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博士論文

Manga-Drag:
Female Address,
Male Cross-Dressing Character,
and Media Performativity

ドラァグとしてのマンガ：
女性的な表現、女装キャラクター、メディアの
パフォーマンス性

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades it appears that the media mixes[1] and media convergence dominate Japanese popular culture. Franchises offer a variety of possible modes of engagement and usages, and the popular titles connect the fans across social barriers, such as: gender, education, income or age. Consequently, media mixes draw attention of the researchers, while academic interest in single media and textual analysis of single narratives is dwindling. In this thesis I bring attention back to the text and suggest that media specific textual analysis allows mapping the mechanisms through which consumers interact with the text.

Presently, manga remains one of the most popular media in Japan[2], however, I do not intend to prioritise it over other popular media such as games, anime, and light novels[3]. Using manga as an example, I suggest that a close reading of the texts reveals aspects of media that facilitate interactive use. At the core of my dissertation is the ability of manga to transcend boundaries and create connections between readers by facilitating a variety of reading approaches. I especially focus on peculiar genre division of manga and consumption across genre to showcase my theory. By combining insights into manga studies theories of Jaqueline Berndt, Ole Frahm, Thierry Groensteen, Scott McCloud and Thomas LaMarre I define the mechanism and main elements that make multiple readings possible. I specifically pay attention to how the contents are interrelated with the form[4].

In "Ghostly: 'Asian Graphic Narratives', *Nonnonba*, and Manga" (2013) Jaqueline Berndt relates multiple usages of manga to the reader's agency in meaning construction:

[1] The texts of manga, anime, light novels' etc. are frequently interrelated through media-mix, and even within one franchise the same basic narrative plot or same character may be reinvented in a variety of ways. The industry as a result offers narratives and further media mixes and merchandise to facilitate multifaceted engagement. Each element of media mix offers a different mechanism of interacting with the consumer. Overall the media mixes are structured so that each element of it can be a self-contained narrative.

[2] Until early 2000s it was the leading media, although it is losing its dominance to anime and games in recent decade.

[3] My inquiry into single media is also facilitated by general structure of the media mix that allows each instalment to function as a self-contained narrative

[4] Also manga's flexibility is visible in its popularity overseas that gave rise to a variety of local interpretations and variations, as well as foreign artists referring to their works as "manga" and being marketed as such. For more on this topic, please, refer to Zoltan Kacsuk's article "Re-Examining the "What is Manga?" Problematic: The Tension and Interrelationship Between the "Styles" Versus "Made in Japan" Positions" (2018)

"[...] in manga the agency of the reader often counts more than that of the creator as 'author'. [...] Naming manga a 'visual language' points beyond the issue of decoding sweat beads or nose bleeds. It refers, above all, to the existence of specific communities that value less a single work's aesthetic or ideological qualities than its facilitating relationships and support of reader participation, from empathy and immersion to fan art/fiction and CosPlay" (Berndt 2013: 365). Berndt focuses on manga's specifics as "language" shared by the readers, which allows the readers to use this language to create new contents and connects the readers into taste-communities.

This thesis limits the scope of inquiry to contemporary story-manga, which historically cultivated four major genres, separated by gender and age of intended audience. The "female" genres are *shōjo*[5] (少女 girls) and *josei* (女性 women), while the "male" genres are *shōnen* (少年 boys) and *seinen* (青年 young men)[6]. While thematic genres are not specifically gendered, gendered genres are distinguished via visual style, character settings, and character relationships[7]. Specifics of generic tropes solidified in the 1980-90s and became recognisable intertextually as indicative of the genre[8]. I will focus on the contemporary generic tropes and examine the three major genres: shōjo, shōnen and seinen.

[5] All Japanese terms are written without s in their plural form. Japanese words are rendered in italics when mentioned the first time. Long vowels are indicated with macrons, except in citations where they appear in Standard English. The Romanization of Japanese words follows the modified Hepburn system.

[6] I use the terms of "male" and "female" genres following the industries' pervasive gendered terminology. Patriarchal terms also allow to demonstrate all the avenues of subversion that are open up with the tendency of fusion in genres.

[7] Japanese gendering of the genres overreaches thematic genres; one of the most prominent divisive narrative features are characters' relationships. Male genres emphasise competition and friendship between peers and underplay romance, while female genres appear to focus more on romance and other relationships as driving forces of the narrative.

[8] Gendering of Japanese genres remains largely unaddressed, and the main four genres have not been analysed comparatively at any length. Nishihara Mari notes in her recent article *Манга как материал для гендерных исследований* [Manga as Material for Gender Studies] (2018) while, there is extensive gender studies based research into shōjo genre and some male genres that are associated with sexuality and gender, shōnen and seinen genres have been largely omitted. In this thesis the juxtaposition in gender-dynamics within manga genres is brought to the fore through consideration of genre-specifics of all genres. A focus on the evident fusion within shōnen and seinen genres especially instigates a discussion about the change in gender-paradigm within the gendered genres that still strongly influence most products of Japanese popular culture.

As a genre josei is minor compared to shōjo, shōnen and seinen; similarly, I will refrain from looking into erotic and pornographic works, rather focussing on mainstream story-manga.

Initially manga genres mirrored the pre-war division of boys and girls magazines. The genre conventions in manga developed gradually[9]: in the 1950s Tezuka Osamu[10] is credited with introducing "cinematic" panel layout, which became a recognisable characteristic of story manga. In the end of the 1950s *gekiga* (劇画) comics distanced themselves from more child-oriented productions, and further developed both "cinematic" panel layout as well as alternative experimental styles (Kacsuk 2018: 8). Later in the 1970-1980s seinen manga separated from shōnen as a mix of shōnen and gekiga, and the first shōnen magazines appeared, although initially the stylistic division is blurry. The late '60s and '70s saw the growing stylistic divide between male oriented contents and shōjo genre (Prough 2011: 95).

I explore the multifaceted potential of usages by focussing my inquiry on the changes in gendered genre dynamics that had occurred in the last 15 years[11]. After the 2000s male genres have been overtly borrowing tropes from female genres, producing titles with recognisable citations[12]. Jessica Bauwens-Sugimoto relates this tendency to the rapidly increasing female consumption of male genres, resulting in a situation in which: "at least half, and sometimes more than half, of the readers of 'manga for boys' do not identify as male" (Bauwens 2016: 112)[13].

[9] and are not comprehensively addressed yet historically or comparatively

[10] Throughout this volume, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean names are given in the domestic order, surnames preceding given names. However, in the bibliography all surnames are given first and separated from given names by a comma.

[11] Therefore in this dissertation, although genre division existed almost since the beginning of manga industry in Japan, I observe genre distinctions and tropes in contemporary genres which solidified in 1980-1990s, due to restricted time. I hope to come back to comparative and historical analysis of gendered genres in more detail in my further research.

[12] Although on the level of manga industry, there is not actual fusion genre, there is ample fusion within genres.

[13] As a matter of fact, female genres too, starting with the works by The Magnificent 49ers, show generic fusion. The 49ers included male manga tropes into female narratives. Takemiya Keiko explained in a series of lectures at Kyoto Seika University, that she borrowed visual conventions from shōnen manga, because she needed tools to depict the dynamism of boys. She employed speed-lines, dynamic facial expressions, icons from shōnen genres, which she herself grew up reading. The wide strides, running in the school corridors, resolving relationship problems with violent fights—the abundance of movement permeates the world of boys in *Kaze to ki*

Gender in genres is linked with the gender of the characters. Both Bauwens-Sugimoto and Thomas LaMarre relate the fusion in genres to the appearance of male protagonists, who deviate from the template of patriarchal masculinity. They see subversive potential in such character. Following their inquiry, I theorise that novel gender dynamics are inspired by the popular image of bishōnen (male protagonist typical to female genres) [14]. I theorise bishōnen as a citation of the female genres is one of the titular elements of fusion that embodies a potential to open the generic texts to new audiences, specifically to the readers of the female genres[15].

