, visual and textual analysis. The content analysis helps in the overall understanding of the manga, the plot and the way the heroines are presented. Visual and textual analysis focused on specific attributes the female leads bear. The sample of the manga which was used is a mix of random and purposive sample. A random sample insures objectivity, but a purposive sample is used because it is representative of the population. It is a non-probability sample and it is based on the subjectivity of the researcher who makes the decision on what he
should include in the sample. One of the disadvantages of purposive sample is that a research with a different sample might end up in different results. (Hall, 2008:645). That is why in order to avoid this I used also a random sample, which is a probability method of sampling. The purposive sampling was used for the main analysis while the random sampling was used for the supplementary semiotic analysis.

For the general comprehension of the manga all four series were used, while for the visual analysis some random pages were analyzed visually and some panels were chosen with the method of the purposive sampling. Thus, the unit of the visual analysis is the frames where the main protagonist appears in these chapters.

The features which will be examined in order to analyze the manga are:

- How many female characters appear in each manga and how many male?
- How many times the female characters are wearing trousers?
- What are the attributes each female character has (for instance, shy, active etc.).
- How many times do these characteristics appear in the manga? For this classification the general comprehension of the manga was used. Additional classification which is known only to manga readers and anime fans was also used, for instance, tsundere, yandere etc. The classification took place according to how the characters were referring to the heroine and to the researcher's personal evaluation.
- How the basic characteristic of the main heroine are presented visually and textually? Only the frames or the sequence where the main heroine appears were used.
- How the female characters are represented, blonde, tall, slim etc.
- Analysis of the character of the main protagonist depending on the general comprehension of the manga.
- Comparative analysis of the heroines of the manga.

From the main character's sheet I saw which traits I needed to search for visual and textual elements in the random pages I picked up and in the purposive
sample of the rest of the manga. Each panel was checked for visual elements which are related to the specific characteristic the heroine has. For instance, if the character is shy I could check for blushing or the heartbeat sound effect. If the heroine gets angry easily, I could search for this at her look or the way of her depiction.

Manga make use of the same patterns when it comes to depiction of emotions, thoughts or traits. The visual and textual analysis can be made by using McCloud’s basic elements. After the reading, the specific panels were isolated. First an encoding tool was designed. The tool was in a form of an inventory, where the attributes of each female character were added. Each heroine had her own sheet. A ready made scale similar to BEM’s sex inventory\(^4\) could be used regarding the personality traits of each heroine. But since this tool is old and contains a lot of stereotypical characteristics, I decided to use my own evaluation and find traits and characteristics of the heroines. The scale of characteristics can then be used in the analysis of future manga heroines.

One of the biggest challenges was to decide whether someone can be characterized as having one of these traits. For instance, if a heroine is shy only twice, then is she considered as shy in general or if she is shy only towards one person? One way of avoiding this was to use a scale according to how many times a heroine has a specific characteristic.

1. Never or almost never true
2. Usually not true
3. Sometimes but infrequently true
4. Occasionally true
5. Often true
6. Usually true
7. Always or almost always true

Moreover, the characters were divided in 3 categories, Protagonist, Intermediate and Background characters. The protagonists are obviously those that they are the main focus of the story. The background characters are those that the reader encounters, but

\(^4\) BEM’s sex inventory is an inventory which conceptualizes masculinity and femininity based on specific characteristics.
they do not play an important role and the intermediate characters are those that they are having a big part but it is not protagonistic. They can be characterized as side characters. For the quantitative analysis, when I am referring to the main characters I mean both Protagonist and Intermediate characters. Here is an example of how I have defined the different features of Manga characters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Nana Komatsu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of character</td>
<td>Protagonist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair Colour</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>Pretty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wears trousers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big bust</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slim</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically strong</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal oriented</td>
<td>Always true</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talented</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driven by love</td>
<td>Usually true</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes care of her physical appearance</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submissive</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Confident</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ends up being saved by the male character</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shy</td>
<td>Never or</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 41 -
The results were imported in excel and calculated. For each manga there was a different excel sheet. After collecting all the excel sheets for each heroine, they can be combined and a scale for future purposes can be made.

For the data analysis the manga in question were collected and read. Then the sample for the analysis was chosen. A statistical population is the object of a study (Fischer, 1934, p. 3) and can be defined as a large group of possible texts (Armitage, Berry & Matthews, 2002, p. 40) and consists of a collection of similar values (items or events) which is important for a question or experiment (Hand, 2008, p. 64). Hence, in simple words, a population is the real group a researcher wants to examine (Takahashi, 2009, p. 52) and consists of all the objects that are relevant for a study (Wilcox, 2009, p. 4). The statistical population is represented by N. In our study the population are the manga in question. In order to study the population someone needs to draw a smaller group of items of this set (Armitage et al, 2002, p. 40). “A sample is a subset of the complete population of values” (Hand, 2008, p. 64), a group selected from the population (Takahashi 2009, p. 52). The sample is represented by n.

In order for the data collection to become clear, two more terms needs to be presented, confidence level, confidence intervals (or margin of errors). The confidence level is the amount of uncertainty a researcher can tolerate. Higher
confidence level requires a larger sample size. Confidence level is represented by c. Confidence interval (CI) is the margin of error is the amount of error a researcher can tolerate. The margin of error is symbolized with an E. For this study the confidence level was set to 99% and the confidence interval at 5%. For finding the sample the following formula was used: \[ x = Z(c/100)2\sigma(100-r), \quad n = \frac{N \times r(100-r)}{(N-1)E^2 + x}, \quad E = \sqrt{\frac{(N - n)x}{n(N-1)}} \] where \( N \) stands for the population size, \( r \) is the fraction of responses that you are interested in, and \( Z(c/100) \) is the critical value for the confidence level c.

Glass Mask had a population of 2382 pages. For a confidence level of 99% and a confidence interval of 5%, which are giving a good representation, it was decided to check a page for the quantitative analysis every 5 pages, which restricted the sample to 520 pages. The population size for Nana was 4106 pages and the sample size was defined to be 572 pages with a random sampling of choosing a page every 7 pages. Nodame Cantabile’s sample was also 571 pages and Crest of the Royal Family’s sample was 381 pages with a page chosen every 2 pages.

After the data were collected in different sheets, the quantitative part of the analysis took place by using excel. The second part of the data analysis was the analysis of each page that consisted the sample. Each manga page was inserted in a word file and analyzed. At the end of each manga the conclusions that were derived from the reading were written. The third part was the semiotic analysis of the influential manga covers. After all these analyses, the results were combined and the general conclusions were derived.

3.4 Reliability and Validity of the Research

Reliability and validity are two terms very important to quantitative research. Reliability in simple terms is how reliable a method is, meaning that if someone repeats the same test more than once with different sample, the results will be the same (Golafshani, 2003, p. 599). Validity refers to the degree that the research measures what it tries to measure (Golafshani, 2003, p. 599; Litwin, 1995, p. 2). Although a research can be reliable, it might be invalid. The problem with the test-retest aspect of the reliability, lies on the fact that sometimes the researcher or the
participants might be affected from the results of the first test and thus, their answers might be subjective (Golafshani, 2003, p. 599). There are contradictions whether reliability should be a matter in qualitative studies, since a qualitative study might not be proved by test and retest and a valid research is enough to imply that there is reliability (Golafshani, 2003, p. 602).

Instead of validity, in qualitative research, some researchers suggest terms like trustworthiness or quality (Golafshani, 2003, p. 602). It is still under consideration if reliability and validity can be applied to qualitative methods, since they are carrying the researcher’s view and it is not certain that if the research was to be repeated, the results would have been the same (Shenton, 2004, p. 71). This dispute lead to the shift towards ensuring rigor and methods of evaluating the trustworthiness of the research and the researcher, after the research is finished, were introduced (Morse, Barrett, , Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002, p. 1). But, this has the disadvantage of end up conducting a research that it might prove unreliable and invalid. So it is better to acquire methods that can be used before that (Morse et al, 2002, p. 9).

Morse et al (2002, p. 12) suggest that in order to acquire reliability and validity you need to have in mind the following aspects: methodological coherence, appropriate sample, collecting and analyzing data concurrently, theoretically thinking and theory development. One problem in this research was the sampling. What if in the random sampling we couldn’t find any of the characteristics we were searching for? In order to avoid this, the sample was decided to be a mix between random and purposive sampling, thus the probability of error was reduced. Moreover, setting the confidence level at 99% and the confidence interval at 5% ensured a very big amount of sampling, therefore the sample was made as representative as possible. In addition, adding to the above an independent supplementary semiotic analysis of other manga covers advanced the validity and the reliability of the research.

