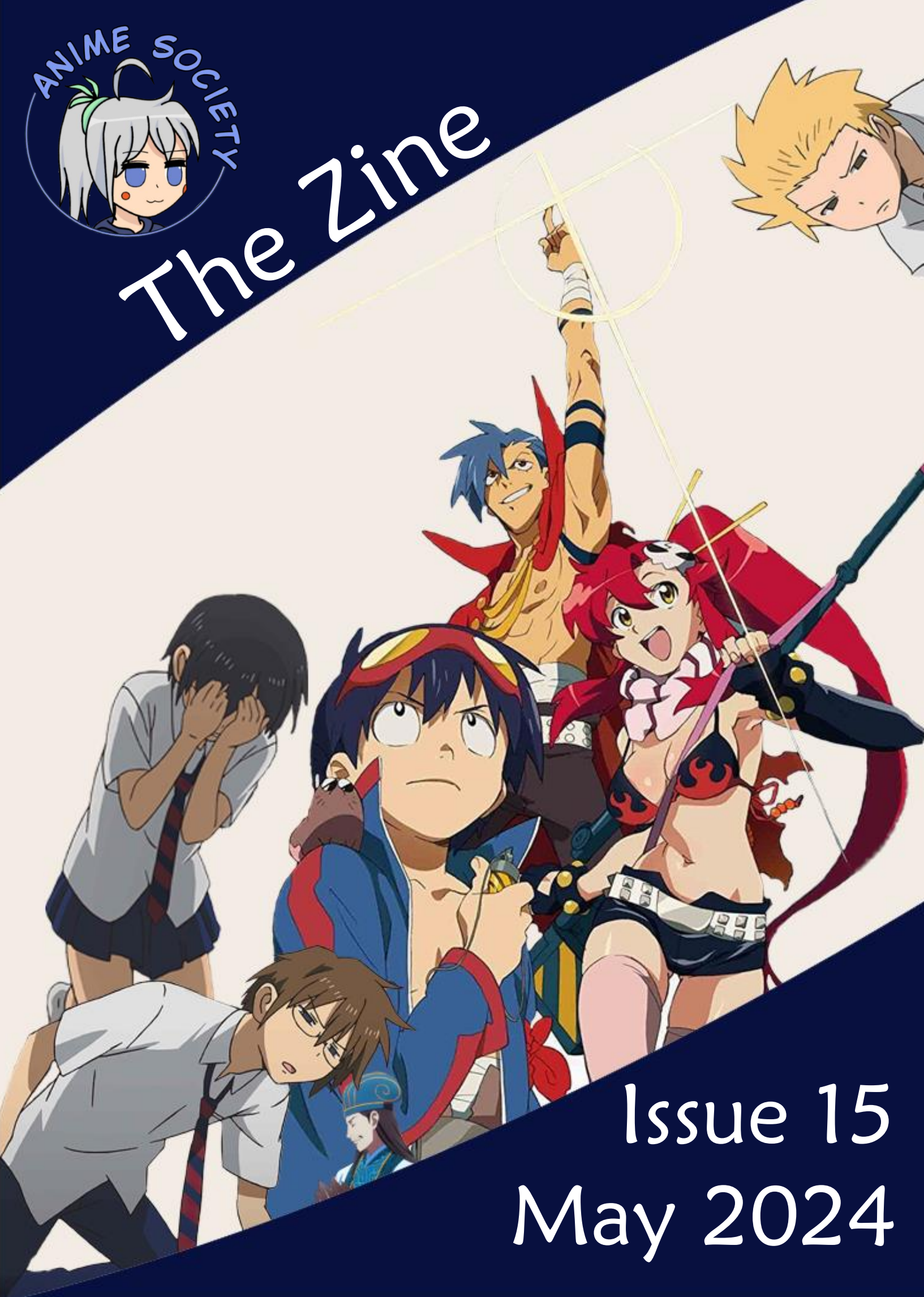




# The zine



Issue 15  
May 2024

Welcome to this year's edition of the Zine!

Thank you to everyone who helped contribute to this masterful tome, it really is the longest we've ever produced and it only keeps growing as the years go on. I hope you'll have as much fun reading this as I have!



The views and opinions displayed in the Zine are those of the author and do not reflect the views or position of AnimeSoc. If you have any comments, please reach out to the original author or a member of the committee.

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# A brief dive into otaku car culture

*By Joaquin Madamba*

Ever since watching Initial D in AnimeSoc, my childhood obsession with cars was rekindled. The only difference between now, and when I was a kid, is that now I'm a weeb. I've since been rediscovering the glorious world of Japanese automobiles and the niche subcultures within the eastern and western car communities. From the mainstream to very niche. This will be a brief dive into the beautiful amalgamation that is otaku car culture.

## **Brief history of drifting and car culture.**

Most of you are probably already familiar with Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift and Initial D. But what you may not be as familiar with is where the sideways vehicular technique came from? But first, what exactly is a drift? Putting it simply, it is when a car turns into a corner and experiences oversteer. Oversteer is when the rear of the car rotates too much, which can cause the car to spin out. Drifting is the art of controlled oversteer. Controlling the car enough to oversteer, but not so much to lose grip and spin out. Now that the basics are out of the way, where did drifting come from? The technique originated around the 1950s, but it wasn't until the 1970s when a man called Kunimitsu Takahashi decided to exploit drifting in his races for both victory and showmanship. Kunimitsu Takahashi was dubbed the 'Father of Drifting'.

Meanwhile watching Kunimitsu's insane antics from the grandstands, every race, every drift ingrained in his mind, was a man called Keiichi Tsuchiya. Little did he know at the time but he would soon be known as the 'Drift King' (aka Dorikin, ドリキン). Long story short, through many race victories, illegal street races, revoked licences, and one AE86. Tsuchiya-san became both legendary and notorious for his influence over drifting. Creating a new generation of drivers who'd also follow in the smoke trail left behind by the Tsuchiya-san. One such product born from drifting, was the series 'Initial D'. Tsuchiya-san was a consultant for both the manga and anime starting from 1995. From which the main character, Takumi Fujiwara was inspired by and based off. Initial D was a major cultural export which brought the art of drifting to the west. Inspiring many video games, films ("If you go hard enough left, you'll find yourself to the right." - Cars 2006) and other media.



*Takumi and his AE86, as well as me imitating his pose.*





*Keiichi Tsuchiya and Kunimitsu Takahashi sharing a podium. The king and father of drift.*

Tsuchiya-san was also a consultant, stunt driver, and had a cameo in the aforementioned Tokyo Drift. Even more recently, drifting has become its own sport with its own profession competitions such as Formula Drift. With Tsuchiya-san being a judge in Formula Drift: Japan. Safe to say, the Japanese's influence on global car culture and drifting is undeniable. How about the niche-r otaku side of car culture?

## Itasha

As a wise man once said,

*“If there’s empty space on your stuff, you can probably fit your waifu on it”.*

– Marcus Aurelius probably...

If being in the otaku community has proven anything, it's that we love showing off the stuff we love. Be it anime or manga, waifu or husbando. So, what happens when you love motoring and are an otaku. Boom, itasha.

Itasha (痛車) is the unholy communion of otaku and car culture. The word Itasha is derived from 痛い, meaning painful and 車, meaning car. So, the very definition of the word is ‘painful car’ or ‘cringy car’. Such reaction is standard when a normal person sees an itasha on the streets. However, the word itasha was not originally associated with weeb mobiles. In the 1980s, Itasha was associated with Italian imported cars. During this time, otaku itasha was rare. It wasn't until the 2000s was the modern itasha vehicle birthed. With the first appearance of an itasha at a convention in 2005 at Comiket 68. Itasha come in all shapes and sizes, given the great diversity in vehicle types and otaku interests. Itasha can be painful for normal people to look upon, but also for the wallets of the enthusiasts themselves. Full body wraps and artworks can cost thousands of pounds to create and install, not even taking to account the cost of the car itself. As a result, itasha isn't the most free-to-play hobby out there.



In Japan, itasha are actually quite a common sight in everyday traffic. Anyone can put anything on an itasha, as long as you have the creativity and the cash to spare. Common Itashas (in Japan especially) often feature vocaloids, vtubers, anime and manga waifus, game waifus. The list goes on. Currently, some of the most popular series/characters to have an itasha of are: Hatsune miku, Uma Musume, Touhou, virtual idol groups (Love Live!, IDOLM@STER, etc..), other gacha games (Blue Archive, FGO, Genshin, etc...), Hololive, and more. As well as the series/characters, the types of cars which itasha can appear on can also vary greatly. From the everyday domestic kei-cars to race-spec heavily tuned time-trial machines. If you have the money, passion, and lack of shame, then anything is fair game. Levels of commitment also vary from enthusiast to enthusiast. Some may only make one itasha and cherish it like their only child, some change their itasha every month to the new best waifu or best girl. You can think of an itasha as a very expensive cosplay.

Here are a few itasha which I particularly like. The following cars were selected to participate in an event called 'Itasha Vision 2023'. This was an invite-only event, meaning only the best itasha were chosen to participate. If you'd like to watch more, popular drifting youtuber 'Noriyaro' made a video at this event, as well as the channel 'Super Sonic Cars'.



Hitori Gotoh from  
Bocchi the Rock  
Toyota GT86

Flandre Scarlet  
From Touhou  
Honda S2000







Asuma Toki from  
Blue Archive  
  
BMW M3

Kotoha Tanaka from  
IDOLM@STER  
  
Subaru GD Impreza



Chisato Nishikigi  
from LycoReco  
  
Nissan R34

Rebecca from  
Cyberpunk:Edgerunners  
  
Subaru Impreza WRX STI



## Racing and Motorsports

You are probably familiar with Good Smile Company, for their various products such as Nendoroids and Pop-up parade figures. However, what you may not know is that they have a GT racing team. Good Smile Racing (GSR) competes in the Japanese SUPER GT championship. They can easily be recognised for their iconic livery each season, donning the beloved Hatsune Miku on their cars. They have a great presence within the championship, thanks to their legendary drivers: Tatsuya Kataoka, and good friend of the drift king, Norubuchi Tanaguchi (nicknamed 'NOB' standing for 'no one better').





The 2024 livery of GSR's BMW AMG. With drivers NOB and Kataoka



Other than drifting, though rare, otaku culture has been observed in other motorsports. For example, a few NASCAR and IndyCar drivers have had liverys, helmets, or stickers of anime characters.

To the left is Team EVA's R35 racecar, donning Shinji's iconic EVA colours from Neon Genesis Evangelion

Below is a 2003 NASCAR car with a Yu-Gi-Yoh! livery.





## Other types of itasha

As said before, Otakus will put their waifu on anything you can put stickers on. Here are other vehicles which haven't escaped from being itasha'd.



Itansha - 痛単車

Ita-motorbikes

Hatsune Miku bike

*'Truly a rolling girl'*



Itachari - 痛チャリ: Ita-bicycles

Itachari road bikes, as well as my own *Initial D* inspired BMX itachari



Itabasu - 痛バス : Ita-buses

*Highschool of the Dead itabasu*





Itahikoki - 痛飛行機

Ita-airplanes

Oreimo on an airplane...

Itadensha - 痛電車

Ita-trains

Yui Hirasawa's  
Ho-Kago Express



Someone I know made this  
1/64 model of a Nissan S15  
itasha.

Liliya and Rozaliya Olenyeva  
from Honkai Impact 3rd

Though technically not an  
itasha. I found it funny that there  
was Lucky☆Star engine oil.

Time to replenish your engine's  
moe reserves.







Itasuketo - (痛スケート)

Skateboards

Trash Taste podcast's skateboard.

A snowboard with  
Kita Ikuyo from  
Bocchi the Rock!



Itatoraku – 痛トラック

Ita-trucks

Houshou Marine from  
Hololive JP



Itasha Helicopter  
belonging to the  
Japanese Self-  
Defence force  
(JSDF)

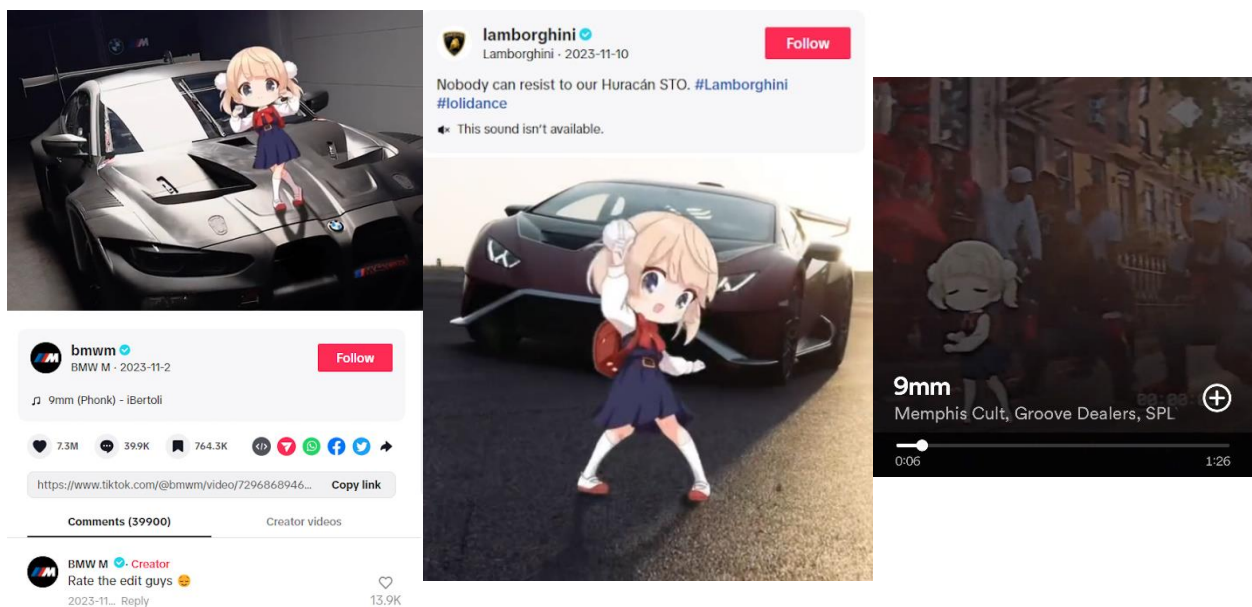
Kisarazu Akane,  
OC of the JSDF

## Other media, internet trends, and art

Other than physical itasha, the internet has a lot of media inspired by otaku car culture.

A few live actions of Initial D have been made, including one currently in production as of writing this. It's called 'Initial' and is aiming to be an accurate live action adaptation of the early Initial D story, directed by Sung Kang, the actor of Han from Tokyo Drift. Additionally, many other motoring anime exist. Such as Wangan Midnight, Redline, the recent Overtake anime, and MF Ghost (The successor of Initial D).

A recent internet trend concerning otaku car culture occurred in late 2023. Japanese v-tuber, Shigure Ui released the song, ロリ神レクイエム(aka loli-kami requiem), in which she was animated doing a cute dance. The animation went viral across the internet. One of the funnier places she found herself was in car edits. Anime girls in car edits isn't anything new. However, what was different about Ui, is that she broke into the mainstream. Big car manufactures such as BMW and Lamborghini posted Ui dancing in posts on their official social pages. Additionally, the artist which made the song that was paired with the animation, changed their Spotify background video to an Ui edit.



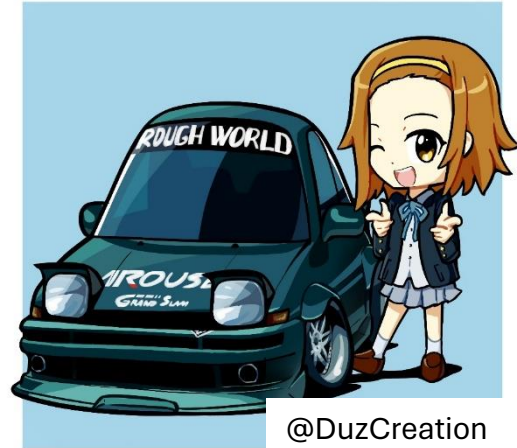
Inversely, there have been many references to car culture in anime. An example is Lucky☆Star having a parody of the iconic 'inertia drift' scene from Initial D. Also, recent S2 Mashle ending featured the characters standing aside iconic cars, such as the Nissan 370z.

Many artists online have expressed their love for both cars and anime, by creating amazing art with their favourite anime characters and cars. To finish off, here are a few of my favourite ones with their ~~twitter~~ X handles.





@No\_9aDa



@DuzCreation



@No\_9aDa



@holeecrab



@run\_rotary



@balladeluce

## Conclusion

This was but a quick dip into the world that is itasha and car culture. There are many more amazing itasha out there (given there's only 10ish in the UK). It's an extremely bizarre and interesting community to be part of. I also hope to have an itasha of my own in the future! I know there is an Initial D AE86 lurking somewhere in Nottingham too, so that's something to keep an eye out for. Thanks for reading! And thanks to Anime Soc for reigniting my passion for cars, as well as anime and cosplay!



# **A (questionable) analysis of how often men lose their shirts in Jujutsu Kaisen**

*By Dylan Annable*

*Foreword:*

Jujutsu Kaisen is a shonen manga that, for better or for worse, loves a good subversion of expectations. Some support the series for its treatment of female characters (though that goes out the window roughly around Chapter 126), some laud how it isn't afraid to torture its characters and delve into darker backstories. Me, personally, as someone who has devoted two years of his life and a countless amount of hours to this series — above all, I praise Gege Akutami's ability to work a shirtless man into *every single possible scenario*.

*Fanservice: does it need a definition, really?*

The concept of *fanservice* is familiar to anyone with more than a minute clocked on MAL: content, often erotic or sexual in nature, added to a piece of media with the intention of enticing the audience and giving them what they want. More often than not, the term in an animanga context conjures up images of boobs threatening to spill from shoddily buttoned shirts, or sweet girls tripping in front of their love interests to flash the audience in a kind of sexy fourth-wall break.

Fundamentally, fanservice is most typically created through female characters, perhaps due to cultural perceptions or otherwise. There's a reason that 'reverse harem' is considered almost a genre in of itself, due to the fact that a singular woman surrounded by men tripping over their comically short skirts for her isn't anywhere near as common.

The shonen genre and the typical harem genre share the trait of being designed to appeal to a primarily heterosexual male audience, which is where the actual topic of this article comes back into play. We must ask: why is one of Shonen Jump's best selling manga so obsessed with men being in states of undress?

(For the sake of keeping this analysis to a socially acceptable page count, I'm using the simple term of 'fanservice' to refer to any time that a male character loses his shirt for a reason that adds nothing to the narrative. In part, this is because it happens an awful lot, and also because I've formed a comprehensive list of these moments already to poke fun at the mangaka on the internet. Finally, it came in use!)

## ***The female fanservice in Jujutsu Kaisen: hooray, it kind of does exist!***

(This will be your first, last and only warning: this article contains spoilers for the entirety of the Jujutsu Kaisen manga, up to around Chapter 256. If you haven't read it already and you're interested... well, this'll either entice you or put you off completely!)

In order to fully highlight this contrast, it's vital to acknowledge that some female fanservice *does* exist within the series... in about three separate instances across nearly five thousand pages.

- **Chapter 17:** During Aoi Todo's thorough TED talk on his type in women to a rather unenthusiastic audience, there is a single panel of an unnamed girl in a bikini leaning towards the camera. Yeah. That's what we're working with here.
- **Chapter 174-180:** Introduced in the **Culling Games** arc as a player in Sendai, Takako Uro's Cursed Technique is Sky Manipulation, allowing her to manipulate the sky (big surprise) as if it were a surface. In order to perfect her application of this, she flies around the atmosphere of colony sans clothing.
- **Chapter 219:** In what might be the ballsiest move since Yuuji tried to end the series right back in Chapter 11, a fully naked Yorozu launches herself at Ryomen Sukuna in hopes of seducing him... somehow? All she earns for it is a slash across her torso from Sukuna's favourite cannibal monk chef, Uraume, and the first of her grisly deaths resulting from her entirely relatable love for the King of Curses.

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***The main event: the sheer, absurd amount of shirtless\* men present throughout Jujutsu Kaisen's current two hundred and fifty-six chapters***

(which is, of course, what you're here for)

***05 — various characters, throughout the manga: you know that you can die without losing your shirt, right?***

My initial plan for this article was to run through the entire plot, start to finish, and list out every single moment that I just simply couldn't defend the mangaka for – and then I got tired around Chapter 3, so instead it'll be laid out like this.

Following the canon timeline<sup>1</sup>, the series commences with the **Cursed Child** arc, covering the four chapters that comprise the prequel film, Jujutsu Kaisen 0. It's set about a year before the events of the main series, and this shows in the comparative lack of fanservice in the volume (unless elephant-esque curses get you going... in which case, I have incredible news!). The slightest hint of bare male torso offered is during Suguru Geto's death in the final chapter, as he bleeds to death and arches his back in an alleyway.

This trend does not continue throughout the start of Jujutsu Kaisen's main manga; otherwise, we wouldn't be here. While Geto is the first of many deaths that haunt the twists of the narrative, he's certainly not the last to die in such a way. Naoya Zen'in's final transformation in the Sakurajima colony arc has him morph into a kind of half-shirtless-human-man, half-cocoon entity before he's stabbed in the back...

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<sup>1</sup> This was a total lie: Gojo's Past arc chronologically comes first, but I had to mentally prepare myself to write a full-length, chapter cited essay on Fushiguro Toji and his painted-on shirt. Sorry!!! We'll get to chat about him later, don't worry...

Kento Nanami is incinerated to a crisp in a manner that keeps him tastefully clothed but only from the waist down – Naobito Zen'in is rendered yukata-less by one of the Nature Curses, Dagon, before Jogo finishes him off.

And of course, this isn't limited to deaths. Kinji Hakari seems to be incapable of fighting with a shirt on, and it wouldn't be a total surprise if Ryomen Sukuna's hidden Curse Technique was his inability to fight clothed. Outside of the black-and-white pages of the manga itself, Volume 20's physical release sees Ishigori Ryu twisted to focus the attention on as much of his torso as possible. It's one of those things that wouldn't be particularly notable in the world of shonen if not for the *disparity*; how often do you see a Jojo's character tearing his clothes off?

(Actually, don't answer that one.)

#### 04 — Jinichi Zen'in [138]: a true record-break, even by Akutami's standards

There's definitely some more... *questionable* content to be found in Chapter 138 revolving around a certain Zen'in Clan heir — however, as he is throughout the rest of the manga, Naoya is little more than an annoying fly buzzing around the chapter here. Our focus for the purpose of this article is instead his cousin, Jinichi Zen'in.

The ***Perfect Preparation*** arc brings with it a number more fights (and indeed, some of the best of the series) as Zen'in Maki finally takes revenge on the clan that oppressed her for so long, but before all of that, the mangaka manages something even *more* breathtaking than all the previously outlined male-torsos-with-no-plot-relevance: from entrance to when he first swings at the aforementioned fly, Jinichi remains shirted(?) for a grand total of seven panels.



It's worth noting that this is one of the *only* major insights we get into Jinichi as a character, since his short-lived time in the manga ends with his head in the Zen'in estate lake, but at least he gets to do something significant here, I guess?



### 03 — Mahito [32]: who said Jujutsu Kaisen isn't a shoujo manga? We have a hot tub scene!

Those that have only viewed season 1 of the anime will know that one of the manga's most egregious heartbreaks comes in the form of Junpei Yoshino's death; the kid is given a full character arc, from bullied student to close friends with Itadori Yuuji, which all serves to make his torturous body horror death at the hands of Cursed Spirit Mahito all the more devastating for an audience and for the main character himself.

As you've probably noticed by now, Gege Akutami is a big fan of absolute, total tonal whiplash, trapped in a very small chapter count. Case in point here: following the attempted exorcism by the dynamic duo of Nanami and Yuuji, Mahito slithers away in worm form to live another day, with his subsequent following appearance in the form of him dive-bombing the volcano Disaster Curse, Jogo — coupled with a lovely little "Curse" censorship bubble over his crotch.



A couple of additional fun facts:

- via the Jujutsu Kaisen fanbook (which is getting an official English release some time this year! Please pay me advertisement royalties, Akutami!), Mahito doesn't... actually even have anything to censor here, quote: "Q: Does Mahito have "that thing" that men can have? A: He doesn't, cursed spirits do not have reproductive capability."
- This isn't the first time that this censorship bubble crops up in the manga! Fumihiko Takaba's costume is inspired by a real-life comedian, who also leaves his entire right side naked — Atsuya Kusakabe comments in Ch240 how his only impression of "that guy is when his dick flopped out of his pants". What cameraderie!

### 02 — Kenjaku [208]: I can't even put a tongue-in-cheek title to this. I'm still reeling over it.

The two-hundred chapter mark brings with it some momentous occasions for the Jujutsu Kaisen manga — primarily that we were delighted with the return<sup>2</sup> of protagonists Itadori Yuuji and Fushiguro Megumi, and from here, we finally got to see the fourth and final Special Grade sorcerer of the series in action. A relative mystery since the start, very little was known about Tsukumo Yuki before the **Star and Oil** mini-arc, aside from her tutorage of Kyoto's Grade 1 Aoi Todo, and her brief conversations with Suguru Geto in **Premature Death** and Itadori Yuuji following the **Shibuya Incident**.

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<sup>2</sup> This happened in Chapter 199 but work with me here

This only made it all the more exciting when she was the main focus of this fight, alongside some not insignificant lore drops about her status as a Star Plasma Vessel and her ties to Master Tengen, the lifeblood of jujutsu itself in Japan. One of our main villains, Kenjaku, breaks into the Tomb of the Star Corridor, a place of relative unease since Amanai Riko's assassination ten years prior, with the express intent of absorbing Tengen via Suguru Geto's Cursed Spirit Manipulation and wreaking further havoc on society as it was known. As Tengen's voluntary bodyguards, both Yuki and Choso are tasked with defending and (hopefully) defeating Kenjaku.

Imagine the collective community surprise, then, when the absolute rollercoaster conclusion of the fight hit: despite the relatively even match between the two Special Grade sorcerers, Yuki makes a grave error in leaving her abdomen unprotected in close range to Kenjaku, allowing for him to blitz through her major organs with a small concentration of combined curses.

In a final, last-ditch effort, Yuki uses her Mass Technique to transform her dying body into a black hole that devastates the landscape around them, surely destroying anyone that hadn't fled the area...

...only for Kenjaku to emerge from the rubble unscathed aside from — you guessed it — his shirt, and crow about how excellent the reversal of his "Gravity Technique" is, as inherited from his time possessing Kaori Itadori's body.

Yeah, Tengen. How? indeed.



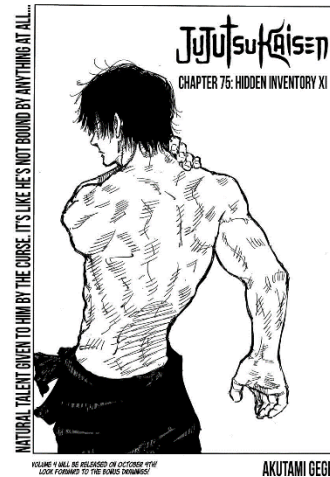
*01 — the man, the myth, the legend: the 40-something year old guy that lazed about eating takoyaki until he could shoot a teenager*

The **Gojo's Past** arc is a fan-favourite, though to the author's credit, popular pretty boy Satoru Gojo has only ever received one panel of the nature relevant to this article, but our focus in this arc isn't the titular character by any means. Fushiguro Toji is our primary villain, both for his generally unrepentant attitude in killing a few teenagers and his general inability to wear anything appropriate for leaving the house.