After the triple disaster of March 11 2011 leading manga studies specialist Jaqueline Berndt presented manga studies community with a question: what can light-hearted media of manga and other entertainment media achieve in regards to representation of critical themes and topics. Manga speaks to the widest audience non-discriminatory and has potential to become a common forum for crucial social topics. Through consideration of form, Berndt leads her discussion (2016) to focus on the ways critical potential can be interwoven into the fabric of the narrative, yet remain in between the layers, not making any political statements, rather drawing attention to the existence of the problem. Under Jaqueline Berndt's supervision I began to address this issue on an example of mange about 3.11, specifically Hagio Moto's *Nanohana* [Rape Flowers] (*Flowers* 2011-2012). From the perspective of Judith Butler's theory of subversive potential of the performative, I have contested the bias

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no uta[13] [The Poem of the Wind and the Trees]. This dynamism is also overlaid onto romantic scenes, where the movement of the body, as I have argued above, is combined with metaphoric visualisations of interiority. Not to forget that around the same time, Takemiya also published the shōnen title *Terra e*[13] [Toward the Terra...]. Oshiyama Michiko, in turn, cites the example of Ikeda Riyoko, who studied anatomy and *gekiga* conventions in order to depict the battle scenes of *Berusaiyu no bara*[13] [The Rose of Versailles]. The development of her style is truly obvious throughout this long series. One may theorise that male modes of address may have made the titles accessible to male readers; however they did this not at the expense of the female mode of reading.

[14] Female manga research associates bishōnen character with critical perspective on gender. I ask throughout my dissertation, what merits this character holds as he is brought into male genres, and is sometimes even installed as the protagonist, as a figure that male reader is invited to identify with. It is important to note that there is no new separate fusion genre at this moment officially in Japanese manga industry; the four main genres remain separated by publication site. Therefore I address the fusion as it happens under the terms of patriarchal gendered genre division.

[15] Readers of the female genres are not necessarily female themselves. There are periods in shōjo manga history when female genre titles were widely consumed by men, such as the works of The Magnificent 49ers in 1970s (see more in Part 2). However due to the hierarchy in genres, female genres are less likely to be read by male readers than the other way around.

that critical reading is the alleged "correct" reading. Rather I began my inquiry into potential manga provides as a vehicle of critical themes when critical theme is only one of multitude of potential readings the text opens up[16].

In this thesis, I focus on gender in manga both within the narratives and encoded into the genres. Although evolving for over a decade, the change in gendered genre dynamics is underrepresented in manga studies. LaMarre (2009), Fujimoto (2015), and Bauwens-Sugimoto (2016, 2018) point out aspects of cross-genre reading through the perspective of the female genre readers, who are allegedly courted by the male genres. However, I suggest that a systematic approach to this recent development offers an insight into a possible new relationship of readers to their own gender and sexed bodies. My dissertation, while focussing on textual analysis, offers a dual perspective, exploring how the text is opened for the female reader and what potential the fusion in genres holds for the male readers consuming these narratives. Gender-related changes in genres (especially male genres) are happening on the level of represented contents, such as new themes, topics, character settings etc, and also at the level of formal specificity of the media, including aesthetics of character depictions, panel layout, decorative symbolic elements, and other pictorial innovations.

[16]Since 1960s There is an extended discussion of the relationship between text and reading of the text when traditions of viewing the texts in context are contrasted to the notions of readers' agency towards the text. These discussions mostly focus on texts which are revered as works of art. In his seminal article "Death of the Author" Roland Barthes (1967) argued against the supremacy of authorial intent or the necessity to seek the meaning of a work while analysing the figure and intent of the author. Instead Barthes prioritised a relationship between the text and the reader.

Subsequently, Stanley Fish suggested that a text acquires multiple meanings as it is read within different contexts. As a matter of fact, Fish suggested that it is the characteristic of a great artwork, when the same text remains relevant across time, cultural backgrounds and other alternations, which take the text out of the context it was created for. Moreover, the text when taken out of the context may be read in a way that brings the reader to a different reading, none the less this reading is relevant to the reader. In other words, the same signs get new meaning as they move between the contexts. However, Fish does not quite deviate from the notion of correct reading. He suggests on the example of religious texts and symbolic poetry how certain texts tease the reader with a riddle of "real meaning", however remain free to interpretation ("Interpreting the Variorum" (1976), *Is There a Text in This Class* (1980)).

In short, in Fish suggested that the multiple meanings are derived from the text by readers, who harbour an intention to look for the one correct reading. Fish even notes that the reader may seek the correct reading out of the admiration for the author. However, Fish goes one step further, as he draws attention to the additional meaning of the reader's inquisitive involvement with the text namely formation of the interpretive community, relationships between people are fostered around a text, a text facilitates a usage beyond reading. Umberto Eco in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (1990) questions the limit of possible recontextualisations.

To focus my inquiry on the bishōnen, who raises the question of gender, I explore the recent growing popularity of depiction of kabuki (歌舞伎) in manga and the inevitable appearance of cross-dressing *onnagata* (女形)[17]characters. In the past decade, kabuki has become a popular setting in manga as a part of an overall rise of interest in the traditional arts. All male genre titles which feature kabuki place great narrative importance on the onnagata character, who sometimes is the main character. I argue that even depicted realistically, onnagata characters share many traits with bishōnen; therefore the onnagata is a very convenient example to explore how alternative gender dynamics gradually seep into the male genres.

I combine my previous research into Japanese classic culture, which I have conducted in University of Latvia within the framework of my master's thesis with my inquiries into Japanese popular culture, specifically manga studies. My choice of the representation of kabuki as a case-study offers several elements which reflect both current gender debates as well as offer a smooth translation into manga. I suggest that even the realistic depiction of onnagata would produce a character similar to bishōnen. Therefore, the onnagata does not have to be recognised as a citation of bishōnen from female genres to be consumed by male readers. At the same time, presence of a bishōnen-like character invites the female readership and opens the narrative to gender-subversive readings.

When genres are addressed from the perspective of gender, it is specific representations of gender that are problematized in the framework of the consumer's gender, for example *fujoshi* and *otaku* related genres and their consumption[18]. I analyse manga

[17] Onnagata are male actors performing female roles in traditional theatre – kabuki. Kabuki is a proto-modern theatre, originating in early 17th century. Kabuki was a part of Edo popular culture, it was a dynamic entertaining drama abundant with sexuality, violence, and humour. Historical onnagata specialised in only female roles and tended to lead a stylised version of female life-style off-stage as well, becoming socially accepted alternative gender. Contemporary onnagata are not required to do that, however through my analysis of contemporary media I make an assumption that they are still positioned as non-phallic males. Onnagata gain social agency by being purveyors of traditional art and dedicated professionals. Due to the nature of their performance, it appears that the audience largely expects them to be in some way queer in real life. The actors' off-stage persona thusly perpetuates the mystique of their profession.

[18] This research largely focusses on either female genres, but most notably problematizes genres with sexual overtones, such as boys' love in female genres, or moe-genre in case of masculine genres. With selective insight

consumption as a gendered act and as a self-gendering act. From this perspective, I draw special attention to the changing protagonist, the "self" that a male reader would be encouraged to identify with.

In order to structure my inquiry I rely on Judith Butler's theory of performativity as the main methodology that informs my analysis[19]. I analyse manga as postmodern performative media that through interplay of formal and narrative conventions embodies multiple meanings[20]. While any narrative can be deconstructed as performative, Butler singles out meta-performances and likens them to parody. In terms of gender meta-performance it is drag in *Gender Trouble* (2006, originally published in 1990) and in the later volume, *Undoing Gender* (2004) Butler combines insights into transsexuals, cross-dressers and other queer genders. As a parody drag imbues the patriarchal symbols of femininity and masculinity with alternative meanings. Drag showcases the relational nature of meaning, and opens the performance of gender to recontextualisation, and subversion. At the same time it is also possible to perceive such performances as "fake" [21] and incomprehensible in patriarchal terms, which Butler addresses in *Undoing Gender*. In this thesis I apply Butler's methodology both to structure my analysis of manga form as inherently parodic and

into more heavily sexualised thematic sub-genres. In this dissertation I focus on mainstream genres, sometimes analysing works that problematize sex and sexuality, however I and refrain from analysis of sexually explicit thematic sub-genres, such as moe, hentai, ladies comics, and explicit boys' love.