I believe that even if the results were based to a certain extent to my beliefs and evaluation, a high amount of validity and reliability was ensured. This was possible firstly by the big level of confidence that was chosen for the sample (99% with 5% margin of error) and secondly by the supplementary semiotic analysis to other influential manga. Furthermore, the research includes a quantitative part which is totally reproducible.
4. Analysis

The analysis has been divided into three parts. The first part is the quantitative analysis part of the basic four manga under examination, followed by the content analysis of specific manga volumes of the four manga. The third part is consisted of the semiotic analysis of other popular manga covers. The results of the analysis are summarized at the end of this chapter. In the quantitative analysis, a brief description of the manga plot is taking place so it will be easier for someone who does not know the story to follow.

4.1 Quantitative Analysis

**Glass Mask (1976)**

Glass Mask is the story of the noble rivalry between Maya Kitajima and Ayumi Himekawa as they are trying to become actresses. Maya is a natural born talent but she is poor. Gradually she manages to become an actress by taking advice from Chigusa Tsukikage, a former great actress. Ayumi on the other hand is gifted with talent but she is also rich and her mother is also a well-known actress. As Maya tries to become an actress she meets the rich Masumi Hayami who falls in love with her and he becomes her secret admirer, giving her support without her knowing that.

In the first 13 chapters of Glass Mask there are 474 characters. The biggest percentage of them are male characters. In particular, out of the 474, 290 are male (61%) and 184 (39%) are female. The majority of these characters though are background characters (93%) which is natural. In terms of the main characters though (protagonists and intermediate characters), the female characters are more than the male (58% female, 42% male).
Figure 1: The ratio between male and female characters in “Glass Mask”

Figure 2: The ratio of the characters’ types in “Glass Mask”
Figure 3: The ratio between male and female main characters in “Glass Mask”

Interestingly enough, a lot of times at the background characters, some professions always correspond to the same sex. For instance, journalists, directors and doctors are always male while nurses are female. The men in these volumes are presented usually as characters of status. For example, they are teachers (naginata teacher), directors, actors or the object of women’s desire (Satomi). They are also presented as strong while in some instances, women are presented as submissive. For instance, Saeko Mizuki, Masumi’s secretary, although she is a very active person and a woman of status, when she tries to contradict the patriarchy (which is symbolized by Masumi in this instance) she gets slapped and she accepts it without fighting back.

Crest of the Royal Family (1976)

*Crest of the Royal Family* is a story about Carol, a girl from the 1970s U.S.A. who studies archaeology and she has visited Egypt. After she agrees to marry Jimmy, she ends up in ancient Egypt in a mysterious way. Thus this manga makes use of time travel and for this reason there are two timelines. Hence, the “ancient Egypt timeline” is referred as the past and the “1970s timeline” as the present. In ancient Egypt Carol meets Memphis, a young pharaoh with who she falls in love with. This angers Isis, his half-sister, who tries to make Carol’s life difficult. Except from Memphis, Ismir, a young prince of the Hittites
In *Crest of the Royal Family*’s first 5 volumes, there are 184 characters. Out of those, 70% (129) are male and 30% (55) are female. In its vast majority (89%) the characters are background. From the main characters, the analogy is 50% male and female when it comes to protagonists and 73% are male towards 27% who are females for the intermediate characters.

![Chart 1: Male/Female Ratio in Crest of the Royal Family](image1)

*Figure 4*: The ratio between male and female characters in “Crest of the Royal Family”

![Chart 2: Character Types in Crest of the Royal Family](image2)

*Figure 5*: The ratio of the characters’ types in “Crest of the Royal Family”

Someone might think that the women are underpresented, but, since the plot is taking place in ancient Egypt, it is natural in an era where men had more rights than
women to be more prevalent. The status difference in a way is also prominent here. For example, professions such as doctors, professors or wise men, belong to male characters, not only in the past, but in the future as well.

![Crest of the Royal Family](image)

**Figure 6:** The ratio between male and female intermediate characters in “Crest of the Royal Family”

**Nana (2000)**

*Nana* main plot revolves around two girls at the same age who have the same name (Nana) and they are meeting inside a train that goes to Tokyo. Nana Komatsu is a young girl who left her hometown in order to meet her boyfriend Shoji. Before Shoji Nana Komatsu was in love with an older guy who only wanted a sexual relationship from her. In Tokyo her boyfriend Shoji cheats on her and after their break up she ends up with Takumi, a famous bassist but at the same time she starts a relationship with Nobu, Nana Oosaki’s friend, thinking that she had broken up with Takumi. Nana Oosaki was abandoned by her mother when she was young and she decides to go to Tokyo to become a professional singer. Her boyfriend Ren, left one year before but she did not follow him because she did not want to rely too much on him.

In *Nana* 136 characters were found. Out of these, the 112 (47%) are female and the rest are male (53%). The ratio is very similar when it comes to the main
characters. Out of the 38 protagonists and intermediate characters, 17 are female (45%) and 21 are male (55%).

**Figure 7:** The ratio between male and female characters in “Nana”

**Figure 8:** The ratio of the characters’ types in “Nana”
Figure 9: The ratio between male and female main characters in “Nana”

Unlike *Glass Mask*, in *Nana* there is no strong correlation between professions and sex. Although there are more male journalists, there are female journalists as well. The doctors are also both women and men and the same goes for the directors.

**Nodame Cantabile (2001)**

*Nodame Cantabile* is a story about Megumi Noda, or Nodame, a girl who is very good at playing piano but she does not put all her heart to it. While in college she meets by accident Shinichi Chiaki, the best student of the college and decides to marry him. At the same time she tries to become a better pianist.

In *Nodame Cantabile* there are 696 characters. Regarding the character types, there are only two protagonists (setting the % ratio of the characters types close to 0), 48 intermediate characters and 646 background characters. Out of those, the 57% (399) are male and 43% (297) are female. From the main characters, the 21 are female and the 29 are male, a percentage of 58% to 42%.
**Figure 10:** The ratio between male and female characters in “Nodame Cantabile”

**Figure 11:** The ratio of the characters’ types in “Nodame Cantabile”
Figure 12: The ratio between male and female main characters in “Nodame Cantabile”

*Nodame Cantabile* also follows the same example as *Nana* and with the exception of the profession of the conductor, the rest of the professions are distributed to both males and females.

**General Quantitative Analysis Conclusions**

It seems that with the exception of *Glass Mask*, the main female characters are slightly fewer than the male and this does not seem to be affected by the decade the manga was written. As the number of male characters increases during the 2000s, the same happens for the female characters as well, keeping the ratio between male and female characters on a similar level.
Figure 13: All manga’s main characters in numbers

Regarding the hair colour, it seems that the main female characters were presented more as brunettes back in the 1970s while the number of brunettes dropped during the 2000s and the number of blondes was increased. On the other hand there is a dramatic increase of the heroines who are presented with some other hair colour, different than blonde or brunette. Hence, the brunettes might have as well been replaced with the other hair colour characters.

As it is been mentioned in the literature review, the manga of the 1970s a lot of times were set in different countries and the notion of the exotic was prevalent in order the readers can distance themselves. Maybe that is one of the reasons why there were more blonde female characters during the 1970s than in 2000s. During 2000s though, the readers did not have any need to distance themselves and the mangaka decided to follow a more closer to Japanese society approach. The Japanese women are having dark hair and there is also a widespread trend all over Japan for women to dye the hair.
Concerning other characteristics, such as strength or talent, it is difficult to reach a conclusion from quantitative methods only, since not all the intermediate characters meet all the traits. For example, a character might be strong but it might not be mentioned in the manga or it might not fit the context to be mentioned.

The heroines are usually depicted as slim and cute with normal or small bust size. Even if the bust is big, there is no direct implication about it, unlike the shonen manga. Out of all 63 female main characters, no one is presented with big bust and there are only two cases that the female character is not thin (about 3% percent). In these cases, the characters are intermediates (Nana Komatsu’s mother and a paparazzi journalist in Nana).

4.2 Content Analysis

**Glass Mask (1976)**

Glass Mask main protagonists are Maya Kitajima and her rival Ayumi. As far as their depiction is concerned, both of them have similarities and differences. Both of them are talented, strong willed and goal oriented.

