

Interview with Keiko Takemiya by Masami Toku in 2003



January 22, 2003

Citation: Toku, Masami, (2003), "Interview with Keiko Takemiya," California State University, Chico, http://www.csuchico.edu/~mtoku/vc/interviews_full/Interview%20w_Takemiya.html. (broken link) [Maintained link: http://mtoku.yourweb.csuchico.edu/vc/interviews_full/Interview%20w_Takemiya.html]

Masami: With the founding of June in 1978, depicting homosexual love in magazine is not a taboo. Is this taking advantage of the popularity of "Kaze to Ki no Uta (Poem of Wind and Tree) first?

Keiko: I think so. The "Kaze to Ki not Uta (1976)" was first and then June is.

Masami: *You explained the reason for creating the story was that you wanted to depict human's *double personality (which means that everybody might consciously and unconsciously has two against personalities in mind).

Why do you have to depict it through homosexual love?

[*She said in a manga textbook, Takemiya Keiko no Manga Kyousitsu – Takemiya Keiko's Manga School, in 2000.)]

[*In case of this, double personality seems to be meant the dual genders – male and female roles in it.]

Keiko: Through boy's love, it is possible to express dual personality (feminine and masculine) that is involved in human beings. Boys play the part for both genders to discuss the relationship between love and sex. If the relationship between love and sex is expressed through the love of man and woman, it is avoidable to emphasize gender. But, it is possible to discuss the problem beyond the limitation of gender based on boys' love. Also, in case of man-woman love, it is difficult to talk about dual personality since there is reality such as childbirth after the achievement of love.

Masami: You have been in charge of *Oekaki Kyoushitsu (manga school) in JUNE from the beginning in 1978. How were you involved?

[*Both Takemiya and Sagawa did not remember if the manga school was from the first issue or not. But they said that it was quite early started.]

Keiko: Actually, this is Mr. Sagawa's idea, director of JUNE, in those days. He tried to create a kind of manga school for JUNE like other major publication companies. Unlike major publication companies (e.g. Shogakukan, Koudansha, and Syueisha), June cannot attract readers/amateur mangaka by setting awards for the school, Sagawa tried to draw readers' attentions by the name value of Takemiya as the editor of the manga school in JUNE.

The reason for being accepted to be an editor of the manga school such in a minor publication magazine, I was interested in challenging new things. (She called herself as a revolutionary in manga.) Also, it was true that I wanted to give support to the manga of Kaze to Ki no Uta.

Masami: Do you see all manga (which applied for the school)?

Keiko: Yes

Masami: How have you guide them?

Keiko: The quality is vary. I changed the way of guiding depending on the person so that I can tell the personality through the work. For example, I was severely teaching for those students who would be grown by guiding rigidly.

Masami: For you who already had a great status as a female manga in Japan in those days, I am wondering if this work (Kaze to Ki no Uta) might have been a risky attempt. For example, you might lose your reputation which you built so far

Keiko: It is true that it was a very risky. But I am not a person who protects and keeps the established status as if I always challenge something new and different.

Masami: Is such attitude important to succeed as a mangaka?

Keiko: I don't think that all mangaka who are successful are the same as me. I definitely need to be.

Masami: Is the new idea flew out one after another?

Keiko: Rather, it might be a way of my life style.

Masami: What is the definition of YAOI for you?

Keiko: Originally, it was just an enjoyment (hobby) itself by depicting sexy and seductive scenes in manga so that the YAOI meant no climax, no conclusion, and no meaning.

Soon after the style became so popular in Dojinshi. Then the YAOI meant parody. In short, it was easy to see the character in dojinshi, the YAOI became parody style since it was the easiest way that amateur dojinshi group can enjoy without spending time and without creating their own character. Also, it is easy to sell at the comic markets.

Masami: Have they created parody to sell dojinshi?

Keiko: In case of this, selling easy does not mean to produce money, but it means they can share the fantasy which they created in it. Selling many means that there are many people share the same fantasy, simply means "Ukeru – catch on."

Masami: What is the definition of "like JUNE"?

Keiko: The magazine of JUNE turned a spotlight on human sensitivity of dual personality in human beings which go beyond gender. JUNE is called "Tanbi-kei (esthetic)" and the value of aesthetic in those days was called like JUNE.

It was not a magazine which depicted only boys' love. Mr. Sagawa and I basically agreed with the thing.

Masami: What is esthetic by means? Could you give me an actual example? I feel that it is a little different from aesthetic in English. Is it related to a very peculiar Japanese aesthetic of "Horobi (decadence)"?

Keiko: Well, for example in a movie, there was an English movie of "Remaining of day" and Anthony Hopkins played as a steward in it. The steward's way of life was a very JUNE.

(I believe that the magazine of JUNE could be published with Mr. Sagawa who has his own aesthetic in a small publication company. It could be happened with the idea of salaried worker who work in big publication companies.)

Masami: Then what do you think of "Boy's Love" after JUNE? What is it different from JUNE?

Keiko: That is a love story of boy and girl by substituting with boy and boy. The characters of boy and girl are clearly defined in them.

Masami: How about “Lady’s comics”?

Keiko: Although it deals with love between male and female, it is manga that gratify female’s desires so that female depend on male who has everything.

Masami: By the way, you seemed to be interested in a student movement during 60s in Japan. Has the experience been influenced on the process of creating your manga and/or the style?

Keiko: I feel that I understood what a revolution is. During such a short time, I could understand. For example ... how the revolution changes world by doing something new.

Masami: Then I am wondering if YAOI is remained in manga from now on.

Keiko: The movement of YAOI will continue in meanwhile, but time will come that people will stop creating YAOI when they feel it is not fun anymore. They can see everything.

Masami: What does it mean by that?

Keiko:* TV already creates stories like YAOI and there are YAOI type story in commercial manga. There is no meaning to create YAOI in dojinshi if it is possible to create YAOI in commercial manga. If so, YAOI will be gone out of fashion in dojinshi.

[*Even in a taiga drama (a great river drama – a long historical TV series) in NHK (Nippon Hoso Kyokai – Japan Broadcasting Association), Hojo Tokimune, a leader of the Kamakura shogunate at the beginning of 14c, Tokimune and his elder brother’s relationship looks like a little JUNE although there are no such sexual scenes. I felt so. Keiko agreed with me.]

Masami: By the way, compared to the period when I was reading manga, I feel that the pictures in girls’ manga look very alike. I don’t see much about characters depending on each mangaka. Is this simply a reflection of readers’ preferences?

Keiko: Yes, it is. But, girls started to be now reading boys’ magazines. So, girls’ and boys’ magazines are influenced each other. The expression in boys’ magazines became more sensitive than before. Also, readers during girls’ magazines had power (popularity) started to become mangaka in boys’ magazines recently.

Masami: Mr. Sagawa said that JUNE is a salvation place for girls who don’t have their places to go. Did JUNE change their sense?

Keiko: *Yes, I think so.

[*She explained this well in her book, Takemiya Keiki's manga school. Also, the idea was a pretty much the same as Mr. Sagawa's explanation through the interview.]

Masami: After 25 years from the first issue, how has JUNE changed?

Keiko: It became extremely radical and easy setting. The expression falls into direct representation and JUNE became a magazine for masturbation.