[19] Since *Gender Trouble* and across several later volumes Butler shapes her theory of performativity closely related to the notion of parody. Sexed bodies reiterate elements of gender in the context of the patriarchal discourse. Communal reiteration creates an illusion of unity of the elements and implies the direct link between the sexed bodies and the gender/gendered behaviour. However, due to absence of natural core, reiteration is never seamless, in a personal performance the coreless signs can all be juxtaposed, omitted, or fluctuate in meaning. The elements of another gender may be included, assimilated and recontextualised within personal performances as well. Awareness of performance as compilation of replicable elements opens the gaps, offering a potential to deconstruct and reconstruct it. Butler exemplifies with meta-performances, such as cross-dressing, drag, intersexed or transgender individuals gender constructions. For example, in case of drag exaggerated performance of feminine becomes a sign that references male body beneath or vice versa. In case of transgender performances, especially in the context of communal reiteration, the binary terms of male and female may begin to reference person's self-identification as subject to change disconnected from any "natural" physical bodily source of gender.

[20] I do not mean a number of specific meanings, but overall structure that allows for reader's intervention and recontextualisation.

[21] Genders that extend beyond the binary, such as intersexed, transsexual, transvestites are therefore defined as "copy" or "fantasy" (Butler 2004: 217). However, by accepting the injurious name and embodied performance of therefore, "fantasy" genders though communal performance acquire agency within patriarchal terminology. Extending and redefining patriarchal terms, rather than changing them altogether.

undermining singular representational meanings; and also in order to address the complex gender of the bishōnen, who undermines gender representation tropes in manga across genres. I address manga as performance and performance of the bishōnen in manga combining consideration of form and contents respectively.

From the perspective of form I look at the particulars of manga as a narrative based on the interrelation of two heterogeneous systems of signs (word and image) proposed by Ole Frahm. He relates the mechanism of two particular sign systems, fragmenting the narrative, and reiterating the same information inconsistently to the notion of parody and performativity of Butler. I take a step further and suggest that fluidity of the comics for resonates with the postmodern mode of consumption, explored by Azuma Hiroki[22] and further elaborated on by Jaqueline Berndt[23].

I suggest that bishōnen characters in seinen and shōnen genres embody two aspects of cross-genre consumption. I substantiate my focus on the character by referencing Azuma Hiroki[24], LaMarre, Itō Gō and other research into the centrality of the character as a construct that embodies references to a generic body of work. Manga characters are frequently associated with character-types[25], their design and other characteristics imply a character's personality development, role in the narrative, possible further scenarios, etc. I focus my

[22] Database consumption

[23] Multiple uses and readings

[24] In this seminal work *Otaku: The Database Animal* (2000), Azuma addressing novel consumption and narrative creation paradigm, which he associates with postmodernism. His insight provides valuable framework to think about genre not in relation to thematic clustering, but rather with the focus on the stylistic and narrative tropes associated with the publication site, as well as intertextual references. This facilitates reading specific titles in relation to previous works.

Especially in case of contemporary narrative their flexibility and interactivity, which Butler and many others note, is a significant part of their attractiveness. This flexibility is achieved by deliberate inconsistency; elements that comprise the narrative are assembled with sizable gaps. Recognition of the references encompassed in the elements allows for interaction with the narrative by creatively filing the gaps with related elements from the database, resulting in significantly different readings, and in reading the work against the backdrop of previous works. In other words, in this interrelated database system, one element may imply a whole possible narrative development. The more complex clusters of elements, such as narrative character settings and visual character designs virtually embody a variety of narrative developments. As a matter of fact, Azuma explores how specific genre of *moe* revolves completely around attractive characters who encompass these diverse interactive potentials, which their initial narratives serve as vehicles for them.

[25] Thomas LaMarre elaborates on the character design related to the database, referring to it as "soulful body": "[…] bodies on which supposedly inner states, spiritual, emotional, or psychological tensions and conflicts are directly described, appearing on the surface in character design, implying potential movement of the body and of the soul" (LaMarre 2009: 228).

inquiry through “female mode of address” a notion that LaMarre coins in his seminal work *The Anime Machine* (2009). LaMarre explores how various aspects of the characters and their relationships can address the readership beyond intended audience of the genre. As a result, a character from another genre can substantially influence readings of the narrative he is fused into. Especially I pay attention to the way protagonist who is most prominent identification choice changes under these new circumstances. As a result, the male reader redefines his own masculine performance and expands on the elements that he individually includes into his own construction of agency.

By addressing the bishōnen through the theory of performativity I divide the critical potential of manga into two tiers. 1. Firstly, as an example of representational critical citation, I focus on the critical themes of queer gender, patriarchal power-binary etc that bishōnen introduces into the seinen narratives via the character of onnagata. Themes that are represented resonate with earlier shōjo works that are critically acclaimed. 2. Secondly, I look at the critical potential of elements of shōjo manga and bishōnen as not necessarily aiming for critical representation. I look at a parodic shōnen title that openly ridicules female genre tropes. Therefore, it presupposes prior literacy of the tropes it parodies. Their presence and gradual recognition within male genres progressively expand the expressive palette of male genres and change the definition of male genres and male contents.

As more and more elements of female genres are introduced into male genres, the definition of male taste, contents and tropes blurs. Subversive potential that this tendency presents lends itself to analysis through Butler’s theory of multimodal formation of alternative agency. It further relates to the later performativity theory expressed in *Undoing Gender,* where Butler explores how patriarchal terms and hierarchy of male/female binary undermine themselves through ever expanding and blurring meanings of the terms that happen due to the essentially insubstantial nature of performance.

Finally, I suggest that the current shift in gendered tropes and their consumption in Japan can be used as a perfect example of Butler’s theory of performativity in action, and the

resulting social change that Butler predicts. It demonstrates how allegedly "superior" universal narratives of male genres encompass more and more female genre tropes as inherent parts of the genre. I also claim that retaining labels supports potential for subversion and change by providing a safe environment for male readers to reach for these novel contents maintaining the privileged position.

In Part 1 I create an overarching framework for my discussion of multiple readings opened up by the text. I employ Ole Frahm's analysis of comics as performative and parodic media that parodies referentiality of signs[26]. I begin by addressing structural duality of manga, a combination of word and pictorial drawing, which cite, reiterate and interrupt one another. Next I use Azuma's theory of database consumption to position manga within the framework of postmodernism. In combination with Thomas LaMarre's analysis of different types of the linework, that discerns between cognitive and affective involvement with manga, I suggest that manga is like Butler's drag, parodic rather than just performative, and uses the specifics of its form to multiply the possible meanings from within the narrative itself.

In order to talk about multiple meanings in a performative text, I introduce gendered genres in manga and cross-genre consumption. I focus on the centrality of a character in cross-genre consumption through the emphasis on the male cross-dressing onnagata as an example of the bishōnen. I negotiate bishōnen and cross-dressers as one of the main filters that multiply the meanings of manga. I suggest that onnagata as a recently popular character in all genres offers a point of entry for a gender-queer bishōnen-like character to play major roles in seinen and shōnen manga.

