

Top Model: Cosplaying Ito Junji's Tomie

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Emerald L King

Fans of horror comics are currently enjoying what translator Zack Davisson has loosely termed a 'Junji Ito boom' (@ZackDavisson). Ito's work has been widely translated and has even resulted in a line of Hot Topic clothing. Fanworks that have resulted from both the original Japanese titles and recent English language translations include *doujinshi* comics, fanfiction, fanart, and cosplay (costume roleplay) costumes. Ito's long running manga series *Tomie* (1987-2000) is one of his most popular works and has been adapted into eight live action films, a tv series, and a novel. The series revolves around the eponymous Tomie, a beautiful girl who drives those around her, usually men, mad to the point of violence, murder, and ruin.



Figure 1. Cover of the 2018 photobook, *Tomie*, photographer Dizzy Monogatari. Cosplayers Shunsuke Cosplay and Saya the Fox. Images used with photographer's and cosplayers' permission.

This article will examine the 2018 cosplay photobook adaptation of *Tomie* created by European cosplayers, Shunsuke Cosplay, Saya the Fox, and photographer Dizzy Monogatari. “Top Model” comes at the end of the original run of the *Tomie* comics and tells the tale of male model Ryo and Tomie. This is the focus of Shunsuke and Saya’s fan production. One of the main concerns of cosplay is how to replicate and recreate the perfected and edited images found on the 2D page or screen using imperfect, real world locations, materials, and bodies. We will see how cosplay, as an act of fan translation and adaptation, builds on Ito’s original horror *manga*. We will first look at Ito’s manga version before giving a close reading of the cosplay photobook. Throughout this article, the translated titles of each *Tomie* episode as published in the 2016 English language Viz Media collection will be used. It should be noted that the first episode, “Tomie” has the same name as the collection, *Tomie*, and the protagonist, Tomie. *Manga* and comic will be used interchangeably throughout.

My Friend Tomie is Dead – *Tomie* and the Monstrous Feminine

Horror as a genre stereotypically ‘tends to draw a younger and more male audience than other fictional settings’ (Rouse 2009, 18). Similarly, comics, and graphic novels are also seen as being more widely read by men, especially in Anglophone countries. While there is a long tradition of ‘cross-reading’ (reading outside of one’s target demographic, Hartley 2015, 25-27) in Japanese fandom, it seems pertinent to remember that a lot of Ito’s work, including *Tomie* was published in *shōjo manga* or girls comic collections such as *Gekkan Harowin* (Monthly Halloween 1985-1995) and *Nemuki* (1991-2012).^[1] This is particularly of note if we read cosplay through a fandom studies lens in which various acts of fan production are often gendered (see for example Hills 2014, Cherry 2016). However, as I and others have noted elsewhere, labels such as *shōjo* and *shōnen* (lit. girls or boys), while originally markers of target demographics, are more helpful if regarded as different genres with different aesthetics and requirements (see for example King and Fraser 2017, 107) – a notion which may well be extended to cosplay craftsmanship in 2021.

Further, *shōjo manga* can also be seen as a set of stylistic conventions reserved for a target audience across a broad range of genres including romance, adventure, science fiction, magical girl, slice of life, boys love and, of course, horror. Ito’s work seems far removed from other *shōjo manga* titles released in English such as *Sailor Moon* but as Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase notes, *shōjo* horror manga ‘continues to captivate young girls’ (2010, 59). *Tomie* is often prefaced by the fact that it won the first Umezu Kazuo award.^[2] Umezu, writing since the 1960s, was one of the first manga artists^[3] to break *shōjo manga* conventions by introducing ‘scary women, ugly girls, and gruesome scenes [causing] a stir in the beautiful world of *shōjo*’ (Dollase 2010, 61).