In order to show the two girls’ talent, the mangaka first brings an acting challenge (for instance an extremely talented actress), which Maya and Ayumi surpass with flying colours. Another way of showing their talent is that in numerous cases,
the setting of the play is the plot of a particular manga chapters. The fact that, if someone just reads a random chapter story and does not know the context-that it is a theatrical play- he will think that this is the main story, might be indicative to the actors’ talent. Also, another way of depicting their talent is by emphasizing on the audience’s reaction.

Maya in particular is described as talented, goal oriented, insecure, emotional, affective, stubborn, sensitive, helpful, shy, honest, courageous, independent, physically strong, cheerful, humble, introvert, spontaneous, self-blaming, kind and clumsy. Although she is stubborn, she is rational enough to listen to other people’s advice. Regarding her appearance, she is described as ordinary by everyone. Her hair is brown. Despite her plain looks, according to the audience, when she gets on stage she becomes a different person. Therefore, in this aspect she can be characterized as charming. The reason for her insecurity and low self-esteem comes from her mother who usually calls her “good for nothing” and she feels ashamed about her.

Maya puts acting above everything else. This becomes apparent in Volume 11 (p. 150) when Masumi asks her: “Why do you like acting so much? Is it fun to be someone else? Do not you like to be yourself? Have a boyfriend, walk together, or to enjoy friendship at school? Can’t you be a normal girl who lives in peace and happiness”. To this question Maya replies that she does not really know but acting gives her courage and she feels alive.
Although independent, she acts childish sometimes, but she is also strong and feminine at the same time. An example of this is when she tries to learn naginata\(^5\) using a broom. A stereotypical female tool is transformed to a bladed weapon, a stereotypical male tool. Her talent is admirable even by the patriarchy, a fact which is confirmed every time Maya is acting and the directors—who are men—are positively surprised by her skills. Although Maya has very good memory skills, she has

\[^5\text{Naginata is a bladed weapon similar to a scimitar.}\]
difficulties in learning, something that is being shown in the chapter when she tries to learn naginata.

* Naginata can be said as Japanese halberd, but instead of having an end on the top, it has a round.

Even though Maya is goal oriented, she is very emotional and usually puts the emotion above logic. For instance, Maya is carried by her emotions when she sees her mother. She forgets that she is acting and she starts crying in the middle of a theatrical play (volume 9, page 33).
In Volume 13, which is the last volume of the 1970s, Maya is depicted as a girl who can easily be distracted when it comes to love. This is being shown in different occasions, but mostly towards the end of the volume, when Maya cannot concentrate on her role. She acts all embarrassed, having a red face all the time, a dreamy look and wondering what is wrong with her every time she thinks of Satomi. Despite that, Maya is still a girl focused mainly on her career. Her attitude towards love although can be justified by the fact that she is emotional in general and not only when it comes to love. She could not concentrate when she saw her sick mother and
she could not concentrate sharing the same stage with Satomi. That itself does not make her a heroine that she is only driven by love.

![Image 4: Maya is getting shy with Satomi](image)

Ayumi, the other protagonist is described as talented, goal oriented, confident, independent and stubborn. She is considered to be very pretty and she is blonde. Ayumi is very similar to Maya in her depiction, but she is shown as more strong willed and goal oriented than her. Ayumi is seen as totally independent when she makes her own decisions for her career. She is so driven by her goals that she appears in a TV show where she is invited, wearing the make-up and the clothes of the role she is impersonating.

Interestingly enough, when it comes to appearance, Ayumi is presented more feminine than Maya, with the majority of the time appearing in a dress, having her blonde hair in a trim style and a perfect make-up. Maya on the other hand is being shown a lot of times wearing trousers, not wearing make-up and having her dark hair sloppily styled. Despite this contradiction, it is Ayumi who seems to care more for her
career and she is depicted almost as having no emotions. Someone might have thought that a girl who takes care of her appearance is more interested in romance.

But this perfect appearance of hers might just be related to the fact that she comes from a wealthy family. Ayumi does not care of sacrificing her appearance though, something that is seen in a lot of instances. For instance in volume 6, (p. 156), Ayumi has lost weight and poses as a beggar in order to play the beast’s lackey.

One interesting observation is that the romance came in the manga at the end of the 1970s. Compared to the mangas of today though, Maya back then was more focused on her acting skills than in the romance. But, still Maya remains a girl driven mainly by her career.
The "saved by the male hero" stereotype is repeated in some cases. For instance in Volume 1, (p. 110) Maya is saved by Ryu, her male friend or a lot of times when she loses heart, she is saved by Masumi.

![Image 6: The "saved by the male character" trope](image)

Another character who is worth mentioning is Rei, a girl who everyone mistakes for a boy and who is liked by all the girls. Most of the times Rei appears wearing male clothes, except if she performs a female role. Rei is calm and usually acts as the voice of logic. For instance, when Maya is mad towards Daito Company, Rei explains to her that she should accept the offer because it is good for her career. Someone might think that the mangaka made on purpose a girl who looks like a boy to be rational, in order to confirm the stereotype that men are rational and women are emotional. But Ayumi is usually rational and the only emotions she shows in extent is the feeling of fair competition towards Maya. She is jealous but she has a sense of justice.

**Crest of the Royal Family (1976)**

Carol, the protagonist of Crest of the Royal Family is described as brave, risky, curious, energetic, clumsy, cool headed, emotional, shows compassion, stubborn (according to Memphis), altruist, kind (according to Sephora). Carol is also a self-blaming person. When it comes to her appearance, in the modern era, she is considered as very ordinary or even tomboyish but due to her blonde hair, in the past she is regarded as a beauty. Carol has a petite body. Contrary to Glass Mask, Jimmy, an intermediate character, confess his feelings to Carol in the first chapter and she accepts his confession pronouncing him her fiancé.
Crest of the Royal Family plays a lot of times with the ‘‘saved by the male character’’ stereotype. Carol in the first 6 volumes is kidnapped already 3 times and she ends up saved by Memphis.

Carol is also very emotional. A lot of times she is seen crying for help. It is worth mentioning that when Carol calls for help, she usually asks for her brother and Jimmy’s help and when she feels nostalgic she remembers her mom, something that shows that her mother in her mind is representing the house and the traditional values, while the help will come from the male characters.

**Image 7:** When Carol is asking for her help, it is from her brother
Carol is also altruist to the point of sacrificing her happiness by staying in the ancient time to help the people of Egypt. Another prominent characteristic of Carol is that she blames herself for everything that happens like Maya (i.e., volume 4, page 36).

The romance between Carol and Memphis develops very fast. Memphis thinks of Carol as his pet the first time he meets her. By volume 4, Carol says that he loves him more than ever, without any previous evidence to back up her claim. Before that, Carol had agreed to marry him, having in mind that she will find a way to escape. Memphis does not respect Carol’s wishes at all. He made her a slave in order to
punish her for not liking him, he threatens to kill all the servants in palace if she does not accept to marry him, he treats her like an object and never apologizes to her. On top of that, both male characters, Memphis and Izmir act violently towards Carol. Memphis breaks her arm, Izmir punishes her by beating her with a whip or kisses her by force. Memphis prefers to make Carol suffer if she does not accept to marry him.

Image 10: Memphis breaks Carol's arm
The male characters’ behavior is a lot of times justified by the fact that they are living in a different era where women weren’t treated respectfully and men did as they please. But at the end of the day, Carol ends up with Memphis who—in his turn—becomes a little more soft-hearted. Someone might think that the mangaka used this time reference to show the difference and how much times have changed, but if Carol prefers to stay in the past than returning, does not that mean that she prefers this kind of behavior? The difference is emphasized a lot of times when Carol repeats how things are in 20th century.

Crest of the Royal Family mainly focuses in the love relationship between Carol and Memphis. Although a lot of times Carol is mentioning how much she is interested in archaeology, these are only few examples that this can be seen and they are quickly forgotten in the next pages. But, Carol has deep knowledge of the era and Memphis due to her knowledge of archaeology, something that helps her to cope with the ancient society.