[26] Comics are comprised of fragments of the narrative which are arranged spatially on the page, structured into potential sequence via panel layout. Therefore, while comics suggest sequential consumption they are always also simultaneous. Furthermore, Ole Frahm draws attention to heterogeneity of comics, as comprised of two semiotic systems of text and pictorial. According to Frahm these two systems interrupt each other and reference and cite each other, therefore creating illusion of "something beyond the signs". However, in effect they only reiterating each other inconsistently. Inconsistency opens the gaps between heterogeneous signs, offering spaces for the readers to enjoy the elements separately, and reinterpret them beyond the sequence and closure

In order to talk about bishōnen and onnagata, in Part 2 I aim to amend one of the most evident lacks in gender-related manga research. I refer to a comprehensive definition of the male protagonist in female genre, often referred to as *bishōnen*. I employ the term bishōnen ahistorically to define gender-queer male characters, who appear both in boys' love and shōjo titles. I combine narrative tropes and themes associated with the bishōnen with extensive analysis of visual tropes used to depict him. Through historical retrospect, combining research by Ōgi Fusami, Ishida Minori, Fujimoto Yukari with gaze theory by Lacan I trace how bishōnen came to fulfil a dual role as identification anchor for the female readers and as an object of their desire. Through gaze theory I analyse depiction of bishōnen as fluctuating between subject and object.

I look at the linework as an embodied performance of manga and combine Oshiyama Michiko's insight into shōjo-manga generic tropes of masculinity and femininity, which range from narrative twists to linework and colour-palette[27] with Thomas LaMarre's theory of plastic and structural linework in order to define bishōnen's formal structure. LaMarre defines interplay of physical/affective and cognitive levels in reading manga by separating two functions of the line, as a figure and as a sign[28]. Combining these two theories reveals similarities between plastic/feminine and structural/masculine. These aspects fluctuate in depictions of bishōnen and demonstrate his movement between subjectivity and objectivity, deconstructing gender binary and divorcing agency from gender.

Using examples of Takemiya Keiko's *Kaze to ki no uta*[29] [The Poem of the Wind and the Trees] (*Shūkan Shōjo Comic, Petit Flower* 1976-1982, 1982-1984), Kishi Yūko's *Tamasaburō koi no kyōsōkyoku* [*Tamasaburō's Rhapsody of Love*] (*Bessatsu Shōjo Comic* 1975-1981) and *Pintokona* [*Pintokona*] by Shimaki Ako (*Cheese!* 2009-2014) I focus on the

[27] Oshiyama concludes that "male" elements signify the wider world, while "female" imply movement inward into intimate emotional matters, "within". However, this alleged "masculinity" and "femininity" exists as a facet of the character, and fluctuates according to the situations.

[28] LaMarre suggests that the linework and panelling in manga operate on two levels, cognitive, as a comprehension of signs, and affective level when the reader bodily reacts to the form of the line, ratio of black and white, and other visual cues

[29] In this thesis I use manga titles released as tankōbon, therefore I italicise the titles.

alleged masculinity of the bishōnen body, and define the bishōnen as a male character whose fluid agency is embodied through representation of him as an interiority and as a physical body through fluctuations in plastic and structural linework.

I analyse mechanisms that facilitate identification through emotionally explicit plastic lines versus emotional dissociation that is spurred by affective response to the bodily experience, such as physical trauma[30]. Following this line of inquiry I outline a general trend that relates structural lines that convey mortality and physicality to masculinity, and consequently define masculinity as "other" and "on the surface/superficial"; and contrary, plastic lines connote immortality and femininity, elaborating on the character's interiority as "self" and suggesting emotional empathy.

I propose that plasticity and structurality can be viewed as functions in the narrative, or even two ways of reading. They can also differentiate between the two plains of character's existence, physicality of linework that elicits affect towards the line as figure; and line as a symbol that however elicits affect towards the portrayed contents, such as physical violence, rape etc. The lines' effect oscillates between identification with the interiority, affective response to corporeality or even dissociative viewing.

In Part 3, I do a close reading of *Kabukumon* [Kabukumon lit. Deviant] by David Miyahara and Tanaka Akio (*Morning* 2007-2010), which I compare to *Juntarō* [Juntarō] by Murakami Motoka (Bi*g Comic* 2011) and *Kabuki Iza* [Iza from Kabuki] by Sakura Sawa (*Fellows* 2012-2014). After a brief insight into historical development of onnagata, I focus on current media images of prominent onnagata as a tolerated and celebrated queer "others", devoid of patriarchal masculine agency. Like bishōnen, they are approachable and objectified masculinities, catering to the female desire. I suggest that this facilitates the

[30] In scenes of intimacy the bodies either merge as an extension of ecstatic souls, depicted in plastic lines, and contrast it to the way structural lines clash, hurt and violate each other's' physicality as in the depictions of the rape scenes and other scenes of violence and dubious consent.

smooth translation of onnagata through bishōnen tropes, and inclusion of bishōnen-onnagata in masculine genres, as a part of realistic depiction of kabuki.

I use *Kabukumon, Juntarō, Kabuki Iza* as representative of different modes of onnagata depiction within seinen manga. *Kabuki Iza* is an overt citation of shōjo-manga, *Juntarō* is a realistic portrayal of onnagata, and *Kabukumon* is a middle ground that allows for a seamless reading within multiple contexts.

I use Lacanian psychoanalytic theories of the gaze and *objet petit a*/partial object in combination with Judith Butler's theory of performativity in order to trace how the femininity and masculinity of a cross-dresser is constructed and contextualised within seinen narratives. I analyse the tropes such as linework, fragmentation of characters' movements and body through panel layout, and internal monologues as *objet petit a* both within the narrative and from a perspective of cross-genre reading.

While, *Kabukumon* adheres to seinen manga visual conventions, it uses elaborate costumes and fragmentation of the panelling as well as reiteration of aesthetic detail and beautified body-parts similarly to shōjo manga. Combined with internal monologues, the physical detail of bodily motions becomes plastic embodiment of emotional upheavals and extends character's interiority, simultaneously creating a tangibility of the character's physical existence.

I compare two opposite images of onnagata characters, Koishirō and Tsukinosuke who perform on stage and form a relationship off-stage with protagonist Shinkurō. The "woman" in *Kabukumon*, while remaining an object, is not unified. Koishirō is depicted visually and narratively as a bishōnen, Tsukinosuke begins as an antithesis of bishōnen yet through a relationship that starts with hate and grows into respect with the protagonist Shinkurō becomes internally like a bishōnen, which in the narrative is also a culmination of his artistic growth and sexual tension between him and protagonist. Both onnagata manipulate partial objects to attract the gaze, and gain agency through this sexualised exposure, subverting the patriarchy as the locus of their agency.

In combination with represented homoeroticism, gender-queerness, and alternative object-subject relationships, this manga lends itself to reading as a gender-critical piece that depends heavily on citation from female genres. However, I suggest this does not mean that reading this title as boys' love is synonymous opening up its critical potential. In contemporary female genres gender-critical themes inherited from earlier shōjo manga gradually turned into well-established cliché's which are habitually reduced to dramatic twists and erotic triggers. Instead I suggest that the image of seinen manga as a universal genre that often tackles a variety of critical themes and issues revitalises critical potential of a variety of bishōnen-related tropes instead. Contrariwise, I also demonstrate seinen tropes as *objet petit a* that neutralise gender-queerness for the reader, offering the intended audience a safe reading within the same narrative.

In Part 4 I look at the second type of critical potential. I focus less on represented critical themes, instead I look at the changes in narrative and visual tropes that expand the understanding of male generic tropes, and contents aimed at male readers. For this purpose I do a close reading of a shōnen manga *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* [Circumstances of Kunisaki Izumo] by Hirakawa Aya (*Weekly Shōnen Sunday* 2009-2014), which has a cross-dressing gender-bending onnagata protagonist Kunisaki Izumo. However all gender-queer behaviour always serves "masculine" goals, such as protecting his honour, keeping a promise, helping his friends, etc. As a result the term "masculinity" grows to include not only cross-dressing and gender-bending, but also loyalty, sensitivity, and nurturing behaviour. Following Butler's line of inquiry, *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* takes patriarchal term "masculinity" as it is, yet rewrites completely what it signifies within the narrative, expanding the term, until it becomes obsolete[31].

