

Clamp and Coincidence

The spiritual origination of my manga collection began in the year 2000. The Kid's WB marked the new millennium by adding *Cardcaptors* to its Saturday morning cartoon roster. The anime was the start of a hobby that would fully develop ten years later as I began formally exploring the world of Japanese animation. Nostalgia drove my initial explorations, but I quickly found myself immersed in an established and fascinatingly complex entertainment genre abounding with classics that had pushed the limits of animation.

A few months into my newfound obsession, I came across an anime titled *Tsubasa Reservoir Chronicle*. The plot was a sufficient hook; a young archeologist helps his love interest recover her lost memories scattered across different dimensions. What clinched my interest, however, was the simple fact that this anime and *Cardcaptors*, my childhood favorite, shared the same two lead characters. The coincidence was too intriguing and perhaps bolstered by the intellectual milieu of the University of Chicago I endeavored on some background research.

The link was Clamp, an all-female manga illustrative team which now includes, Nanase Ohkawa, Mokona, Satsuki Igarashi, and Tsubaki Nekoi. Their manga debut, *RG Veda*, a series which drew heavily from Vedic mythology, was released in 1989. *Magic Knight Rayearth, X*, and *Chobits* followed and would rank as some of their most popular works, establishing dedicated fan bases in both their native Japan and overseas in the United States. From their humble beginning as fan fiction illustrators, Clamp has found prolific success with their unique plots and striking artwork, and continue their endeavors today with three serialized works currently being published.

The character models for the protagonists of *Tsubasa Reservoir Chronicle* were indeed based upon their earlier manga work, *Cardcaptor Sakura*. The series was a first for the group as it was one half of a grand overarching plot, completed by the crossover series *xxxHolic*, which despite the unfortunate prefix has nothing to do with the adult entertainment industry. The two series began serialization in 2003 and Clamp worked diligently for the next several years to release chapters in a near simultaneous fashion. *Tsubasa Reservoir Chronicle* would end serialization in 2009 and span a total of twenty-eight bound graphic novels, while *xxxHolic* would end two years later with a total of nineteen bound graphic novels.

The decision to collect the bound volumes of *Tsubasa Reservoir Chronicle* and *xxxHolic* would come nearly a year after reading each manga twice. Thanks to the work of dedicated fans around the world, free translated scans of the chapters were available on any number of websites. I quickly grew dissatisfied with viewing the chapters online, though. I will shamefully admit that copyright issues were not my biggest concern. Rather, the works represented an exquisite blend of striking artwork, exotic storytelling, and robust character development that spoke to me on a deeper level than any other piece of fiction I had encountered. I found the story to be exceedingly relevant and the physical collection would ultimately serve as a symbolization of the transformation I was undergoing as a student of the University of Chicago.

Amazon.com proved not only useful for finding inexpensive textbooks during my college career, but also for building the bulk of my collection. Search results yielded listings for both English and Japanese copies of the bound volumes and to my delight most price ranges began at one penny. With the addition of standard shipping, the affordability of the collection was well within reasonable reach. On October 24th, 2012, my twenty-first birthday, I ordered volumes one of both *Tsubasa Reservoir Chronicle* and *xxxHolic*. Holding the physical copies and flipping through the superbly illustrated panels proved to be an immensely thrilling experience and for the next several months I continued to order the subsequent volumes in an attempt to feed my growing addiction. Due to condition issues, some volumes were reordered to maintain the pristine quality of the rest of the collection. Additionally, some volumes were perplexingly difficult to find on Amazon.com, sending me across the web to comic stores in Illinois and even Canada (see the note on vol. 17 of *xxxHolic*).

The collection would reach completion during the summer of 2013 with the purchase of two books not part of the original canon. The first was *xxxHolic: AnotherHolic: Landolt-Ring Aerosol*, a novel adaptation written by Nisioisin based on the characters and events of *xxxHolic*. The dust-jacket is a mellow purple and features a stylized butterfly delicately painted in gold. There an original color illustration by Clamp and each of the three parts of the novel is preceded by a full two-page illustration. The second book was *Tsubasa Album De Reproductions*, an original art collection inspired by the first fourteen volumes of *Tsubasa Reservoir Chronicle*. The art-book contains over one hundred color illustrations and even includes an extra comic which had not previously appeared in the series.

There is a small caveat I must mention at this point which relates to the future of the collection. In February 2013 Clamp announced a new series titled *xxxHolic Rei*, a direct sequel to *xxxHolic*. The first bound English volume, which I have already pre-ordered, is set to be released at the end of April. Thus, my collection is technically incomplete and will remain so for an indefinite period of time until *xxxHolic Rei*'s eventual end. I did not find out about the new series until fall quarter of this academic year and when I made the discovery I was struck with how coincidental the announcement was with my collection's "completion." Yet it was coincidence that brought me to the Clamp universe in the first place. As Yuko Ichihara, the enigmatic witch of *xxxHolic*, tells the protagonist "There is no such thing as coincidence in this world. The only thing is Hitsuzen [the inevitable, a naturally foreordained event]." Whether by accident or kismet, I find myself continually drawn to the works of Clamp. I hope to expand the collection beyond the world of *Tsubasa Reservoir Chronicle* and *xxxHolic* with the purchase of *Chobits*, a series set in a future where androids have become an established part of society. *Kobato*, a series which began in 2005, was recently completed, and all six bound graphic novels are available for purchase. I would also like to collect the recently rereleased series *X*, an apocalyptic thriller that was never completed due to its violent plot and portrayal of the destruction of Japan. It is nevertheless a beautifully illustrated manga with a haunting relevance to our current struggle with global climate change. *Cardcaptor Sakura*, the series that began this journey and collection, is also a high priority and I hope to find the original, first edition releases from online sellers.