Ah, Fushiguro Toji. It's almost incredible how a hitman with no Cursed Energy continues to impact the narrative ten years and over a hundred chapters later, whether that's due to his previous killing of Satoru Gojo and his son's subsequent resemblance to his father, or the parallels between his own Heavenly Restriction and that experienced by Zen'in Maki.



His shirt is positively vacuum sealed; his waist is half the size of his shoulders; his pecs are the first (and second) thing you notice. It's impressive how both the mangaka and the animation studio took every key trait usually applied to female characters that are used for fanservice, and threw it at this *grown man*.



On the surface, there's very few redeemable traits from Toji considering his reputation for murder and stepping on ramen (I could argue against this, but that's another zine article for another year), but the crux of the matter remains. Despite all his moral reprehensibility, he sure does knock most of the cast out of the park when it comes to obvious author favouritism.



(All three of these panels are from after his second death in Shibuya; I promise you, nobody else is getting this kind of treatment, and especially not a certain white-haired Strongest Sorcerer.

Outside of the manga: sometimes, your greatest ally is an intensely overworked animation studio

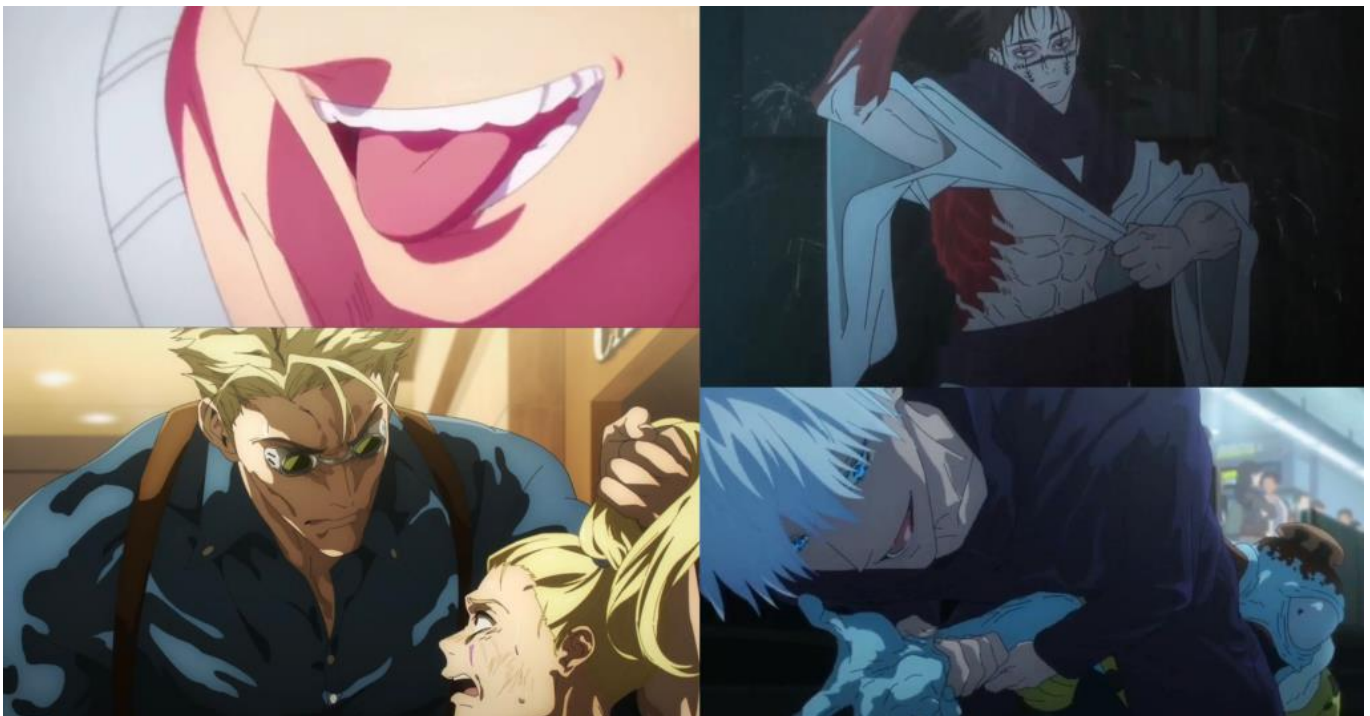


In the Summer 2023 season, Jujutsu Kaisen's second anime season aired to praise and criticism alike, as it adapted two fan-favourite story arcs: **Gojo's Past**, in which we witness the downfall of Suguru Geto, the trauma of Satoru Gojo, and the relatively unbothered attitude of Fushiguro Toji. This was subsequently followed by the **Shibuya Incident** arc, which focuses on pain, suffering, and ensuring the audience internalises they're never getting the lighthearted adventures of our main trio back.

The latter is where this duality of praise and criticism really shines through. The incredibly minimal three-week break between arcs and the sheer time crunch to complete such a battle-heavy, animation-intensive narrative within the Shibuya Incident was felt by animators and fans alike. Multiple staff mentioned quitting the production once it had wrapped, and shared transparently online how episodes were being completed nearly on the day of airing. The particularly hyped fight between Ryomen Sukuna and the shikigami Mahoraga was released with breathtaking animation, but still a mere fraction of the studio's intended vision.

MAPPA's mistreatment of their animators is a full topic itself – the few paragraphs allocated here barely begin to touch on denied extensions, hurried schedules, scrapped genga and cut corners, but there's one thing that shone through despite these issues: much like Gege Akutami himself, MAPPA animators *really* loved drawing attractive men. Like, a lot.

A picture says a thousand words and plenty of choice (unpublishable) phrases were said about these shots, and so I won't pad out this write-up any more than I already have and simply leave you with these still images that were (surprisingly) *not present in the manga at all*:



*Conclusion: but seriously, why?*

The major overarching question that we end with is: what could all of this mean? Does Akutami aim to resist the prevalence of female fanservice throughout anime? Is this some wider social commentary? If only we could turn to the man himself and discover his thought process while he's illustrating yet another fresh panel of (twice dead) Toji and his vacuum-sealed shirt. If only *authors* had a place where they could *comment* on their feelings about their work...

## Jujutsu Kaisen

### Gege Akutami



It's possible that I may have contracted the "I'll die if I don't draw a half-naked macho character" disease.

*(from Jujutsu Kaisen, Chapter 59, archived at: <https://www.viz.com/blog/posts/mangaka-musings-05-19-19>)*

Oh. Alright, then...

# Man's True Nature is Fire

## Kingdom: Man is neither Inherently Good nor Evil

*By Joseph Thomas*

### Introduction



Kingdom is a manga that is all about war with little breaks in between, it is a constant war arc. Focusing on the protagonist Shin's desire to be the world's greatest general under the heavens which leads him to being best friends with Sei the King that will unify all of China during the Warring States period under the state of Qin. Yet despite Kingdom's epic battles, strategies and general story progression. I specifically want to focus on the characters that are illustrated in this story all relaying back to a central point, which is shown in chapters 759-760, during a diplomacy arc, no war involved. Shin is asked by a legalist in the state of Wei whether he believes humans are inherently good or evil, a common philosophical and religious debate on human nature. Shin however answers with humans are inherently fire. We will be exploring the good and the bad of Kingdom as well as exploring the most morally grey character that is both loved and hated by the fanbase (Kan Ki) and concluding with the rest of Shin's speech to the legalist. This article will have spoilers of Kingdom obviously throughout as well as discussing disturbing topics such as war, violence, torture, sexual violence and genocide.



## Those of Light

### The Grandpa of War, Mou Gou



To start with the exploration of the figures in Kingdom that I have decided represent the light (good) we shall start with the, loved by all Great General Mou Gou, who is one of the oldest generals in the state of Qin being alive during the period of the Six Great Generals of Qin. Mou Gou has always felt inferior as a general next to these giants as he is extremely reliable but he has never once surpassed their levels of greatness. Mou Gou is a general that mainly focuses on fortification and defence leaving the offence to his two main lieutenants, Ou Sen and Kan Ki. He is also the father of General Mou Bu who is one of the strongest generals in the Qin military who later becomes the first and the leader of the new Six Great Generals. This further plays into his insecurity as his son has surpassed him completely being the same gigantic level as the previous Six Great Generals. His insecurity however is mostly alleviated by his grandson Mou Ten who is a rising star in the Qin military and Shin who makes him realise that it is ok to be afraid of Ren Pa, the Zhao Great Heaven he lost to time and time again, and that he has always survived to win which he does do in the Sanyou Campaign arc. The main reason he encompasses the good of humanity is his genuine love for his men he sees his army as his children and he wants to protect them and encourage them, further shown through him taking the merciless Kan Ki under his wing to give the bandits a chance at war and a home of their own, despite their contrasting personalities there is a lot of respect shown. Mou Gou is a character that despite not being the strongest or smartest, you can't help but love because he exudes with light and warmth even while in war.

## The King of Light, Ei Sei



Next the light of humanity is mainly encompassed through the life and ideals of the King of Qin Ei Sei who was born in Zhao as prisoners in which his whole childhood was being physically abused and tortured for what had happened in Chouhei before hand, whereby Qin Great General Haku Ki buried 400 000 Zhao prisoners of war alive. This led to Sei seeing the world as nothing more than hatred and violence as he survived no matter what even coming home to a Mother that saw him as purely the reason why she was so suffering a child that experienced the true darkness and evil humanity has to offer. Yet when Qin needs him back after discovering his existence to be the heir to the throne, they employ a Zhao black market merchant called Shi Ka who sees this child and wants to save him, seeing him so emotionless. Through their journey Sei starts to fear becoming a king as he feels the weight of all those at Chouhei, Shi Ka makes him realise that he will make a great king since he has seen the worst of what humanity has to offer. This encompasses Sei's personality and dream of unifying China, so that China will be free from war and tragedy. Sei desires to be king in order to achieve this dream as he intrinsically believes that humans are light, they are good natured. It's just that war distorts these good intentions and transforms them into evil. Two main examples showing Sei's light are his inspiration of the people of Sai during the Coalition Army when he leads the people himself transforming them into an army through exceptional morale and caring for his people personally unlike many kings before, his second main example is his speech against Ryo Fui during the final part of the State of Ai where Sei himself says humans are inherently light and that he wants to nurture and protect this light through becoming the king of all china, despite in the process accepting that he will be seen as a villain and a tyrant by all the other conquered states, he needs to use war in the warring states period to end the war and preserve the light of all people in China.

## The Mad Duke, Duke Hyou



A more subjective example of light and good in Kingdom is Duke Hyou who is a Great General of Qin who was born on the battlefield and spent the rest of his life on the battlefield, not having a grand dream like many only wanting to live his life in war. The Duke is the first general that Shin serves under and everyone perceives the Duke as a madman with no one being able to understand his tactics, and him sacrificing lots of soldiers for seemingly pointless advances. This unique style of war is due to the Duke being an instinctual general, he feels the state of war and reads it through instinct rather than tactics, he describes it as where the next fire will be stoked in the war. This combined with his insane level of might and his soldiers loyalty and their overwhelming ferocity when they charge together makes the Duke a formidable opponent. The reason why I am arguing he is an example of the light and good in Kingdom is due to the amount of love he has for his men and the battlefield as a whole, transforming the landscape of horror in death into one of challenge and honour. His instinct rules all and no sacrifice is in vain as he showcases the good of humanity through this desire to serve his country forever and use his instinct to wage war to protect his people. He is also a massive inspiration for our protagonist Shin in the Coalition Army arc through showing him to enjoy drinking with comrades in order to embrace the times they have together, to embrace the light of allies all fighting together for the same cause. While also heavily influencing Shin as a general since both of them are instinctual type generals in practice.



## The Demon who Hates War, Ri Boku



The final example of light in Kingdom is probably the most interesting due to it actually being the main antagonist of Kingdom, Ri Boku. Ri Boku is one of the new Three Great Heavens of Zhao and the Commander in Chief of the Zhao army. Ri Boku is first introduced to us in the Battle of Bayou arc as the true general of the war, masquerading behind Hou Ken. Ri Boku is a very calculating strategist, a tactician of the highest calibre who is willing to use any strategy no matter whether it's seen as underhanded or how brutal it is. Yet despite this Ri Boku is a very kind and humble man who loves his friends and especially the people of Zhao making him a true patriot who values his country more than anything. This leads to Ri Boku, orchestrating the death of Qin's Great General Ou Ki (one of the last original Six Great Generals) which is a massive blow to Qin in order to strengthen Zhao's position. The main event that shows the true resolve of Ri Boku's character is him being the organiser and leader of the Coalition Army who used all the states against Qin in order to wipe it clean from the map, decimating an entire state and its people all for the light and love of his people. Yet his kindness is even shown in this through the twisted way that he is trying to end it as quickly as possible for Qin since he hates war and just wants to ensure that Qin does not get more powerful, which leads into later when he is the commander in chief of Zhao defending itself from Qin's invasion to unify all of China. He is a man who at his heart just wants to protect his people from war and tragedy despite himself having to commit multiple atrocities.

## Those of Darkness

### The Strongest under the Heavens, Hou Ken



Now we've explored the light/good of humanity in Kingdom through four key figures. We will now apply the same format to the darkness/evil of humanity in Kingdom. First examining Hou Ken, a Bushin who claims to be the strongest in all of the heavens and seeks out people that threaten his claim and kills them. Hou Ken's whole life is violence and combat to forever serve his God and feed his ego he seeks out opponents. The darkness of Hou Ken is shown for his constant need for violence and his monstrous acts. Yet Hou Ken is a very interesting character in Kingdom mainly due to his lack of interest in war, his main weakness is his lack of understanding of generals or war and why they do what they do. Hou Ken is used as an antagonistic force and direct opposite to Shin throughout the Kingdom, his main rival other than Ri Boku. This is further shown through Hou Ken's sheer strength he manages to kill Ou Ki the Mysterious Bird of Qin, one of the last surviving original Six Great

Generals and he manages to kill Duke Hyou in combat. Hou Ken is a one man army successfully used by Ri Boku and Zhao as a way to eliminate powerful threats to their country. He is the main hurdle that Shin must overcome in order to surpass his limitations and ensure his dream of becoming the greatest general under the heavens can be achieved, he manages to eventually kill Hou Ken in the Western Zhao Invasion, leaving Hou Ken bewildered at how it is possible to be defeated constantly by generals who he believed to be weakened by the human restriction of war.

## The Ghastly Survivor, Man Goku



The next example of darkness in Kingdom is the Zhao General known as Man Goku, a tragic man whose life is built on tragedy and revenge, crafting him into a monster capable of similar atrocities. Man Goku as a child was a prisoner of war due to his family's involvement in the Zhao army when they lost the war against Qin. The leader of the Six Great Generals of the past Haku Ki organised the mass murder for all the prisoners of war burying all of them alive in mass graves, totalling 400 000 prisoners buried alive. Man Goku, a mere child back then, managed to dig his way out of the grave and survive the massacre of Chouhei. This led to the creation of Man Goku as a general of Zhao hell bent on revenge against Qin murdering civilians or any who cross his path all in the name of Chouhei, his unit's morale is built on the trauma caused by the state of Qin making them an army of darkness and tragedy. Shin has to fight Man Goku in the Coalition army arc, which leads to a very difficult battle for Shin due to him understanding the pain of Man Goku despite how much of a villain he is. Shin eventually slays Man Goku, promising to carry his hatred and pain with him, promising to not allow anything like Chouhei to happen again. This makes Man Goku become the epitome of darkness as he swears to be a vengeful spirit forever watching over Shin in case he fails to uphold his promise.



## The Tyrant, Rozo



The next example of darkness is an example of sadism and warped power in the form of Rozo, an extremely violent and selfish king of a native tribe in Zhao. Rozo is a tyrant that delights in heavy violence and brutality as he loves to control people with fear and assume his position as the true king of the mountains. Rozo is introduced in the Western Zhao Invasion arc as he is recruited by Ri Boku's army to join the war against the State of Qin currently invading them. He is a necessary evil that Zhao accepts despite his rule over Ryouyou being tyrannical and evil due to his potential support in the defence of Zhao in an invasion. His evilness and monstrous nature is the perceived perception of the mountain tribes from the rest of China making him the perfect antithesis to another example of light Yo Tan Wa. Yo Tan Wa is the King of the Western Mountain Tribes introduced in the first arc of Kingdom as an ally to Sei, she is a very charismatic and ferocious leader yet is full of light and hope for her people. The battle these two wage against one another is truly a very good example of light versus darkness in Kingdom. Rozo's death is even more prominent due to the one slaying him being Heki, a general of Qin most beloved due to his kind nature and loyalty to the King from the start, Rozo a being of sadism and evil being destroyed by a constant source of light in Kingdom.

## The Absence of Maternal Love, Bi Ki



The last example of darkness in Kingdom I would like to explore is one of the most hated yet understandable in some way antagonist is the Queen Mother (Bi Ki). The Queen Mother of Zhao and the mother of Sei who was sold off to a marriage with the King of Qin by her lover Ryo Fui. This started the corruption of the Queen due to her first love of innocence and passion being exchanged for money and social standing by the one who she fully trusted and fell in love with. Then her time in life becomes even worse when she is held captive with her son (Sei) in Zhao after Chouhei which resulted in her turning into a prostitute in order to feed herself and her son. They were constantly humiliated and tormented by every citizen and her son's look of hollowness made her start to warp her feelings into a severe hatred of her own son Sei and her position in life, resulting in her even trying to strangle Sei to kill him in some hope that her suffering will end. Many years later when she returns to Qin she becomes the Queen mother leader of the Harem faction, a very powerful force in the court of Qin that contains all the concubines for the King and the Eunuchs loyal to her. She even forms an alliance with Ryo Fui at an attempted power grab to assassinate her son Sei showing how twisted her love is and how all she wants is power and freedom from everything that makes her remember how dark her heart is. This desire for freedom from all is further shown when she falls in love once again with a false Eunuch sent by Ryo Fui to satisfy her, and the two leave and create the State of Ai which results in her being punished and begging for her new children's lives to Sei the son she never cared about, making her eventually realise how evil she has become but Sei secretly keeps her children alive despite the world believing he executed them.

# Kanki's Complexity

## Who he is



Kan Ki is one of the new Six Great Generals of Qin, a former mountain bandit who managed to unify all the bandit clans under his leadership and became part of the Qin army due to Mou Gou recruiting him after being captured by them, offering them a place of freedom and higher status. Starting off his lieutenant alongside Ou Sen, he rose to General and became recognised for his war achievements time and time again, yet this did not outshine his barbaric nature, mountain bandit past and sheer brutality in war. As most showcased in one of my favourite arcs, the Kokuyou campaign which was most recently adapted in Kingdom's Season 5, in which Kan Ki is the General of Qin and leads his army alongside Shin's Hi Shin Unit into the Hills to battle for supremacy against Zhao gaining a foothold. This however shows the true levels of darkness Kan Ki has through raping and murdering civilians all in the name of victory, as well as looting bodies and using the Saki clan as torturers makes for his "adult way" of war to be a showcase of true human depravity. This leads all of us to believe that despite Kan Ki's cool personality he is an abhorrent general of darkness in Kingdom.

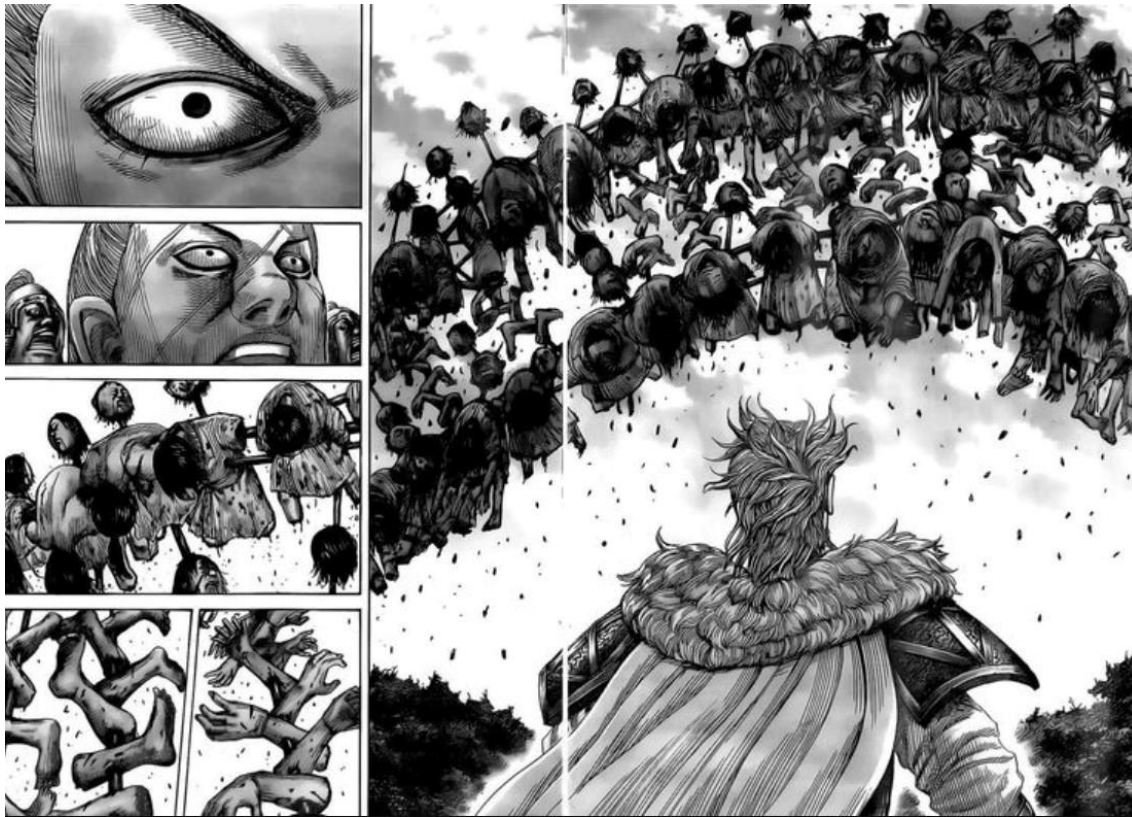


## Family



Yet this darkness is also shown to have an element of light through his actions and relationships making Kan Ki a great example of complexity in Kingdom for how he is written and his motivations and past. Kan Ki is extremely close with his army, especially the leader of the bandit tribes making his inner circle, forming an almost family-like closeness and the doctrine to follow Kan Ki no matter what, to always believe in the boss. The strongest sense of light through the loyalty of those around him is shown through Rai Do who while being tortured by Ko Chou a general of Zhao in the Battle of Eikyuu arc he refuses to tell any information resulting in his gruesome death of being dismembered into pieces and stuffed in a box. When Kan Ki sees this at the end of his victory the loyalty and love displayed by Rai Do causes Kan Ki to lose his composure and let the darkness consume him as he orders his army to behead the 100 00 captured Zhao soldiers and burn their heads in the process. This shows how Kan Ki's love and light can be corrupted into darkness through the strength of his emotions resulting in the horrid act of revenge on many lives that are not fully related to Rai Do's death.

## Kokoyou Hills/Kokoyou Campaign



This seeming amoral personality of Kan Ki is further explored through Shin's opposition to him in the Kokoyou Hills arc (Kokoyou Campaign).

This opposition is mainly due to their ideals and their perception of war. Kan Ki utilises any means necessary to win, killing and putting civilians in horrible displays, raping and looting to better his morale. He calls this the “adult way” to wage war. Shin on the other hand, while accepting that they are the invaders and knowing that he will be the reason for a lot of bloodshed still believes that there should be some moral code and limits to how they wage war. This comes across as naivety to all of Kan Ki's men but Shin then says this is not how we unify all of China. This makes Kan Ki realise that he has conviction and his way of war will be even more brutal and dark than his with the amount of bloodshed he will induce for following the dream. Kan Ki calls brandishes that dream as truly evil due to the endless wars and violence Shin will cause all for the ideology of unification. Further showing despite Kan Ki's overwhelming darkness, his light limits him from waging monumental wars in the name of peace.

## The Birth of Hatred



Finally the truth of Kan Ki's complexity is mainly shown in his backstory, this emphasises his pure light contrasting his darkness that we mostly see in practice. Kan Ki as a child was left for dead at thirteen and saved by the Saki Clan who were at the time a group of vagabond children, not the torturing clan we know to be in the present. Kan Ki forms a strong bond with the Saki clan seeing them as family and wanting a better life for all of them, this over encompassing care and light shines through Kan Ki as a rebellious child. This light however is corrupted and moulded into darkness through his love of one of the Saki clan in particular Shio. This is due to her being kidnapped by the Lord of Kiha who tortures her inhumanely as well as defiling her, ending with murdering her very brutally. This leads Kan Ki to leave the Saki Clan to make his own, due to regret for not being able to protect them and for wanting to be stronger. This is what builds his iconic hatred, his darkness is formed due to his love for his family and his light being corrupted. Years later this hatred that was born out of his light, his care for others is shown to the fullest when he conquers Kiha and personally beheads every person within Kiha earning him his infamous Beheader moniker.



## **Shin's overall stance**

### **The Change of Good and Evil**



Throughout we have explored examples of light and darkness in Kingdom, while also deeply examining a character of true paradoxical complexity of both in Kan Ki. Now however we will bring all of these together through the main focal point Shin's speech of human nature as fire. Shin's answer is met by lots of confusion by everyone but Shin himself struggles to explain it but uses Sei's brother as an example first who was responsible for Shin's brother's death due to his rebellion yet he died heroically as an ally to them saving the life of his wife, Shin commenting on how he was not the same evil guy he once knew. Another example is Kan Ki, a despicable human yet his rage was directed at those who turned a blind eye to the oppressed, showing how much affection he had. Shin makes the point that if you change your perspective good and evil can swap places, therefore what is more important is what all of humanity possesses, a completely universal trait.

Shin proposes that these are the Fire of Life and the Fire of Will.

## The Constant



Everyone has these and they are unleashed to their full potential in battle, if you die the flame of life goes out but the fire of Will gets inherited by the next person, allies or even the enemies you slay. Therefore this Fire of Will gets woven into one, inheriting fire and making your own bigger, declaring that he will take Ri Boku's fire for himself due to how strong he is. Yet even so this is believing in inherent goodness, that's why laws are necessary due to human desires that could corrupt goodness, to quote Shin "People are Dumb right?". Making a distinction between foolishness and evil, while making the main legalist Kan Pi realise that due to him never giving up on his people due to these laws he himself believes in inherent goodness despite his refusal. Overall this is an excellent way of showcasing how light and darkness are all subjective even in my analysis of these specific characters I have chosen, from another perspective they could be on the opposing side. Shin's argument of Fire of Life and Fire of Will is such a brilliant way of expressing how attachment and ideals work in modern life through the importance that people have on us and when they die we inherit their Fire of Will making ours even larger.