[31] I follow Butler's inquiry into construction of individual into a subject in *The Psychic Life of Power* and *An Account of Oneself*. Agency and subjectivity bring the individual into a coherent existence within patriarchal dominant context. However it is constructed from fragmented and juxtaposed multiple performances of various loci of agency (sex, race, income, social status etc). Therefor the aspects of an individual which within patriarchal

I use *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* to explore how this specific title cites from other genres in two ways. 1. The first way is parody, an overt juxtaposition of sign and meaning that create comedic effect and question the source material. 2. The second way is integrating citations of shōjo manga with a similar narrative function. By switching between visual and narrative styles, this title visually differentiates between the character's emotions and plot-twists, contextualising them as "masculine" or "feminine".

From the perspective of expanded masculine contents, I look at the way parody expects literacy of the original content and how citations gradually teach the reader to comprehend these borrowed visual tropes through further elaboration and increasing frequency of shōjo sequences. The potential for multiple readings therefore provides the male reader an entry to new contents, modes of expression and most importantly new strategies of identification (visualised interiority) with a new type of protagonist (bishōnen).

Manga like *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* by virtue of being a part of the shōnen manga industry, validates the consumer as a shōnen manga reader, while consuming female mode of address and novel types of characters. The change in modes of address exposes the reader to the new representational strategies and to the new themes.

In this way my dissertation accomplishes several goals:

1. I provide a comprehensive picture of multiple meanings inherent to the postmodern media of manga.

2. In order to explore multiple meaning constructions I develop an innovative comparative discussion of gendered manga genres.

3. By focussing on the cross-dressing onnagata I address the crucial issue of the critical potential of manga. Through Judith Butler's theory of performativity I

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context define him as lacking in agency (the individual is referred to by an injurious name), can be intermixed with aspects that facilitate agency. The communal performances or alternative agencies expand the definitions of patriarchal terms, gradually transforming injurious name as the locus of agency.

analyse two types of subversive potentials: 1. direct representation of critical themes and 2. performative subversion of the meaning of patriarchal terms.

In doing so, I reveal the fundamental paradigm shift that is happening in the manga industry. I explore gendered genres and the implications of such genre division within the context of the contemporary attempt to market male genres to female readers.

Finally, my dissertation bridges the gap between research into traditional arts and contemporary media. My research identified a potential for a new approach to kabuki research. The lack of critical inquiry into kabuki is evident. I propose a more in-depth gender-studies informed research into the contemporary image of kabuki, specific gendered performances of onnagata from the standpoint of popular representation of kabuki and reception by the intended and extended audience.

PART 1: Performativity of Media and Multiple Meanings

Part 1 begins with introducing Judith Butler's theory of performativity as the leading methodological approach in order to discuss manga as a performative media. Butler's theory of performativity is used twofold: 1. as an algorithm for deconstructionist analysis of manga's form, 2. as methodological approach to gendering of the manga genres and gender within the narratives.

Ole Frahm uses the theory of performativity to define comics media as a parody of referentiality of signs[32], emphasising the ability of comics to generate equivalent multiple meanings. Using theory of performativity I relate the contextual flexibility of meanings to the three aspects of manga's form: fragmentation, reiteration and citation.

I relate multiple uses of manga to consideration of manga as postmodern media based on Azuma Hiroki's theory of database consumption. I analyse how performative structural specificity of manga is utilised to facilitate versatile consumption paradigm which Berndt emphasises as intrinsic to manga.

Focussing on the gendered genres, I define the formal and narrative distinctions of gendered genres before continuing the analysis of the fusion in genres. Genre is a paratext that implies how the work is supposed to be read. However, reading practices, especially cross-genre reading, and creation of derivative materials, suggest that manga titles are habitually taken out of genre context. Using this specificity of manga, I follow Jaqueline Berndt's inquiry into manga's potential for social critique. I introduce the overreaching theme of this dissertation, critical potential in meta-performative media.

Finally, I focus on specific mechanisms of inclusion of critical theme of gender in shōnen and seinen manga. I define manga as character-driven media and lay groundwork to explore the critical potential of a gender-ambiguous character on an example of recently

[32] Comics consist of two semiotic systems (text and image), each repeats and supplements the other, but since they use two different ways to transmit their message, they inevitably contradict and fluctuate, adding layers of meaning.

popular male cross-dressing onnagata. Kabuki is a popular setting in recent manga and onnagata is the female role specialist in kabuki. Onnagata cross-dress as a part of their occupation and are inescapable presence when portraying kabuki. I argue that these characters typically end up depicted as bishōnen in male genres.

I suggest to structure inquiry into critical potential of manga twofold: 1. direct representation of critical themes (such as gender) within the narratives that are generally anticipated to tackle more mature topics[33] (such as seinen), 2. performative critical potential, non-overt subversion of existing terms and tropes, that leads to the expansion of the contents that are considered "masculine"; for example use of visual elements from female genres, or new gender-ambiguous male characters as identification anchors for male readers.

PART 1 Chapter 1: Multiple Meanings: Manga as Performative Media

1-1-1: Manga as Comics

Media Specificity of Comics

To begin with, it is a wide-known fact that manga is read indiscriminately with popular (usually shōnen and seinen) titles embraced by the most diverse audiences. As Berndt emphasises in "Ghostly: 'Asian Graphic Narratives,' *Nonnonba*, and Manga" (2013) manga is a language, in a sense that it is connecting different readers into taste-communities around the same title: "[...] Naming manga a 'visual language' points beyond the issue of decoding sweat beads or nose bleeds. It refers, above all, to the existence of specific communities that value less a single work's aesthetic or ideological qualities than its facilitating relationships and support of reader participation, from empathy and immersion to fan art/fiction and CosPlay" (Berndt 2013: 365). Instead of referring to the alleged "grammar"

[33] They are not necessarily portrayed in overtly critical manner; however, they draw attention to the existence of the problem.

of speech balloons and panel layout sequencing, Berndt suggests the language as means of communicating and connection. Indeed, popular works of manga, especially in shōnen and seinen genres appear to connect readers beyond age difference, education, income, social class.

And in recent two or three decades manga's popularity outside of Japan also overcame the cultural barrier, despite its pronounced cultural specificity, such as books opening left to right (which of course influences whole reading sequence), dynamic and flexible panel layout as well as multitude of culture-specific symbols and onomatopoeia. Translated volumes even resort to dedicating a few extra pages to explanations on how to read this imported media. Despite extra effort to teach the reader at least conventional reading sequence in manga, it is naïve to believe that these texts are read for the purpose of reading out the authorial intent across the globe. Such flexibility attests to the tendency of popular culture products to facilitate a variety of possible readings and usages.

In Japan weekly and monthly manga magazines keep track of the titles popularity before the title becomes a media mix, with additional instalments in different media, such as anime, games, live-action and others. When a title has proven popular, media-mixes further produce diverse versions and readings of the same basic story-line and expand it in alternative directions.

Jaqueline Berndt comments on the contemporary usages of manga: "For many dedicated fans, a single manga's intrinsic quality as a narrative work is less important than its potential as a text to invite participation, facilitate relationships, and mediate taste communities" (Berndt 2016:125). Readers consume popular titles (manga, anime and media-mixes) in diverse ways, and use them differently, often as a basis for some form of derivative works. Empathy with the attractive characters may lead to reinterpreting character's relationships in the narrative through illustrations, dōjinshi or novels about alternative pairings: heterosexual, homosexual, or even gender swap. Some fans are including themselves in the narrative as an original character (also sometimes cross-gender). Other

fans do cosplay, reimagining themselves as characters, frequently across genders. Most of these fans enthusiastically discuss their interpretations in communities. Some practices are widely researched, especially those that are related to gender, such as fujoshi and otaku allegedly sexualised involvement with characters.