**Nana (2000)**

In *Nana* the difference between traditional and modern values is emphasized with the two Nanas, Nana Komatsu and Nana Oosaki. Nana Komatsu is the first one that appears in the manga. Regarding her appearance, she has light brown hair and she is described as cute. She is considered to be not that talented, emotional, love-driven, enthusiastic, spontaneous and according to Nobu impulsive, natural and kind (by
Nana Oosaki, naïve (by her coworker and from the actor that plays Nobu in the Nana movie), careless, self-blaming, possessive, energetic and outgoing (as described by Takumi). For instance, according to Takumi, she is careless and that is the reason she is tricked by men easily (ch. 38, p. 38). The actress who plays the role of Nana Komatsu in the Nana movie describes her as cheerful and a girl who falls in love with all her heart. Nana Oosaki was the first one who gave her the nickname “Hachi” because she reminded her of a famous dog, loyal to its owner. A character from another manga (from the same mangaka) describes Nana Komatsu as obedient. Nana Oosaki also describes her as capricious, crybaby, spoiled and sensitive.

Nana Komatsu says that even if she cannot find a job, cooking meals for the one she loves is the best happiness for her. In contrast to her, the man who chooses to be her husband, Takumi, a workaholic self-centered bassist, believes that his top priority is work. Takumi mentions that his work is accountable for the 90% of his time and then come women—and consequently love. Nana Komatsu is also very indecisive and easily manipulated. For instance, she chose Takumi over Nobu because—as she admits herself—he was there at the moment she needed someone to support her. That also makes her an emotional character since in a difficult time she chose the one that offered her temporary support.

Nana Komatsu has also a low self-esteem. For instance, she mentions that she is happy to see people enjoy her food because she feels useful that way (Ch.41, p. 49). In chapter 43 (p. 36) Shoji says that Nana Komatsu is counting on other people’s earnings to live and that she is also selfish (chapter 43, p. 38). Although Nana Komatsu is very dependent on the others she get over problems easily. She is described as flexible and unusually strong by a character of another manga of the same author. She is also a self-blaming person, a characteristic that is seen in a lot of circumstances, such as when she blames herself for Ren’s death or when she asks for Takumi’s forgiveness after he told her to shut up.
Regarding how her attitude towards love is depicted, there are a lot of instances where she is seen mentally or physically abused by men. At the beginning of the manga she dates a man who only wants to have a sexual relationship with her while she wants a serious relationship. In ch. 36. (vol.10 p. 57), Takumi says to Nana Komatsu to shut up. On the next pages though, it is seen that probably this was due to his anger and he is rational with Nana Komatsu. The normal aspect of life should always been taken under consideration. Meaning that even a female character could have this kind of attitude if she was under stress. In the same chapter Nana Komatsu admits that she really preferred Takumi over Nobu and that she fell for self-centered guys while she should have been in love with Nobu who treated her well. In the next chapter though, Nana Komatsu is calling Takumi and ask for forgiveness self-blaming herself, believing that it was her fault. Nana Komatsu describes how violent was
Takumi when he made love to her, but she went on with that because she wanted to escape the anxiety of that moment (Ch. 49, p. 42). Nana Komatsu mentions that as long as she is the number 1 in Takumi’s heart, she does not care about the rest of the women he might be sleeping with (Ch. 53, p. 5).

Although she mentions that she does not want to become someone who just follows instructions -meaning Takumi- (Ch. 49, p. 27) her life is ruled by other people’s decisions. For instance, she goes to Tokyo without having a job just because Shouji went to study there, she ends up in a marriage while she is unsure who she truly likes and ends up in Tokyo, instead of going to U.K where her husband is,
because she is waiting for Nana Oosaki. She also mentions that if Nobu’s wish was for her to have an abortion she would have done it (Ch.85, p. 28).

Despite the fact that Nana Komatsu is abused by men and she has a submissive attitude, she chooses to do that, the moment she puts love above all. Unlike Carol who ends up in a different patriarchal society and she has to go along with it if she wants to live, Nana Komatsu has the choice of choosing differently. Even if she was manipulated by Takumi, he did not force her on choosing him. Nana Komatsu mentions that she will not lose Takumi because she has Sachiko (her unborn child) and she will make it her goal in life to grow happily this child with Takumi working (Ch. 45, p. 34). From this perspective Nana Komatsu is selfish and manipulative herself, thinking of using her child as a means of keeping Takumi with her.

Nana Oosaki seems as the total opposite of Nana Komatsu. Concerning her appearance she is described as very pretty and stylish by everyone. She has short black hair and she is the only protagonist out of all the examined manga that she has short hair. This might mean that the mangaka decided to depict a strong female character with a stereotypical trait (short hair). As a character, she is described as headstrong (by Nana Komatsu), proud and introverted, but kind with a strong sense for justice. She has a cool attitude, she is daring and possessive. Despite her fierce attitude (Takumi describes her as cold hearted), she herself admits that when she is alone she cries like a little child and the panic attacks she gets later show that she is wearing a facet to show that she is strong.

One of her bigger characteristics is her pride that it is underlined by a lot of characters and even by herself (Ch. 37, p. 17). When Nana Oosaki decides to take advantage of a scandal involving her relationship with Ren and signs a contract, Nobu wonders where Nana’s pride went. In Ch. 31 when Shin tells to Nana that all her clothes are given to her by Ren, Nana is stripping. Nana’s pride is going along with the fact that she wants to be independent and that she does not want to depend on others. Characteristically, after her first panic attack, she says that she hates the weak version of her that she has to depend on others (Ch. 40, p. 18).
Nana is considered to be very talented and a unique singer. In an attitude very similar to Glass Mask’s Maya Kitajima, she says that she feels complete, only when she is on stage. Even “her love for Ren is a full moon that it is not totally full”. Nana prefers to sacrifice her love for Ren for her pride and her career and although she really loves Ren, she does not seem to be mainly driven by love, in contrast to Nana Komatsu.

A trait that is very characteristic on both Nanas is their possessiveness. But, Nana Komatsu shows procession only towards Nana Oosaki, something that she regrets later, while Nana Oosaki is possessive in general. For instance, in Ch. 35 she says she will get Nana Komatsu back through battle tactics, thinking that Nana Komatsu belongs to her. She even scolds Nobu when she learns that Nana Komatsu is most likely pregnant with Takumi’s child. The fact that her boyfriend Ren is wearing a padlock around his neck given by her and she is the only one who has the key also emphasizes this possessiveness.
When it comes to her depiction towards romance, she is more level headed than the rest of the heroines in question. Although Ren is described as the love of her life and he is the only man she has ever been with sexually, she prefers to sacrifice that for her career. Even after Ren’s death and despite her being devastated, she declares that she will continue singing. She gets angry that her mother left her just to be a normal housewife, since for her, career is her main driving factor.

Contrary to Nana Komatsu, Nana Oosaki does not want to bear children and she dislikes the thought of just being a happy housewife, posing a basic feminist matter. She uses the contraceptive pill and in a visit to her gynecologist she asks if every woman has maternal instincts. Her gynecologist answers that every woman has this instinct. This can be seen as an antithesis in a way. A doctor who is female, contrary to the older stereotypical representation where the doctors were presented as males, holds a stereotypical belief, that all women have maternal instincts.

Comparative Analysis of Nana Komatsu and Nana Oosaki

The femininity in this manga is portrayed by emphasizing on the antitheses between the two Nanas. Nana Komatsu’s dream is to find love and to make a happy family, while Nana Oosaki has already the love of her life, but she prefers to give up on it, in order to become a professional singer who will not be depended on others.

Nana Komatsu is a good cook contrary to Nana Oosaki who is described as an awful cook by everyone. Here there is the stereotype that someone cannot be a good cook and strong at the same time since good cooking is considered to be a more traditional feminine skill. Nana Oosaki is described as an energetic person who can work all day. A lot of times she ignores Ren in order to chase her career. On the contrary, Nana Komatsu does not care that much about finding a job and she quits her job as a secretary or not paying attention to her job. She also does not seem to have any goal when it comes to her career.

Throughout the manga, questions regarding feminism are raised. In Ch.38, (p. 12) Nana Komatsu’s mom says that her responsibility (Nana Komatsu’s) is to make a home where her husband can relax in. Moreover, another female character, Reira, wonders why she has to write a music song about love and why do Japanese people like love stories so much. There is also the dilemma whether a woman needs to have a
child or not and the presentation of the contraceptive pill as a way of the woman’s control over her own body.