# Apothecary Diaries

A pharmacologist's analysis of the mechanism of action of poisons and other drugs seen in the series.

By Erin Cranston

## INTRODUCTION:

Hi! My name is Erin, and I am studying **Pharmacology** in my third year, so I would like to say that I know a lot about drugs. I would also like to think that if Maomao could pick a course at university she would probably pick Pharmacology. This year I took a module called **toxicology** where I learnt a lot about poisons, toxins, and the general mechanisms of toxicity for different drugs. As a result, I often found myself explaining the mechanisms of the drugs and poisons to my partner whilst we watched the show. I would also google some that I did not know about!





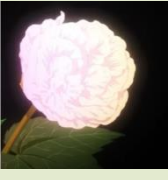

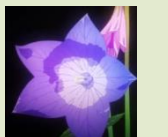
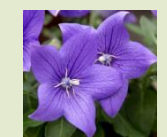
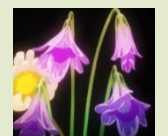

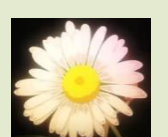
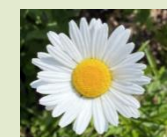
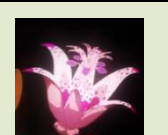
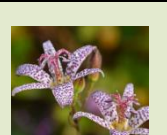
Therefore, I have decided to compile all of the research about all of the different **poisons** seen in the show into one big document, so this will more be like a fact file of the poisons with their pharmacology and **symptoms** written beside them. This will mainly be a scientific **report** rather than information about the show. There will also be **spoilers**! Lastly, I will probably get some stuff wrong and maybe miss stuff out, but this should hopefully contain a lot of interesting information if you are curious. **Thank you!** :D


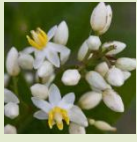




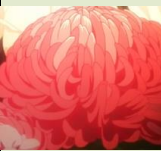







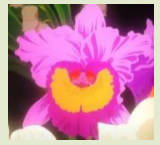

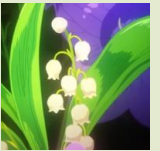

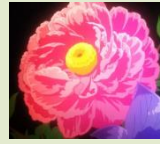





# PART 1: FLOWERS SEEN IN THE OPENING

Disclaimer: It was quite difficult trying to find the names of all of the flowers, so some are likely wrong, but I tried my best to match them! Also, the symptoms listed would be in cases of high consumption/dose usually.

Flower	Image from Show	Image Real Life	Toxic?	Mechanism of Action
Rhododendron			YES	<p>Binds to sodium channels leading to prolonged sodium channel opening and depolarisation of the cell. Therefore, it leads to increased excitability of nerves leading to tingling, numbness, and muscle spasms.</p> <p><b>Symptoms:</b> dizziness, vomiting, sweating, headache, visual disturbances, and potentially respiratory problems.</p>
Peony ?			NO	<p>Generally non-toxic, however the seeds may cause GI issues if ingested in higher amounts.</p> <p><b>Symptoms:</b> Pain in stomach, vomiting and diarrhoea</p>
Balloon Flower / Chinese Bellflower			NO	<p>The plant is mainly used for decoration and in Asian medicines. It is also safe to use in culinary amounts, however it could be toxic if ingested in high concentrations such as extracts.</p> <p><b>Symptoms:</b> Vomiting, diarrhea and stomach pain</p>
Beardtongue			NO	<p>Massive range of flowers and they are not usually toxic to humans. May be used in herbal preparations and/or teas.</p> <p><b>Symptoms:</b> Vomiting, diarrhea and stomach pain</p>
Daisy			NO	<p>Not really considered toxic and are sometimes added to food as decoration such as in salads.</p> <p><b>Symptoms:</b> Vomiting, diarrhea and stomach pain</p>
Japanese Toad Lily			NO	No known toxicity associated.

Nandina			YES	<p>The berries of these flowers can release cyanide when metabolised in the body.</p> <p>Cyanide is a toxin which inhibits cytochrome c oxidase which leads to inhibition of ATP production leading to cell death.</p> <p><b>Symptoms:</b> Vomiting, confusion, headache, rapid heart rate and breathing and fatality</p>
Japanese Orange Azalea			YES	<p>May contain grayanotoxin like Rhododendrons.</p> <p>Binds to sodium channels leading to prolonged sodium channel opening and depolarisation of the cell. Therefore, it leads to increased excitability of nerves leading to tingling, numbness, and muscle spasms.</p> <p><b>Symptoms:</b> dizziness, vomiting, sweating, headache, visual disturbances, potentially respiratory problems, and GI effects.</p>
Plum Blossom			YES	<p>Contains cyanide as a defence mechanism.</p> <p>Cyanide is a toxin which inhibits cytochrome c oxidase which leads to inhibition of ATP production leading to cell death.</p> <p><b>Symptoms:</b> Vomiting, confusion, headache, rapid heart rate and breathing and fatality</p>
Chrysanthemum			NO	<p>May contain pyrethrins which can have an effect on the human body. They are natural insecticides. Pyrethrins prolong opening of voltage-gated sodium leading to repetitive neurone firing.</p> <p><b>Symptoms:</b> Vomiting, headache, stomach pains and skin irritation</p>
Magnolia			NO	<p>Not known to be toxic to humans but there is limited data.</p> <p>Traditionally used as a medicinal plant in East Asia for anti-anxiety, anti-microbial effects, relief of headaches and nasal congestion.</p> <p>Essential oils are also extracted for use in perfumery and medicinal uses.</p>

White Rose			NO	Not known to be toxic as they contain no known toxic compounds. They are used as decorations and to add flavour and fragrance to dishes like teas and desserts.
Cattleya Orchid			NO	Mainly used as decorations and little is known about their toxicity.  No known toxic that would be harmful to humans.
Lily of the Valley			YES	Highly toxic flower due to the cardiac glycosides present.  Cardiac glycosides inhibit sodium-potassium ATPase pump leading to increase in calcium levels. This leads to increases contractility of cardiac muscle and contraction of the heart (positive inotropic effect). This leads to arrhythmias and life-threatening cardiovascular effects  <b>Symptoms:</b> stomach pain, vomiting, confusion, weakness, headache, seizures, coma, and death
Peony				Generally non-toxic, however the seeds may cause GI issues if ingested in higher amounts.  <b>Symptoms:</b> Pain in stomach, vomiting and diarrhoea
Wood Sorrel				Common flower and consumed in salads. It is known to be non-toxic but if ingested in large quantities it could become toxic.  High dose: Oxalic acid in the flower may bind to calcium forming crystals which can lead to kidney stones.  <b>Symptoms:</b> Urinary urgency, blood urine and pain.



Maomao found the flowers!

## PART 2: DRUGS/POISONS SEEN IN THE SHOW



Disclaimer: This will not contain every single plant/drug/poison seen in the show as that would take so long! I have tried to include all of the key and important ones, as well as mostly limiting to ones with a known name. :)

# EPISODE 1

## The face powder

Maomao discovers that the reason for the baby's sickness was due to the face powder used. In ancient China, some face powders contained lead.

**Mechanism of action:** Lead has many actions such as: substitution of calcium, NMDA antagonism, inhibition of NaK-ATPase and overall leading to neuronal cell death.

**Symptoms:** headache, stomach pain, muscle pain and miscarriage in pregnant women



# EPISODE 2

## The Poisoned Food

The soldiers that were poisoned experienced nausea, difficult breathing, and other symptoms.

The wood that was burnt to cook the soldier's food emitted poison, as they obtained the branches from a poisonous plant!



## Aphrodisiac Bao Buns

It is not known what aphrodisiac was used in the bao buns but Maomao makes her own later in the episode as shown below.

## Maomao's Aphrodisiac Recipe

Ingredients:

- Milk
- Butter
- Sugar
- Honey
- Powdered Cacao
- Spirits



**Recipe:** Maomao mixed all of these ingredients together and then coated some fruit with it and cooled it in a jar. She then had some remaining chocolate, so she made some bread with it for herself for later (which was stolen...).



## Fun fact:

The plates that were served to Maomao when she was tasting the food for poison for the first time were made out of ceramic. She suggested they should be changed to silver as silver would react to sulfur-based compounds leading to a colour change, therefore showing poison. Arsenic is a poison that has been very popular historically and was tested for in this way. Jinshi already knew this and gave her the ceramic bowls as a test, which she passed of course.



## EPISODE 4:

### Maomao's Poison Cure!

Lady Lihua is still sick from the powder poisoning and one of the ladies in waiting is still using it on her. Maomao has been assigned to cure her by the emperor.

### 3. Steam room/bath

This would make the lady sweat more and perhaps increase the elimination of the poison. Generally, this probably would not help too much but it would promote some relaxation and stress relief.



## EPISODE 5:

### Maomao's Warming Candy

She made candies with orange peel and ginger and explains that the orange peels improve blood flow and ginger warms the body.

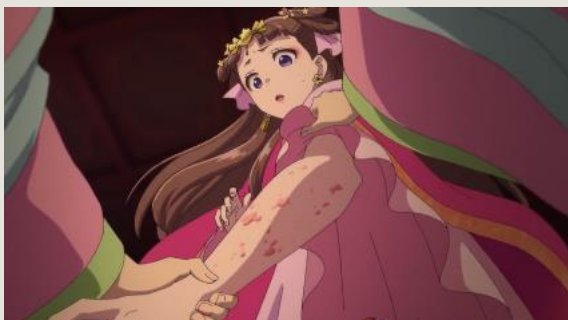


## Mechanism of Action

Orange peels contain antioxidant properties which may help to reduce oxidative stress and repair blood flow. They may promote blood vessel endothelial function by producing nitric oxide. Ginger can cause vasodilation which would lead to an increase in blood flow keeping the body warm.

## Lady Lishua's Allergy

Fish allergies may be IgE or non-IgE mediated, where the actual allergenic activity usually lies in the muscle of the fish. Parvalbumin is the main allergen that is found in fish and regulates many biological processes mainly by binding to calcium.



## EPISODE 6:

### Puffer Fish Mentioned

Puffer fish was mentioned by Maomao in this episode. The toxin found in pufferfish is Tetrodotoxin and it acts to inhibit voltage-gated sodium channels and firing of action potentials. Leading to paralysis of muscles and stopping the users breathing.

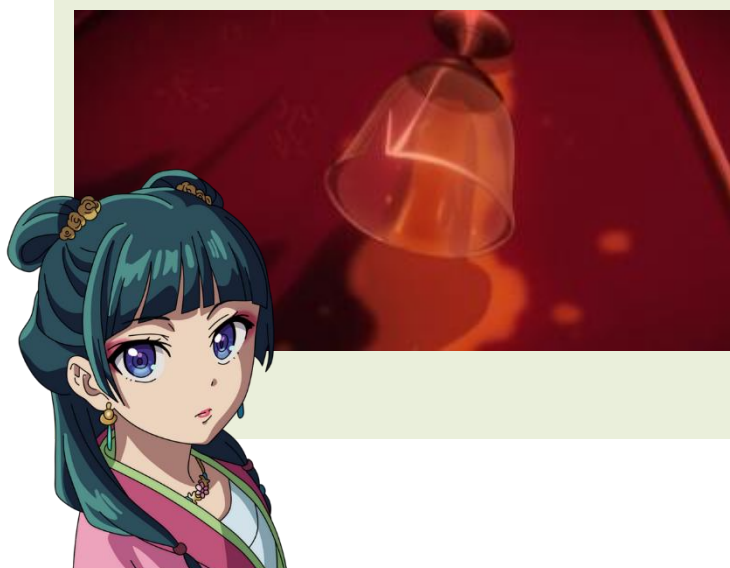


## EPISODE 8:

### Poisoned Courtesan and Customer

The drink was laced with poison from tobacco leaves. Nicotine binds to nicotinic acetylcholine receptors which increases neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin. At high doses nicotine can cause inhibitor effects and neuromuscular blockade leading to symptoms such as sweating, hypertension, respiratory failure, and seizures.

Maomao treated it with crushed charcoal and herbs made into a tea, which would act to bind the poison and prevent its absorption.



## EPISODE 9:

### Sir Kounen's Death

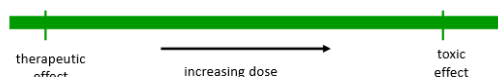
His drink was spiked with salts which became poisonous due to the high dose consumed, he lost his ability to taste salt so did not notice.

Salt poisoning may lead to death by seizure or cardiac arrhythmia. This may occur via brain swelling due to water being drawn out of the brain and into the blood stream because of the osmotic gradient created by high salt concentration. There would also be general dehydration leading to dysfunction of all major organs.



Paracelsus: Father of toxicology

- "All things are poison and nothing is without poison, only the dose permits something not to be poison"
- (Paracelsus *circa* 1530)
- The dose makes the poison!
- (but the route matters! :- my addition)



Information from one of my lecture slides!  
This is relevant as it highlights that the salt only became toxic due to the dose ingested.

## EPISODE 11:

### Honey

Honey can lead to infant botulism which is caused by the absorption of the botulinum toxin. The heavy chains bind to the apical surface of gut epithelial cells where it is then absorbed into the general circulation. It leads to the failure of intestinal microbiota in infants which would normally act to inhibit the growth of spores.



### Tiger Lily

The flower name was not mentioned but I believe this is a tiger lily.

The flower contains lycorine which acts to inhibit protein synthesis and ascorbic acid biosynthesis. It may also be inhibiting AChE. It leads to nausea at small doses and other symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhoea and convulsions.





## EPISODE 12:

### Cordyceps

Jinshi gifted Maomao some Cordyceps which is a fungus traditionally used in Chinese medicine.

It has been shown to downregulate A2 receptors and inhibit several neuroinflammatory markers, as well as being used as an antioxidant and anticancer compound.



## EPISODE 14:

### Red Spider Lily

If ingested it may cause symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhoea and convulsions and potentially death. It contains galantamine which acts at nAChRs in humans causing an increase in acetylcholine released. Therefore, it may be useful in the treatment of Alzheimer's disease.

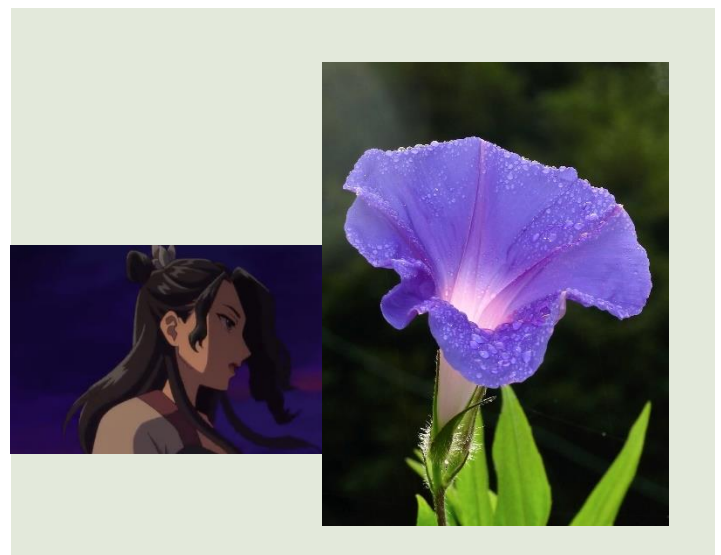


## EPISODE 18:

### Morning Glories

Suirei told Maomao she was going to plant some morning glories in the herb garden.

The seeds contain lysergic acid hydroxyethylamide (LSD). LSD acts on 5-HT receptors as an agonist, where action on the 5-HT<sub>2A</sub> receptors leads to hallucinations.



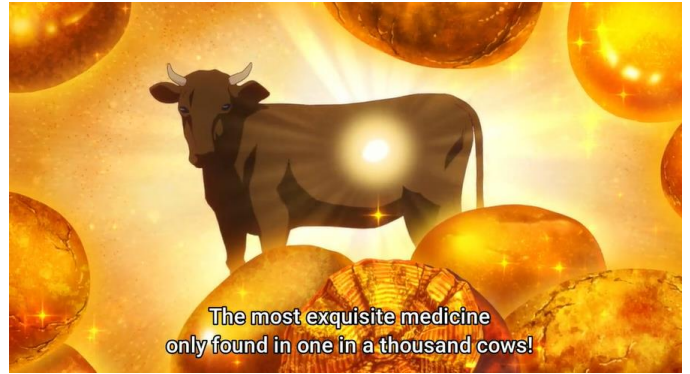


## EPISODE 19:

### Ox Bezoar

These are gallstones from cattle and have been used in traditional Chinese medicine.

I could not find much pharmacology, but they seem to be cardioprotective, preventing arrhythmias. Taurine found in them has been shown to protect against abnormal heart rates.



## EPISODE 20:

### Thornapple

This was part of the medicine that Suirei made to make her resurrect from the dead.

The flower may contain atropine and scopolamine. Atropine is well used in pharmacology, and I have used it in lab a couple of times. It binds to muscarinic acetylcholine receptors blocking acetylcholine action. Scopolamine is used to prevent nausea but has been reported to cause frightening hallucinations and incapacitate users.

Symptoms include amnesia, hallucination, bizarre behaviour etc.

### Jinshi's Medicine

The medicine is supposed to suppress is manhood. We know from a previous episode that it is some sort of potato flour.

Sweet potato has been shown to increase estrogen levels, improving menopause symptoms. So, it is likely this that he is drinking.



## EPISODE 21:

### Woolly Milkcap

This is a poisonous mushroom which can cause paralysis, difficulty breathing and death at high doses. At lower doses there will be general symptoms such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.

I can't find much about the pharmacology, but it seems to inhibit thrombin (serine protease) which acts to promote platelet activation and aggregation.



## EPISODE 23:

### Wood Sorrel

Mentioned earlier in the opening flowers chapter.

It is non-toxic but if ingested in very large quantities it could be toxic.

Oxalic acid in the flower may bind to calcium forming crystals which can lead to kidney stones.

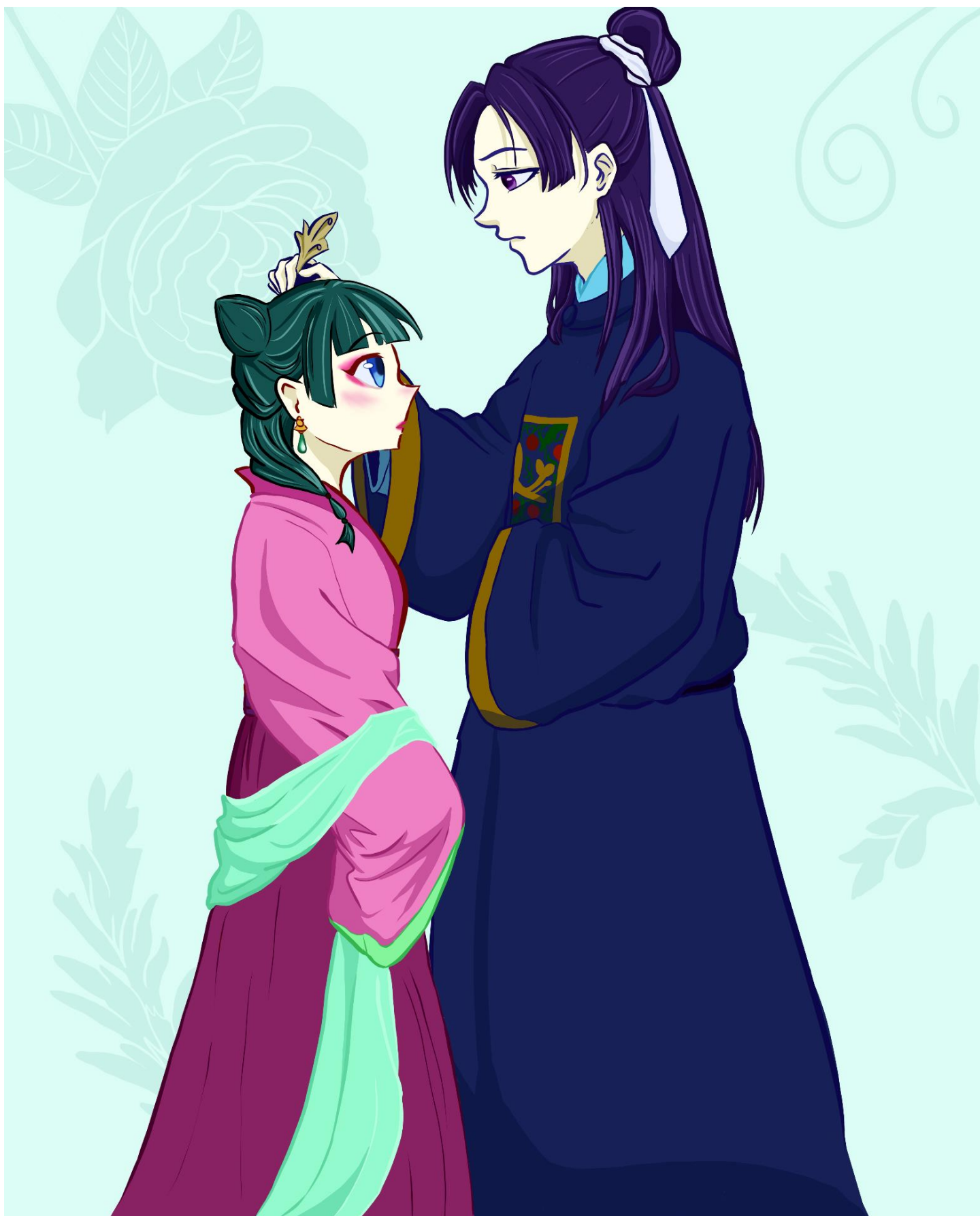
Symptoms: Urinary urgency, blood urine and pain.



Thank you for reading this and I hope it was interesting to someone!

Erin Cranston





**Art by Amber Milford**





**Art by Amber Milford**



# **The Moral Tellings of the Ugly Bastard Fighting Anime - Some Thoughts on Strength in Baki**

*By Kristian Bergene-Gray*

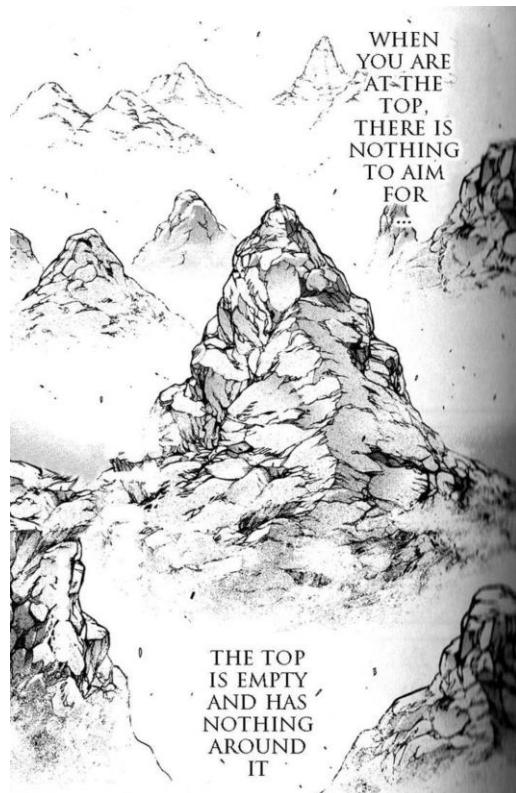


Baki, aka Baki the Grappler, aka Baki Hanma, AKA a number of other names, is a manga that started in 1991 and is still running today. It has 151 volumes in the main series and 11 different side stories. It is one of the best selling mangas of all time, selling over 85 million copies worldwide and making the author Keisuke Itagaki the 9th richest mangaka in the world.

Baki follows the life and growth of Baki Hanma, son of Yujiro Hanma, the strongest creature on the Earth, and Emi Akezawa, a gangster who fell in love with Yujiro and used Baki to try to get him to love her. With such a simple and lovely family (read: sarcasm), Baki had a wonderful childhood full of brutal training and familial abuse from both parents that concluded with his mother being killed in front of him by his father, after she finally showed love to him by attempting to protect Baki from Yujiro, followed by Baki carrying her dead body through the streets of Tokyo whilst hallucinating that she was still alive. All this occurred after Yujiro stopped an earthquake by punching the ground. Baki then spends the rest of the series going through trials and tribulation to grow stronger in an attempt to defeat his father, coming to some rather stunning moral conclusions during the entire series.

The primary moral idea in Baki is strength, and its use and purpose, as shown by the tagline of the series; “Every man dreams of being the strongest at least once in their lives”. The primary character that is used to explore this is the titular strongest, Yujiro Hanma. As the strongest creature alive, he is viewed not as a person, but rather as a force of nature; defeating earthquakes, the United States of America, even time itself. As the strongest, he has raped, killed, tortured and done many more things, simply as in the world of Baki, at the basest level, strength is the ability to do what you want as strength allows you to impose your will upon the world around you. However with this strength, with the ability to do whatever he wants, Yujiro is still trapped, not by any man or country, but by his strength itself. For a man who desires fighting and the growth of strength, for him to end up as the strongest is hell, as there are no more mountains to climb, just boredom until a challenge comes along.

So driving Yujiro in the series is not the desire for strength, like nearly every other character, but rather the desire for someone else who is strong. Through the series we see Yujiro pose himself at the strongest, facing all who would call themselves strong so as to judge them with his presence and wisdom. These battles of strength which are done for a selfish need of Yujiro, then leads to the people who were attacked by the strong, the weak, to view him as an angel sent to save them. This shows the belief of Itagaki that strength is only a means to an end, and not the end itself. This in turn leads to the only desire of the strong being that of defeat, as any challenge that does not defeat the strongest is no challenge at all. If the desire to be the strongest lead to the imprisonment, then what would happen for someone who wished to be the most free in the world.