I will begin by looking at the basic structure of manga as a type of comics. Through textual analysis I define the mechanism of such multifaceted usages. Fragmentation, reiteration and citation are the cornerstone notions of comics' structure in general and manga in particular. Manga as a part of comics media consists of two semiotic systems: written text and pictures. These two systems are fragmented and juxtaposed on a flat surface of the page (or a computer screen), which unlike film, conflates progression of time onto single surface. Within each panel the action is fragmented into pictorial elements, and text. Pictorial elements include: character-design, backgrounds, symbols, evocative onomatopoeia etc. Textual elements include: character's speech or thoughts in speech balloons (internal monologues and thoughts may also appear without balloon), indication of where the action is taking place, supplemental information as well as sound-effects and other. However, these signs may overlap, with words and fonts being used as decorative and visually evocative elements as well. It goes without saying that a large portion of the narrative is implied in the gutters between the panels.

Thierry Groensteen calls comics truly abstract media: "[...] comics [...] are abstract in the strict sense of the word, that is to say composed of a series of drawings that are themselves non-figurative" (Groensteen 2013: 11). He goes on to suggest that staples which became the representative elements of comics, such as panels or speech-balloons are optional too, deconstructing the conventional image of comics itself:

> Many artists never use onomatopoeia, others never use speech balloons—either because their stories are wordless, or because the words are placed beneath the images or "float" inside them—and the drawings are not necessarily framed. It is nonetheless the combination of these elements (frames and balloons in particular) that, in the modern collective imaginary, seems to typify comics, to characterize the formal apparatus of the medium and its

> language (to the point where this "machinery" should be called *primary* rather than secondary) (Groensteen 2013: 11).

Groensteen suggests that none of these elements are absolutely necessary for comics; many artists forgo one, another or most of them. In other words, what we consider comics is essentially a compilation of elements, which appear to construct a media, however each element is replaceable and can be portrayed in alternative combinations (Groensteen 2013:11). What truly seems to be a staple of the comics is that these elements produce a sequential effect of fragmented time visualised in space, specifically on a page and double spread. Even in conventional story-comics that refrain from excessive meta-like expressions, the abstract nature of comics allows for a variety of reading approaches and opens up avenues for readers' involvement. In this dissertation, I will focus on story-manga for this particular inquiry and refrain from looking into more alternative manga or four-panel manga.

Performativity and Comics

Focussing on story-manga, I will look at the most recognisable form of manga with panels, speech balloons, and evident sequence. These are the trademarks of popular image of comics and manga. Scott McCloud emphasises the sequence, using Will Eisner's definition "sequential art" as a starting point, and elaborates on what elements are sequenced and how. In other words, he does not question sequence as a cornerstone of comics (McCloud 1993: 8). Many volumes on comics and manga literacy mainly explore how the fragments, which are simultaneously spread out on the page, come together in unity and are perceived as a linear sequence. McCloud calls this process "closure". (McCloud 1993: 63-64).

However, what exactly constitutes a sequence in comics and manga had been also contested by Ole Frahm in regards to comics and by Jaqueline Berndt in regards to manga. While in story manga and comics in general closure and linear narrative plays an important

role, it appears that awareness of sequence is combined with potential to reinterpret it, as Berndt's observations earlier suggest.

Concurrently, in his essay "Weird Signs: Comics as Means of Parody" (2001) Frahm draws attention to the specific trait of spatial arrangement in comics, and refutes both unity and sequence as the cornerstones of comics. He contests McCloud's fixation on unity and closure[34] in comics': "the reading of comics is precisely *not* about reconstructing unity (of whatever) but rather to appreciate the heterogeneous signs of script and image in their peculiar, material quality which cannot be made into a unity" (Frahm 2001: 177). Frahm looks at the formal structure of comics and specifically draws attention to how the text and drawings are essentially two heterogeneous systems of signs that appear to reiterate each other and supplement each other, however, they do not refer to something tangible beyond the signs.

Claiming that the unity is denied on the most basic level in comics, he further suggests that incomplete reiteration of the same contents via text and image draws attention to the juxtaposition of these elements: pictorial depictions, stylistics, text, paneling, rhythm etc. For Frahm the closure is only one of many possible ways to read comics. He uses the theory of performativity of Judith Butler, citing *Gender Trouble*[35] to define comics as a meta-performance – a parody: "I shall argue that comics parody the very notion of an original and therefore of something preceding "beyond the signs". They are a parody on the referentiality of signs. They parody the presumed relation between signs and objects" (Frahm 2001: 179).

Although refraining from commentary on gender, Frahm draws on Butler's definition of performativity and parody as an algorithm of deconstructionist analysis of comics' form. This is a valuable approach to comics and manga, which I will build upon

[34] Reading out a sequence to achieve a coherent narrative out of fragmented panels.

[35] Frahm uses *Gender Trouble*, Butler's monograph which became the starting point of her performativity theory. While later Butler focusses more on performance rather than parody, and shifts to discussion of transgender and intersexed individuals, initially she draws on parody (drag) as revealing performativity of gender on a more overt or intentional level.

throughout my dissertation. The parody cites a recognisable text, yet imbues it with different meaning for comedic effect. As a result, the subversion occurs: if the same element can have multiple meanings, the absence of the element's meaning within initial context is questioned as well. In comics words and images theoretically depict the same thing. Text reiterates information that is given in images, sometimes clarifying, sometimes supplementing, and images do the same to text. Consequently, to Frahm, each of these sign systems signifies each other, and reveals the absence of "original". Frahm refers to comics as structural parody that parodies precisely the relation between the sign and what it signifies.

> In the case of comics, the structural parody reveals the contingency of the relationship between sign and reality. By what means? The constellation of signs of different kinds in comics does not only show that typographical and graphical signs are related. In their heterogeneous materiality the signs in constellation are already self-referential. We may even say that the signs, because of their being self-referential, imitate each other in their claim to signify a thing beyond the signs (an "original"; Butler 1993: 30). The structural parody of comics thus shows us a constellation of script and image in their material difference, being juxtaposed and integrated at the same time. It parodies precisely that claim for a truth beyond the signs, and directs our attention to the constellation of signs itself. Because comics offer us a system of signs in its own right which seems to integrate the heterogeneous script and image, the structural parody calls into question this apparent unity (Frahm 2000: 180).

As a result, one may question whether the meaning of any sign is relational and contextual. On this premise Butler herself questions gender. Elements of gender in the context of the patriarchal discourse shape the sexed bodies with an aim to perpetuate reproduction, and at the same time, the continuity of the governing ontology. Communal reiteration creates an illusion of unity of the elements and direct link between the sexed bodies and the gender/gendered behaviour. This in turn suggests that there is an alleged "correct" reading of gendered performance. However, performative reiteration is never seamless, the order and choice of reiterated elements fluctuate from one personal performance to another, and within cultural and historical context may have alternative connotations. Butler used drag to exemplify a meta-performance, a parody, when gendered signs are imbued with different or opposite meaning. And it is the notion Frahm borrows

from her when he refers to comics as drag. Drag is a form of parody of gender; it draws attention to deliberate juxtaposition of exaggerated male and female behavioural and bodily stylisation patterns. It gives new meanings to recognisable gender traits and their combinations. In case of drag, exaggerated "feminine" traits end up signifying the masculinity of the body beneath drag, demonstrating the relational meaning of signs.

Such meta-performance illustrates how the signs that reference gender of a sexed body can all be juxtaposed, omitted, and overtly acquire different meanings. Gender is revealed as a compilation of elements. Fragmented nature of meta-performance (parody) facilitates alternative sequences, as well as juxtaposition of specific gender traits, change in meaning of the same traits, as well as omission. Parody reveals the absence of any such element that would be essential, a manifestation of some "original core" (such as gender directly extending from sexed body).