**Nodame Cantabile (2001)**

The heroine, Megumi Noda or Nodame -as her nickname is- is a girl who is considered odd, almost by everyone. In terms of appearance she is considered to be pretty as two male intermediate characters, Kuroki and Frank, fall in love with her at first sight, praising her appearance. Nodame does not portray stereotypical feminine characteristics. She does not clean her house and not even herself to the point that mushrooms start growing at her clothes. Her cooking skills reach to the point that a lot of people who try her food, end up getting food poison. She farts in front of people and she does not know how to properly put makeup, ending up looking like a clown. Nodame is very spontaneous. Contrary to the Japanese standards where the man approaches the woman at first, she does not afraid to express her feelings towards Chiaki. She is also physically strong, something that is seen when she wins her physical fight over Chiaki.

Nodame is talented in playing piano, being a child prodigy that she can play everything she listens. Nodame is not motivated at the beginning of the story of being professionally engaged with the piano. She is also very persistent, once she sets a goal, but she does not put all of heart in the things she is doing.

When it comes to how she confronts love, she becomes attracted to Chiaki from the beginning of the story and she self-proclaims herself his wife. Comparing to the rest of the heroines she is clingier and she does not afraid to express her love. Once she graduates, her dream is to get married (Ch. 28, p. 34). This can be seen as a balance between the non stereotypical representation of her and the stereotypical belief that women’s role is to become wives.

Although Nodame is clingy and she likes Chiaki, this is presented in a more comical way. In fact she is goal oriented and when Chiaki once tells her that she does things half-heartedly, she acts violently and beats him. She wins their fight with a jump-kick. But even though that fight that is physical, it is presented in an amusing way.
In fact it is Chiaki who possesses more stereotypical feminine characteristics since he does not know how to swim and ends up being saved by a group of girls. He has also a fear of flights and he is the one that ends up being saved by the heroine who successfully hypnotizes him and take his phobia away. In addition, he is the one who cooks for both him and Nodame. It also seems that Chiaki is a music genius due to his hard work while Nodame is a natural talent.

The mangaka kind of inverts the stereotypes making Chiaki bearing more female stereotypical characteristics and Nodame more male. She is also playing with some. For instance, Nodame is a terrible cook like Nana Osaki. Emphasizing once again that a girl who is not traditionally feminine cannot do things that are considered feminine.

4.3 Popular Manga Semiotic Analysis

This part is consisted of the complementary semiotic analysis of popular manga covers of the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. Here some manga covers of manga that are considered influential are presented. The manga covers which were examined were chosen by random sampling.

1970s

**Rose of Versailles by Riyoko Ikeda (1972)**

The Rose of Versailles came out in 1972 by Riyoko Ikeda and it consists of 10 Volumes. The covers of the volumes 1 and 3 were analyzed.
Volume 1 cover

Signifier/Signified: A blonde girl with blue eyes in front of a pink background. She wears a crown and there are flowers behind her.

Denotation/Connotation: The girl is Maria Antoinette the future to be queen of France. Even if someone did not know that, he would have known that she is of noble descent, due to the crown and the jewel on her neck. The author preferred all the colours that are considered feminine such as the pink background and the pink roses. Maria Antoinette is depicted as young, most likely at the age of the 13, something that will make the manga more appealing to the shoujo audience.
**Volume 3 cover**

**Signifier/Signified:** A young man with silver hair and a girl in the background. The background is orange.

**Denotation/Connotation:** At first sight, the reader will probably assume that the person standing in the front is male because of the clothes the character is wearing, but this is not the case. In this case the reader needs to know the context of the story. This person is actually Oscar, who is a woman and the protagonist of the story. Behind her is Maria Antoinette. As already been mentioned in the cover of Volume 1, Maria Antoinette is the epitome of femininity, encompassing all stereotypical female traits. The mangaka is playing with the antithesis. On the one hand there is a girl who bears all the traits a woman should have and on the other hand there is Oscar, a woman who looks and she dresses up as a male.
Even their expressions are showing this antithesis. Maria Antoinette has the dreamy shoujo look while Oscar has a more decisive look without the sparkles in her eyes. Comparing to Maria Antoinette who wears a crown and jewels, Oscar holds a sword and a shield and she keeps the glove out of her hands. The weapons that Oscar holds stereotypically belong to men. Even if the reader wants to avoid the connection, by drawing Oscar holding these objects, the mangaka wants to present her as someone strong, who will protect Maria Antoinette if needed.

**Candy Candy 1975 by Mizuki Kyoko and Igarashi Yumiko (1976)**

Candy Candy is a successful manga from the 1970s and one of the most sold ever. It consists of 9 volumes. The covers of the volumes 2 and 7 were analyzed. Candy Candy is a shoujo manga focusing in love. The story revolves around an orphan girl whose name is Candice. Once, when young, Candice met the so-called Prince of the Hill -her big love that the reader only learns about, in the last volume of the manga.

In general, in all volumes Candice appears on the covers, she dress up girly, she has a big smile and there are flowers at the scene.

**Image 18**: Candy Candy’s covers of Volume 2 and 7

**Candy Candy’s Cover of Volume 2**

Signifier/Signified: A blonde smiling girl in front of a window and flowers are around.
Denotation/Connotation: the girl is Candice, the protagonist of the series. Her clothes indicate that she lives in a different era. Candice looks young and happy. She has the typical shoujo sparkles in her eyes and in the background there are some pink flowers.

**Candy Candy’s Cover of Volume 7**

Signifier/Signified: A blonde smiling girl wearing blue and white clothes. There are flowers around her. She wears two blue ribbons.

Denotation/Connotation: the girl is Candice, the protagonist of the series. Once again, her clothes are indicative of the different era she lives in. She looks young and happy. Her happiness is being portrayed by her big smile and the typical shoujo sparkles in her eyes. There are flowers in the background to emphasize that happiness. Candice brings typical feminine characteristics when it comes to her appearance.

**Wata no Kunihoshi (Star of Cottonland) by Ooshima Yumiko (1978)**

Ooshima Yumiko’s stories are always centered on teenage girls who have a difficulty entering adulthood. Ooshima Yumiko belongs to the 24 Group. The Star of Cottonland revolves around a young cat that the readers sees having human characteristics, but in the manga world, everyone sees her as a cat. The manga gained the Kodansha Manga Award for shōjo. It consists of 4 volumes. The covers of volumes 2 and 3 were analyzed.

The main protagonist is a cat named Neko chan which just means cat. Neko chan has the appearance of a young girl and by reading the manga it becomes clear that there is a hidden symbolism regarding reaching adulthood.
Image 19: Wata no Kunihoshi all Volumes’ Covers (1-4)

Image 20: Wata no Konihushi’s cover of Volume 2
**Wata no Kunihoshi’s Cover of Volume 2**

Signifier/Signified:  A girl with brown hair and cat ears is standing in front of a clock. She has her hands placed in a way that she forms 3 o’clock. Around her there are the stars, the moon, a toothbrush and a cup, and a plate along with a notebook which has the letters of the alphabet. Between 6 and 9 a sea, some birds and a sail are visible.

Denotation/Connotation: The girl is Neko chan. She has the appearance of a seven or eight years old girl. She is posing as clock hands most likely showing events that are taking place during different times of the day. Neko chan looks very much like a porcelain doll, bearing sterotypical feminine traits. Unlike the heroines of the 1970s, Neko chan has brown hair. The fact that she is posing as a clock, might be an indication of repetition. It can be perceived that young girls are brought to do the same things every day.

![Image 21: Wata no Konihoshi’s cover of Volume 3]
Wata no Kunihoshi’s Cover of Volume 3

Signifier/Signified: A young girl with cat ears stands in the middle of a field. There are trees in the background and flowers all over, not only in the ground but in the air as well.

Denotation/Connotation: The girl is Neko-chan the main heroine of the manga. In this drawing Neko-chan has blue hair. Neko-chan is in the middle of a field with a wondering expression (she is looking up) and one of her ears is lifted. The cover itself does not reveal a lot regarding her character, but once again, she is drawn in a way to arouse our “kawaii” feelings.

Tokimeki Tonight by Koi Ikeno (1982)

Tokimeki Tonight is the most sold manga from the 1980s. The story revolves around three heroines, Etō Ranze, Ichihashi Narumi and Aira Makabe. However, Etō Ranze is the main character and Narumi and Aira are main characters in the manga’s side-stories. The manga is consisted of 30 volumes with the 15 of them revolving around Etō Ranze. Etō Ranze is the daughter of a vampire and a werewolf. She has the power to transform to anything she bites. She is in love with her classmate, Makabe Shun.