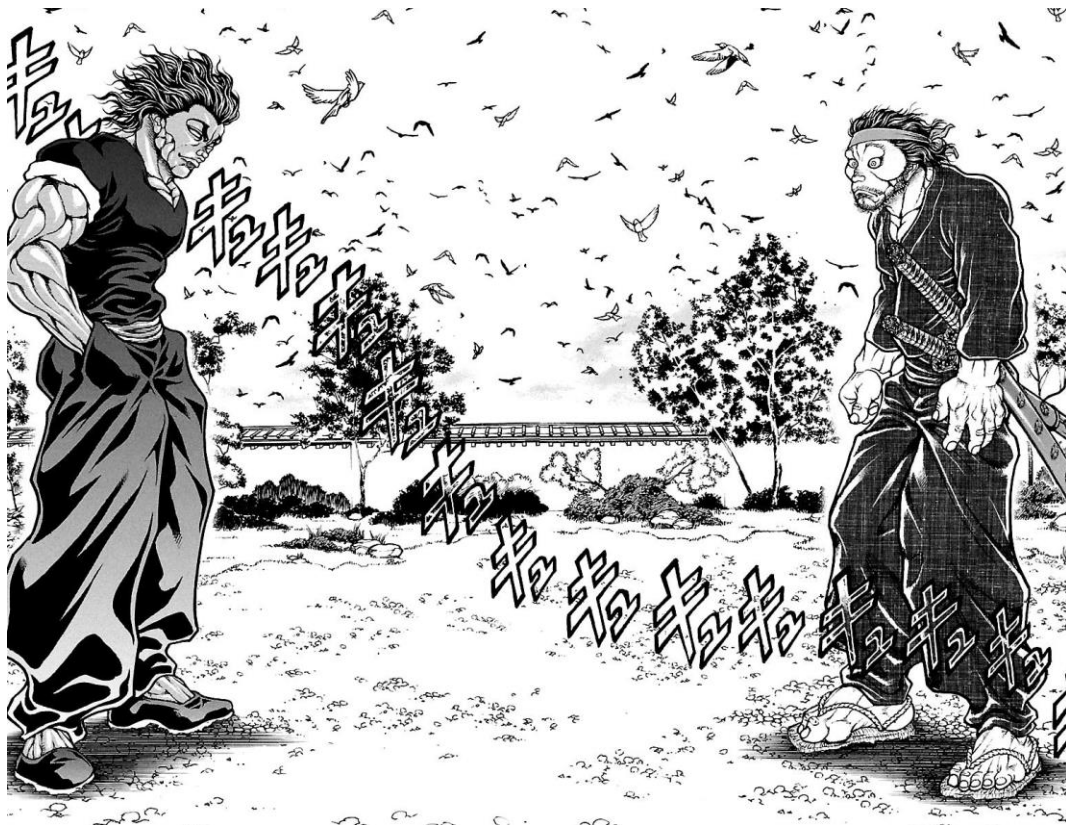
Meet Biscuit Oliva, also known as Mr. Unchained, the freest man in the world. A man so strong that even when sentenced to prison, he can come and go

whenever he wants to. To Oliva strength is not the goal, even freedom is not, instead Oliva fights for something that no-other character does, Love. His love for Maria (his mistress) whom he believes to be the most beautiful woman in the world. Oliva's strength for love sets him apart from the other characters in the story, as he does not fight for himself, for his pride or his desires, but rather for someone else entirely. This strength is also reflected in his way of fighting, as every action and attack is done as a performance for the person that he loves. All together this leaves him in a much happier situation than the strongest, as even though he is not unbeatable, he is still strong enough to be free of any chains that want to bind him, as the only chain he desires is love.

Whilst defeat is the desire of those who viewed strength as the end, Itagaki also provides the perspective of those who view strength as the means, with one example being Musashi Miyamoto, the legendary Japanese swordsman who was resurrected in the modern age to fight the greatest fighters in the world. Musashi Miyamoto is characterised as wanting to "Cut my way to the top". Behind every fighter he faces, Musashi sees the rewards that he may obtain, from bountiful feasts to piles of gold to even crowds screaming adorations, his driving motivation is not the strength or victory over others, but rather the rewards that he can reap. This is a direct dichotomy to the fighters, who could be surrounded by piles of gold, but their only desire would be the opponent. Musashi's different attitude to fighting stops him from integrating with the fighters of Tokyo, even less so than the prehistoric man Pickle. His difference in attitude when eventually he comes to a head in his final battle with Baki, in which fight the bountiful feast that was behind Baki, became eaten, leaving nothing for the warrior,



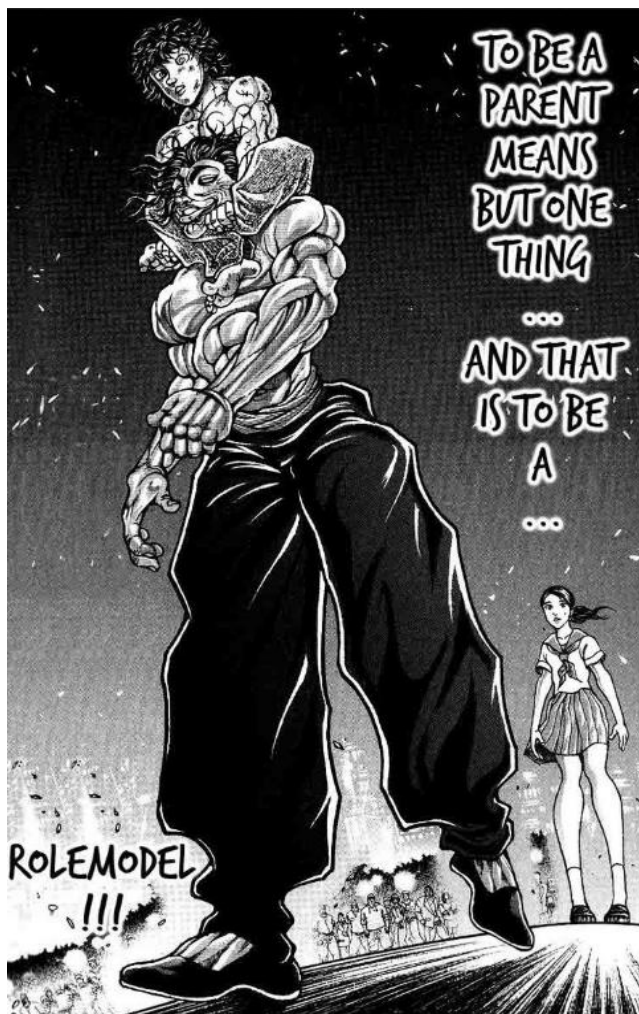
showing that his time in the modern world had come to an end, and so had his attitude for fighting. This battle of ideology is also shown between Musashi and Yujiro; one the greatest warrior in the world, the other the greatest fighter. When the battle finishes, Musashi is on the ground unconscious, leaving Yujiro, and the attitude of fighters, as the victor.



To contrast against the achieved strength of Yujiro and the desire for rewards of Musashi, is a man whose only desire is strength, Jack Hanma. Son of Yujiro and half-brother to Baki, Jack's mother was raped by Yujiro during the Vietnam war, whom after giving birth to him became a monk. Jack's life was characterised by ridicule and pain as he trained and overtrained to become the strongest in the world and defeat his father by any means necessary, turning to drugs and radical surgery to become stronger. Jack's desire to grow stronger is so great that he has abandoned food, women, even glory and fame, just so that he can grow stronger. It has been characterised by Yujiro that Jack has a "purity" to him, that despite all his shortcuts to strength, the strongest cannot find it within him to dislike what Jack has done to gain strength. This shows that even the strongest has traits finds traits in others that can be admired, in this case being the undeniable and uncontrollable lust for strength, this is even more pertinent for Yujiro, as while he had been defeated by this point of the story, he is still as bored as he always was. However Jack when compared to Yujiro is said to have a resolve even greater than he, being free from the curse of aesthetics that the other characters are bound by, perhaps showing that the main thing holding the fighters back are their skills themselves and their veneer of civility.



Finally we come to the protagonist of the story Baki Hanma. Baki in the story is a special character, as we follow him from being a troubled boy, angry at his father and the world at the beginning of the story, to the matured master of combat and the strongest creature in the world by the end of the story. Baki at the beginning of the story (at 13 years old) is much like a babe, imitating those around him. He poses as his father, attempting to be strong trying to take on 300 yakuza thugs and then his father himself. The gangsters beat him into the ground, and then his father repeats this and then kills his mother. Yujiro follows his philosophy of the strong here, facing those who would call themselves strong (Baki) and fighting them to the end. Baki, facing the fact that he is weak, loses his motivation and simply fights for the sake of fighting, no-longer having the same drive that he once had. This lacklustre energy is maintained until he matures and becomes a man, through his girlfriend Kozue, following the advice of his father.



This maturation from becoming a man and overcoming his weakness lead to him coming to the realisation that even if his father was the weakest in the world, if Baki was stronger than him he'd be happy. This change occurs due to the fact that in the face of someone truly strong, he and his philosophy were both defeated handily, showing the failure in his philosophy, as one is not strong because they are correct, but are correct because they are strong. This leads to his final epiphany, that he wants to have a normal relationship with his father. He had concluded that throughout his pursuit of strength and power, that neither were truly what he wanted, but rather just a happy life. He used his strength to fight his father to enforce his will on the world and have his father cook dinner for him, like in a normal relationship, where the father provides for the child. And then like a normal relationship Baki complains about the food, and in return, the strongest in the world laughed, for he had been defeated, proclaiming that he was no-longer the strongest, for he had been shown a world not enforced by himself.



# **Kakegurui: An Exploratory Show that Delves into Pure Insanity and Discrimination**

*By Joseph Thomas*

## **Introduction**

This will explore the thematic themes of insanity and discrimination present in Kakegurui, one could even argue an extreme case of Hedonism. This report will be taken from my post of this on the Anime Amino website under my name Gum Gum Kakuja posted on 19/7/2019 of the same name. This will be updated and adapted for this zine article. One of the main focal points of this series is its hedonistic, colloquially almost orgasmic portrayal of gambling which at first glance feels like it is promoting the feeling of risk and reward. Yet if dissected through analysis the author utilises this as a smokescreen tactic to distract the reader or viewer from the annihilation of people's hopes and dreams, and the almost euphoric feeling of complete victory over someone causing them to feel utter despair. I will analyse three components of the story that show this overall theme, the protagonist Yumeko Jabami, the House Pet System and the Momobami Clan. This article will contain spoilers for the anime and manga of Kakegurui, in anime terms of both seasons. Additionally this article focuses heavily on the concept of discrimination so please bear that content warning in mind.





## Yumeko



The protagonist Yumeko Jabami is in a sense the perfect method of showing the hedonism and insanity of gambling and the discrimination it can cause through our society that promotes it. The author uses Yumeko's gambling addiction and sexual reaction to the result of it to highlight the dominance that money pertains to humanity as a whole, and how it holds us hostage since nothing in this world we enjoy could be achieved with no money to a certain degree. Yumeko is an excellent portrayal of Yumeko, who is so enslaved in the cage of gambling that she is more than willing to bet her own life in a gamble. This highlights the destructive level of gambling addiction, by using her as a medium of the extremes of gambling addiction. This is extremely effective in the exploration of how gambling alters a person's concept of morality and life as a whole. In the eyes of Yumeko anything in the entire world including her memories and emotions can be gambled, showcasing the fully distorted mental state of a heavy gambling addict. Ultimately showing the colloquial term of Yumeko's pure insanity through her euphoric and hedonistic view of gambling.



## The House Pet System

The House Pet System portrays how discrimination can affect a localised community in this case the school in which Kakegurui takes place, a school whose social hierarchy is determined by your money and gambling prowess. This system is dependent on influence, cheating, luck and most of all an abundance of money if a student is to use it in their favour. The House Pet System is where if a student of the academy owes a certain amount of money in that school environment they become the lowest caste, and lose all human rights being referred and utilised as more of a pet than a human. The House Pet System shows the audience and reader the extremely hostile and barbaric environment that discrimination can cause whereby people can lose all forms of their humanity, becoming deindividualized since they are replaced with new pet names, losing their sense of self and identity due to the power of the discrimination that is an almost unbreakable atmosphere of the school that is protected by the other students out of fear for becoming a house pet. A truly terrifying horror of personality and individualism that creates the overall circus of insanity of Kakegurui.



## Momobami Clan

The Momobami clan revealed in the second season of Kakegurui is utilised by the author to highlight how power between groups of people can shift dramatically, due to the power of influence and money or an overall shift in social atmosphere. The Momobami clan is a group of prestigious wealthy students of allied families who are skilled in gambling and have access to an array of fortunes. This is almost akin to the discovery of psychologist Sherif where he studied the conflict and cooperation of boys that were split into two rival camps. There is group conflict between the previous student council in Kakegurui and the Momobami clan as well as Yumeko being a wildcard more on the side of the previous student council. Kirari Momobami the student council president of the first season and main antagonist of season 1 ends up having to ally with Yumeko against the Momobami clan causing cooperation between the two of them due to the superordinate goal of defeating the clan. A further example is Rei whose story is a representation of how gambling shifted a person's status and authority. Her family lost a gamble years ago and became a sub family in the Momobami clan. The constant discrimination she faces because of the family that she was born into and not because of her own actions or identity. This reinforces the theme of pure insanity as the idea that your entire reputation and human nature is judged by your family's actions is baffling, yet makes psychological sense in terms of her family being used as a scapegoat to better the reputation of all the other families, by having a common family to blame.



## Conclusion

Kakegurui is a series that fully delves into a controlled world of insanity, corruption, extreme wealth and hedonism. Through the three factors discussed we see the overall power money has on humanity while also looking at how as social humans we can be destroyed socially through certain means that can cause people to feel extremely deindividualized and in a sense psychologically lose their sense of self and even deeper, lose their humanity due to there feelings of hopelessness and inability to rebel against the social atmosphere of the majority.





# Why Citrus isn't Shitrus: A Brief Defence

*By: Sam Melrose*

Whilst the primary focus of this piece will be on the anime, this is a discussion of the entirety of Citrus and, as such, will feature spoilers for the anime, the manga, references to its sequel, and quotations from Milan Kundera's 'The Unbearable Lightness of Being' but no spoilers for said novel.

Before I begin, I will attempt to outline both the reception and some of the characters mentioned. First, here is a brief overview of its reception: It's very poorly received - while IMDB's rating is a 6.5, you must remember that IMDB ratings for TV shows are somewhat inflated (consider that School Days is a 5.9 on IMDB). On Letterboxd, Citrus holds a rating of 2.4. On MAL, it has a rating of 6.44, ranked #7132 (as of the time of writing), which means it is only slightly higher rated than the atrocious 'Ore, Twintail ni Narimasu' - a massive injustice. For me personally, Citrus is not a great show. But it's also not wholly shit, and a lot of it is surprisingly good and well done.

As for the characters, the two main characters are Yuzu and Mei. Yuzu begins the story by transferring to a new high school, one where Mei is the student council president and is run by her grandfather. By the end of the first episode, these two girls are step-sisters as Mei's father married Yuzu's mother. The other characters mentioned in this review are Sara - a girl from another high school who develops a crush on Mei after a chance meeting and briefly goes out with her, and Matsuri - a former classmate of Yuzu who tries to assert her dominance over Mei and steal away Yuzu.

To frame this discussion, I'll cover some of the negatives. First and foremost, the pacing (for the most part) sucks. In one episode, they introduce the father in person - who, granted, was always felt in the story, and then wrap up his story arc - barely mentioning him later. In just that one arc, the time needed for Mei's growth to be believable (although, arguably, the development is trivial) is more than the show dedicates to it. There are clearly points when they dedicate too much time to certain arcs, for example, Matsuri's arc - which goes on for way longer than it needs to - so it's not entirely a case of them not having time (although it could have done with a few more episodes) it's a case of them not adequately distributing the time to each arc to make it believable.

Second, some writing, especially the dialogue, is unbelievably painful. If I had a pound for the number of times Yuzu embarrassed herself or did something that normally would get her crucified in a semi-realistic society and then got away scot-free or had it reversed, I'd have somewhere between 10 and 20 pounds. I can't remember exactly; I lost count. Outside of that, some of the writing is generally just poor - for example, in one episode, a girl who has never brought up her bike before and never again, brings a bike to school - on the exact day the bike is needed to get resolution.



Third, the setting is painfully underutilised. You have a school environment, but all that does is add to the overall fetishistic nature of the show (I'll get onto that later) or signify their age rather than being used as a tool for a romance-based coming-of-age story - which it does want to be. If you want an example of how setting can be used to its fullest in a Yuri anime, look at Dear Brother (Oniisama e...) - as what it adds is what Citrus lacks.

Finally, before I bring up the positives, I will address one final point - how fetishistic the show is. And it is very fetishistic. Within the first episode, you have a girl who is deliberately introduced as super-straight becomes progressively less straight after going to an all-girls high school, being groped by a girl, seeing that girl being forcefully kissed by a teacher, becoming sisters with that girl, and then being forcefully kissed by that exact same girl. And by the end, she's far from straight. I mean... how many fetishes can you fit into one episode? And to top things off, Passione clearly does so much to make things as fetishistic as possible and then doesn't build on top of them - it's like Passione, of all people, is scared to go all in, which at times can make it feel like the show is scared of dedicating itself to one thing.

But here's the part where I bridge it over to the positives - the fetishistic stuff is clearly deliberate and needed for the story it's trying to tell. When you read anything about Citrus, it almost always brings up how it makes them uncomfortable. And whilst I won't go as far as to say that this means they have less media literacy than the people who think The Wind Rises is pro-war, I will note that the show and manga are meant to make you uncomfortable. You are not watching two mentally stable people. You are watching two girls experiencing significant change in their lives in a coming-of-age story with extra step-sisterly steps, and then, to top things off, one of them is incredibly mentally scarred.

I mean, the entire point of the show is how she wants to be needed and loved. I mean, that's entirely what she asks Sara in episode 11 (chapter 14). With her father gone and failing consistently to look after her as a daughter, her birth mother actually permanently gone, and a grandfather who only cares about her as a tool to ensure the family's future success no shit she's going to be scarred - especially when half the time her grandfather is marrying her off to older men who only care about her for her body and her future title. That's what she's grown to expect from people, and that's why she does those things - she's still behaving as her grandfather expects her to act for the vast majority of it, and it's only at the end - where to its credit, the show successfully becomes less fetishistic by adding a little thing called consent - that she finally starts to break out of that. If you want evidence of this in the show, look at episodes 1 and 2 or Chapter 35 of Citrus+.



So yes, whilst some part of its fetishistic nature is maybe a bit too much, especially when the school setting is underutilised, it's clearly with a cause. It adapts to how the characters change throughout the show, which is, I appreciate, contradicting my earlier point. Still, I don't believe the two are mutually exclusive.

Citrus is also clearly a story about communication as much as anything else, and the fetishistic stuff is, more than anything, a means to an end to convey the difficulty of communicating that the characters have. The entire point of the latter half of the Citrus show is Yuzu building up the courage to let Mei know how she truly feels without holding anything back - rather similar to Kimi ni Todoke, in that respect. Similarly, Mei suffers from the same issue as she is unable to tell Yuzu her feelings, putting it off until the very end, which is shown most clearly at the beginning of Chapter 33. This isn't the only tool in the series's arsenal, however, as levels are also used to suggest the difficulty that Yuzu has even reaching Mei.



Next, the characters in this aren't all that bad, and as I mentioned above, they make sense in the world of the show. Their development is generally well explored and, more than anything, actually fulfilled. Okay, yes, some of the side characters really suck, and there is no development as to why they are like that - until you get to the manga - but for the main characters, it makes sense. Yuzu begins just wanting physical contact with Mei; she is still fulfilling her desire at the start to be physical with a boy, just this time with a girl - why? Quite simply because that is what she thought was expected of her, and that's what her friend group introduced to her. But as she moves to the all-girls school - and this is the one thing it is good for - her horizons are broadened, and she gets a more complete view of the world, and she realises that the fetishistic stuff



isn't all there is. This means that by the end, she rejects a highly intimate, non-reciprocal relationship with Mei in the hopes of developing a stronger one.

More prominently, however, Mei is genuinely well-written and (in some instances) believable in how she acts. I've already discussed this above, so I'll keep it brief. Mei is a character who, throughout her life, has been consistently forced into various roles created for her, following the paths set for her without creating new ones for herself. The clearest evidence for this is in the opening (titled 'Azalea') - a storytelling method in its own right - in which it states, 'There aren't many things that you're allowed to do, are there? Whose favour do you need to make sure no one gets hurt?'. So when she gets an opportunity to act independently, to have her own relationships (which are both a sign of rebellion and an expression of freedom), she develops them according to the framework of her life experiences - one of sexual abuse at the hands of men she was assigned to marry by her grandfather (see episode 1). This is genuinely pretty true to real life; there is a wealth of research as part of the 'Family Systems Theory' into parts of behaviour just like this.



And here I'm going to lightly criticise it because in a lot of online discourse, I see it mentioned how the show retreads steps (I kind of brought it up in my section on structure), and whilst that is untrue, that belief stems from a failure on the anime's part to convey the reasons Yuzu has for making that decision which, on a surface level, does kind of feel like the characters are taking a massive step back (see the end of the Matsuri and start of the Sara arc). Obviously, I can understand why believing the show is doing that would be frustrating because, at that point, you are just retreading old steps and making very little new progress - but progress has actually been made. Whilst it may not be completely obvious on the surface, there is actual character development there for both parties. Without this, it wouldn't have made complete sense for the characters just to start dating - it needs one more obstacle to get in the way, one more hurdle to encourage Mei and Yuzu to make that step.

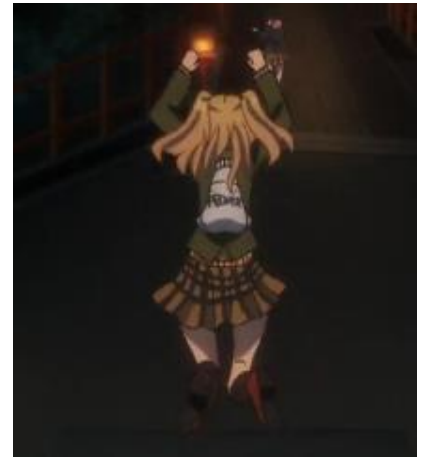
I'm possibly giving them too much credit in this section. Still, I genuinely believe they tried to make this a great anime. They deserve at least some praise for that - even if their attempts to backfire and result in actual character development being obscured. The show doesn't explicitly tell you precisely what the characters think or their motivations at every point. Whilst there is a moment in the final episode where Yuzu summarises her thoughts, that's basically the only point when the show is ever that blatantly obvious. What *Citrus* does, and far better than the vast majority of shows, is that it shows the audience a modicum of respect - both in their ability to understand the plot and draw their own conclusions. Most shows will have something to show, and then the characters will explain precisely what is happening and what developments have occurred. And maybe that's okay if you're watching it and not really paying attention, but it can soon not only become clear how little respect the show has for the audience and their time but also becomes excessively tedious. Again, I'm not saying it does it perfectly; I'm simply stating that it's a minor point in the show's favour that most people seem to ignore.

Another point commonly levied against *Citrus* is that it's a bad romance. While its introduction is flawed, it is generally a decent romance. First and foremost, it's well-paced - yes, they share moments of physical intimacy throughout (significance discussed earlier), but they only actually start a relationship by the end of the series - which makes it possible to actually root for them as the audience generally has a good understanding of their character. Furthermore, the series goes through a lot of effort to really emphasise how they are meant to be together - through the effort required for them to get together (for example, personal troubles or romantic rivals) and the very existence of fortuity.

I feel that it is important to delve further into the fortuity essence, as a lot of the time in romance stories, it is mistaken for poor writing - and although a romance story featuring fortuity (which is most of them) can be poorly written it also allows the romance to introduce the main couple as potentially being, for lack of a better term, 'soul mates'. In defence of this, I would direct you towards Milan Kundera's novel, 'The Unbearable Lightness of Being,' in which the protagonist describes how it took 'six chance happenings to push Tomas towards Tereza'. Similarly, both the early meetings between Yuzu and Mei are frequently based on coincidence and decisions made for them - the failure of any of these could have ended or prevented their relationship. Again, this is not to say they put in no work of their own; fortuity is merely used to suggest that there is some force pushing them together - it takes their own effort to make sure the relationship succeeds, as Kundera put it: 'So fateful a decision resting on so fortuitous a love'.

I also think it is important to bring up the structure briefly. Whilst yes, it is repetitive, the show is not nearly long enough for it to become nearly as repetitive, or nearly as much of a problem, as shows like *Monster* (an otherwise exceptional show). In fact, it loses much of its structure past the four volumes of the manga that the anime covers.

It is important to note that the *Citrus* manga is actually pretty good, and many of my criticisms of the anime are addressed in the manga, albeit past the four volumes and 16 chapters covered by anime. Most notably, the school setting is utilised more fully in the manga - especially at the current point in *Citrus+*.



But more than anything, I don't find it too painful to watch the show or read the manga, for that matter. Actually, I kind of enjoy it, and every time I watch it, I don't think I'm wasting a massive chunk of my time. And here's why - it has decent production values, can be funny in places, and generally respects the audience's time. It's really not a boring show, nor is it a massively frustrating show like *School Days*. Dare I say it, it's kinda fun. So no, I don't think I've wasted my life after watching it, as I do for *Psycho-Pass* season 2, *Gamers*, or the undefendable *Scum's Wish* (which is also, for some reason, rated higher than *Citrus* on all three sites listed above).

This means that *Citrus* has established a relationship that is continually built up throughout the series (even if individual arcs are poorly paced) - one that is possible thanks to both powers outside of Yuzu and Mei's control and their own effort. It establishes a believable relationship that the audience can root for, thanks to the many ways it is shown that they are meant to be together. This is only helped by the characters, and whether or not you believe the issues they face, which are introduced well and early on in the series, and how that influences their behaviour, it is clear that there is a logic behind them. There is the capacity for them to be believed. So, whilst this certainly does not make for a great show, it makes for a show that is far better than people give it credit for and far superior to many shows that are consistently reviewed higher.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I like the title.

You see, the title *Citrus* is a clever reference to both the taste of the Citrus fruit and the main character's name. For instance, a Yuzu is actually an East Asian citrus fruit. Additionally, most citrus fruits are actually quite sweet, but one is overpowered first by sourness. You see, what the series is doing is comparing love to citrus fruit, being fundamentally sweet but also sour, much like Yuzu and Mei's relationship.

10/10 for the title.

# The Weird World of Hetalia

by Josie Brown



*Hetalia* is a webcomic, later adapted into a manga and anime series, by Hidekaz Himaruya (a.k.a. ‘Hima’ within the fandom) where every character is an anthropomorphism of a country and their personality is based on national stereotypes of that country. Its main genre is comedy and the story mostly involves the characters acting out various events throughout history with the countries as people, though there are occasional scenes which are just random made-up skits.

The title ‘Hetalia’ is a portmanteau of the Japanese word ‘へタレ (hetare)’ meaning pathetic or useless but in a kind of cute way, and ‘Italia’ – the local name for Italy, the anime’s central character. So ‘Hetalia’ essentially means “pathetic Italy”. Though Italy is the central character, the two other main characters, at least in the first season, are Germany and Japan – this is the reason for the ‘Axis Powers’ in the title – though *Hetalia World Series* and subsequent seasons begin to include more of America, Britain, France, Russia, and China in the canon of main characters.

Like many popular anime, Hetalia once had a huge cult following during its peak, remnants of which can still be found online. Now it may be well past its heyday – I’m told this anime once dominated the internet at one point back in 2009-11 when it was first being released – but its legacy remains in the collective mind of much of the weeb community.

To the surprise of many, Hetalia is actually still ongoing – the latest season of the anime (season 7, called *Hetalia World ★Stars*) was released in the Spring 2021 season, and new chapters of the manga are still being regularly published as of the writing of this article, though I will primarily just be discussing the anime in this article, and not the manga.



I have seen the entirety of the Hetalia anime as I binge watched most of it upon discovering it last summer, and I honestly really enjoyed it – mainly because of the comedy and the portrayal of the countries and their historical and political dynamics. Although one thing that I, much like many other viewers, found confusing upon watching for the first time is that it does not take place chronologically, but rather it jumps between various time periods, sometimes even within the same episode. That being said, I still enjoyed it enough to watch every single episode – not just once, but twice – as I went back and re-watched the entire series dubbed after first watching it subbed.