Frahm echoes Butler's discussion of parody by focussing himself on examples of meta-comics, which specifically play with form. For example, he uses a comics title *Salut Deleuze!* by Martin tom Dieck and Jens Balzer (1996) that depicts exactly the same visual sequence of images on each double-spread, however, every time the text is different. This, on the one hand, propels the narrative. On the other hand, it is a parody of the media; it attracts attention to the way visual and textual elements are two separate material instances.

Frahm operates with meta-case studies, however, he vividly demonstrates how open comics are to readers' involvement. In his analysis, Frahm deconstructs the unity and closure in comics, drawing attention to the fragmented nature of comics. An implied "thing beyond the sign", is represented twice and simultaneously, through text and image. Fragmentation and inconsistent reiteration open up the gaps, drawing attention to the relationality of meaning. Frahm looks at panels, speech balloons and the text inside, the reiterated similarity of characters as elements of performance that suggest the unity yet betray the heterogeneity (Frahm 2000: 180). Frahm's theory gives a theoretical foundation for questioning the conventional views on the so-called grammar of comics, epitomised by McCloud.

Building on the notion of comics as performance, I will further differentiate between not only script and image, but also between the layers of images, such as linework, panel layout, character design etc. in Part 2. Building on deconstructionist theory, and Butler specifically, I will look at "fragmentation", "reiteration" and "citation" which are the key notions in my analysis of meaning constructions in manga. I analyse how manga as a commercial media utilises essential fragmental nature of the narrative, to emphasise the gaps both in form and in narrative flow as spaces for the reader's creative involvement. I analyse the performativity of manga by looking at how the media produces specific spaces for specific audiences, by citing elements that may reference different meanings for different audiences.

Manga is famous for detailing the action; the time between the frames of a typical story-manga is comparatively short, action is minutely fragmented with frequent emphasis on the movement and/or emotions. As a result a typical story manga frequently has multiple volumes, yet these pages are read at a high speed. The effect is achieved at the expense of background designs and other details. Although manga spends more time on single events, the speed of reading can be made even faster, because the highs and lows of the action are visually implied with panel size and other clues.

As Berndt suggests repeatedly, reading order in manga is ambiguous; the manipulation of panel shape and size creates the flow on the one hand, while simultaneity of images of the double spread may offer alternative reading order. Reader can skim over the intermediary frames, disrupting linear sequence yet following the narrative flow (Berndt 2016: 123). After the readers grasp the pinnacle of the page or double spread, they can go to the beginning of the page and read how the crucial plot-twist fits into the whole story or skip to the next page. In other words, manga consciously utilises spatial simultaneity of action

laid out on a page, to offer a variety of reading sequences. While it accelerates reading speed, this technique also slows down at crucial points, both narratively and aesthetically. It draws attention to the aesthetics of a drawing, and emphasises narrative climaxes within and outside of the unity.

Speaking about the specific form of manga, after discussing heterogeneity of text and image, the next level I would like to address is the line itself. Thomas LaMarre looks at the use of line in manga and differentiates between symbolic meaning of the line and visceral affect that line elicits. He differentiates two polarities of line: plastic and structural. LaMarre develops these definitions on the basis of Eisenstein's analysis of Disney cartoons. The flowing plastic line, depicts characters bouncing, changing shape upon impact. LaMarre defines this line as a figure, which impacts the reader affectively on a visceral level before comprehending it as a symbol or sign. Meanwhile, technically looking, sharp and precise structural lines are used in realistic drawings of backgrounds, as well as in the design of some characters, who appear less sympathetic to the reader: these lines also may be implemented is some realistic bodily functions such as sickness or death. These lines, according to LaMarre, appeal to the readers' cognitive response, resulting in reading out signs and symbols, rather than feeling the flow. I will discuss in further detail this theory throughout this dissertation. LaMarre draws attention to how the use of the line further diversifies comprehension of the form of manga.

Frahm, Groensteen and McCloud's formal analysis variously define the intricacies of comics. Manga being a type of comics appears to have intrinsic potential for a variety of readings, due to its formal structure, based on fragmentation, reiteration and citation that juxtapose heterogeneous elements. Spatial arrangement of the panels on the page materially present the action as simultaneous, at least within the confines of a double spread. Reading sequence is implied, yet, it remains up to the reader to choose in what way to pursue it. A variety of visual layers are at play in comics and manga specifically, such as pictorial

elements of characters, backgrounds, etc which are supplemented with text in speech balloons, and other additional information. Text and pictorial elements reiterate and cite each other. Next I would like to inquire further into the relationship of manga with deconstructionist approach in the framework of postmodernism.

1-1-2: Manga as Postmodern Media

Postmodern Media

The aforementioned previous research is not concerned with historical or social context of the specific examples. Goensteen refers to comics' physical specifics, rather than comics as a media in historical and social context. Frahm's examples are scattered across the 20th century: first title is from 1917, second from 1952, and last one is from 1996. Frahm appears to choose examples that draw attention to the form of comics and illustrate the three key-elements he is focussed on: omitted information and the gutters, repetition, and finally text and image inconsistency. Frahm does not address reading practices; rather he is demonstrating a potential of physical aspects of comics in general.

LaMarre's analysis is more specific, focussing on manga. His case study is exemplary of shōnen manga, although he claims that Nakazawa Keiji's work is representative of the essential manga style and basic grammar, which he defines as a combination of gekiga and Tezuka's manga aimed at children.

In his seminal work *Otaku: the Database Animal* (2000) Azuma Hiroki offers a contextual perspective on the genre becoming a powerful paratext that may shape the reading practices. He suggests that the transition from modernity to postmodernity elevated intrinsic qualities of Japanese popular narratives into a carefully crafted system of intertextuality and intentional interactivity. Azuma uses anime, games and light novels as examples of post-

modern narrative structure and consumption mechanisms. He limits his analysis to the *moe* genre [36], and its intended readership referred to as *otaku*[37].

In this thesis Azuma's theories help to illustrate the continuity between the multiple readings in comics (and manga) as facilitated by the media, and Berndt's analysis of manga as a "language" that brings diverse readerships together and facilitates non-linear consumption. The transition demonstrates how the reader became a fully acknowledged party in meaning construction in Japanese popular media, and in our case, in manga. Azuma explicates the shift in reading practices from looking for the intended reading to interactively using the text within individual and communal contexts. He proceeds to analyse how the industry structurally adjusted popular texts to invite such usages. Azuma specifically focusses on the postmodern narrative as constructed to facilitate awareness of gaps and inconsistencies as potential points of interactive engagement. Gaps and interchangeability of the tropes present consumers with the possibility to pull the narratives apart and reconstruct them in their own personal contexts. Repetitions with variations give rise to new readings, while maintaining the generic consistency. The readers may be aware of multiple readings at once and choose the one that suits them, alternatively coming back to the text to read it from another perspective. (Azuma 2000:31-33).

The multiplicity of meaning in mainstream narratives helps to persevere in a competitive climate[38]. Azuma suggests throughout his book that it is the awareness and

[36] Moe genre (named after a feeling of protectiveness and affection elicited by someone inferior) appeared around 1980-1990s. It is a male-oriented genre with overwhelmingly cute (frequently underage) female characters whose innocence elicits a type of protective affection, sometimes overlapping with sexual attraction.

[37] The term otaku broadly refers to the fans, who are dedicated to specific media (anime, trains, mecha and robots, etc). It frequently refers to involved fans of manga and anime, especially moe. Sometimes otaku are seen as sacrificing their social lives in favour of affective pursuit of imaginary images.

[38] [expand in Introduction] In his seminal article "Death of the Author" Roland Barthes (1967) argued against the supremacy of authorial intent or the necessity to seek the meaning of a work while analysing the figure and intent of the author. Instead Barthes prioritised a relationship between the text and the reader.

Subsequently, Stanley Fish suggested that a text acquires multiple meanings as it is read within different contexts. As a matter of fact, Fish suggested that it is the characteristic of a great artwork, when the same text remains relevant across time, cultural backgrounds and other alternations, which take the text out of the context it was created for. Moreover, the text when taken out of the context may be read in a way that brings the reader to a different reading, none the less this reading is relevant to the reader. In other words, the same signs get new

purposeful utilisation of the potential for multiple readings and usages that comprise the value of pop-culture products.