Shōjo manga stories are easily recognisable by their slender girl (or girl-like) protagonists and their dreamy page layouts filled with showers of flower petals and lyrical word chains (see for example Honda 2010). The highly decorative elements encourage the reader to linger on the page, immersing themselves in the characters’ feelings, dreams, hopes, and desires (Takahashi 2008, 126-127). The girl protagonists are often drawn with long limbs, delicate features, small noses and lips, thin eyebrows, and enormous eyes fringed with long eyelashes. Central to the *shōjo manga* look are the galaxy of

star-shaped highlights drawn near the pupils of each character's eyes (Ito 2011, p. 10; Shiokawa 1999, p. 101; Schodt 1984, p. 91). However, in *shōjo* horror manga, these conventions are flipped. The 'flowers, ribbons, and cute imagery' are replaced with 'blood, death, and ghosts' (Dollase 2010, 59). In *Tomie*, the endless galaxy of stars in a typical girl protagonist's wide eyes are replaced by Tomie's dark, almost empty gaze. In many respects, Tomie is drawn with an ethereal, traditional Japanese beauty – a square cut fringe, long black hair, pale skin. Indeed, so widespread are these hair ideals that they are often included in school uniform regulations (Kidder 1992, 385). These beauty standards can be traced back at least to the Heian period (794-1185). The Heian period was a time of religion and superstition and so, as these first beauty standards were established, so too were conventions relating to horror and horrific figures of women such as jealousy, spirit possession, long black hair and pale skin (Inouye 2012, 446). These tropes link Tomie to rogue's gallery of ghosts and witches such as Sadako from *Ringu*, Kayako from *Ju-on*, and even Lady Rokujo from *The Tale of Genji* (see for example King 2019a, Dumas 2018, Wee 2011).

At the heart of the horror of Tomie is her unbreakable youth and unconquerable girlish femininity. Her delicate features and schoolgirl uniform hide an inhuman and demonic reality. Throughout the twenty episodes that make up the 1987-2001 run of *Tomie*, Tomie ages along with her initial readers (for more on *shōjo* and aging see King 2019b). In the first stories published between 1987 and 1997, Tomie appears as a schoolgirl. Her powers of regeneration are introduced in "Tomie" as well as the effects she has on those around her – madness, jealousy, blood lust, murderous rage, et cetera. The mania caused by Tomie is further explored in "Morita Hospital" and "Basement" (*Morita byōin, chika* Ito 2016, 5-116). These themes are expanded upon when Tomie shows up as an exchange student in another school in "Photo," "Kiss" and "Mansion" (*shashin, seppun, yashiki* Ito 2016, 117-276). In later works, most of the Tomie clones are shown as young women, with the exception of the final story arc, made up of "Passing Demon," "Top Model" and "Old and Ugly" in which three young girls are infected with Tomie as infants (*tōrima, toppu moderu, rōshu* 647-742). As these girls grow, they all turn into Tomies, eventually trying to destroy each other. The focus on the schoolgirl protagonist is a well-used trope in *shōjo manga*. However, while:

'*shōjo manga*'s main focus is their characters' sensitive inner feelings of melancholy, love, solitude, and joy, horror manga explore their characters' dark feelings of jealousy, anger, fear, and frustration [...]. *Shōjo* horror manga's cultural function is to serve as a means for girls to recognize the fearful truths within themselves. Vivid desires and raw emotions, which are hard to express in regular *shōjo manga*, are revealed,' (Dollase 2010, 59-60).

For a reading audience of girls, Tomie is both a role model and a warning – you will be used and abused by men, she says; even if they think they love you, they will destroy you, her dismembered corpse murmurs; you may as well use them and take them for everything you can, her newly regenerated smile whispers.