Now much like many other weebies, I am an adamantly ‘sub over dub’ anime enjoyer, however I found Hetalia to be one of the rare exceptions to that rule – in this case the dub is actually better than the sub. The main reason for this is because in the dub, each character is voiced with an accent of the country they portray, which adds to the comedy, but this is mostly lost in the sub. Another reason why is that the dialogue in the dub is far more chaotic, similar to the infamous *Ghost Stories* dub, as the voice actors improvise many of their lines, making various pop culture references and some rather risqué jokes – which all in all adds to the inherent silliness of the anime and its characters.

Make no mistake, Hetalia is not an anime to be taken seriously. While it does portray several real-life events throughout history, overall it is just meant to be a goofy comedy where each character has a relatively exaggerated personality – that happens to be based on real countries. I won’t deny that there are some problematic aspects of it (and the fandom), but I won’t be going into those here. This article is meant to just be a commentary on some thoughts I have about the anime, and several things I found weird and/or interesting when watching it.

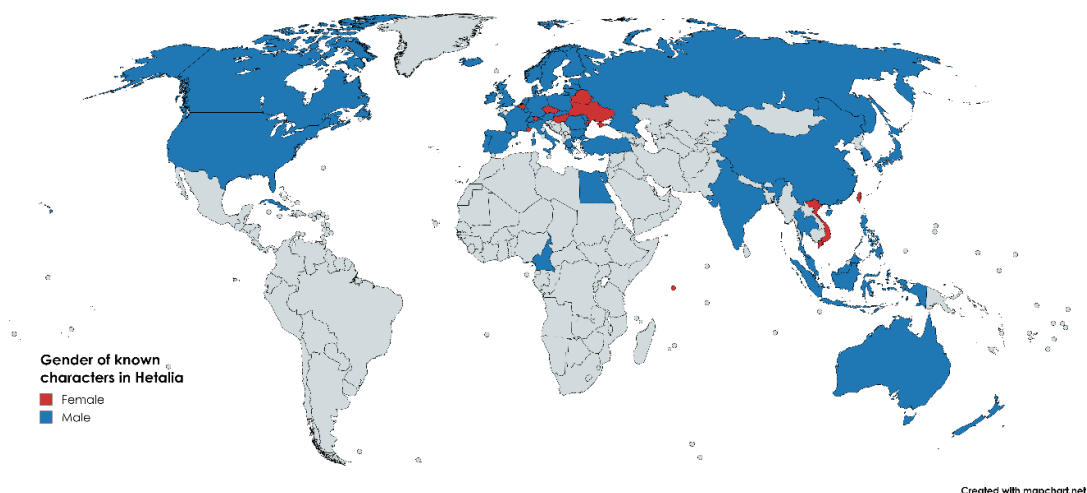
I will try to avoid spoiling too much of what happens for any readers who haven’t seen Hetalia, though for the record, I don’t consider it to be an anime that one would watch for the story, but rather for the comedy, characters, and the overall experience of watching. After all, since Hetalia’s story is mostly based on historical events, anyone who studies or studied history probably already knows how most of it goes anyway. So feel free to (in fact, please do) read this article even if you’ve never watched Hetalia.



## Representation of countries

The first thing I want to discuss is the representation of countries in Hetalia. Most countries are portrayed as male characters, however a handful (Belgium, Hungary, and Ukraine to name but a few) are portrayed as female characters. The reason for this imbalance, according to Hima, is that he just prefers drawing male characters, and it has nothing to do with the countries themselves. So when he first started creating Hetalia, all his original designs for the countries were of male characters, and when he published these early drafts in the original webcomic, they stuck in the fandom's memory. Essentially, once a character is first revealed, even if it's just a rough sketch, it immediately becomes canon and leaves little room for later revisions. This also likely explains the somewhat simpler designs of many of the main characters (who were all revealed early on), and the more detailed designs of characters revealed later on.

In other words, this means that Hima's default gender when designing a character is male, and so the few female characters in Hetalia were designed as such as a deliberate choice. However, in many cases, there is still no clear reason for why he chose to make them female. The only thing Hima himself has said in regards to this was that it usually just comes down to how the name of the country "sounds" to him, and that in the case of Czech[ia] for instance, the name just sounded more feminine so he decided to make her a female character. But again, this is only *usually* the case, not *always*.



Above is a map I made to show the gender of every known Hetalia character thus far (according to [https://hetalia.fandom.com/wiki/List\\_of\\_Hetalia:\\_Axis\\_Powers\\_characters](https://hetalia.fandom.com/wiki/List_of_Hetalia:_Axis_Powers_characters)). Not included are minor and/or mentioned characters as these are yet to officially appear in the anime or manga, and in most cases their gender is still unconfirmed. Also not shown on the map are historical countries such as Prussia and micronations such as Sealand – so I shall note that all of those which have appeared so far are male with the exceptions of Ancient Egypt (historical) and Wy (micronation) who are both female.

But anyway, enough about gender for now. The map also shows another interesting thing I want to talk about – that being how only some countries are represented at all and actually the majority of the world's countries do not have their own Hetalia character.

Most European countries are represented as well as a handful of Asian countries, albeit primarily East and Southeast Asia. On the other hand, not a single South American country is represented and there are only three African characters (Cameroon, Egypt, and Seychelles) so far. Some large and notable countries are missing too – Pakistan for instance is currently the largest country by population to have not yet been seen in Hetalia (though they have been mentioned, making Nigeria the largest to have neither been seen nor mentioned).

Yet despite the majority of the world's countries being completely unrepresented in Hetalia, Hima has decided to create characters for various historical countries which no longer exist, and weirdest of all: micronations. Micronations, for those that don't know, are essentially self-declared states that generally lack any kind of legitimacy or recognition – they are usually 'joke countries' where someone has declared their house or whatever to be an independent country, complete with a flag and themselves as ruler. From well-known ones like Sealand or Molossia, to the ridiculously obscure Kugelmugel (yes, really), many of these micronations are shown in Hetalia – almost an unjustifiable amount given the number of real countries like Brazil or Mexico that are still waiting for their own character design.



*This is the entirety of Sealand  
(a 'country' which has more  
screentime than India does)*

What the map doesn't show, however, is the difference in screen time between the countries that are represented. It is often joked about within the fandom that Wy, a micronation based in Australia, has more screen time than Australia himself – but this is actually entirely the case. To give a more extreme example – India, despite being the most populous country in the world (although admittedly it was only second when most of Hetalia was released), has only appeared in two episodes of the anime and two chapters of the manga so far, meanwhile tiny little Sealand, an aforementioned micronation based on an offshore platform off the coast of Suffolk, is a common recurring character with at least one entire story arc.

The reason for this Eurasian-centric representation is probably due to Italy being the central character (after all, he is technically the anime's namesake) with Germany and Japan being the other main characters, so it makes sense for most of the story to focus on them, their histories, and their interactions with their friends or neighbours – which of course are mostly in Europe or Asia. In addition, it could also be linked to the dominant role that Europe (and Asia to an extent) have played in most of recent world history, so those are the events which are primarily portrayed in Hetalia. Alternatively, it could also be in part due to Hima simply being more familiar with Eurasian history than anything else.

Another thing I find rather curious is how each country is represented by only one character, and that character represents the entirety of their country. So large and diverse countries like America, Russia, and China for instance have but one character to represent their various cultures and histories.

However, there are two key exceptions to this: the UK and Italy. In the UK's case it's pretty understandable as there are four separate characters for England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland (although England's character is also said to represent the entire UK as he is interchangeably referred to as Britain and only ever shown with the UK flag as opposed to the English flag).

But in the other case – Italy – it's a bit weirder as there are two separate characters for North and South Italy. When I said that 'Italy' was the main protagonist of Hetalia, I was actually referring to North Italy, or Italy Veneziano to give his full name. [North] Italy's older brother meanwhile is Italy Romano, who represents South Italy. Despite both representing the same country, only North Italy is just called 'Italy' for short, whereas 'Romano' is the short name for South Italy. The reason for this divide appears to be due to varying histories of Italy's north and south and how this is depicted in Hetalia as North Italy is shown as being part of the Holy Roman Empire for most of its history, whereas the south was fought over between France, Spain and the Ottoman Empire (portrayed by Turkey's character). That's good and all, but why does only Italy get this divide? Aren't there many other countries whose regions have very different histories? It's even weirder when you consider that North and South Italy aren't even separate political entities in any way, unlike the aforementioned four nations of the UK.

One could also argue that China is also a case of this as Hong Kong and Macau have separate characters (and also Taiwan, but that's another story) despite belonging to the same country, however I am not counting that as they are presently separate geopolitical entities from mainland China so it makes more sense for them to have their own characters.



## Stereotypes as personalities

Each character's personality in Hetalia is based on rather exaggerated national stereotypes of the country they portray, or on some sort of generalisation or popular perception about the country or its history.



*America being America*

Take America for instance – he's shown to be highly energetic and kind-hearted, but can also be quite loud and obnoxious at times. He likes to think of himself as the hero in most situations, eats a lot of junk food, and isn't exactly the smartest – especially when it comes to geography. How true are any of those stereotypes? Well that's beside the point – those stereotypes certainly exist and so Hima wrote America's character in this way to reflect them.

As for some of the other characters, Italy is depicted as a cheerful and carefree pasta addict who likes to take siesta and is quite cowardly in battle, usually surrendering without a fight. On the other hand, both Germany and Japan are shown to be serious and hard-working – Germany is also very efficient and responsible, but he can be quite aggressive at times – meanwhile Japan is also rather quiet and mostly likes to keep to himself.

Britain is a tsundere who is easily annoyed by others even though he tries to act like quite a gentleman. He is also really bad at cooking and is always arguing with France, apparently just for the sake of it. Speaking of whom – France is presented as fashionable and overly romantic and his favourite hobby is going on strike.

Canada's running gag is that he is invisible and nobody ever notices him except his brother America, who he is usually mistaken for the few times other characters do see him. In a way, this reflects reality as it is true that Americans and Canadians are often mistaken for one another by foreigners. Other running gags include Finland being Santa Claus in the Christmas episodes, or Switzerland always remaining neutral even during an alien invasion.

One way where the stereotypes as well as other cultural or historical factors surrounding these countries is most visible is at the start of *Hetalia: The Beautiful World* (season 5) where there are two episodes titled 'Gakuen Hetalia' in which every character is a student at the W Academy and each join different clubs based on their hobbies or interests, which are mostly based in some way on something the country is well-known for in reality.

The episodes revolve around Italy, Germany, and Japan all deciding to join the Newspaper Club and interview all the other clubs at the academy. From this we see China, France, and Turkey in the Gourmet Club – which makes sense as these countries are known for their cuisine.

There is also the Music Club consisting of Austria and Prussia – two countries known for their classical music. In addition, Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania make up the Choir Club and mention that they frequently get stalked by the Soviet Club, which consists only of Russia.

Then there's America who is the sole member of the Hero Club, and the five Nordic countries who also have their own exclusive club. Others include Australia and Hungary in the Swimming Club, Britain and Romania in the Black Magic Club, or Switzerland and Romano in the Going-Straight-Home Club.

## Countries being related

One of the things I find most interesting about the characters' dynamics in Hetalia is how some of the countries are actually related to one another – usually because of shared history and/or culture or just overall strong similarities.

As mentioned previously, America and Canada are brothers, albeit with very different personalities. It is still not known which of the two is the older and younger brother, though a common assumption within the fandom is that the two are actually twins due to their near-identical appearance. Either way, this relation makes sense as in reality both countries have similar histories having gained their independence from Britain, and to this day they remain very culturally similar.

Likewise, Romano (South Italy) is the older brother of [North] Italy. This one makes even more sense given that the two are literally part of the same country in reality. However, it's never confirmed why Romano is the elder of the two – if I were to guess, I'd say that it's because Romano is centred around Rome, whose recorded history goes back further than Venice's (since Italy is centred around Venice given that his full name is Italy Veneziano). It most likely has nothing to do with the Roman Empire though as that is represented by its own character, Ancient Rome – or "Grandpa Rome" as Italy calls him.

On the other hand, there is also the case of Liechtenstein being the little sister to Switzerland, as well as Monaco being the same to France. In both cases, these are small countries whose 'big brother' is a larger neighbouring country that they are mostly economically, politically, and/or militarily dependent on. Liechtenstein for instance has long had a currency and customs union among other agreements with Switzerland, giving the two countries a strong alliance in real life, and similar also exists between Monaco and France.



*Switzerland and Liechtenstein*

Hima's decision to portray these countries' relations in this way is interesting to say the least. I think it does make sense, both sets of siblings represent two countries that are very culturally and historically similar after all. Were that not the case, he might have instead opted to just show them to be two very close friends or even roommates. That being said, both are still cases of a smaller country being closely linked to and dependent on their larger neighbouring country, so I think showing them as younger siblings who live with and rely on their older sibling probably was the best way to represent them.

Then there's the case of the so-called 'UK bros' – those being England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland who make up the four nations of the UK. Like in the case of the Italy brothers, it makes complete sense for these four to be related since they are all part of the same country in reality. It is not confirmed which of the four are older or younger than the others, however the four have agreed in their house rules that England is to be treated as the youngest, making Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland his older brothers in practice. Their dynamic is rather interesting, Scotland is shown to want to move out of the UK bros' shared house so he can join the EU, though he doesn't want to jeopardise his relationship with England. Meanwhile Northern Ireland wonders whether he'd be better off living with Ireland or staying with England, reflecting the divided opinions within the country on that same issue. It is implied, though not confirmed, that Ireland is also Northern Ireland's brother – and by extension, brother to England, Scotland, and Wales as well – but the fact that he does not live with the UK bros reflects Ireland's status as an independent country from the UK.

But then we have the Slavic trio consisting of Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus. This trio have probably one of the most interesting and dramatic dynamics of any of the characters in Hetalia. Ukraine is the older sister of the three, Russia is the middle brother, and is Belarus the younger sister. Though not mentioned in the anime itself, the reason for them being siblings is likely due to all three countries claiming the Kievan Rus' (a country which existed from the late 9<sup>th</sup> to the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century) as their common cultural ancestor. Within this trio, Ukraine is shown to be the responsible one who wants to be more independent so she can go off to make friends in the West, much to the dismay of Russia who wants her to keep living with him just like in the days of the Soviet Union. As for Belarus, she is portrayed as the crazy little sister who is deeply obsessed with her brother Russia, so much so that she actually scares him to an extent.

Moving on, there is also the Benelux trio – that being Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. In this trio, the Netherlands is the older brother, Belgium is the middle sister, and Luxembourg is the younger brother. These three countries are certainly very similar in many ways, including culturally and historically, so representing their relation in this way makes complete sense.

However, I wonder why some other groups of countries that are culturally and/or historically similar that are often closely linked are not portrayed in the same way. The best example of this would be the Nordic countries: Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland. In Hetalia, they are not related to each other and instead are shown to be just be a group of very close friends – apart from Iceland and Norway who discover they are actually brothers in an episode where the five friends all decide to take a DNA test. I’m not entirely



*The Nordic countries: Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden*

sure why Hima chose to characterise the Nordics in this way, and moreover why the only two that are related are Iceland and Norway. To me, it would have made more sense for either all five of them to be brothers, or just Norway, Denmark, and Sweden at the very least. In reality, Iceland was part of Denmark for most of its history and Norway was frequently fought over between Denmark and Sweden.

In that same vein, what makes the least sense to me is why the Baltic states – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – are not related to each other at all. Those three would have been a perfect trio – possibly even more so than the Slavics or Benelux – given their similarities in various aspects and having been part of the same country for a lot of their recent history, which is mentioned as them having lived together.

## Countries in relationships

Another thing I find interesting about the characters’ dynamics in Hetalia is when two unrelated countries are in relationships – or even married – to one another, usually to depict a historical merger between the two.

The main example of this is the marriage of Austria and Hungary to portray the real-life Austro-Hungarian Empire. Though their wedding is never explicitly shown in the anime, it is mentioned that they married on June 8<sup>th</sup>, 1867, which was the real-life date that the Austro-Hungarian union was formed, and the two are always shown together during any event that happened between then and the empire’s dissolution after WWI. Despite their marriage being a political arrangement, the series does suggest genuine affection and care between Austria and Hungary, and the two are also shown to remain close friends even after their separation. This reflects how the Austro-Hungarian union, while driven by pragmatic concerns, did develop real cultural and social ties over time. Though not seen to the same extent, it is also mentioned that Poland and Lithuania were married for a time, and this represents the historical Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.



On a similar note, there is one episode where France asks Britain to marry him, which believe it or not, reflects a real-life proposal for Britain and France to merge into one country back in 1956. Britain ridicules the idea, and convinces himself that it must be April Fools' Day as there is no way that France can be serious, just as was the real-life reaction to this proposal at the time as well as when it later came to light in 2007, which was also the same time that Hima started working on the manga. Hypothetically though, had this merger have happened (or if Hima had decided to delve into alternate history and show them marry anyway), France would presumably be shown to move in with England, but how would that affect both their relationships with Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland? It would have been very interesting to see how it was portrayed, that's for sure.

Conversely, we also see the divorce of Czech[ia] and Slovakia, who were already married upon their first introduction, to represent the breakup of Czechoslovakia (an event known as the 'Velvet Divorce' in reality). The two are shown to frequently argue with each other throughout their marriage as Slovakia insists on hyphenating their name to read Czecho-Slovakia because he feels that Czech being the first part of their name (and also capitalised) makes her dominant over him in their relationship, and that the two should be equal – this was actually a real dispute between the two countries, which was dubbed the 'Hyphen War' by the media, and was a contributing factor to the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. After their breakup, the two are shown to remain good friends, which reflects how the dissolution in reality was completely peaceful (hence the name 'Velvet Divorce') and the two countries remain closely linked and are strong allies to this day.



*The breakup of Czechoslovakia*

However, not all country mergers are portrayed through relationships or marriages. In the case of the Anschluss for example, where Austria became part of Germany just before WWII, this is depicted through Austria simply moving in to live with Germany. The reason for this distinction is most likely due to the two being implied to be brothers, although this is yet to be confirmed. Alternatively it could also be due to German expansion at that time later including other countries as well – though we don't explicitly see this in the anime.

## How the characters reflect their country

For the most part, every character in Hetalia appears roughly the same age – all being young adults around 20-25 years old or so, though there are a few exceptions such as the some of the micronations like Sealand or Wy who are basically kids. However, this is just the age they appear as, not their actual age, which is in some way connected to the age of the country they represent.

China frequently mentions that he is the oldest, insisting that he is immortal and has lived for over 4,000 years already. This makes sense as Chinese history does indeed go back thousands of years. Though this also shows that the characters are not tied to the specific state of the country they represent, as China has been unified, divided, reunified, and changed regimes numerous times throughout its history – yet in Hetalia the character for China remains the same, and despite being over 4,000 years old he has still not aged one bit.

That being said, when exactly a country is ‘born’ in Hetalia is not exactly clear. For instance, there is one episode where we see America as a child, having just been ‘discovered’ by Britain and France, where he later grows up and goes on to fight Britain for his independence. This means that America’s character was not born on the USA’s independence day which is famously July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1776 (although confusingly, in the anime he does mention celebrating it as his ‘birthday’) as he is shown to exist before then.

This does at least show that each character’s ‘age’ is based at least in some way on how far back the country’s history goes – usually anyway. As mentioned previously, some of the countries who are related to one another are older/younger than their siblings, though the reason for why is not always clear. Going back to the Slavic trio of Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus – it is not known exactly why Ukraine is the oldest of the three siblings. It makes sense for Belarus to be the youngest, given the country’s relatively recent history compared to most others in Europe, but for Ukraine to be older than her and Russia? Perhaps this is based on some history I’m not aware of, despite my best efforts to research it – though this does at least prove that the older sibling is not based on which country is larger, as if that were true then Russia would be the oldest of the trio.

Speaking of which, the differing sizes of the countries is actually reflected in their Hetalia character’s height – with Russia being the tallest character to reflect that he is the largest country in the world (by area), and countries like Liechtenstein being rather short to reflect their small size. This also explains how America grows up to become taller than Britain very fast to portray the USA’s rapid development as a country post-independence.

In addition, we should also remember that the characters are meant to represent the culture and people of their respective country, and the characters' lore is based on their country's history. The characters, do not, however, speak for their governments or leaders in any way as these are shown to be separate. We know this as the characters occasionally refer to their 'bosses' – meaning their leader – and how they are often made to do things by them, sometimes against their own will. The leaders are usually only mentioned, though some do actually make an appearance when talking to the character of the country they lead – examples include Britain talking to Queen Elizabeth II and France talking to Napoleon Bonaparte.



*Queen Elizabeth II in anime form*

## A unique way of telling history

Most, but not all, of Hetalia's story is based on real-life historical events. If I had to put a number on it, I'd say that about 70-75% of Hetalia is at least somewhat based on real events, whereas the other 25-30% are random scenes or skits made up just for the anime. But of course, even the parts that are based on real history are more of a parody, and are just meant to show it in an absurd and comical way. Though a prior knowledge of history is not necessary to watch Hetalia, it does help you to understand a lot of the comedy and jokes they make around it.

I may not be a history student myself (though I do study politics and international relations, which is related in a way), but I do have somewhat of an interest in it and I consider myself to know a lot about history. Despite that, even I have actually learned stuff from Hetalia – I mentioned earlier an episode where France proposed to Britain, asking him to marry him, and that this was meant to portray a real-life proposed state merger between the two countries. That is a fact I did not know, and would actually later come up on a quiz I took part in a few weeks after watching that episode.

There are all kinds of historical events shown in Hetalia – political and/or military interactions between countries are depicted as social interactions between the characters, so wars and disputes are generally portrayed as fights or misunderstandings. There is a range of events that are shown, from well-known to lesser known or even trivial. I have mentioned a lot of these already, like the Anschluss where Austria moves in with Germany, or Czechoslovakia's 'Hyphen War' and their subsequent breakup.

Other examples include the Industrial Revolution, where Britain, Germany, and Prussia invent many different types of machines – only to be copied by America, or how Britain raised Hong Kong but then he grows up and goes back to live with China – like was the case with the Hong Kong handover, or in one episode where we see Greece talking to France about his ancient sporting traditions and competitions, which France thinks sounds great and that they should be brought back – and this is how the modern Olympic Games were born. In that regard, I must say that as a huge fan of Eurovision myself (oh you really thought I wasn't going to find a way to bring that up?), I am disappointed that there is no representation of the song contest in Hetalia. I think an episode where several of the European characters get together to have a singing competition was a missed opportunity.



*China berating Britain for the way he raised Hong Kong*

Personally, I consider Hetalia to be an anime like *Cells at Work!* is to biology, but for history and international relations. Not exactly in the same way though, as I feel that the historical parody of Hetalia is more appreciated when you already have an interest or great deal of knowledge in the subject already – but that's not to say that you won't learn a thing or two from it if you don't. If you want to learn history seriously, then you'd probably be better off watching a history documentary or something – but there's no denying watching Hetalia would certainly be the more fun option, that's for sure.

## How to watch

At present, there are 15 MAL entries for Hetalia – 13 anime and 2 manga. The two manga are *Hetalia Axis Powers*, which has six volumes, followed by the still-ongoing *Hetalia World ☆ Stars*, which just released its eighth volume.

As for the anime, the main series are technically ONAs as they were originally released directly onto the internet and never broadcast on TV. In addition, episodes are only approximately five minutes long, making it very compact and fast-paced, similar to *The Disastrous Life of Saiki K.*



Unlike many other anime, Hetalia has no objectively necessary watch order. As long as you understand the basic premise, you could watch it all in whatever order you want. Episodes are relatively standalone for the most part, but they are usually split up into different unrelated scenes, some of which contribute to a wider story arc. Because of that, I would still advise watching all the episodes for each season in order, though it's not imperative that you do since after all the story isn't that important as the main reason to watch Hetalia is just for the comedy.



All that being said, there is a recommended watch order, which is as follows:

MAL Title	Released	Episodes	What it is
<i>Hetalia Axis Powers</i>	2009-10	52	Seasons 1-2
<i>Hetalia World Series</i>	2010-11	48	Seasons 3-4
<i>Hetalia Axis Powers Fan Disc</i>	2010	1	Seasons 1-2 OVA
<i>Hetalia Axis Powers Movie: Paint it, White</i>	2010	1	Movie
<i>Hetalia World Series Specials</i>	2011-12	4	Seasons 3-4 specials
<i>Hetalia: The Beautiful World</i>	2013	20	Season 5
<i>Hetalia: The Beautiful World Specials</i>	2013	4	Season 5 specials
<i>Hetalia: The Beautiful World Extra Disc</i>	2014	1	Season 5 OVA
<i>Hetalia: The World Twinkle</i>	2015	15	Season 6
<i>Hetalia: The World Twinkle Specials</i>	2015	3	Season 6 specials
<i>Hetalia: The World Twinkle Extra Disc</i>	2016	1	Season 6 OVA
<i>Hetalia World ★ Stars</i>	2021	12	Season 7
<i>Hetalia World ★ Stars Specials</i>	2021	3	Season 7 specials

Essentially, you'll want to watch *Axis Powers* first, then *World Series*, then *The Beautiful World*, then *The World Twinkle*, and finally *World ★ Stars*. This watch order is less important for the movie, the specials, and the OVAs, as these can really just be watched whenever



between the main series. But if you do deviate from the watch order, or miss an episode or two, it's no big deal – just make sure to focus more on the comedic element, rather than the story. That's the best way to appreciate Hetalia.

Also, as mentioned previously, Hetalia is a rare exception to the usual 'sub over dub' rule when it comes to anime. That's not to say that watching it dubbed is necessary – unlike *Ghost Stories* – so if you do want to watch it subbed, then by all means go for it. But in mine and many other Hetalia fans' experiences, the dub is far more enjoyable. For that reason, I strongly recommend the Hetalia dub over sub.

## Concluding thoughts

I really admire Hima's creative way of showing history and international relations in Hetalia. I appreciate the way he references even some of the most obscure historical events, and overall is able to make a parody of history and international through the lens of countries as people. I have discussed in this article some decisions of his in interpreting the countries and their histories or relations which I found interesting, and what I believe are the reasons for said decisions.

Would I recommend watching Hetalia for the history? – Well, yes and no. I'd recommend watching it anyway because I think the comedy and gag humour (especially in the dub) are worth it, but I recommend it even more to anyone interested in history and/or international

relations. Of course, as I have said before, Hetalia is not just a retelling of history as part of it is just random made-up skits.

The anime and manga have attracted some controversy over the years (and so has the fandom), mainly over what parts of history are actually included. While I won't deny that it is problematic in some ways, I believe that virtually any representation of history in this way would be. Hetalia does gloss over a lot of events, but I say understandably so as these would just be hard to parody without being insensitive. At the end of the day, it's a satirical anime – the characters are meant to be likeable, so bringing real world problems into the mix would just ruin it.

That being said, there are actually two episodes that completely deviate from Hetalia's usual comedy genre – these are “A bientôt! Until We Meet Again!” (*The Beautiful World*, episode 15) and “Davie” (*The World Twinkle*, episode 11). I won't spoil what happens in these episodes as these are the only two where the story is actually important – but the shift in tone is very apparent and it makes these two episodes stick out from the rest of the anime.