The difference with the 1970s manga starts to become evident. Tokimeki Tonight focuses mainly on the forbidden love between Ranze and Shuun. Despite that, only some covers of the manga volumes show her and Shuun together, and from them, it is not obvious that their relationship is romantic. The covers of volume 3 and 12 were analyzed.
**Tokimeki Tonight’s Cover of Volume 3**

Signifier/Signified: In this cover there is a young blonde girl with long hair and blue eyes and an older man who is wearing a tuxedo and a cape behind her. The girl is holding a bunch of pink roses.

Denotation/Connotation: The girl is the main heroine, Ranze and the older man is her father. Her father is a vampire, something that is presented by the cape he is wearing. Although Ranze is brunette, in a lot of the manga covers she appears blonde with blue eyes. That might be related to the fact that Ranze has the ability to transform. Ranze in general is strong willed and kind and she cares about her family. The last is visible from this cover since she is drawn along with her father.
Tokimeki Tonight’s Cover of Volume 12

Signifier/Signified: A young girl and a young boy are standing in front of a green fence. They are having silver hair and they seem happy. They are wearing sport clothes.

Denotation/Connotation: The young girl and boy are Ranze and Shuun, the main protagonists of the manga. At this cover Shuun is looking towards Ranze with a tender look while Ranze seems happy. Both of them seem happy and due to the way they look each other, they seem that they are in a relationship which most likely is romantic than friendly. The sparkles around them might also be indicative of that. Shu is taller than Ranze, something that subconsciously might lead the reader to think that he is the one that saves and protects Ranze. The matching colours of their
clothes might also be a sign of them being in a relationship. They both combine red, blue, white and green clothes and also the wire is green.

**Yukan Club by Yukari Ichijo (1982)**

Another popular manga of the 1980s is Yukan Club which received the Kodansha Manga Award for the shōjo category in 1986. It consists of 19 volumes. The main story revolves around three different types of girls: Kizakura Karen who likes boys, Hakushika Noriko who dislikes them and Kenbishi Yuri who is liked by girls. The covers of the volumes 4 and 15 were analyzed.

**Image 25: Yukan Club’s Cover of Volume 4**

**Yukan Club’s Cover of Volume 4**

Signifier/Signified: There are three young women in front of a checked pattern wall. All of them are wearing sunglasses and the one in the middle is wearing a police officer’s hat.

Denotation/Connotation: These girls are the main heroines of Yukan Club. Looking from left to right, the first one is Kizakura Karen, the second is Kenbishi Yuuri and the third is Hakushika Noriko. Karen is a stylish girl and the one that pays more attention to her beauty. Her dream is to marry a rich man. The fact that she pays attention to her appearance is evident since she is wearing a pink dress, gold jewels, long gloves and most likely a fur. Yuuri has a more androgynous look and that
justifies that she is liked by girls. Yuuri is strong and takes out the bad guys with her punches. The police hat in her head, which is a symbol of power and authority might indicate that. Noriko is the embodiment of the typical feminine traits of old Japan. She is not that physically strong and a lot of times she is the one that gets rescued by the male hero. The pink dotted dress might represent that “fragility”

In general all of them seem fashionable and ready for action. The sunglasses hide their eyes so their expressions are not visible, but at the same time they reflect those who they look at.

Image 26: Yukan Club’s Cover of Volume 115

Yukan Club’s Cover of Volume 15

Signifier/Signified: In this cover, three young women and three young men are smiling. One of the women is winking and has her finger close to her lip.

Denotation/Connotation: The people on the cover are the main characters of Yukan Club. At the top is Yuuri, who seems more like a male in contrast to Bidou – the guy with the blonde straight hair in the middle who looks more like a female character. Their sex is becoming obvious because Yuuri is wearing the girls’ uniform and Bidou is wearing the boys’ one. Yuuri seems carefree, something that fits with her description as an energetic and spontaneous girl. Karen who is the one who likes boys
and wants to seduce them is portrayed in a playful way. She winks while at the same time she has her index finger close to her lips. Noriko who is the embodiment of all traditional feminine characteristics is having a calm and more of a typical expression. It is worth mentioning that Yuuri is considered to be as strong as boys, therefore the placement at the top might be indicative to her strength, that she is the one protecting the Yukan Club.

On the other hand, the male character who looks like female, Bidou, is placed between Karen and Noriko. Except from his outer characteristics, Bidou is not physically strong and he is not particularly good at sports. He is placed exactly opposite to Yuuri -which might indicate this difference- and next to the girls with the more stereotypical representation, but also between the boys, as a kind of connecting character between the males and females. The relationship between the male and the female characters seems to be friendly rather than romantic.

1990s

Sailor Moon by Naoko Takeuchi (1991)

Sailor Moon made the genre of the magical girls popular and it is one of the most sold manga not only in Japan but also worldwide. The story revolves around Usagi Tsukino, a middle school girl who gains super powers and along with her friends she is fighting to protect the earth from evil. The covers of volumes 4 and 12 were analyzed.

In the Sailor Moon covers the main protagonist, there is always Usaki Tsukino either alone or with her friends. In a few cases instead of her friends, she is along with Mamoru Chiba her boyfriend.
Sailor Moon’s Cover of Volume 4

Signifier/Signified: Five young girls with different hair colours are posing in front of the half-moon. The girls are wearing similar uniforms which are very short.

Denotation/Connotation: The girls are sailor moon and the rest of the sailor warriors. The girl in the middle is Usagi Tsukino, the protagonist. The sailor uniform
they are wearing is a variation of the school uniform. From this, the reader can safely assume that they are students. Their skirts are short but not revealing. Their pose is active and they seem ready to fight.

![Image 29: Sailor Moon’s Cover of Volume 12](image)

**Sailor Moon's Cover of Volume 4**

Signifier/Signified: A young brunette boy hugs a young blonde girl and the background is filled with stars. They are wearing white.

Denotation/Connotation: The girl is sailor moon with her boyfriend, Mamoru. The galaxy is behind them, something that it is indicative to the fact that they are both sailor warriors. Mamoru seems protective most likely because they are in the normal timeline, while when she is a sailor warrior she constantly worries over protecting him. It is obvious that Usagi and Mamoru have a romantic relationship from the way they hug each other. They are not looking at each other but Mamoru is having his hand through Usagi’s hair and she is holding his arm. The white colour on their clothes might imply that they will get married.
**Boys Over Flowers by Yoko Kamio (1992)**

Boys Over Flowers is the most sold shoujo manga in terms of total volumes sales in Japan. It consists of 37 volumes. The story focus on Tsukushi Makino, a girl who enters a rich academy because her parents hope that she will seduce a rich man and get them out of poverty. The covers of the volumes 1 and 29 were analyzed.

*Image 30: Boys Over Flowers all Volumes covers of (1-37)*
Boys Over Flowers’ Cover of Volume 1

Signifier/Signified: The picture shows one brunette girl in the middle and two boys kissing her. The face of boy on the left is not visible but he is holding flowers.

Denotation/Connotation: The girl is Tsukushi Makino, the main heroine of the story and the boys are Hanazawa Rui on the right and Tsukasa Domyoji on the left. Rui is kissing her on the cheek, something that shows affection while Tsukasa is offering her pink flowers, a symbol of love and romance. A pink rose also is a symbolism for innocence and first love. She seems worried, reaching out her hand and the drop of sweat shows that she is uncomfortable with that situation.
Boys Over Flowers’ Cover of Volume 29

Signifier/Signified: The picture shows one girl with bob styled pink hair in the middle and two boys behind her. There are flowers around them.

Denotation/Connotation: The girl is Tsukushi Makino, the main heroine of the story and the boys are Hanazawa Rui on the right and Tsukasa Domyoji on the left. Comparing to the first volume’s cover, there is a difference since Tsukushi has her hair cut and instead of black it is pink. She seems happy, something that is evident from her big smile and in contrast to the first volume, all of them seem to have a friendly and not romantic relationship since there is no direct touching between the characters. But the flowers that are spread all over might indicate otherwise.
2000s

Skip Beat by Yoshiki Nakamura (2002)

Skip Beat was chosen not only for its popularity but also because it has a similar plot to Glass Mask. Kyoko Mogami, the main character wants to become an actress, with the difference that she started that, in order to get revenge from her ex love interest who she followed to Tokyo. Despite the fact that Kyoko starts as a submissive girl who gives up everything for love, she becomes an independent character and she starts to love acting. The manga is still ongoing and 37 volumes were released when this thesis was written. The covers of volumes 28 and 30 were analyzed.