This is why *Tomie* is so terrifying. Not only does she actively know her beauty, capitalise on it, and revel in destroying those around her, she exhibits a complete lack of remorse. As Rachel Dumas points

out, the 'monstrous-feminine' is a 'potent threat to the patriarchal order' (2018, 37). Unlike the recent trend of *moe* (affective) anime and manga series – series which feature very young girl protagonists who lure in a (mostly male) audience by fanning feelings of infatuation and a desire to nurture (*moeru* to have a romantic crush; to burst into bud) – the girl protagonists of *shōjo manga* are unapologetic in their individuality, independence, and their agency (see for example Shamoan 2015). While *moe* protagonist are available and biddable, Tomie is anything but. In horror films such as *Ringu*, men and masculinity are linked to stoic and scientific rationality (Wee 2011, 160)– mathematicians, doctors, unflappable journalists, while ghosts (and the feminine) are aligned with chaos and irrationality (Wee 2011b, Ancuta 2007). However, under Tomie's influence these stoic and sensible male figures are driven into a frenzy. Indeed, when reading *Tomie* in 2021, it seems as though Ito predicted the current fandom and online phenomena of 'simsps'^[4] in Tomie's army of thralls – the men who she has cast aside but who will now do anything for the smallest scrap of affection or attention from her, including committing murders and/or suiciding.

トップモデル TOP MODEL – a mirror of male beauty

Published in 2001, "Top Model" features a 'more mature' Tomie and her interactions with male supermodel Ryo (Dumas 2018, 30). Bored with his usual dates, Ryo is looking for someone more 'on his level' (Ito 2016, 681). A photographer sets him up on a date with Tomie. Enamoured, Ryo sets out to capture and hold Tomie's affection, even proposing marriage. However, she rejects him and sends one of her thralls after him. During the altercation, Ryo's face is slashed with a double-bladed knife. Ryo meets with Tomie one last time and when she mocks his appearance and his disfiguration, he kidnaps her. In an attempt to take Tomie down a peg, Ryo cuts Tomie's face leaving a deep wound. However, rather than leaving the pair with matching face scars, the next morning Tomie's visage is its usual porcelain perfection. In a fit of rage, Ryo destroys Tomie's face, leaving her disfigured but alive. This time, Tomie does not heal, but her wounds fester and mutate, eventually giving birth to a forest of clones. Driven mad by the constant murmured insults from the Tomies, Ryo burns the building to the ground. Ryo is injured in the fire and when he comes to in a wooded area he is covered in horrible burns. The episode ends when Ryo hears a voice say 'gosh, what a horrible burn,' only to look up and see a new Tomie smiling mockingly from the shadows (Ito 2016, 679-710).

In their 2018 cosplay photobook *Shunsuke Cosplay and Saya the Fox* (henceforth Shunsuke and Saya)^[5] stated that they wanted to 'pay homage to the amazing stories and iconic character that Tomie is' (Shunsuke and Saya 2018, forward). Their elaborate reproduction of "Top Model" took roughly six months from concept to print release. Their aim was not to directly 'copy/paste' the composition of the manga but to follow the storyline (@Shunsukecos 2018). Throughout the photo book, the pair wear clothing that is faithful to the original manga designs right down to Saya's pearl, and diamond earrings. When selecting which *Tomie* episode to reproduce Saya notes that they chose "Top Model" as it 'fitted well with the cast and the possibilities that we had location wise' (@sayathefox 2018). Both Shunsuke and Saya have been invited as cosplay guests at conventions and anime events (see for example Epic Con 2019), and Shunsuke represented Switzerland at the World Cosplay Summit in 2019, making it to the final night of performances. Both have Patreon accounts where they

sell photosets allowing them to support themselves in part through their cosplay.

Saya's observation that she and Shunsuke suited the roles of Tomie and Ryo is something of an understatement. Shunsuke's body type is similar to the typical *bishōnen/biseinen* (beautiful boy/beautiful young man) archetype of tall, sleekly muscled with long limbs and delicate hands. His facial features are eerily reminiscent of Ito's 'older brother' type face which appears throughout all of his works (Iwane 1998). As noted above, for a *shōjo manga* heroine the emphasis is on the delicate facial features and mesmerising eyes. For Tomie, perhaps the most important element is the beauty mark under the outer corner of her left eye. Throughout the photobook, Saya wears subtle makeup with peachy tones on her lids and dewy pinks on her lips. Her eyes are emphasised with winged liner and long eyelashes. Unlike comic book Tomie, Saya's cosplay version actually does have reflections in her eyes – something which makes the scenes where her eyes turn an empty and demonic white even more shocking. Taking slight liberty with the clothes drawn in the manga, Saya wears tight pencil skirts and bodycon dresses which echo the spirit of the original designs but update them for a 2018 audience. Saya has a total of seven outfit changes, not including her 'costume' as the Tomie clones that grow from her battered face at the end of the comic. Shunsuke's Ryo has ten different outfits plus the special effect makeup worn for the final scene in which he is heavily burnt.