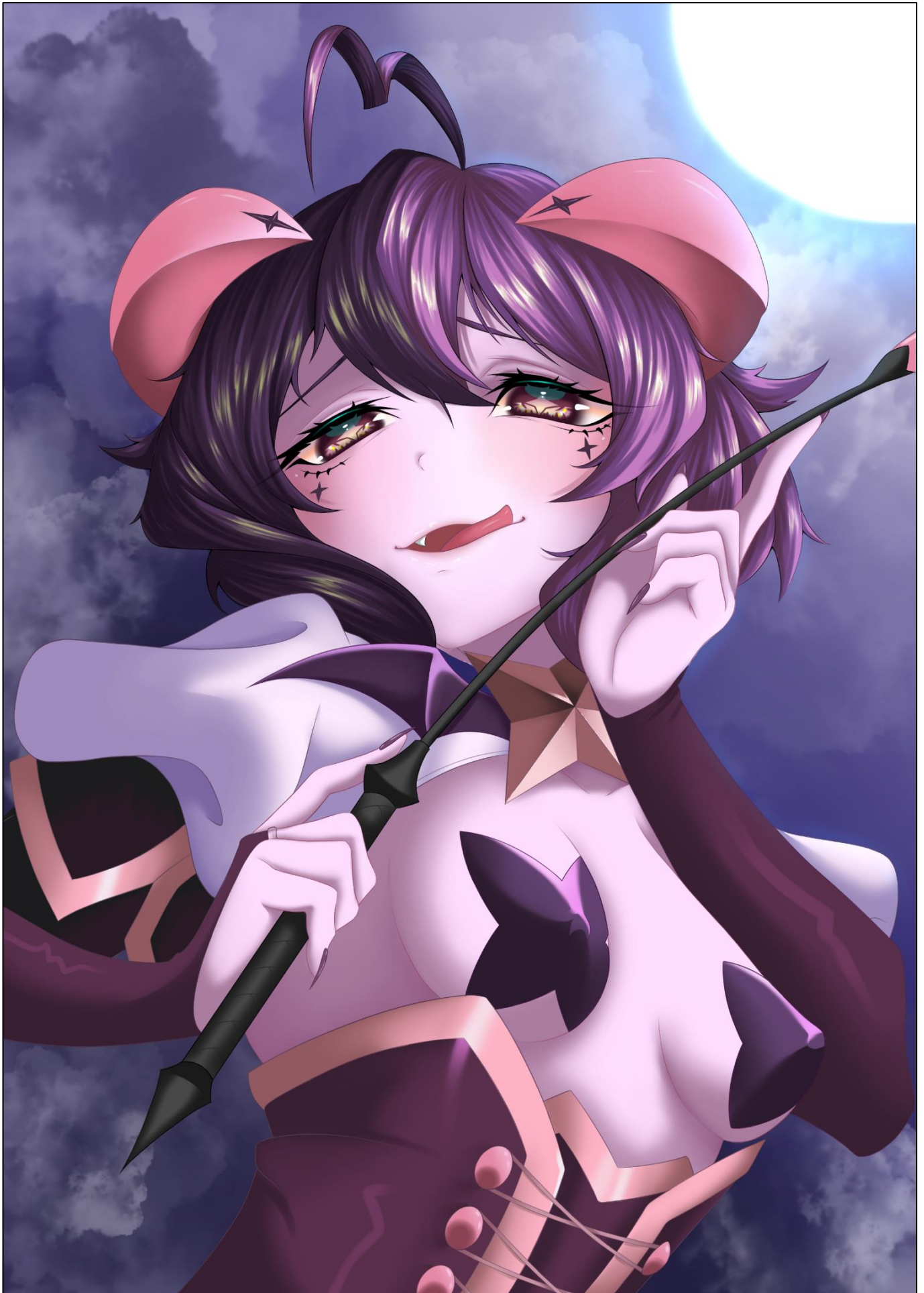
I really enjoyed watching Hetalia, and I still occasionally re-watch some of my favourite episodes. That is what motivated me to write this article – it wasn't meant to be a critique or a theory in any way, it's meant to be more of a commentary – I just had a lot of thoughts about the anime and there were many things I wanted to say about it.

I really hope the Hetalia anime makes another comeback. As long as the manga continues, I shall remain optimistic – after all, there was practically a six-year gap between seasons 6 and 7, though hopefully we don't have to wait until 2027 for season 8. I wasn't around to see Hetalia or the fandom in its heyday, and I am painfully aware of just how few people nowadays, not just in this society but in the wider weeb community, have seen it and consider themselves fans. I hope to change that – I thoroughly enjoyed Hetalia and I want more people to see it and appreciate its humour. I did manage to successfully suggest the first five episodes at one of our usual Anime Monday sessions a few months ago, but that's not enough.

If you have made it this far into reading this article, please consider watching Hetalia (ideally dubbed, but the choice is yours). I will admit, it can be a bit hard to get into at first for most people, as you still get to know the characters and get used to the story not being told chronologically and how story arcs are sometimes split up between non-consecutive episodes. But with that in mind, I implore you, dear reader, to go forth and invest the time into watching Hetalia. Even if I convince only one person to watch all of Hetalia as a result of this article, it will have served its purpose.

This article took a lot of time to write, but I did enjoy making it. There's probably more to discuss that I haven't said, but this article is getting quite long now so I shall leave it here.

Anyway, watch Hetalia – it's fun, and you might learn some history too.



**Art by Fin Hill**





**Art by Fin Hill**





**Art by Fin Hill**

# **Ballad of Kittan**

*By Nick Stathakis*

## Preface

This, I feel, will be my last article of the zine; unless of course I pull a Miyazaki, and return for next year's edition, but I suspect that to be unlikely. I've greatly enjoyed writing articles year on year for our prestigious *peer-reviewed* journal on anime, typically writing analyses of anime like my articles on Gurren Lagann in Zine 12 and on Evangelion in Zine 13; or writing about the nature of anime as an art-form, like the 'Timbres of Anime' in Zine 11, and 'Anime, Art, and Limitation' in Zine 14; and in Zine 10, I debated the most important point of contention: that all dubs are bad. But never have I been able to contribute anything artistic myself. For better or for worse, I'm more analytical than artistic, more left-brain than right-brain, more an art consumer than an art producer. The word 'analysis', when analysed and broken up into its etymological quanta, simply means 'to break up' or 'unloosen', and deconstruct: analysis is a *de*-structive process rather than a *con*-structive process, like art. And whilst I haven't much aptitude for the paint brush nor the Wacom tablet, I rather enjoy writing; so I figured this year, I would try to write a poem.

Poetry doesn't come too intuitively to me, and from talking to others my age it may not come intuitively to yourself, the reader. Somehow, generation upon generation, the faculties of comprehension are veering too analytical, becoming alienated from the very origins of speech. If this is the case for you, I'd recommend first reading it aloud, but also finding 'Row Row Fight the Power' on Youtube and playing it while you listen; it should give my shallow and gravely inexperienced verse a well needed boost: a bit of spiral energy, one might say.

Unfortunately, the medium of anime won't last forever. It relies either on tapes, which rot and disintegrate; on computer files, which might not last forever; and distribution, which may be shut down by tyrannies. Anime is in a very fickle spot in the long-term; yet it contains some of our greatest stories! Stories like Gurren Lagann are ones I believe should last the test of time, and be passed on to future civilisations once our own unravels. But in order to pass that test, it cannot remain as an anime. Homer wrote the Iliad in verse over 2500 years ago, and so long as scribes write it, or bards memorise it as was traditionally the case, we will still have Homer. Please do understand I'm not comparing my work to Homer; I am but a greenhorn poet writing for an esteemed *peer-reviewed* journal. But I do hope this work can be a kind of prototype for others more talented - perhaps some reading in the soc - to do the same.

I've always loved Gurren Lagann, this being the second time I've had the privilege of watching the show as a set series with the society. I've been here for six years now, and I can only thank anisoc from the bottom of my heart. This place means a lot to me. Make sure good anime keeps getting in, everyone. This is my last gift to the soc. Adieu.

## **The Ballad**

I

There was once a brave legion of brothers-in-arms  
Composed of a band of odd misfits and knaves,  
Who broke free from wet prisons concealed by land,  
To fight off a golem who's stunting each man,  
A tyrant oppressing a kingdom of sands,  
To free all mankind from their darkness in caves.

For Simon the Digger did lead them with might  
And fought to return to them law and esteem.  
Though journey and venture would have been in vain  
Without his just knights and his noblest thane  
Kittan the great chief of the Dai-Gurren team.

Upon one sad eve, Simon's love was usurped,  
Narrating the plans of foul foes to defeat,  
A clan with the name anti-spiral had sought  
To throw back the freedoms the core drill had brought,  
By digging new holes for mankind to retreat.

Across the dark galaxies Simon's men chased,  
The shape-shifting, kidnapping devils in space;  
Though the team had an ace tucked just under their sleeve  
For by Simon's core drill they could couple their ships,  
Connecting and wedding one hulk to the next  
So that the two crafts were completely annexed  
By the bond of a mystical energy great.

As Simon began to build strength to combine,  
Defending the ship was his legion of knights;  
But many a baron had fallen in fight:  
Among them were Zorthy and Iraak, and Kid;  
And the twins named Balinbow and Jorgun, who died  
Protecting the lives of their comrades; and then  
There was Makken, who died without fanfare nor ode,  
By leaving this world without stutter nor qualm.

These men who have died are not gone, but live on  
As grand constellations we see every night;  
For courage's paradox they had perceived:  
In life they ne'er flinched and stared forth into death,  
And then come their death they found unending life.

## II

Then as Simon was free to build up spiral force,  
Came a gloopy space sea which seeped into the ship  
Invading each nook with a cold liquid dread.  
Then Simon's green energy soon did deplete,  
And so did the energy fueling their fleet;  
The engines turned off and the thrusters lost grip,  
And their ship fell far further towards the sea-bed.

However much spiral force Simon could grow,  
His plans were uprooted by forces below;  
The Death Spiral Machine was their jugular spot,  
A black hole for green had ensnared them in knots  
And further, and deeper, they sank to its core.



They bobbed and they buoyed and tread water to float  
But then Simon commanded they shouldn't resist:  
"It is futile to fight when this sea is so thick,  
However much kicking and fighting we give,  
We do naught but feed further this black coiled beast;  
So why do we struggle to gasp for small breaths,  
And not drag a great lungful and dive to the depths  
Then spear this coarse shark with harpoon through its maw  
To continue our journey with power restored.

They descended down deeper and dark was the sea,  
Each missile destroyed by the pressure beneath.  
The crew then assembled and gritted their teeth,  
But amongst the tense crowd was a definite voice,  
Of the thane named Kittan who was armed with a plan;  
Was furrowed his brow, and decisive his look,  
For his eyes were electric, and thunder he spake:

"The core that's so far where the pressure is strong,  
Trajectory nor laser could reach those dark depths  
For little can penetrate this matte-jet heart;  
Save solely my vessel whose hull would withstand  
The pressures below, were I now to depart  
On a mission down deeper: a mission that's manned."

To journey so brashly, he didn't think twice,  
For it was no great battle nor wrestle of heart;  
He knew that his moment of stardom had come,  
To no longer be tied to the gravity from  
His blue planet where he had grown up and learned wrong  
About just what it meant to survive or be great,  
And how such a thought had come present so late.  
To survive, thought that thane, was just not enough,  
For man is but seed planted deep in the dust.

The stars that he followed brought Yoko to him,  
And he warmly embraced her and kissed her and missed  
Her, for he would not see her nor live out his dreams,  
Of her as his wife with three kids and a home  
Where they could live peacefully all on their own;  
But it was not so. Such warmth was never to last.  
For Kittan was no man of warmth but of fire;  
He set down the lady and said his farewells,  
Smiling slightly, his heart neither sank low nor swelled.  
Donning armour of courage wrought silver and gold,  
With that stoney sobriety death's knocking told,  
Kittan was the man he had always withheld.

Approaching the villain he fired his shot  
But by pressure his missile was shrapnel and squashed.  
And hull after hull of Kittan's noble craft  
Was shredded and crippled to naught but debris,  
For his chassis containers could hardly withstand  
The forces uncloaked on the journey he'd planned.

And the brave thane was gone; disappeared in the mist  
Of black space-sea thick. But upon the ship's bridge,  
On the dashboard was read, a small signal which seemed  
To come from ahead, with a reading of green  
Pulsating the dial, as if Gurren Lagann  
Had collected that thane; but that ship had not been.  
That force of green spirals did come from one man:  
The source of those coils was the brave thane Kittan.

Now stripped of his armour he barreled forth green,  
Like a radiant emerald escaped from a ring;  
Outside of mere reason and sense he now fought,  
For such scruples and doubts are but products of thought,  
For when the heart fights, all of reason distorts;  
And hope echoed through stars which could hear Kittan sing:

### III

"I feel a great energy passing through me,  
Like great winds of fire that have burnt all my sins  
To naught but a figure of silvers and golds,  
Like a phoenix whose cast from hot fiery moulds;  
Yet gentle and subtle these burning flames are,  
And warm are my hearthstones which gloweth within;  
Yet ash I'm becoming by burning so bright  
With which I'll irradiate all of the night.

“But somehow I don’t feel the least bit dismayed  
When bathed in this comforting, warm sprightly bliss,  
Despite being haunted by definite doom!  
O why when I stare down into the abyss  
Do I not feel shaken, unsure, and amiss;  
For why only now when I’m facing my tomb  
Do my verdant field’s flowers now finally bloom?

“I’m blessed by this warm green viridian glow;  
This openness, freedom, and delicate flow;  
I feel like an awl piercing through leather skies  
To weave a jade cord patching up the great rifts,  
Which were cut by false gods who donate us false gifts.

“Is this how our prince the lord Kamina felt?  
Excitement and crystal lucidity pure,  
This sense that the world is a beautiful lock,  
Which has a gold key with which one can dock;  
The name of the key is just ‘looking above’,  
Not ‘looking afar’, for the distance is what  
Most mortals do lust - these empires built  
Upon honour and dust - are but passing.  
The immortal rich fields of heavens above,  
Give entry to those who are selfless and love.



“And I’ll say to those hearing my final few words,  
That the warrior Kittan will always be heard  
Through legends and stories which still will be told  
When Yoko’s great-grandkids will be very old;  
For once I am stardust you’ll think I have gone,  
But with Kamina, laughing, we’ll wait for the dawn.”

#### IV

Then wielding the drill that shrewdly he’d stored,  
(Which Kittan was thankful he guarded on board),  
He leveled his joust and dove straight at the sight;  
His aim not just squared at that cursed machine,  
But also to where those great heroes are seen,  
In the heavens above, in the firmament’s night.

And bathed in viridian energy great,  
He lanced at the foul machine wielding his drill  
Unleashing his personal Giga Drill Break,  
And he pierced the tool drowning his comrades in arms,  
And split the infernal machine in two parts,  
Exploding the gadget of malice so pure;  
And with that explosion, Kittan was no more.

## V

And thus was the end of the digger Kittan,  
The bravest of fighters whose drill pointed high,  
Who suppressed the worst threat ever facing all man,  
Now residing above, deep within the night sky

From the stars Kittan watched the whole cosmos untied  
As the noose of the sea of despair was uncoiled;  
The sea which once drowned our great crew effervesced  
Into coils of green; and at Simon's behest  
The Gurren Lagann did collect all that boiled.

From black seas, came green force; from despair, evolved hope;  
As that brave thane best knew, that warm pleasures and ease  
Gives us nought what we want, for the flesh is but rope  
By which man is yoked to the mill of those seas.

The Death Spiral Machine is a mill, you must see,  
Which powered by force from without, not within,  
Is sent rounding and circling down a fixed path,  
Not widening greater, nor narrowing near,  
Around that fixed axle they realise their wrath  
By rasping their millstones and grinding the seeds  
Of mankind into flour. Once ground of our hope  
And our love of creation, what seeds shall we sow?

By Kittan's sure drill that Machine may have ceased,  
But in every man's bosom exists such a beast.

As Kamina knew, and our Kittan did too,  
That power oppresses, and hope sets us free.  
That by sheer force of will, and by manliest drive,  
We too can destroy that obsidian chain  
Which bindeth our heart's to the trunk of the yew.  
For the sunlight beyond the veiled shade of the boughs  
Is so bright it is blinding; and hot like white coals.  
We will scorch, sear, and scald when we clamber from shade,  
As our sin becomes soot, and we shed petty lusts  
Of the flesh: of our hunger, our envy, and pride;  
And even our lives, just as Kittan has shown,  
Are forfeit to causes more high than our own.

# Death and rebirth: A history of Anime Society

*By Cameron Johnson*

The anime society technically came into being in 2019 but the history of the society extends much further back when it was formerly Science Fiction Fantasy and Anime society. I have been part of the society since September 2018, so I have seen the death of SFFA soc and the rebirth into the anime society. I would now like to tell you about the society from my experience and how it has changed over the years.

## **YEAR 0: Sep 2018 – May 2019 Death**

My journey began with the fresher's fair where I met some of the committee members on the stall. I had already done my research and knew that the society wasn't just anime but I beelined straight for it to sign up. What I learnt at the stall was that the society was quite friendly and that they watched anime every Monday, so I paid for the £3 membership and looked forward to the first event which was to be held on the Wednesday of Fresher's week.



The final freshers stall of SFFA soc with Alastair, president 2018-2019, (left) and James, president 2019-2020, (right) running it



The first anime event of the year was a screening of the film 'A Silent Voice' which was quite a draw although it was in an unusual room in the LASS building which made the film difficult to watch over everyone's heads. This was also the first event where the traditional trip to Mooch after each session began; at least for me. This is where I spoke to a lot of the committee, and we discussed everything from the film to anime we liked and the obligatory university talk. I felt very welcome and knew I made the right decision to join the society.

Next up came the first anime Monday where we decided our set series. We ended up voting in Konosuba as our set series and it ended up being my third time watching the series.

Watching as a group only elevated the humour as we continued to watch it. This was also the first time I saw people drinking in a session which would later become a staple activity of the sessions and we witnessed the Alastair falling down the stairs after drinking one too many.

The format of anime Monday was different back then too as we used to watch 6 episodes in a session rather than the normal 5 nowadays and we could vote in a second episode after the first if the crowd really enjoyed it. This was how we ended up watching Toradora as a second set series alongside Konosuba because we could 'watch the Christmas episode near Christmas'.

When the society was only just a tiny part of SFFA soc's title, anime was by far the largest draw of the society with anime Mondays being the highlights of my week. However, due to only being a small part of the society rather than the whole society, we could only do anime events once a week. This was a blessing in disguise though as it forced the society to do more social events outside of watching anime beginning with the meet and greet at the Johnson Arms that was a long-held tradition during freshers' week.

As was tradition, the second Saturday of the semester was the 'geeky tour' where we were shown around all the local nerd spots in the city centre. We were shown around Forbidden Planet, Page 45 and Waterstones which are still mainstays to this day. However, the anime sections in all these places were much smaller than it is nowadays with Waterstones only having a single corner on the bottom floor for manga.



A group picture of the SFFAsoc on the geeky tour

The next big event that came along was the annual trip to London Comicon where many friendships were formed and the shared suffering of being up at 6am together on a Saturday brought us together. This was also the event where I made my friends that made anime society so much more than just watching anime and it also allowed for memes to be made including the time I bought and then immediately regretted buying a body pillow.

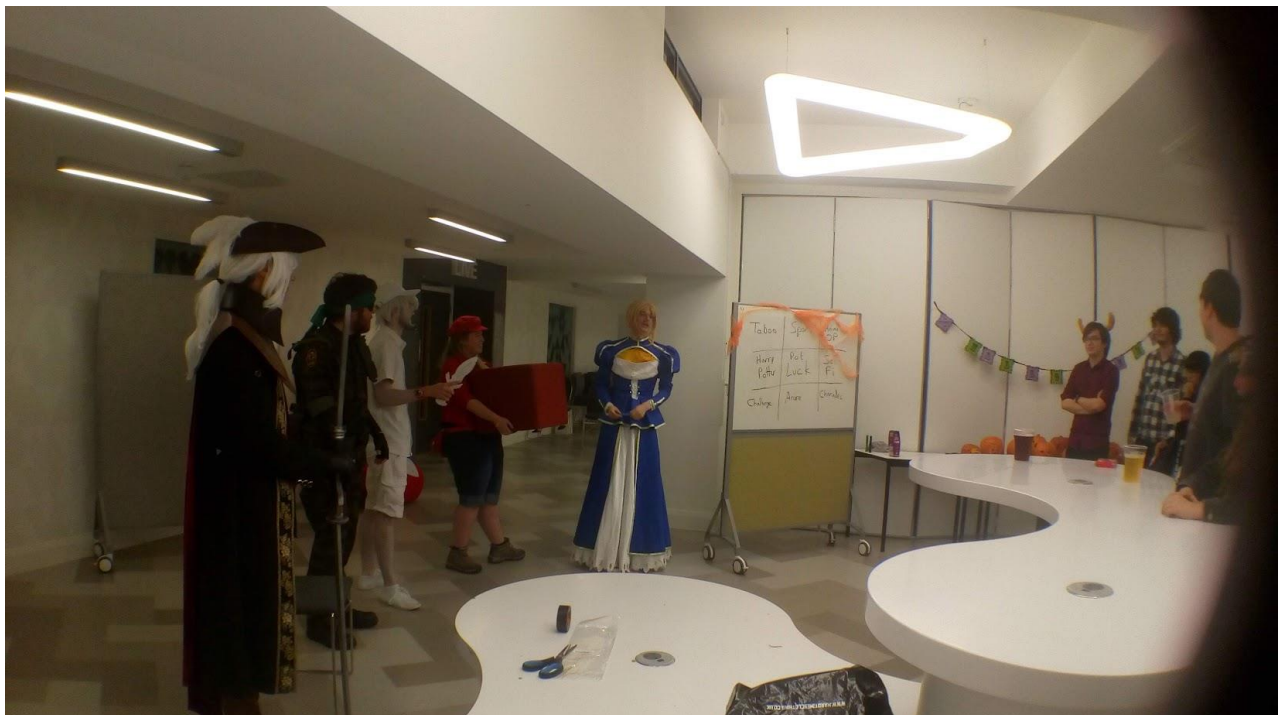


3 future committee members of the society wearing the same horns purchased at London Comicon 2018. Left to right: Nick Stathakis (Treasurer 2019-20, president 2020-21, Mascot 2021-22), James Thackway (Comms officer 2018-19, President 2019-20), Cameron Johnson (Gen secretary 2019-20, Mascot 2022-???)



Group photo of the anime society + random woman in a Pikachu onesie at Comicon 2018

The next event was the pumpkin carving event / Halloween party which occurred in the dance studio next to Mooch. At this event, we carved pumpkins and did party games including: a Halloween quiz, a costume contest, pass the parcel, anime charades and arm wrestling which I must lose every year to name but a few. This was also a great event as it followed right after ComiCon allowing for friendships made during the trip to London to be strengthened and the easy access to the Mooch bar next door easy to get a drink or two.



The costume contest featuring Saber, Red and White blood cells, Snake and Lady Maria



Some other traditions that began in the first semester of the year were the weekly speeches that were held on the podiums outside of the Portland building after Mooch kicked us out. These speeches were often just drunken rambles, but they were great fun and we often got into heated arguments about anime for hours. Btoom got voted in one Monday and became a meme over the years as 'Btoom guy' really liked it. Anime society and its events were just an excuse to get drunk sometimes and when we were kicked out of the pub, we would often find ourselves going to the 'senpai house' to party until the silly hours of the morning. These parties are what started the tradition of having a designated 'anime house' where afterparties could occur.

During November, we also did a couple of collabs with other societies because the committee had friends on other committees. We collaborated with bowling society and went to Nottingham Bowl where we proceeded to get destroyed by the bowling soc members except for Dave who got over 170.

November was also the month where I found out cinemas in Nottingham screened anime films. This was how there ended up being an unofficial social to go watch the new Hosoda film at the time, *Mirai*. It was a surreal experience getting to watch an anime film in the cinema, but it wouldn't be my last one before the end of the semester as the first *My Hero Academia* film was also screened in December which I went to see with other anisoc members, and it was a blast.

The last big social event of the year was the annual Christmas meal at the Rose and Crown pub in Lenton. This was a tradition which has been maintained up until the writing of this zine.



The Christmas meal at the Rose & Crown featuring left to right:  
Simon says, Nick, Me on my phone, Miles, Dave



Second semester started off strong as we voted in Hinamatsuri as our second series which is a hilarious anime about a yakuza dude who adopts a girl who is psychic and really loves Ikura. Not long after second semester began, we had a screening of the film of the film, Night is short walk on girl, that was run by our mascot at the time, Matt, and ended up being a crowd pleaser.



As the semester progressed, another series called Acca 13 emerged as our second set series which has a lot of style and probably kept getting voted in because of its great OP. Cowboy bebop also kept getting voted in and we ended up watching half of it by the end of the semester.

Some other events we held in second semester were 'Pondering in Nipon with Hugh' where an alumnus of the university and former member of the anime society came to give us a lesson on Japanese. He showed us how to write characters in hiragana and katakana and showed us how to write and pronounce simple phrases. This was a one-off event, and it hasn't been repeated since because it was an excuse for previous alumni of the society to come back and see old friends. As the semester trucked along, anime society would often meet up outside of anime Mondays with St. Patrick's Day being a big one where a lot of us dressed up in green and got drunk.

At the end of second semester came the AGM which was where we had society elections to see who would run it next year. This one was different though because this was the election where we voted to kill science fiction and fantasy from the society, and it would be reborn as the anime society. A tradition that continues to this day is where the presidential candidates must cross-dress at the AGM which make the elections a lot more exciting.



Pictures of James Thackway vying for presidency and the miniscule amount of pizza we had for the election.

The best part about the elections was that there was only one candidate and RON for each position, so it was tough competition and we ended up with the first committee of the new anime society.

Before the Easter break though, we did our final collaboration of the year with NERFsoc where it was the anime society vs NERFsoc in a free for all in the ESLC building on campus. It was a one-sided battle though as NERFsoc came in guns blazing with their machine guns, but it was a lot of fun, and we went for drinks afterwards.



Anisoc vs NERFsoc featuring Alex in a snake cosplay as the last man of anisoc standing. Easter break came and went and the final few weeks of year 0 had anime soc holding a 'bad descriptions nights' where the president brought in a bunch of shows, and he would give them a bad description and then we voted on which ones sounded the funniest. It ended up as a disaster though as we ended up watching persona 5 the animation that everyone hated.

After exams, the society went out with a bang as there was a huge house party at the senpai house where the whole society was invited. It ended up being a great night and it's where the mascot told us about a website called [live.karaoke.moe](http://live.karaoke.moe) which is an anime karaoke website and it defined anisoc house parties going forward.

## Year 1: September 2019 – March 2020 Rebirth

Thus began the first year of the new and rebranded anime society. It started off with the fresher's fair stall where a lot of people wanted to talk about One Piece, Naruto, or Bleach while I was clueless.



The first anime society fresher's fair stall run by me (left) and James (right)

The introductory film for the year was 'Summer Wars' which was a successful start to the year. The rest of fresher's week went well as we went to the Johnson arms again for the meet and greet.