Image 33: Skip Beat’s Cover of Volume 28

Skip Beat’s Cover of Volume 28

Signifier/Signified: The picture shows one girl with bob styled brown hair wearing a pink uniform. She has her thumb extended and there are stars behind her.

Denotation/Connotation: The girl is Kyoko Mogami, the protagonist of the series. The pink uniform belongs to the “Love Me” club, a club for people who do not feel love in a romantic way. This implicates that Kyoko does not put love above all. The stars behind her might be an allegory for her as a rising star.
Image 34: Skip Beat’s Cover of Volume 30

**Skip Beat’s Cover of Volume 30**

Signifier/Signified: The picture shows one girl wearing a white dress and a man behind her holding a bunch of bordeaux roses.

Denotation/Connotation: The girl is Kyoko Mogami, the protagonist of the series and behind her is Tsuruga Ren, one of the two main male characters of the series. Kyoko is dressed up as a bride and Ren as the groom, holding a bouquet of bordeaux flowers. If someone does not know the plot, he would assume that Kyoko is getting married. Yet, this does not related to the story at all, but it might represents the feelings of the readers, Kyoko’s subconscious feelings or there might be a play where the characters are acting. Kyoko seems active, she throws flowers towards the audience and she is cheerful while Ren behind her is serious. Contrary to the Cover of Volume 28, she bears more stereotypical characteristics. She has long hair and she is a happy bride.

**Lovely Complex by Aya Nakahara (2001)**

Lovely Complex is another successful manga of the decade of 2000. It won the Shogakukan Manga Award in 2004 for the shoujo category. The story revolves around the love story between Risa Koizumi, a tall girl and Atsushi Ōtani, a short boy. The manga consists of 17 volumes. The majority of the volume covers presents the protagonists. The covers of volumes 4 and 16 were analyzed.
Image 35: Covers of all Volumes of Lovely Complex

Image 36: Lovely Complex’s Cover of Volume 4
Lovely Complex’s Cover of Volume 4

Signifier/Signified: The picture shows one girl and one boy with brown hair. They are both wearing one scarf and they are both dressed in shades of blue.

Denotation/Connotation: The girl is Risa and the boy is Otani. The double scarf can be seen a lot of times in the manga and it is usually worn by couples. They seem happy and they are next to each other. The focus of this cover is in their romantic relationship.

Image 37: Lovely Complex’s Cover of Volume 16

Cover of Volume 16

Signifier/Signified: The picture shows a young boy holding a heart. Inside the heart there is a girl who blows kisses to him.

Denotation/Connotation: The boy is Otani and inside the heart is Risa who sends her love (in the form of hearts) towards him. This cover alone might indicate that Otani holds Risa in the palm of his hand, but the cover of the previous volume
which is not examined in this analysis, had exactly the same topic with Risa being the one holding a heart with Otani inside. Taken this into consideration, the cover most likely emphasizes the romantic relationship between the two.

**Kimi ni Todoke by Karuho Shiina (2005)**

*Kimi ni Todoke* is an ongoing manga who is the most sold shoujo manga the time the thesis was written. It also won the 32nd Kodansha Manga Award in the shoujo category. Until the time the analysis took place, 25 volumes have been published. The story revolves around the love story between Sawako Kuronuma and Shota Kazehaya. Sawako is shy and introverted and due to her long black hair her schoolmates are calling her Sadako (like the girl from the horror movie “The Ring”). Despite her appearance, Sawako wants to make friends and she is metaphorically saved when Shota Kazehaya, the most popular boy at school starts talking to her. Gradually she starts making friends and a love story is blooming between them.

The covers of the volumes 7 and 17 were analyzed. The majority of the volume covers feature Sawako and Shota but there are also covers who feature other intermediate characters.

*Image 38: Kimi ni Todoke’s Cover of Volume 7*
Kimi ni Todoke’s Cover of Volume 7

Signifier/Signified: The picture shows a young boy and a young girl with black hair sitting back to back to each other. There are flowers in the background and the girl has red cheeks.

Denotation/Connotation: The girl is the heroine, Sawako and the boy is the main male hero. The blushing shows that Sawako is shy. Shota seems confident, something that goes hand to hand with him being the most popular boy at school. Their position shows that there are romantic feelings between them, but their relationship has not moved to the point of being an actual couple. The flowers on the background indicate romantic feelings between them.

Image 39: Kimi ni Todoke’s Cover of Volume 17

Kimi ni Todoke’s Cover of Volume 17

Signifier/Signified: The picture shows a young boy and a young girl very close to each other. Their eyes are closed.
Denotation/Connotation: The pair are the protagonists of their manga. They seem ready to kiss each other. This indicate a romantic relationship between them that already exists.

**Analysis of the Manga Covers: Conclusions**

During 1970s the manga were focusing on the goal achievement of the heroines and even if there was love, it was complimentary to the plot, while after 1990s, the majority of manga focuses mainly on romance. (Kukhee Choo, 2008, p. 280). Despite that, during the 2000s, the manga that sold the most were manga that were focusing in career and goal achievement, meaning that the audience in Japan might be girls that have solved a lot of matters and that they are interested in romance, but on the other hand, they still admire women that work towards a goal.

But from the popular manga covers complementary semiotic analysis, it became evident that from the 1970s onwards the focus shifted from career to love. The manga of the 1970s did not include any romance characteristics in their cover, even if their plot was revolved around love. For example, in *Candy Candy*’s cover, although the story is revolving around romance, Candice is always presented by herself. This might be related to what it was presented in the literature review, since romance between boys and girls was considered a taboo.

During the 1980s this heterosexual relationship taboo starts to fade. *Tokimeki Tonight*’s mangaka is not afraid of drawing a romantic relationship on the manga cover, although it is not that evident. In the 1990s the relationship taboo is non-existent since both *Sailor Moon* and *Boys Over Flowers* include covers where a romantic relationship is presented. But it is noteworthy that at this decade, *Sailor Moon*, an active and strong character is presented who becomes the favorite among girls all over the world, and even if she bears stereotypical feminine characteristics such as long hair and mini-skirts, she is strong enough to protect her boyfriend.

The 2000s find the women having solved a lot of issues regarding their freedom, hence the stories are focusing on love. Two out of the three most popular manga which were analyzed by using semiotic analysis had love as their main interest and love is also evident in the third manga, as well as the two manga that they were
analyzed in the main analysis (*Nana* and *Nodame Cantabile*). More conclusions regarding the female representation are presented in the next chapter.
5. Conclusions

This final chapter of the thesis discusses the conclusions derived from the analysis in a further extent. Summarizing, it seems that actually, the changes in the manga do not follow the changes in the Japanese society and in some cases, they move into opposite direction.

From the analysis, it became evident that during the 1970s, the manga's plot was focused mainly on goal achievement and love was supplementary to the plot. In fact, love as the main subject did not come in the manga before 1980. During the 2000s, the majority of the manga have love as their main subject. This can be comprehended as a reflection of a postfeminist approach where women have solved their majority of their problem and therefore, they can read romantic stories. But, both *Nana* and *Nodame Cantabile*, the most sold manga of this decade were focusing in both goal achievement and in love. This might mean that Japanese women might have solved their problems, but still hold in high regard girls who are devoted to their goals and who are trying to achieve them.

Regarding tradition, the shoujo heroines continued to be in the same age as the typical shoujo girl in their teens. But in a lot of cases, the heroines start as teenagers and as the manga evolves, they enter adulthood. This is the case with the majority of the analyzed manga. Both of Nanas are now in their adulthood, as well as Maya, Ayumi, Carol and Megumi.

As far as the art is concerned, it is noteworthy that the manga of the 1970s were following the idea of the shoujo girl who looks frail and daydreams all the time. Maya Kitajima is a typical example of that, despite the fact that her daydreaming has to do with the theater and her career. As mentioned in the literature review, the era between 1970 - 1980 is characterized by the "cute" trend, which is also being shown in manga. At this point, it should be mentioned that back in the 1970s, big breasts were not considered as the epitome of womanhood. This started happening after 1980s and it was considered as a rebellion against the cuteness of the 1970s. But in the majority of the examined shoujo manga, women do not have particularly big breasts. For instance, in Nana, only one character is described as having big bust and
this girl is a porn star, something that might be indicative that big breasts are linked to seduction. In addition, as we approach the 2000s the art starts to change. The background does not have so many flowers or it can be totally clear and the panels are connected clearly to each other.