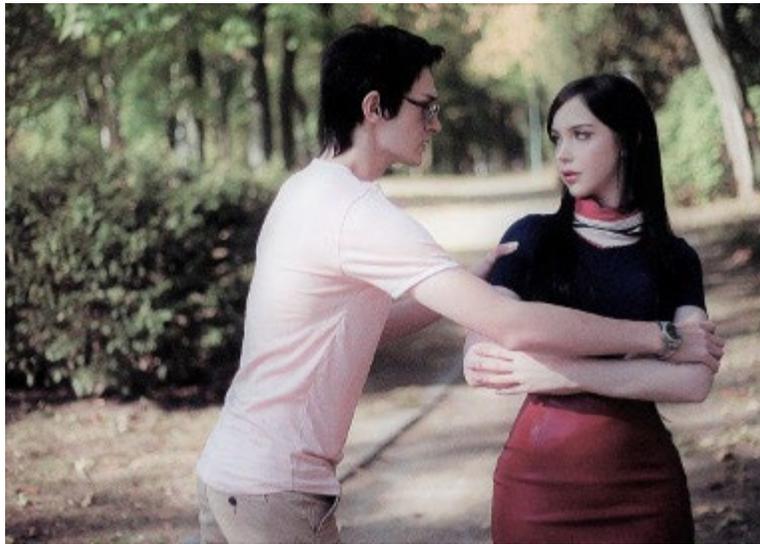


Figure 2.



Figure 3. Photographer Dizzy Monogatari. Cosplayers Shunsuke Cosplay and Saya the Fox. Images used with photographer's and cosplayers' permission.

In her study of *Tomie* and "Top Model," Dumas uses Deleuze's notion of the simulacrum to discuss Tomie's powers of regeneration and self-replication:

Deleuze conceives of the simulacrum as a site of endless possibilities, asserting that repetition embodies the potential to generate radical difference. [...] Thus for Deleuze, the simulacrum is not mimetic; rather, it collapses the distinction between model and copy, subordinating the original to a schema of radical differentiation (Dumas 2018, 23-24).

We can further adapt this notion of simulacra for cosplay studies if we consider Minako O'Hagan's work on fan translations of anime, manga, film and computer games. For O'Hagan fans are simultaneously users and translators breaking down the distinction between consumer and producer resulting in a category of 'prosumer' (O'Hagan 2009, 99). In this way the separation between original product and fan pro-sumable product is as indistinguishable as Deleuze's simulacrum. The *Top Model* cosplay photobook is the perfect example of model and copy as one and the same. In a question and answer about the *Top Model* cosplay photobook posted in her Instagram stories, Saya states that the photobook is 'recommended for people who don't know [the manga] yet' (@sayathefox 2018). This means that for many of Shunsuke and Saya's fans, their introduction to Ito's work is through their cosplay adaptation rather than his other manga works or films or even the Hot Topic clothing line and Funko Pops (Hottopic). In this way, Saya's striking wine red leather pencil skirt ensemble will become the original Tomie for her audience rather than the black A-line skirt depicted in the comic (Ito 2016, 689).

In the introduction to their 2018 cosplay photobook, Shunsuke and Saya focus on Ryo's motivations; Tomie is as unknowable in their rendition as she is in Ito's comics. In this version, Ryo experiences rejection for the first time:

'Humiliated and filled with rage, there was something within Ryo that just couldn't move on from Tomie. She belonged to him, no matter the cost. A blind obsession that would come with a heavy toll and deadly consequences.' (Shunsuke and Saya 2018).