Our first anime Monday of the year happened, and we voted in Banana fish as our set series which became controversial as the people who voted for it didn't stick around to watch it.

Then came our last traditional event, the geeky tour, where the weather was better than the previous years, but the route didn't change that much except Waterstone's manga section had expanded again although it was still on the bottom floor.





Nick describing the lore of Robin Hood at the statue on the geeky tour

To make sure the anime sessions were fun to come too, we changed up the dynamic of the session by adding a few new rules. The first one being that if we had watched more than 3 episodes of a series in the last 3 years, it was banned. If a series had been suggested 3 times in a semester and we hadn't watched it, it was also banned although this was only for the rest of the semester. The most important new rule though that we added was that we had to watch at least 1 new show every Monday so that the sessions didn't become stale watching the same thing. We also dropped the number of episodes we watched from 6 to 5 so that we didn't have to stress about if we'd have enough time to finish the session.

Apart from the set series that the remaining people didn't enjoy seriously, the rest of the year went off without a hitch and it wasn't long before the annual ComiCon trip came around. This time round though, I wasn't foolish enough to spend my money on a body pillow or an overpriced figure and I worked up the courage to ask for pictures. Demon Slayer cosplays were everywhere this year as season 1 had just finished airing.





The group photo taken at ComiCon 2019

Only a week later, the pumpkin carving event occurred which ended up being a bit of a disaster on the committee's part as we left buying the pumpkins until the day of which was November 1<sup>st</sup> so many places had stopped selling pumpkins. This meant that Joe Fagan, social secretary, had to carve a watermelon instead. Other than that, the event was good fun and we had party games again where I proceeded to lose at arm wrestling (again).





A lineup of the pumpkins (+ melon) we carved from this year where Michael's Godzilla pumpkin won the best pumpkin contest

Due to being reborn as the anime society, we now had free Wednesdays and rooms booked where we could do more than one screening event a week. This meant that we did screenings of Akira, FLCL and Perfect Blue in the first semester. There was also a collaboration with board game society where I discovered the game called Secret Hitler and that was entertaining as we had to trust random people we hadn't met before.

We finished our set series where I predicted the ending with weird accuracy and thus the first semester of the newly reborn anime society came to a good end.

Second semester began and once again we had to vote in a set series which ended up being the series I put forward, Little Witch Academia, although it was close with Made in Abyss getting one less vote. However, we did end up watching an episode of Made in Abyss every week, so it wasn't like we missed out on a great series.

Around this time was also when we found out Ghibli made a deal with Netflix to put all their movies on the service which was revolutionary to us as we now had a huge selection of good films, we could do screenings of. We planned to do one screening per batch with our first screening being Porco Rosso that went well. Then we did a screening of Nausicaä. This didn't mean we only did screenings of Ghibli films as we also watched 'Macross: Do you remember love?' in the second semester too.

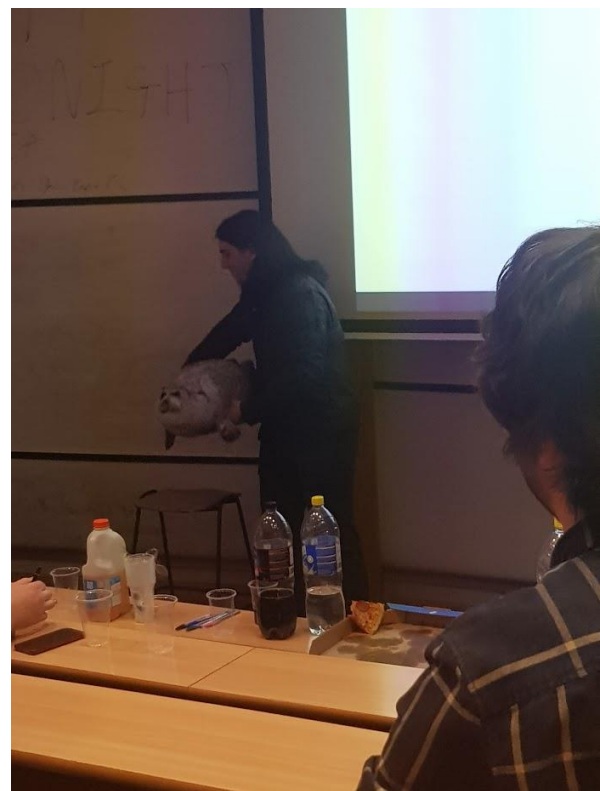


The biggest non-screening event of this semester though had to be the cardboard cosplay night where we booked a room in the Monica Patridge building, brought supplies, and then decided to make whatever we fancied with some creations being better than others.



Pictures from the cardboard cosplay event featuring Jenna (top left), James (top middle), myself (top right), Michael and James doing battle (bottom left) and Nick (bottom right)

That was when disaster struck that was out of our control, COVID. At the time, we didn't know how big it would turn out to be but unfortunately it meant that we had to cut the year of the newly reborn anime society short. However, we managed to get in our AGM elections just in time as we got the email that all events across the university would cease halfway through our elections. The elections went well as Nick vied for the presidency and as part of the cross-dressing rule, came dressed as a shrine maiden. We also had a surprise appearance from the old mascot, Matt, who helped us by asking questions to the candidates. We had some old classic questions to ask at the elections such as 'if you were to kill the president and become the new leader, how would you do it?' to the general secretary candidate and asking the president to describe an anime of our picking which ended up being Btoom! This was also the election where the tradition of having a plush represent you came back with Smugboi and Miles that got voted in as Mascot.



After the elections, we invited everyone back to the 'anime house' for a final party which was incredibly fun albeit not wise considering the circumstances and thus came the abrupt end of the anime society for the year.

A chalk drawing, I made during the final party after the elections that James (president) really liked.





## Year 2: September 2020 – May 2021 the Dark Times

During the madness of the Covid, we scrambled to keep the society alive, and we did this by creating a discord server. Then during the summer of 2020 when we were briefly allowed outside, Nick (president), James (ex-president) and I (NEET) went to Newstead abbey and filmed a trailer asking people to join the society.

In the new server, we had a bot called Mudae which some of you may have heard of but basically it is a gacha that has every single anime character on it, and it had a solid grip over many of our lives during the first semester. It was also the channel which had the most conversations as we would often camp out the channel waiting for our favourite characters to show up, only for Rory to steal them because he clicked faster.

Then the new academic year started and for obvious reasons, we didn't get many new members joining but we kept the society alive. We did this via the streaming website, Kosmi, which was terrible as it kept buffering, but it was our only option. The one benefit though was that we had a chat function, and we were all anonymous animals which meant we had some interesting conversations and we tried to work out who was who.

We started off the year watching the Ghibli film, Princess Kaguya, as our introductory film and that's when we knew we were in for a rough ride as the experience was less than great thanks to Kosmi.

We had a dedicated voting channel when it came to the anime Mondays where we described a show over voice call and then we used the konata thumbs up emote to give our vote. We ended up with over 25 people on our first set series session where we voted in Gurren Lagann as our set series which ended up being incredibly popular.



To save us from our boredom of lockdown, after the anime Mondays when we watched five episodes, we often went into a voice call and ended up talking for hours involving lots of alcohol and had shelter play in the background.

Average setup during anime Mondays during Covid

The biggest benefit of this covid year was that society was a bit more secluded, so we started using the infamous disk-chan to watch anime and because so few of us came, it meant that we got to watch more interesting anime. Due to this, we ended up watching 11 episodes of Nichijou alongside our set series.

The discord server was incredibly active during Covid which meant that seasonal anime became huge discussions, and we would play party games like Gartic Phone even when it wasn't Monday.

During this time, we ended up doing lots of film screenings as it was the only thing, we could really do so we ended up watching Vampire Hunter D during Halloween and Tokyo Godfathers during Christmas. This was also the time when we started the manga book club over discord that was run by Hannah (treasurer), but it wasn't very popular as the only regular members were Ben, Michael, Beanie Joe, and good old Tom.

Second semester came around and we voted in Great Pretender as our set series which ended up being a joke and where we made Lasagna a meme because one character in the series mentions how lasagna is just as important as women and money (refer to zine 12 for images of lasagna). As we had better taste during this year, we ended up watching 11 episodes of Lucky Star and all of Gunsmith Cats during the second semester.

One of the unique events we had during this semester was hyper Joe's 'anime music night' where we ended up watching a lot of anime music videos including famous ones like Shelter and an entire album of Daft Punk (interstellar 5555). Hannah also ran the 'old anime night' where we watched a bunch of short old anime from before 1960 which was interesting albeit most of them were weird. There was also the 'shorts night' where we watched a bunch of anime shorts which made the ban list for the next 2 years quite funny as we had season 2 of 'I can't understand what my husband is saying' because we didn't realise, we were watching season 2 until halfway through.

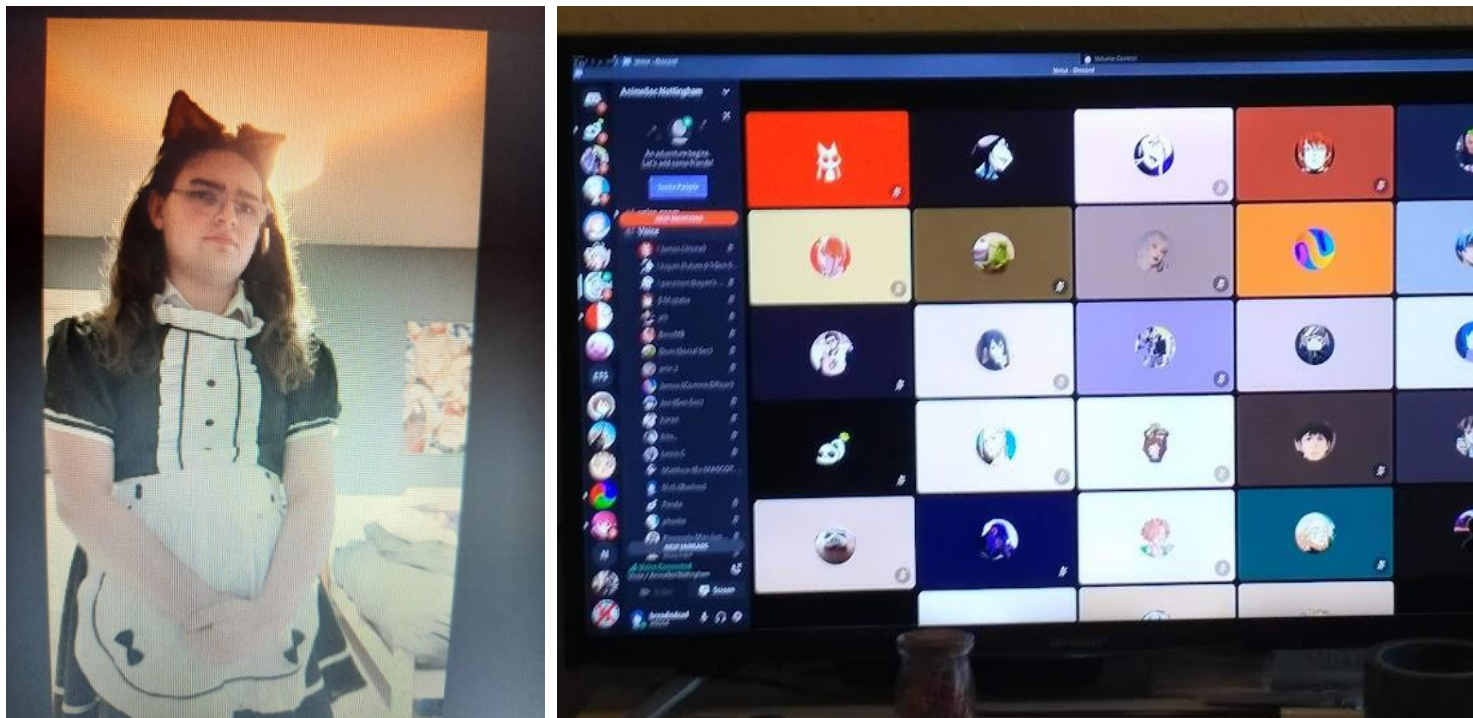
Since we were all bored during covid, we couldn't help but watch the Crunchyroll anime awards which ended up being incredibly disappointing. It was so bad that we decided to our own anime awards using google polls. Nick, Hannah, and I hosted our own anime awards which we called the 'Nott Crunchyroll Anime Awards' and Fishing girls proceeded to win the anime of the year (not biased at all) and this image was made in commemoration.



By Spring 2021, we started coming outside after Covid. However, it was a bit too late for the society as we didn't hold any official events, but the Demon Slayer movie provided a good opportunity for an unofficial event and it was the first time I met one of the future presidents, Beanie Joe, and another one of the Joes, Josephine.

This was also around the time that someone from the society tried creating a BDSM society and asked if anyone would like to join. This was the second time that someone had tried creating a BDSM society from anisoc except this time was successful and now UoN had an official BDSM society going into next year.

Then the AGM came along but this time, we did it over discord and surprisingly a lot of people turned up. Just because it was online, it didn't mean that the cross-dressing rule was scrapped as Trench coat James was vying for presidency and wore a maid outfit.



Pictures taken during the AGM in 2021

Also, during this year was when we held our mascot contest where people designed mascots and we voted on them with Wan producing our now famous mascots: Ryo and Note.



Then disaster struck the society just after as a coup d'état was attempted trying to kick out some of the recently elected committee which turned into a several hours argument on the general channel. The coup d'état failed, and this forced us to start a new server and we went into the next academic year hopeful as we were now able to hold in person events again.



### Year 3: September 2021 – May 2022 Revival

The lockdowns finally ended, and we were allowed to host events again in the new academic year where the university gave us two weeks of freshers but first came the fresher's fair.



Trench coat James (president) running the stall at Fresher's fair

The SU rules were that we weren't allowed to play music during the fresher's fair, so Trench coat James brought his tablet and played the Shelter music video instead at the stall as it was a pivotal part of our history.

The stall was incredibly successful though because our first event of the year was a screening of the film, Promare, which ended up having over 100 people showing up and we were so full that we had people sitting on the steps of A41 just to watch the movie.



The turn out for Promare was massive

Thanks to the SU, we were granted 2 weeks of freshers which meant that our next event, the meet and greet at the Johnson's arms also had a massive turnout and we basically filled up the entire beer garden. This was also the event which was part of a somewhat on and off tradition where one of the current members of the society invited whoever wanted to come, back to their house for an afterparty. This year, it was Nick (the mascot at the time) who decided to invite everyone back and it resulted in about twenty people being squished into his living room while anime openings were being played on the TV. The indoctrination began early and it seemed to work as our second week of fresher's events went off without a hitch.

The first Monday event occurred and it revived an old tradition from back in the SFFA days, the 'anime taster night' where the committee brings in episode one of a show and screens it for the freshers in the hope that they find something they haven't seen before. Anime taster night was popular but this also had the 'Chobits incident' where one of the committee decided to screen episode one of the anime Chobits and it had a suggestive scene where a robot had to be turned on by touching the genital region. The committee member ended up really embarrassed but most of us just found it funny.

Then came the Paprika screening which was very different to Promare and it had a lower turnout but that was mostly due to everyone perishing from super fresher's flu.

The fresher's flu didn't slow down the momentum at all because our geeky tour was successful albeit very wet as it was raining. Then came along the set series vote where the crowd voted in Samurai Champloo.

Then after the set series Monday came the first in person manga book club where the treasurer, Beanie Joe, told everyone to read the first volume of the '100 girlfriends who really really really really really love you'. The format followed a discussion based event where Joe made a slide of each chapter featuring some of the best panels and we discussed what we thought. Then at the end, we would vote for our favourite character and we gave it a score. We would then suggest manga and read usually one volume of the manga that got the most votes. Other manga we read in the first semester included: Yokohama's shopping log, Kuro, The law of Ueki, Frieren beyond journey's end and blood on the tracks. The Frieren session is what created the 'closing thoughts' slide that has become a staple of manga book club with Eisen having a panel from a poor scanlation saying 'It's end, isn't it' and almost all of the manga that we read after this year are featured on the slide in some form.

Within a month of society starting, we held our first EGM in a while as one of the committee, the same one that screened Chobits, decided they no longer wanted to continue as comms officer. This resulted in a two horse race between Matt and Joe 7 as they both pitched their manifesto to becoming the new comms officer. It ended in Matt joining the committee that year.

Immediately after was the pumpkin carving event and this time, we were in the basement of the Trent building which is where we've held our events ever since.

The train didn't stop though as not long after came the biggest event for the society of the year: London MCM comicon. It was very popular but because of lingering covid, we all had to bring covid passes in order to enter the venue. This was also the year Matt dressed as Nezuko which wasn't the first time he was seen cross dressing.



We had party games again and I continued my losing streak in arm wrestling.



This was also around the time that a lot of couples started forming in the society with at least three couples getting together in the first semester. That was a bizarre arc in the society, but it was a sign that the society was alive and social again.

Also during this first semester, a new type of event was created: the binge sessions. The first one was Flip Flappers which was a forgotten anime from 2016 and we watched all 13 episodes of it. It proved very popular and now binge sessions have become a standard event in the society.

The rest of the semester was smooth sailing albeit with way more people than usual as we had about 40-50 people on average per Monday session. It was during this time that the first 'Old anime night' was held which was a 90's night where each of the committee brought in an episode of a 90's anime. The only other notable incident I remember from this time was High school DxD getting voted in on a Monday which ended in an SU complaint, much to some people's disappointment.

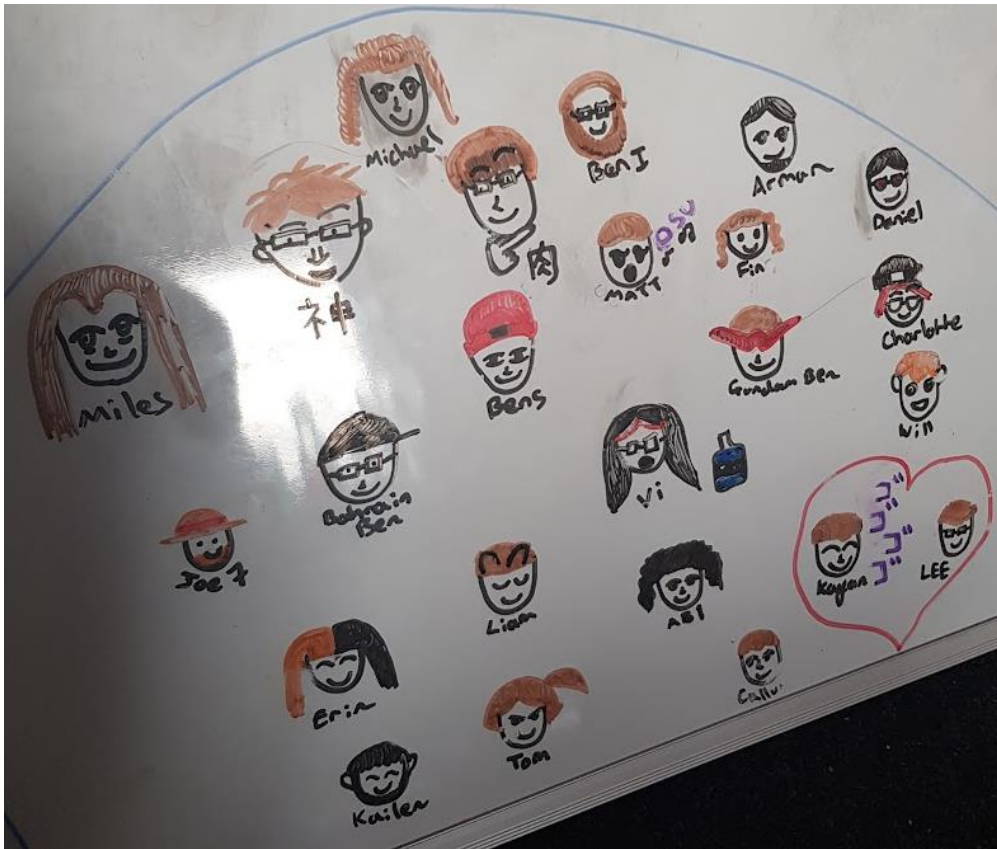


Our annual Christmas meal happened, and it was a good time even though most of us caught covid afterwards.

Second semester began and we voted in Bakemonogatari as the set series although I couldn't go to the Monday sessions this semester, so I wasn't able to see the fallout. However, based on Zine 13's poll results, the reception of Monogatari was mixed.

Also during the first week back was our refreshers meet and greet and this ended up having an after party which continued the trend of anime society having alcoholics who just need an excuse to drink and sing anime songs.





My creation of everyone who was at the refreshers after party

Also, during this semester, we brought back the cardboard cosplay event but only 8 of us turned up for it. This was due to a 'Kayan party' happening on the same day so the eight of us rocked up to the party wearing our cardboard cosplays that proceeded to get destroyed.

Manga book club also continued, and the Christmas read ended up being painful as the manga that everyone had to read, Captain Harlock, ended up being anticlimactic and frustrated most everyone, except Nick and Gun ben. Immortal Hounds kept being brought in during the year and as a result, Beanie Joe became very quick at describing the description and it got dictated in as the Easter read.

Finally came the AGM where Beanie Joe dressed up as Marin Kitagawa and ran for president. This AGM was excessive though as Trench coat James proceeded to purchase too many vegan pizzas due to having a massive surplus of budget which ended up mostly going uneaten. This is the part of the story where I come in again officially as despite myself not being a student yet, I ran (along with my plush Padoru) for Mascot and proceeded to become the boomer of the society.



Beanie Joe (president 2022/23)  
and Matt (president 2023/24) after  
the 2022 AGM

Then came what was arguably the best creation during the third term as we put on a karaoke event. This was ingenious and it has been a popular event ever since. I ended up being the DJ and we had a blast of a time as we sang out banger after banger after banger. It also didn't stop there as Nick proceeded to invite everyone back to his place where we continued singing anime karaoke into the early hours of the morning all while incredibly intoxicated.

And as the meme rose, the manga book club for the infamous series, Immortal Hounds. I wasn't there myself, so I've only heard whispers of this mythical event but from what I heard, the manga was so good, it got a 9000/10.

Trench coat James decided to end the year with his 'president binges' where he booked out a room and used it as an excuse to binge anime he had been meaning to. These weren't very popular events as for one of the series, James was the only person to turn up, but it was a nice way for him to end the year and leave the society in good hands for next year.

#### Year 4: September 22' – May 23' The meme era

So began my first year as mascot of the society and a new year of the anime society. It began with the fresher's fair stall.



The Chika bunny figure that year grabbed a lot of eyes to our stall and a lot of people ended up showing up for the first session of the year: a screening of the boy and the beast. The turnover wasn't as great as the previous year, but it was a healthy start.

With the pandemic being over, the university made fresher's only one week again, but we decided to keep the format of two weeks of introductory events so that meant that our first Monday session ended up being a committee's choice night. I don't know why but our audience this year clapped after almost every episode that night; a good sign, I guess?

For the second film, we screened 'The Wind Rises' by Hayao Miyazaki and I think it left an impression on a lot of people there.

Bizarrely this year, the order of events was changed too as the geeky tour was held on the first Saturday and the meet and greet at the Johnson Arms was held on the second Saturday. This didn't cause too many major disruptions though as the meet and greet was booming and we filled out the gazebo.





Picture of the meet and greet taken by the JA staff

Then came the set series vote for the first semester but there were technical difficulties and it meant we only watched episode one of 4 anime instead of the normal 5. I think that was a blessing in disguise though as it meant we missed out on watching 'To Your Eternity' which has a famous emotional first episode but then gets worse from there. In the end though, we voted Dororo in as our set series. It started off quite strong but then it dragged through the middle and by the end of the semester, it seemed like a lot of people were happy to have finished it.

Also, during this week the new treasurer, Matt, ran the first manga book club where we discussed volume one of 'primitive boyfriend' about a girl that gets transported into the past and falls in love with cavemen. He continued the tradition of getting a random funny panel from the manga and putting it on the final slide. This tradition has continued to this day and has created an abomination of memes and out of context panels. The most notable manga from the semester had to be 'Space Chef Caisar' which was an ecchi cooking manga in space and that is where we get the human pyramid meme from on the closing thoughts slide.



As for the next series that we voted in, it came down to a tie breaker and the tie breaker vote ended in a tie breaker so to break the stalemate, Achilles and I did a best of three rock paper scissors match which resulted in myself winning and 'Sweat and Soap' being the second manga of the year.

I refer to this year as the 'meme era' because every Monday session and most manga book club sessions seemed to be controlled by how memeable you made your description which was for better or for worse, in my opinion for worse.

In October, we held our society quiz where the turnout was massive, and everyone proceeded to get angry at Matt for his insanely difficult OP quiz. Joe 7 also started his themed nights where the theme of the night was the colour blue where he screened episode 1 of a bunch of anime with blue in its title.

Due to Comicon being the same weekend as Halloween, we ended up doing our pumpkin carving event before ComiCon.

This time went quickly as London MCM was upon us and we all got excited for the most popular event of the year. It ended up being a disaster though as our bus driver burnt out the engine twice on the way down to London. When we got there, we found out the west entrance was closed so we spent ages trying to find somewhere to park and ended up parking on double red lines which they were not happy about. As a result, we didn't get a group picture from this year of all of us and it was a nightmare trying to get everyone back to the bus. On the way back as well, we got stuck in gridlock for over an hour as there was a crash on the M1, so we didn't get back until almost 10pm. To top it all off, because of the current events, the coach cost £2000 and the society took a big hit to its finances. This disaster caused us to change our comicon trip next year but overall, we all had a great time at the con despite all the transport havoc. It even saw the return of Dave from year 0 as he had made his way over from Latvia to be at the con.



Right after ComiCon, a new event was experimented with, the Debate Night. This was an event where we went to A41 and the person running the event came up with ideas to debate over and then the audience had to pick a side and defend their point. This was simultaneously, a fun and chaotic event as it quickly turned into brutal attacks against peoples tastes on anime and the judges were biased which only added fuel to the fire. This wasn't helped by the fact that many of us were drinking alcohol. It ended up being a popular event as this was one where we got to discuss instead of watching anime and it has since come back as a staple event.

November came and with it the opportunity to do a binge session. We used a google form to determine what we'd be watching but due to fact that we advertised the form publicly, we watched 91 days as our binge anime. This ended up being quite controversial as most of the people who came to the binge session didn't vote for 91 days.

This was also around the time that I got to run an event for myself, and I decided to screen the Miyazaki film: Lupin III the Castle of Cagliostro. I don't think it was me, but it was this session where the Blu-ray player in A41 broke and it meant that Blu-rays could not be used for the rest of the year, sorry.

We also brought back the bowling event during this time, and it allowed us to be a more social society.

Then came the Christmas meal which was probably the worst one yet. I say this because the Rose and Crown pub decided to change their Christmas menu and it was weird. There wasn't even a Christmas dinner! The part that made it bad though was that at the same time, the England vs France world cup semi-finals were on, so the pub was packed with football fans. Due to us not winning the world cup in 2022, you know how this went but after we lost, we were all depressed and disappointed with the food. This experience made us reconsider our options next year.