But except from the general idea, which is related to the fact that the trends in manga do not follow real life, some ideas are corresponding to the changes in society. For instance, Nana Oosaki is taking the contraceptive pill. The contraceptive pill became legal in 1999 in Japan, a few years before the manga started. I believe this was the mangaka’s idea to remind to women that now they can have control over their body.

However, in Japanese society, it is known that 40% of the marriages during the 1970s and towards the 1980s were arranged marriages, but this was not encountered in any of the analyzed manga. In fact, “arranged marriage” is a genre itself and there are manga specifically having this as its main focus. This might be interpreted as a way of the mangaka showing to their audience -the girls of the Japanese society- that no one else should decide who they will marry or who they are going to fall in love with. For this reason, in the majority of the love stories of the 1970s manga, the romance was genuine. I believe that today the arranged marriage genre is not fully understood and encompasses more “fairy tale features”.

Another correlation with reality is the “punk band” trend which is observed in Nana. As mentioned in the literature review the third wave of feminism has its roots in the girls-only punk bands. Punk music reached Japan a little later than the rest of the world and not in the 1970s, yet, it was a lot earlier than the 2000s when Nana was written. But in Nana the punk movement is presented like something that is taking place during that decade. I am not sure if this was on purpose, but maybe the mangaka is indirectly referring to the third wave of feminism, since Nana Oosaki is a singer in punk band.

It was mentioned in the literature review that during the 1970s, the plot of a lot of manga was taking place in Europe or some other exotic places. In this way, the fact that Carol is a modern American girl in ancient Egypt does not come as a surprise. In my opinion, the Japanese women (and mangaka) were looking up to American women who were considered more independent. In a sense, Carol is representing all
these values that Japanese women were seeking. In a lot of instances Carol is saying to Memphis who lives in ancient Egypt that his behavior is unacceptable in the United States of America of the 1970s. This time travelling might also serve the purpose of showing the antithesis between how women were treated in the past—which is represented by Ancient Egypt—and how they should be treated, which is represented by the United States of America. An exaggerating reading of this time travelling might interpret ancient Egypt as being a representation of the Japan of the 1970s, in the sense that there, women were still fighting for their rights. Nevertheless, it is not certain that women in the rest of the world were more independent, at this point of time.

An additional parallelism between the manga and the Japanese society was also observed. In the literature review, it is noted that during the 1990s, although it was official that women could purchase a career, there was an unwritten rule saying that women should be housewives or raising their children. I believe this contradiction can be seen in *Nana*, where Nana Komatsu wants to be a housewife and Nana Oosaki is focused on her career. Nana Komatsu’s behavior entails in the liberal feminism, since it seems that all her attitude comes from her mother who keeps on telling her that her role in society is to make a nice and relaxing place where Takumi would love to come back.

It is also notable, that from the analyzed manga, none of them followed the typical manga characterizations for their protagonists like tsundere or yandere. Isis is a yandere. The majority of the protagonists have more complex personalities than fitting in a single characterization. That might imply that the majority of the readers were preferring more in-depth characters.

In regard to the stereotypical representation and the four ways women are depicted, we saw that the stereotypical representation applies in a less extent. For instance, when it comes to the independency, Maya is independent since she leaves her house and tries to live for what she loves. Ayumi is rich, consequently she can be more independent since she can do things easier. Yet, she could have been pictured as dependent to her parents, but this is not the case either since she decides to leave her home and live by herself. Carol is independent in the present but not in the past. But again, her stubbornness balances that, since she can be as independent as a woman of
that era can be. For example, she chose to fly away instead of going back to Memphis or she decided to stand up against him, ignoring the consequences.

In the 2000s the independency continues. Nana Komatsu chose to go and find Shouji, leaving her job and flying to Tokyo where she strived to pay her bills. But where Nana Komatsu loses some points in this independency scale is in the fact that she puts love above all. She is very dependent on Nana Oosaki and very dependent on finding the perfect guy. Nana Oosaki is also considered independent since her mother left her when she was a child. This way she had to take care of herself since she was very young. Furthermore, she considers independency one of the most important aspects of her life, something that is obvious if we take account two facts: the first is her pride and the second is that even if she loved Ren so much, she preferred to stay away from him in order to become famous by herself. Nodame is also considered very independent. She gets angry when she hears that she does things half-heartedly and although she chases Chiaki, she always does what she likes.

As far as the aspect of incompetency goes, with the exception of Nana Komatsu, the rest are contradicting that. Maya, Ayumi, Nana and Nodame are considered extremely talented and Carol is studying archaeology. Nana Komatsu is not incompetent as such but she fails, for instance, to put her heart on a job and she failed the entrance exams for the university. But we see her working at a videoclub, as a promoter and as a secretary, meaning that she has skills, but she cannot commit to a job, maybe because she wants to become the perfect wife.

Nana Komatsu also scores high on the next aspect of Wood's stereotypical representation, which mentions that women are usually caregivers. Nana Komatsu says that her dream is to find a nice husband and she will be happy as long as he is happy. Maya and Ayumi are portrayed to care only about their career and Carol is portrayed as being worshiped like a Goddess from the people of Egypt. In the present (of the manga) we do not see her to take care of the household, since she is rich enough to have battlers and maids for this purpose. Megumi Noda and Nana Komatsu are presented as awful cooks and although they care for the house they are staying, this in an extent can be justified since they are staying alone.

When it comes to the last factor, that women are depicted as victims or as objects of desire, this is true to some extent. Even if Maya and Ayumi do not care that
much about love, Maya is the object of her secret admirer's desire and Ayumi later has a secret admirer too. Carol is the object of desire of both Memphis and Ishmir and the "saved by the male character" trope is applied to her all the time, with the main plot of the manga repeating the scenario of Carol being abducted and then saved by the male character. Nana Komatsu is the object of desire of both Takumi and Nobu and Nana Oosaki is the object of desire of both Ren and Yasu, although Yasu does not show his feelings towards her that much and in the end he finds another girlfriend but he really cares for her. Megumi is also been portrayed as the object of the desire but to a different extend. She is considered as attractive, but people usually stop having any romantic feelings for her when they meet her in person.

Regarding the appearance, there is no particular implication that a hair colour is considered more sexy or attractive than the other, except from Carol's. But maybe this is used to show the difference, since she is a blonde girl in an African country in an ancient era. As the time passes by, there are less blondes than in the past, but there is also a rise on the different hair colour. Consequently, the blonde hair might have been replaced by the different hair colour. Except from the changes in Japanese society, where the blonde was considered as exotic, the mangaka might use more brunettes in order to show the Japanese girls that they should not try to gain exotic characteristics, but they should be happy with their appearance and love themselves.

From the stereotypically male traits which are dominance, aggression, power and control in their emotions, I believe that only Ayumi and Nana Oosaki are having some. Both Ayumi and Nana Oosaki are having control in their emotions with the latter thinking that she should hide her emotions if she wants to stand in an equal place next to Ren and Ayumi is even considered as apathetic. The rest of the heroines are usually very emotional, having emotional bursts that a lot of times interfere with their career or their plan.

The multimodal analysis of the manga heroines which combined visual and textual analysis, along with the quantitative analysis and the supplementary semiotic analysis resulted in some useful observations, with the most remarkable being the fact that female mangaka do not portray their protagonists in a stereotypical way and in fact, they are giving them some characteristics that they are stereotypically considered to be male.
Moreover, it became obvious that the trends in the real world do not follow those of the manga world which is only natural in my opinion. For instance, fairy tales never portrayed the real world but a dream world that some children might want to live. In a lot of revolutions, it was literature and arts in general that paved the way to it. When people could not directly express their opinions about something, they could express it through art. In the same sense, it is not strange that at a time when a lot of women were married in a prearranged way, the mangaka of the time chose not to present this. Instead, they were presenting women who were strong-willed and they were working towards a goal. This way they were creating prototypes that the teenage girls of that era would admire.

I believe the topic is very interesting and further research is needed. Except from the female point of view, it will be interesting to examine the male point of view, meaning how female characters appear in shounen manga. A first approach shows that the female characters in the shounen manga are usually portrayed as sexy when it comes to appearance and week as far as their skills are concerned. Further research is also needed in order to check if this is really the case and a comparative study can be conducted, having this thesis as a starting point.
6. References