Ryo's shock at his rejection and his subsequent anger links him to current day pickup culture. The night after Ryo confesses his love to Tomie – a confession which is mocked and rejected with peals of laughter– he sits in his apartment, drinking and working himself into a self-righteous rage:

"That bitch" "What the hell ... ordinary? I'm elite. The top of the top. You call that average?! What are you, thick? She might be pretty ... sort of ... but what does she think that makes her?!" (Ito 2016, 687, Shunsuke and Saya 2018).

Studies into online dating and pick up culture have shown that romantic rejection leads to an increase in male aggression and violence (see for example Andreighetto, Riva and Gabbiadini 2018, Yescavage

1999). Could it be that Ryo is not simply the victim here, but that Tomie acts as some kind of divine retribution?

Shunsuke and Saya's version of *Top Model* sets both Ryo and Tomie up as predators who both use their attractiveness as a weapon. If we read Ryo as a pickup artist, then it is likely that he chooses each meeting spot to impress, weaponizing local geography to increase his chances of scoring (see for example Strauss 2006; Kray 2018). In a manga setting, or even a film with a budget, it is easy to draw or create the locations where the story takes place. For cosplayers living in two different countries on a limited budget (@shunsuke 2018), however, this is much more difficult. The photobook was shot on location in Germany and Switzerland(@sayathefox) – in this way Shunsuke, Saya and their photographer Dizzy Monogatari are the very embodiment of the border crossing fans in the work of Bertha Chin and Lori Morimoto (2013). However, like the pickup artist selecting the perfect location to stage a date, a cosplayer is also looking for the perfect backdrop. There are at least eleven locations used in *Top Model* including what appears to be the lobby and exterior of a hotel, a marble lined shopping mall, an apartment, and a museum.



Figure 4. Foreword from the 2018 photobook, *Tomie*, photographer Dizzy Monogatari. Cosplayers Shunsuke Cosplay and Saya the Fox. Images used with photographer's and cosplayers' permission.

The foreword to *Top Model* shows Tomie and Ryo standing in front of a grand Baroque painting, their backs to the camera. Ryo is wearing a white suit and is shown leaning into Tomie. She has his entire focus. Tomie wears a low-backed black gown with thin straps that criss-cross on the back. Her arm is on Ryo's shoulder but her gaze is locked with that of the reader as she looks over her shoulder. The painting that the pair are standing in front of is Peter Paul Rubens' 1618 *The Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus*. It shows the twins Castor and Pollux, one mortal the other immortal, abducting Phoebe and Hilaeira. The sisters were priestesses of Athena and Artemis (virgin goddesses) who were betrothed to a different pair of brothers. Intentional or no, there are haunting parallels between Ruben's painting and Ito's comic: mortal Ryo and immortal Tomie; the foreshadowing of violence and abduction. Indeed, the composition of the intertwined bodies of Castor, Pollux, Phoebe, Hilaeira, and the twins' two horses, recalls the tangle of Tomies that later grow from her broken face.

Dumas likens the relationship between Tomie and Ryo to *enjo kōsai* (compensated dating) which was allegedly rife in Japan in the 1990s (Dumas 2018, 27,30). Essentially, the practice involves young women, often high-school students, who date older men in return for gifts or money.^[6] Reportedly, those involved in the practice, estimated to be less than 5 percent of all middle and high-school girls, were interested only in '*asobu kane*' (lit. money to have fun) to pay for designer goods (Kingston 2001, p. 117; Leheny 2006, 72, 108). However, while this practice involved adult males, it was schoolgirls, regardless of whether or not they were actually engaged in *enjo kōsai*, who were vilified in the moral panic that consumed the media. While I can understand Dumas' reasons for linking *Tomie* to compensated dating, the Tomie in "Top Model" is too old for the schoolgirl *enjo kōsai* image. Rather, her designer clothes (Ito draws her with pearl earrings and fur stoles; Saya interprets these into designer hand bags, red-soled Louboutin high heels, luxurious leather, and silk scarves) are above the usual schoolgirl taste of fake Louis Vuitton and Burberry (see for example Bardsely and Hirokawa 2005).