This has only happened once so far but Arc Cinema in Beeston reached out to the society around this time with an offer we couldn't refuse: a private screening of the Quintessential Quintuplets movie. We were shocked and honoured at the time for this opportunity

Then came the conclusion of the semester and we voted in an abomination of a manga in 'Waga Tousou: It's okay to purge the world if it is for my little sister!', thanks to Tim being the deciding vote and we finished Dororo which ended up being boring due to it being dragged out. Thus finished the first semester of the year.

The second semester started, and we had to discuss Waga Tousou. It wasn't a fun session though as we all agreed that it was painful to read. This was reflected in the fact that most of us gave the manga a 1/10 and the average would have been less than a 2 except that Henry who only came to pre, gave the manga a 10 despite never reading it. This dragged the average score up to a 2.01 which is the lowest score for any manga we have read in manga book club so far...

As the set series, we voted in Death Parade by Madhouse. However, I think the only part about it that people enjoyed and remember was the opening. As for the rest of the semester, we did screenings of 'I want to eat your Pancreas', 'Patema Inverted' and 'Mind Game'. I want to eat your pancreas had a good turnout, but a lot of people were shocked, and some were even annoyed at the ending. Most people didn't seem to like Patema Inverted but what I think made the session was the description of how the gravity worked and the diagram to go with it after the film. Mind Game though had to be the most memorable of the three films we watched this semester as it was a literal acid trip, which was so weird. The crab sex scene will live on as one of the best sex scenes in anime.

As for our continued tradition of binges, Beanie Joe decided to use his presidential powers to binge all of School Days which has left a lot of the society members scarred.

Manga book club continued its tragic trajectory of boring/bad manga as nothing of note really got in and even our Easter read, Sexy Commando Gaiden, was terrible as we discussed it and came to realisation that Japanese humour isn't funny to a western audience.

In the third term, we decided to try out an idea that I suggested earlier in the year which was the 'reincarnated in a Monday session' where we brought back all the shows throughout the year that didn't quite get in and we gave them bad descriptions. We put them to an audience, and we let them vote on them based on the bad descriptions. My favourite description had to be 'Gym Hoes' for how heavy the dumbbells are you lift, and this ended up being the most voted anime too.

We also watched Steamboy this term at my suggestion but not many people showed up for it and the consensus opinion of the film was that it was too long :(

We decided to go out with a banger event though in the Karaoke and we played many great songs. Some staples include 'Database' from Log Horizon, 'Grand Blue' from Grand Blue, 'Colors' from Code Geass and 'Rasputin' to name but a few.

Due to the high popularity, we ended up doing a second karaoke event after exams where we were in the Dance Studio in the Trent building. It went to a rocky start because the audio was scuffed, and we changed rooms twice to fix it but, in the end, we got it working and it was a blast of a time. There was as always, an after party where this time, we went to Nick, Hannah and Ben's place and sang our hearts out until the late hours of the night.

## Year 5: Sep' 23 – May 24' Redemption arc

We came up on another new academic year and another fresher's fair.



The Chika bunny figure was very effective again and drew a lot of eyes to our stall. We also got a lot of shounen bros due to our One-Piece poster and the anime popping off at the time.

This year had some of the biggest changes we have seen in a while. The first being that the SU gave A41 in Clive Granger to a different society. Thus, we got put inside of A39, just two doors down, and this created 'factions' in the society. It did have a working Blu-ray player at least.





Our first event of the year was a screening of 'Redline' which was very popular and was a crowd pleaser. It was a great start to the year apart from the audio breaking about halfway through. We continued our format of our next event being the meet and greet at the Johnson arms pub, then an 'Anime taster' night on the first Monday and another movie night on the second Wednesday with a screening of Penguin Highway. We also decided to condense our usual events by hosting the geeky tour and the quiz on the second Saturday.

Our second Monday event came, and we voted in 'Daily lives of high school boys' (aka Nichibros) as our set series which was a nice change from the last two years of Samurai shows.

Manga book club also went off to a great start as we had a massive turnout for the first session where we discussed Dandadan. We voted in 'City' for our second session, and this had the funny incident where many people gave it a 1/10 even though they didn't hate it.

During the first semester we also held another anime debate night and Joe brought back his colour based theme with the 'Colours night', which wasn't as popular as his previous 'Blue' night.

October was ending, so we held our annual Halloween pumpkin carving event. We had a great time and we held party games afterwards where Chris (Nick's younger brother) went insane on apple bobbing and managed to get water everywhere and I proceeded to lose again at arm wrestling.



Right after Halloween, we also held a binge of the 3 Yu-gi-oh! Films although this wasn't very popular, it kept Fin happy to finally bring Yu-gi-oh into the society.

Manga book club continued a good trajectory with Usuzumi no Hate being voted in next but then an incident occurred that made people tremble in fear of last year. We voted in the manga: The hero took everything from me, so I partied with the hero's mother! This ended up being a very drunk session because the manga was basically adventure time with milfs and a lot of us didn't find it funny, even in a bad way. Despite this, five people still gave it a 10/10 but that didn't do much to save it from the misery of a low score. It also gave us this legendary recreation of a certain panel performed by the then treasurer Ginger Joe and would be President Tim.



By this point of the year, factionalism set in to the society albeit not in a serious conflict way. This gave rise to the 'isekai corner' where Rob (social sec and resident isekai consumer) and his mini army would sit. There was also the 'Council' which consisted of myself, Nick, Gundam Ben and 'Boomer' Chris with occasional inclusions of Lewis and Daniel.

During November, Matt also brought back an event that had previously occurred during my time in the society, but he used it as an excuse to watch it himself: the FLCL binge. We also held a 90's night again where all the committee brought in episode one of a 90's anime.

Then came the biggest change of the year apart from being in A39, we decided to go to Birmingham MCM instead of London. This was due to several factors with the main one being that the coach was too expensive to go to London and it was significantly easier to go to Birmingham instead. This was a great innovation though, especially compared to the incidents that happened last year. It allowed us to leave later than usual which meant we were less sleep deprived, we also got to make the tickets cheaper which was a great selling point, and we also only had an hour and a bit drive back to Nottingham which was by far less exhausting. It was -2°C outside though so it was bad for anyone wearing skimpy cosplay. The con itself was surprisingly good albeit maybe a little smaller than London. It did have one improvement over London though, it had a Wetherspoons in the venue. Many of us by the end of the con went to the spoons and gulped down a £5 pint until we had to leave. This was the first year we had done something like this and while it wasn't a perfect solution, it was a good one nonetheless and it'll be interesting to see whether this was a trendsetter or a one-off event in the future.





As we approached the end of the semester, we had our Christmas meal the weekend after Comicon and while we did end up returning to the Rose and Crown, it was a way better experience than the previous year.

We also finished Nichibros early which meant we had more freedom to watch random crap and we did. Manga book club also held its final session of the semester, and we ended up voting in Giji Harem as our Christmas read. Tim also hosted a Christmas movie event on the final week where he screened two Christmas movies which was a fitting way to end the first semester.

Second semester started and we voted in Gurren Lagann as our set series which was very popular and the hype around it only got stronger as we kept watching it.

Another unique thing happened this year in the second semester, we did a collaboration with ResX, the student accommodation group. Thanks to Ginger Joe organising it, we screened the film 'dragon dentist' due to it being Chinese New Year and the year of the dragon at the time. This was a fun event as anime society invited Nightingale Hall and got free snacks to watch this movie. While it was advertised to people outside of the society, no one else came and we just had a great time getting comfy in the common room.

This semester was full of movie nights as Kailen screened 'Goodbye Don Glee's' and I screened 'Mobile Suit Gundam: Char's Counterattack' for which I produced a powerpoint to give some backstory and lore to the film.





The manga book club continued to have ups and downs, but it was still good fun to attend as I got 'how many light years to Babylon' and the 'food diary of Miss Maid' in which people seemed to enjoy.

As for the Saturday events, we moved the laser tag event forwards this year and have it in March. It ended up being very popular again and with it being earlier in the year, we didn't get as sweaty. Later in the semester, we also did a binge of 'Spice and Wolf' where we learnt our lessons from last year and did the vote during a Monday session to prevent the vote being rigged towards something we didn't want.

The Council's presence was very strong during this semester as almost every week, one of the members got an anime in during Monday sessions with Tim also having quite a strong presence due to his weirder suggestions.

As the semester was shortened, we were forced to watch three episodes of Gurren Lagann almost every Monday and even four on one Monday. This still meant though that we had to do a binge at the end, but the ending was incredible, and everyone was left in awe. We did a society wide vote and it ended up receiving a score of **8.96** which is I believe the highest score any set series has received, at least while I've been here.

With that, we have reached present day and present time as of the writing of this zine, but we had three weeks of events planned after the Easter break and hopefully the events went down well but that will be for future me to know.

## **Conclusion**

I hope that if you've made it this far, you've learnt something about the society and how it came to be. If not, then I'm sorry you had to suffer through the schizo and uninteresting ramblings of someone who has been around too long. If there's one thing to take away from this, it's that the society attracts certain kinds of people that make it fun, and we want to nurture this community by doing fun events that while based in tradition doesn't mean we're immune to change. So, I hope that to those future members that are reading this that you've discovered something about the society you didn't know before. Before I close off, I'd like to thank everyone who contributed to this by reminding me of stories that I had long forgotten, to those who provided pictures and especially to **Kailen** who has to edit this behemoth of an article.

# Why Do We Hate Crunchyroll?

*By Matt Fieldsend*

Those of you who are newer to the society may notice there is a general disdain for a certain Sony-owned anime distribution company that is expressed by many members. This is personified by our most popular emote on the server – the “Conan Piss”:



Crunchyroll, due to its vast library of streamable anime, is unfortunately a necessity in order to run our society legally – though I wouldn't be opposed to going back to the days of having to bring in a DVD or Blu-ray, I doubt it would make Mondays particularly attractive to most prospective members.

If it provides such necessary value to the society, you may be wondering why it is we hate Crunchyroll so much? That is the question I hope to answer with this article – this will not be an article explaining why streaming as a whole is inferior to the traditional ways of watching anime (see Nick's article in Zine 13 for that), simply an article explaining why Crunchyroll in particular as a company and a service is not worth your money or respect. The points are not ordered in any particular fashion.

## Crunchyroll is a Sony-owned Monopoly



### Service Update

Thank you for being a loyal Funimation customer; the Funimation service is ending on **April 2, 2024**.

You can still access the content you love on Crunchyroll which houses one of the largest anime libraries, subs and dubs, catalog and simulcast - as well as Games and The Crunchyroll store.

You don't have to leave your Funimation Watch History and Funimation Queue behind, you can migrate them to Crunchyroll. Please log into Crunchyroll using your Funimation credentials. If you already have a Crunchyroll account, your accounts will be merged and you will be prompted to migrate your user information at login.

As part of our transition to Crunchyroll, the price of your new Crunchyroll plan will increase from **USD \$54.95/year** to **USD \$99.99/year** beginning **January 28, 2025**. Future billing will be provided by Crunchyroll. Changes will be reflected in your next billing cycle starting on **January 28, 2025** and charged to your current payment method on file. If you want to make any changes to your subscription prior to the transition, please visit your [account page](#) or your third party access platform, or you may [cancel](#) at any time prior to your next billing date.

The Ultimate Anime Experience Awaits!

For any questions, please visit our [Help Center](#) for more

I'll start off with a basic point – monopolies are bad, and with the final merging of Funimation and the seeming winding down of anime licensing over at Netflix and Amazon, Crunchyroll is looking more and more like a monopoly as the days go by. There are caveats to this – Disney+ certainly seems interested in increasing their anime output, albeit slowly and Hidive is a lesser known though incredibly good competitor with its more niche shows that Crunchyroll doesn't pick up, but all in all if you're looking to legally stream an anime 90% of the time it's going to be on Crunchyroll and nowhere else. Now I'm not necessarily sad to see Funimation go, Funimation was an equally poor if not worse service than Crunchyroll, however this merger has already given Crunchyroll an excuse to nearly double their prices – and this probably won't impact on their user-base in the slightest.

Of course, a price increase is to be expected when they're merging all of Funimation's shows over and probably increasing their server capacity – however doubling the cost of an annual subscription is quite extreme and combined with their gutting of the free ad-supported tier in 2022 it is a sign that Crunchyroll are very willing to abuse their position as **the** legal streaming service in order to rapidly increase profits.

## **Where Does Your Crunchyroll Subscription Money Go?**

To get the obvious out of the way – yes obviously watching anime on Crunchyroll is supporting the industry more than if you watched it on alternative websites. However, for the purpose of this article I'm more interested in how that money appears to be spent by Crunchyroll. No concrete evidence as to how much Crunchyroll actually pays anime studios exists, one can speculate by looking at other streaming services like Spotify that have gotten in hot water before for how little they pay their artists or even Netflix who were called out by MAPPA for underpaying animators, but it's mostly a guessing game. There are other things we can look at though.

For a lot of shows on Crunchyroll, Crunchyroll themselves manage the production of the dub. The two shows I will be using as exemplars for this will be Mob Psycho 100 and Jujutsu Kaisen 0. Now I'm no fan of dubs, I don't think that's much of a secret, and if you looked at how much Crunchyroll paid some of their dub voice actors you'd think they were of the same opinion quite frankly. Kyle McCarley, the dub voice actor for Shigeo, the protagonist of Mob Psycho 100, was suddenly let go in 2022 and the role was recast. The reason for this was because Kyle insisted asked that as a condition of him accepting the contract Crunchyroll presented him, they would at least talk to the SAG-AFTRA union, Crunchyroll flatly rejected this and recast the role. Following this controversy, dub voice actors for Jujutsu Kaisen 0, the hugely popular prequel movie to Jujutsu Kaisen that was, again, dubbed by Crunchyroll, revealed the pitifully low pay they received for their part in the film.





Now whatever opinions you may have on unions, being paid just \$150 even for a minor voice acting role in a film that made over 30 million dollars does seem a little absurd, as does recasting the main character of a very popular show's voice because the voice actor politely asked to not be paid a third of typical voice actor union rates. So if Crunchyroll aren't paying their staff appropriately, then the question remains, what **are** they spending their money on? Well one thing they've certainly been keen to spend money on is their stellar line-up of Crunchyroll original shows. Now not all of these are absolute trainwrecks – *So I'm A Spider, So What?*, *Tonikawa: Over the Moon For You* and *Tower of God* represent some of their better received shows (though my personal opinions on these differ) – however Crunchyroll also used their (subscribers') money for such ground-breaking shows as *Gibiate*, *High Guardian Spice* and the infamous *Ex-Arm*.

If you haven't heard of these shows I'm not going to go into why they're absolutely terrible here – you can find numerous videos on YouTube that will doubtless explain that one for you – I will simply show a few screenshots and hopefully you'll get the idea.



*Yes this is a real screenshot from the first episode of the show, they put a 3D model right next to a 2D drawn character (Ex-Arm)*



*I'll be honest I know next to nothing about this show but it's rated at a 3.81 on MyAnimeList and it has worse-looking CG than PS1 game cutscenes so I had to put it in here (Gibiate)*



*Art and writing straight out of early 2010's Tumblr combined with terrible voice acting – also not even technically an anime according to MyAnimeList (High Guardian Spice)*

So if you're a Crunchyroll subscriber your money is being used to underpay voice actors and produce an, **at best**, incredibly mixed bag of shows in terms of quality, and even then nothing they've produced thus far is an outstanding must-watch. **Technically** most of the shows they only give money to, Crunchyroll don't actually make them themselves, except for High Guardian Spice. So if we're judging only true Crunchyroll originals, well, they've produced one and it was absolutely terrible. In conclusion, Crunchyroll spend the money they get from their subscribers on some pretty terrible stuff, but subscriber money certainly isn't their only revenue source. Which leads me into...

## Crunchyroll Sold User's Data (and lost a lawsuit because of it)

Playing fast and loose with user data is hardly uncommon among tech companies in the current day and age, but it's worth mentioning nonetheless as Crunchyroll actually lost a \$16 million class action lawsuit claim the alleged Crunchyroll had, without users' permission, sold users' personally identifiable information to third-party companies like Facebook. To be precise, they didn't **lose** the lawsuit, they denied the claim then settled for the \$16 million pay-out, however that is effectively losing as if Sony truly thought they were in the right they would absolutely have the resources to fight such a case. Users were entitled to a whopping \$30 compensation as a result (though you cannot claim this anymore unfortunately). There isn't a whole lot else to say about this, but it's yet another reason Crunchyroll suck.

# The Crunchyroll Awards Are Offensively Bad

We're getting into my more nit-picky complaints now I must admit – but hear me out for a minute. Corporate awards shows are shit. Everyone knows this and no one with a modicum of sense takes them seriously as a barometer for what the greatest piece of media in a particular industry for that year was. I have never gone into a Crunchyroll awards, or a Game awards, or a BAFTA or any of those awards shows expecting anything but corporate ass-licking with the occasional token award for something that gained a cult following that year. But even by the abysmally low standards I have for awards shows, the Crunchyroll awards, especially this year, are **bad**.

Of all the anime that came out from Fall 2022-Summer 2023 (because Crunchyroll for some bizarre reason do their annual awards show this way) a whopping 12 won awards in 32 categories at the Crunchyroll awards, 11 if you discount the 9 awards handed out to dub actors of various languages. That's more categories than the Game Awards (31) with less unique pieces of media making an appearance (21 in the case of the Game Awards for this year), but games are a different medium so perhaps it isn't fair to compare. I'll instead compare it to the Crunchyroll Awards from 2021, where 12 anime won in 18 categories, a far better ratio than 2024. The Crunchyroll Awards have always been dunked on for not being particularly good but if you go back just 3 years ago there was a far more even spread of nominations than today.

The fact that barely any unique shows appear at the awards isn't even the most offensive part though – the most offensive part is how blatant they are about it, case and point for this year being Jujutsu Kaisen and Attack on Titan. Now of course I expected both of these shows to pick up awards – they're both incredibly popular and generally well received – but 11 awards for Jujutsu Kaisen seems a **lad** excessive, I'm sure even some of the most ardent fans of the show can agree. That is arguably less offensive, however, than giving Best Score to Attack on Titan Final Season **Episode One**. Not only is it comical that they're specifying Episode One, as if they needed to keep Episode Two in the bag for the 2024 awards, but to give Best Score particularly is hilarious as most of Episode One's soundtrack is borrowed from previous seasons. Most of the songs introduced in the final season aren't introduced until the second episode – so the award has quite literally just been given out because "Attack on Titan popular" because by Crunchyroll's own rules of only judging Episode One, it barely produced any music to even rank.

This is also in large part not just the decisions of Crunchyroll staff but also the nature of things being opened up to a popular vote of course. However, the very purpose of awards shows as I see it is as an opportunity to flex the shiniest and coolest things from your medium to the outside world, as such there should be some level of filtering done by people at Crunchyroll as when the same show wins 11 awards or a show that barely produced any new music wins Best Score it isn't exactly sending the signal of a thriving and creative industry to others.



## Other Miscellaneous Reasons That Weren't Egregious Enough For Their Own Section

This section is where I will dump the truly nit-picky complaints that didn't warrant their own section:

- I was originally going to write an entire section on Crunchyroll's terrible localisations in both their subtitles and dub scripts, however I realised that most of the TRULY terrible examples I knew of (prison gate gamergate, dragon maid patriarchy, etc) were actually all done by Funimation before they were merged with Crunchyroll. I still stand by that a lot of their localisation is mis-representative of the original meaning of the source material and I don't like the inserting of Western meme phrases into subs (e.g. Nagatoro) but as long as it's not completely butchering the original as per the examples mentioned before, it's not something worth burning Crunchyroll HQ down over.
- Similar to the point above – Crunchyroll have very inconsistent censorship. You can find Highschool DxD on there uncensored yet at the same time they used the comically censored version of JoJo seen below where cigarettes are covered with a black mist and go out of their way to censor shows with no explicit content like Onimai. I'm not sure if there's an overarching ideological or brand motivation behind this but I wouldn't be surprised if it was just sheer incompetence. Either way, it's annoying and another reason they suck.



- The way Crunchyroll labels series on their website is absolutely garbage. Listing the dub version of something as a completely new season, listing a season 2 as a season 28 or some shit like that for some bizarre reason, listing a season 4 as a season 2 because Crunchyroll just didn't acquire the rights to season 2 & 3, I could go on. Anyone who's used Crunchyroll for a decent length of time will know what I'm talking about, and it's quite annoying.
- Links in to the point above and this is more of a slight against streaming services in general – I wish they wouldn't acquire random seasons of shows. When you acquire only season 3 of a show but not the rest it feels like you're more interested in catching all the people watching the current thing rather than being an actually useful database of anime and I hate it.

This was quite a rambling article in places I must admit but I felt it had to be stated why Crunchyroll in particular are terrible. If you insist on paying the Danegeld to our modern streaming overlords, I would suggest you go with Hidive instead. They're not completely free from some of the issues mentioned here (localisation for example) but they're much cheaper, have a pretty wide variety of shows (some that Crunchyroll seemingly refuse to pick up) and haven't (yet) been caught out underpaying staff or selling user data. They're also good at not censoring stuff which is a bonus.

Nevertheless as stated at the start of the article, I wouldn't be opposed to returning to the days of DVDs and Blu-rays being the only legal means of watching anime. Owning physical media gives you something cool to display on a shelf, more directly supports the show that you're presumably a fan of and it means you can watch that show whenever you want, even if someone's licensing agreement runs out. You can also watch them in decent quality if (like me) you have shit internet and streaming is painful, but I realise in 2024 that is a rather niche issue.

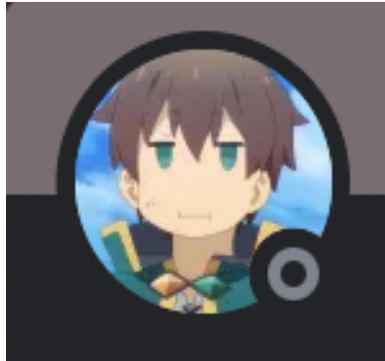
In conclusion – cancel your Crunchyroll subscription now and buy a DVD/Blu-ray, failing that seek out the traditional wisdom on watching anime (Nick's article in Zine 13).



# The Average Manga Book Club 2023-2024

## Mascot/Cam's Year?

*By Joseph Thomas*



### Dandadan

The first manga we read was Dandadan which is a shounen action manga which was a fun introduction for the year resulting in a man fighting to get his dick back from a very creepy turbo granny. This ended in some great conversations and a good bonding experience for how mental manga book club can be with the score of **6.04/10**



### City

Thanks to a passionate sell from our Nichijou and Fate expert our next manga was City, which is by the same author as Nichijou and has a very similar style. This was a great comedy that had the best highlights of a waiter whose family kept conning him to wear skirts and an old man trying to destroy the restaurant for revenge. This scored **6.63/10**

## Usuzumi no Hate

The First Mascot Winner which starts to have a theme of our highest scoring manga being the ones put in by our mascot. Usuzumi no Hate was the Halloween read due to its apocalyptic nature. The main character was extremely compelling drawing us into a bleak and isolated world which led to many fruitful discussions and the high score of **7.65/10**



## The Hero took everything from me so I partied with the Hero's Mother!

This was of course the manga put forward by our amazing president this year which I'm sure will come as no surprise to anyone. This manga was about a man who got treated awfully by the hero party, got kicked out, found the hero's mom bought her at an auction and married her. Wanting his peaceful life with all the mothers of the hero party but the mom's want to teach their kids a lesson, while our protagonist couldn't care less. This was a riot of a manga book club which led to a very heated discussion as the split of the vote was 10/10, 1/10. Overall resulting in the epic score of **4.31/10**.

## My Cross Dressing Senpai

This manga was an interesting examination of the fluidity of gender while having the horniest girl who thinks that the main character is a girl until she realises they're a crossdressing guy and she realises she gets the best of both worlds falling in love with both sides of the protagonist, while the love triangle formulates between them two and the childhood friend of the protagonist. Lines were drawn and teams were chosen as best characters and ships were fought over resulting in a score of **6.5/10**





## Giji Harem

The Christmas read of this year was Giji Harem which was about a man desperate for a harem so his junior in the drama club decides to create a lot of different personalities that create the harem experience as he falls in love with all of them, leading to lots of comedy including the amazing moment when the main girl gets offended that the protagonist wants to be loyal to her as she feels like he has dumped her other characters. This got the score of **6.24/10**



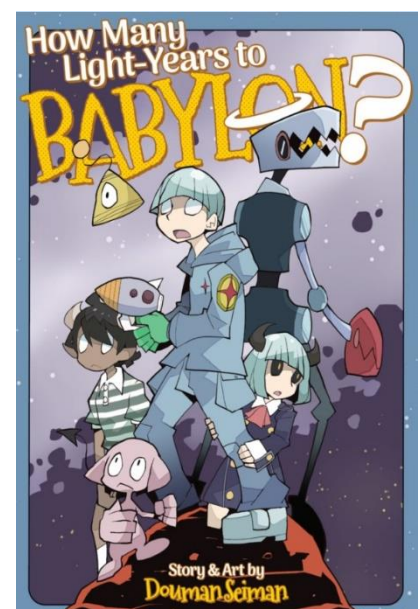
## Jun to Kaoru

The Valentine's day read of this year was Jun to Kaoru, a story about childhood friends who as soon as it becomes midnight they switch to the opposite gender. This shows the acceptance of classmates, the awkwardness of daily life while a relationship blossomed with really nice artwork. This got the score of **5.59/10**



## How many light years to Babylon

Another manga from our mascot was How many light years to Babylon, the epic story of a british weeb in space as the only surviving human desperate to bring back the human population through lots of sex until the devil girl in which he becomes a concerned and loving father/mother, with his two space pals as they fight God. This was a brilliant manga that got the score of **7.83/10**





## **Baka ga Zenra de Yattekuru**

From the highest to the lowest, Baka ga Zenra Yattekuru was a manga about a failing novelist who while at a fresher party sees a drunk naked man and helps him out resulting in him suddenly living with him and helping him become a novelist, with a great backstory of the naked man at the end. This however did get a brutally low score of **3.2/10**

## **Food Diary of Miss Maid**

The last manga other than the easter read which will not be mentioned in this introspection, is the other manga from our Mascot, the Food Diary of Miss Maid which is a manga about a British maid who has to stay in Japan with her grandmother reviewing Japanese food along the way. This was an extremely wholesome read which was a lovely way to end the semester with a score of **6.95/10**





# Thank You For Another Great Year!





# The Committee



**Matt - President**

Kept the society running through another year, did a great job



**Fin – Gen Sec**

Ran meetings, did not kill Matt but cursed everyone with multiple dubbed shows



**Cam – Mascot**

Resident sage of the society, keeping the traditions ever-present



**Kailen – Comms Officer**

Sent emails and sacrificed sleep to write this sentence



**Joe – Treasurer**

Ran manga book club by making presentations longer than his diss



**Tim – Welfare Officer**

Did his job, put more hours into MAL than his actual degree



**Rob – Social Sec**

Ran all the social events without getting isekai'd into a farming world



# This year's edition Includes:

- Many sleepless nights!
- Pharmacy!
- The entire history of  
the society (I guess)!
- International relations!
- A ballad for the ages!
- Lots of cool art!
- Intimidating poses

...and much more!