Annotated Bibliography

CLAMP (Mangaka group). *XxxHolic [v. 1]*. Translated and Adapted by Anthony Gerard. 1st ed. New York: Del Rey, 2004.

- ❖ Features the first three pages of the manga rendered completely in color. A near-mint condition volume with slight fading on the binding. The lettering of the title on the cover and the binding is yellow, whereas most of the cover lettering for the rest of the volumes is done in a shade of red. The cover design features both protagonists wearing costumes adorned with a yellow and orange butterfly.

CLAMP (Mangaka group). *XxxHolic [v. 2 to 5]*. Translated and Adapted by William Flanagan Gerard. New York: Del Rey, 2004-2005.

CLAMP (Mangaka group). *XxxHolic [v. 6]*. Translated and Adapted by William Flanagan. New York: Del Rey, 2005

- ❖ Vol. 6 of *xxxHolic* and vol. 10 of *Tsubasa Reservoir Chronicle* were released simultaneously. Consequently both feature a unified cover design. Peacock feather sway exotically and shimmer with vivid greens and bright oranges as the protagonists stand before a mysterious jungle.

CLAMP (Mangaka group). *XxxHolic [v. 7-15]*. Translated and Adapted by William Flanagan. New York: Del Rey, 2005-2010.

CLAMP (Mangaka group). *XxxHolic [v. 16]*. Translated and Adapted by William Flanagan. New York: Del Rey, 2009-2010.

- ❖ From vol. 16 and on the covers only feature the male protagonist, Kimihiro Watanuki. At this point the series technically changes names to *xxxHolic Ro*, but this is only reflected internally in the chapter opening illustrations.

CLAMP (Mangaka group). *XxxHolic [v. 17]*. Translated and Adapted by William Flanagan. New York: Del Rey, 2010-2011.

- ❖ This volume threatened to derail my budget and the entire collection. Amazon.com had listings beginning around \$40.00 for heavily used copies. Like-new or new copies ran the gamut of \$80.00. I could find no distinguishing features for this volume that warranted such outrageous prices. *Comics America* (paradoxically located in Canada) had the final three volumes for a reasonable \$15.00 each. After three weeks of inaction I discovered the online listing was not an accurate reflection of their actual stock. Thankfully a comic store located in Illinois had a new copy in store for a similar price, perhaps unaware of what the market was asking for. Used copies currently on Amazon.com range from \$40.00 to \$180.00. First three pages are color and the lettering on the cover is an extreme departure in a pure white.

CLAMP (Mangaka group). *XxxHolic [v. 18]*. Translated and Adapted by William Flanagan. New York: Del Rey, 2010-2011.

CLAMP (Mangaka group). *XxxHolic [v. 19]*. Translated and Adapted by William Flanagan. New York: Del Rey, 2011-2012.

- ❖ The no longer “final volume.” Features some of the most memorable illustrations. A new copy with three color pages.

CLAMP (Mangaka group). *Tsubasa Reservoir Chronicle [v.1]*. Translated and Adapted by Anthony Gerard. 1st ed. New York: Del Rey, 2004.

CLAMP (Mangaka group). *Tsubasa Reservoir Chronicle [v.2]*. Translated and Adapted by Anthony Gerard. 1st ed. New York: Del Rey, 2004.

CLAMP (Mangaka group). *Tsubasa Reservoir Chronicle [v.3 to 9]*. Translated and Adapted by William Flanagan. New York: Del Rey, 2004-2006.

CLAMP (Mangaka group). *Tsubasa Reservoir Chronicle [v.10]*. Translated and Adapted by William Flanagan. New York: Del Rey, 2006

❖ See note on vol. 6 of *xxxHolic*.

CLAMP (Mangaka group). *Tsubasa Reservoir Chronicle [v.11 to 14]*. Translated and Adapted by William Flanagan. New York: Del Rey, 2006-2007.

CLAMP (Mangaka group). *Tsubasa Reservoir Chronicle [v.15]*. Translated and Adapted by William Flanagan. New York: Del Rey, 2007

❖ Similar to vol. 17 of *xxxHolic*. Limited like-new or new copies available on Amazon.com. Current listings have “very good” copies starting at \$32.00 with one seller asking an astonishing \$999.11 for a new copy. At first it was a volume that was very easy to obtain. However, after several weeks the manga never arrived, forcing me to find another copy. I lucked out and found a new copy for a reasonable \$15.00

CLAMP (Mangaka group). *Tsubasa Reservoir Chronicle [v.16 to 27]*. Translated and Adapted by William Flanagan. New York: Del Rey, 2008-2010

CLAMP (Mangaka group). *Tsubasa Reservoir Chronicle [v.28]*. Translated and Adapted by William Flanagan. New York: Del Rey, 2010

❖ Final volume that is considerably longer than the rest. Features an insightful word from the translator, William Flanagan, on the difficulties of translating a work in a piecemeal fashion.

Nisioisin. *xxx:Anotherholic, Landolt-Ring Aerosol*. Translated by Andrew Cunningham. 1st ed. New York: Del Rey, 2008.

CLAMP (Mangaka group). *Tsubasa ALBuM De REProDUCTioNS: Original Art Collection*. Translated by William Flanagan. New York: Del Rey, 2009.