Tomie's bored visage, her continued mocking of Ryo, and her repeated rejections speak not of a teen out for play money but of a hostess out on a *dohan* or paid date. While hostesses will have a regular shift at the bar or club where they work, where their job is to look pretty and lure their guests into spending more money, an added responsibility that takes place outside of work hours are *dohan* paid dates. These are organised through the owner of the hostess bar or club, almost like renting a hostess out to a paying client, and the club will take a large cut of any monies earned or given (see Allison 1994 for more on hostess clubs in the 1980s and 90s). Hostess clubs are not sexual in nature which is why *dohan* is perhaps a better analogy here – while other Tomies kiss or hug their victims, the one in "Top Model" (both Ito's manga version and Saya's cosplay version) never does, openly laughing in Ryo's face when he attempts to be intimate with her in anyway. Here we might again think back to the virgin priestesses depicted in the *The Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus*. The one exception to occurs at the end of the manga after Ryo has kidnapped Tomie and has her hogtied on the floor. He kisses her, not the other way around (Ito 2016, 699).

In Shunsuke and Saya's *Top Model* it is not the grotesque depictions of Tomie's face – foreshadowed by the twin slashes across Ryo's cheek – or the tangle of smiling Tomies that grow from the wreckage, that are disturbing, but rather the hyperreal attention to detail. The hand that Tomie holds up to her injured face after Ryo cuts her is decorated with a perfect manicure of glittery pink French tips and tiny pink diamonds. Saya only wears earrings in her lobes in the outfits that Ito drew Tomie wearing them. There is even an entire page dedicated to a close up of Shunsuke's hand when he first touches his bloody face and holds it out in horror. In the same way that the flowers and spangles (or blood flecks and locks of hair) draw and hold the eye in the pages of a typical *shōjo manga*, the photography, posing, staging, costuming and editing used by Shunsuke and Saya pull the audience in, encouraging the viewer to look again.

写真 PHOTO – Capturing Images Real and Imagined

Throughout the manga series, Tomie is set up as a villain – driving 'good men' to destroy her again and

again and again, tormenting them with her beauty, her scorn, and worst of all, her laughter. However, in “Top Model” it is also possible to read her as an avenging woman – a figure similar to Cassandra^[7] in *A Promising Young Woman* (2020) who catches out ‘promising young men’ as they try to date-rape or assault her seemingly incapacitated body. Against a pastel pink and neon colour palette, Cassandra lures ‘good’ men to their doom, ultimately resulting her own death, in a crusade to destroy the men who drove her best friend to suicide after they raped her. Here Cassandra is not unlike Tomie in that even after she has been murdered, her revenge is enacted on the men who killed her and destroyed her friend’s life.

While Cassandra and Ryo both act out of revenge, Tomie’s motives are much simpler. Like the Wicked Queen in *Snow White*, she desires to be the fairest of them all. No matter the cost to herself or to those around her. While “Top Model” could be read as a tale of divine retribution, there is a moment when Ryo’s attempts to ‘neg’ her hit home. When Tomie rejects him a second time Ryo tries to ‘neg’ her by pointing out that she’s ‘certainly not the most beautiful woman on earth’ especially compared to the models he works with (Ito 2016, 690). A ‘neg’ is a pick up technique were a ‘subtle-yet-negative statement that puts the target off-guard makes her question her own value’ (Kray 2018, 54). While Tomie is much better at this than Ryo (she repeatedly questions his popularity as a model and his attractiveness in general, 686,689), he manages to land a blow when he states ‘there isn’t a single photogenic cell in your body’ (690). Realising that he may gone too far, Ryo tries to soften his words by saying ‘Isn’t that right? C’mon level with me’ implying it was just a joke (670). In response, Tomie’s eyes flash an unearthly, pupil and iris-less white as she yells ‘Be careful what you say to me!’ before she storms off. It is Ryo’s insult, not his treatment of women in general, that is his warrant for punishment.

Long-time readers of *Tomie* know that Tomie cannot be photographed. In 1987’s “Photo” a high school student, Tsukiko, makes money by ‘sniping’ photos of the handsome boys at school and selling prints to her ‘infatuated female peers for exorbitant sums of money’ (Dumas 2018, 32) – a neat parallel to the Patreon accounts set up by cosplayers like Shunsuke and Saya.^[8] Tomie, acting as the head of the ‘morals’ committee confiscates Tsukiko’s photos and bans her from selling them at school. In a fit of spite Tsukiko takes photos of Tomie and plans to sell them to the enthralled boys only to be caught by a male schoolteacher – the teacher is, of course, acting under Tomie’s directions. When Tsukiko develops the camera film, the pictures show Tomie grossly disfigured, cross-eyed, or with an extra head. Tsukiko releases the horrific photos of Tomie to get revenge for the confiscation of her photos. However, it is Tomie who has the final say by sending all of the boys in school after Tsukiko. In the frenzy Tomie is accidentally beheaded by the mob of boys. Tsukiko narrowly manages to escape ... for the time being (Ito 2016, 117-180).

Throughout “Top Model” Ryo tries to get Tomie to model with him. The reader knows that she cannot be photographed without revealing her grotesque nature. The fact that Tomie cannot be photographed makes for an interesting paradox when looking at the beautiful images of Saya as Tomie in the *Top Model* photobook. If we return to Deleuze’s simulacrum, we are again struck by the relationship between an image and the model or original upon which it is based (Deleuze 2001, p. 302). Through repeated wears, repairs, and edits, a costume or article of clothing shifts and becomes unstable and

unwearable. Likewise, no two cosplayers will ever make the same character the same way. We can take this even further when we consider that any edited image is made up of multiple copies and layers of the same photo edited together in a programme like Adobe PhotoShop. As an image is edited and manipulated, often with several copies layered together to form a single image, the 'real' image disappears to be replaced by something new. In this way the distinctions between 'copy' and 'original' are rendered obsolete, as too are 'fantasy' and 'reality' (Dumas 2018, 46).

Photography and the reproduction of images is central to cosplay – especially in the current era of COVID-19 restrictions and the on-going cancellation of in-person events. Even before this, Nicolle Lamerichs noted how cosplay events in Japan, the USA and across Europe invariably included opportunities for photographers and cosplayers to interact (Lamerichs 2013, 170). Here we see not only the break down between copy and original but between fan, model, cosplayer, and cosplayed character:

'Though many of the photographers are fans who want a snapshot of a cosplayer—or rather, a character—they love, some may want to develop their photography skills further,' (Lamerichs 2011, 6).

Lamerichs also notes that the characters portrayed by cosplayers are 'strongly embedded in a medium' (Lamerichs 2011, 11). Likewise, I have previously noted that cosplay only makes sense in certain locations, one of which is the frame of a camera lens (King 2019b, 2019c). What does this mean for our purposes looking at Shunsuke and Saya's *Top Model* photobook – a work of cosplay showcasing photographs of a character who cannot be photographed without showing her hideous nature.

There is a long tradition in horror where photography reveals the truth – the ghost in the room, the flair of a werewolf's eyes, or a vampire's lack of reflection. In both "Photo" and "Top Model" Tomie's true self is revealed by the photographic image. In the *Top Model* photobook we see Tomie as Ryo sees her – beautiful, out of this world. It is only at the end of the collection of images when her true nature is revealed in a mound of mutated Tomies, writing and whispering that we too are shown her horrific nature. However, as we have noted above, it is not Tomie's grotesque body that makes her terrifying. The mutated Tomies *are* vomit inducing – Saya's peaches and cream complexion has been edited to a nauseating grey – but the final juxtaposition between Ryo's burnt features and Tomie's newly regenerated perfect figure is where the true horror lies.

The World will Never be Free of Tomie

In her work on *shōjo* horror manga, Dollase notes that girls are able to obtain a sense of 'control and power' which is otherwise lacking in 'their real lives as weak members of society.' Further '*shōjo* horror manga provide spark and stimulation to the world of *shōjo*' invigorating and challenging girl and non-girl readers alike (Dollase 2010, 74). When explaining her fascination with Ito's works, Saya said that she was drawn to it because 'the type of horror he creates' is 'really unexpected; it is not the normal "formula" of horror. I find it to be so refreshing and inspiring' (@sayathefox 2018). It does not matter

that we do not know Tomie's motivation or whether or not she is a divine female force of retribution or a grotesque monster; 'details are not important' what is important is whether or not the audience is scared (Dollase 2010, 60). It does not matter how many times Tomie dies, or how many times she is killed, THE WORLD WILL NEVER BE FREE OF TOMIE.

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@Sayathefox (Saya) "Q&A" saved Instagram stories February 2021 <https://www.instagram.com/s/aGInaGxpZ2h0OjE3ODYzOTAzNzYwMzYzMjk4>

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@ZackDavisson (Zack Davisson) "When Ito started taking off at last, a lot of us were all "YES! This will open the doors to Kazuo Umezu and Ochazuke Nori and Hideshi Hino and all those other great Japanese horror artists!!!" But... nope. It wasn't a horror boom. It was an Ito boom." *Twitter* 21 Oct. 2020 8:04 a.m., <https://twitter.com/ZackDavisson/status/1318659406704250880>

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Nakata Hideo dir. 1998. *Ringu* (Ring). Tokyo: Toho

Takashi Shimizu dir. 2002. *Ju-on* (The Grudge). Tokyo: Nikkatsu.

[1] While *shōjo* is often translated as 'girl' this does not capture the full scope of the word or the manga genre. *Shōjo* are not grown women but they are not without agency or sexuality. In many ways, the *shōjo* is what all women would be if they were freed of obligations. See for example Honda 2010, King 2019b. *Nemuki* takes its title from one of the first stories published in it *nemurenuyoru no kimyouna hanashi* lit. Strange tales of a sleepless night.

[2] Technically, Ito received an honourable mention, but as there was no winner announced, Ito effectively won. It is common practice for Japanese literary awards, such as the Akutagawa prize, for judges to not award a prize if the judges do not feel there is a work that is worthy.

[3] Unlike the American comic book industry where a comic will be created by a writer, pencil artist, ink artist, colourist, and letter, manga are typically written and drawn by the same artist or *mangaka*.

[4] 'Simp' is internet slang used to ridicule men who are perceived as being overly invested in a woman, often a celebrity or online streamer, who will act in a perceived submissive manner to try to attract and attention or elicit a response. This usage has been around since at least 2005 but gained popularity in 2019. While innocuous at first glance, 'simping' can be anything from the slavish behaviour seen in *Tomie* to simply being polite or respectful to women or femme presenting individuals.

[5] There is debate in the cosplay community about the appropriateness of appropriating Japanese names to use as cosplay handles. This is outside the scope of this piece but deserves further research.

[6] Any definition is further complicated by those offered by schoolgirls themselves: 'high schoolgirls don't really sell their bodies for just 20,000 yen or 30,000 yen [...] People misuse the phrase *enjo kōsai*. Real *enjo kōsai* is when a girl plays the role of a lover to a rich man in exchange for 200,000 yen

to 400,000 a month. We do not consider one-night relationships *enjo kōsai* (Otsu 1996).

[7] In Greek mythology, Cassandra is cursed to tell the future truly but to never be believed.

[8] “Platforms such as Patreon provide content creators with a way to share content with patrons and earn revenue without an intermediary” (Church and Oakley 2020). There is some preliminary work that looks at Patreon and crowdfunding in game creation and pornography but the link between cosplay and Patreon needs further exploration.

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