Azuma sees the beginnings of postmodern narrative consumption in late 60s and 70s. He views new mode of consumption as symptomatic of readers' distancing from the modernist grand narrative, in favour of small narratives. On the one hand there are intimate narratives of everyday life. On the other hand, there are titles that introduce detailed worlds that have social problems and characters in various relationships to such world, however, the problems and cataclysms are brought to conclusion through personal intimate dramas of the protagonists (Azuma 2000: 28).

Database Consumption

Azuma does not reference Butler, he is instead following Derrida's analysis of text and speech and the concept of *différance* (difference and deferral of meaning), a theory which also influenced Butler's analysis greatly. Azuma deconstructs the narratives into elements, which may be rearranged in alternative order by readers' engagement with the text. Azuma addresses repetitions, tropes, gaps, and inconsistencies in popular titles as a new narrative structure, which involves the reader interactively. On the example of anime and games, he classifies generic tropes into databases.

Azuma takes a step further by suggesting that acquired knowledge of elements of these databases gradually substitutes the need for a coherent narrative altogether. The reader engages with the elements, and re-contextualises the narratives. The database is inherently

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meaning as they move between the contexts. However, Fish does not quite deviate from the notion of correct reading. He suggests on the example of religious texts and symbolic poetry how certain texts tease the reader with a riddle of "real meaning", however remain free to interpretation ("Interpreting the Variorum" (1976), *Is There a Text in This Class* (1980)).

In short, in Fish suggested that the multiple meanings are derived from the text by readers, who harbour an intention to look for the one correct reading. Fish even notes that the reader may seek the correct reading out of the admiration for the author. However, Fish goes one step further, as he draws attention to the additional meaning of the reader's inquisitive involvement with the text namely formation of the interpretive community, relationships between people are fostered around a text, a text facilitates a usage beyond reading.

intertextual, referencing previous works to the point, when only character design may already imply a variety of potential narratives. The character is designed inviting readers' affect and empathy, manipulating these recognisable elements (Azuma 2000: 48)[39].

As popularity of manga outside of Japan proves, the narratives are open to interpretations also outside of the context[40]. Therefore, the database can be acquired, but also does not define or limit the appeal of manga. Likewise, there is ample evidence of cross-genre reading and novel interpretations through derivative works across genres, the generic texts themselves become more and more complicit in weaving narratives with multiple layers that address different readerships.

One of my main questions throughout the dissertation is how the inclusion of recognisable trope overrides the genre that is ascribed to the text via publication space and format. I look at possibilities of a combination of reading through database, and also reading through a database of another genre via the cross-genre inclusions of tropes. This way I will limit my insights into multiple readings not from the perspective of interpretative communities, but how manga addresses the multiple communities from within the text.

It is a well-known fact that an indication of genre may influence the way narrative twists are contextualised and understood. The indication of genre may be effectively included into the text, as recognisable tropes. Having looked into what manga is, and how it is a media that specifically caters to multiple audience in form and content, I will now begin my main discussion of gendering of the genre and how genres, catering to cross-genre reading open up manga's covert critical potential.

[39] Azuma refers to the narratives within one genre; therefore it is unclear if the narratives are comprehensible to the reader who does not possess extensive knowledge of the database. In limited cases, this mode of consumption appears to lead to dependency on generic literacy for these narratives to become comprehensible at all (Azuma 2000: 49).

[40] Outside of Japan manga is also not published as magazines, but appears as tankōbon, lessening the influence of genre as a paratext.

PART 1 Chapter 2: Genres

1-2-1: Gendered Genres

What is a Genre?

The discussion of genre is notoriously problematic. Literature and film studies have volumes on how elusive genre boundaries are. The general consensus is that classification into genres is contextual. Depending on the goal of classification same contents can adhere to different genres, grouped in different combinations. Genres form gradually and are acknowledged in retrospect, after a certain body of work that reiterates certain elements, such as themes, aesthetics, sometimes even famous actor or writer, is assembled. Accumulated works cite and reference each other. The readers begin to seek out the tropes and citations and creators produce more recognisable materials. As a result, the possibility to assess the body of work as a genre arises. Genres can be defined by themes or narrative types, such as drama, melodrama, comedy etc. Some genres may focus on aesthetics, like costume dramas in film. Or a type of character may be considered a unifying element of a super-hero genre. Each text can be classified as several genres simultaneously, from the perspective of channel of distribution, consumer, or academic inquiry.

Established genres guide consumption, suggesting how to read the text, what texts are similar to the texts a consumer liked, and further also suggesting who will like the specific text. In this context it is especially beneficial to discuss rigid genre division in Japan, where manga, anime and other media-mix products are separated into primarily genres that are defined by the age and sex of the audience.

Gender plays important role in the discussion of genre. In film studies, literature and other media, themes and tropes are variously related to gender of the producers and consumers. Discussions range from which genres are considered aimed at female or male audiences, or inquiries into how gender is represented in specific genres. For example Laura Mulvey's essential essay on depiction of female and femininity in film noir, which paved the

way for further psychoanalytical discussion of genres and gender which I will address in Part 2 as I discuss in depth the critical potential in female genres and female gaze.

Manga Genres

In the case of manga, and most popular Japanese media, genres are primarily grouped by gender and age of the intended audience: shōnen (boys), shōjo (girls), seinen (youth), and josei (women). Such division is quite unique and stems from magazine serialisation. It can be compared to fashion publications elsewhere[41].

> The magazine format gave rise to manga's conventional genres, which have been less defined by the thematic content (such as science fiction, mystery, fantasy etc) than age and gender, namely *shōnen* (boys), *shōjo* (girls) (cf. Berndt, 2014a), *seinen* (youth), and *josei* (women). One of manga's most striking particularities is the "gendering" by publication site and, closely related, style (Berndt 2016: 125).

In Japan itself, while thematic genres (melodrama, historical fiction, sci-fi, fantasy, etc…) are not specifically gendered[42], the graphic styles, narrative patterns, panel layout, use of symbolic elements and many other tropes are gendered. The most indicative genre-specific tropes are character relationship patterns. Female genres appear to include more romance-centric plotlines; male genres focus on friendship, and mostly use romance as catalyst for male characters action.

The industry reiterates the assumptions that biological sex (and sexual experience) equates with certain aesthetic preferences, interests, themes, and motifs.[43] Manga genres guide the consumer, fluctuating between adjusting to consumer's taste and shaping it. Physical separation of publication sites as well as prominence of genre-specific tropes and inside-references resulted in a situation where reaching for a certain title becomes both

[41] The way shōnen (boys), shōjo (girls), seinen (youth), and josei (women) are physically separated by being published in the genre-based magazines is less obvious in the case of translations, when manga are published as volumes and are more dependent on the bookshop's specific way of placing their comics.

[42] Some thematic genres are more represented in male magazines, such as action, while romantic comedies and melodramas could be associated with female readership, however, the thematic genre division remains flexible.

[43] Which is also to a degree allows for the gendered hierarchy to be maintained, which I will address further.

gendered and self-gendering act. Yet, in reality, the audiences are far from homogeneous groups, neither gender, nor age-wise. At the same time, to the consumer, gendered labels can be used to grasp the general mood and aesthetics of the stories, rather than participate in gendered agenda.

Nevertheless, Berndt, Bauwens-Sugimoto, Fujimoto and others note the patriarchal bias in cross-genre consumption, many refer to seinen and shōnen genres as universal stories. This tendency to focus on male genres is visible in works by Takekuma Kentarō, Natsume Fusanosuke, Yoshimura Kazuma, and other theorists who address manga literacy or grammar of manga. Most use shōnen or seinen style as examples of manga proper or manga in general[44], while referring to shōjo manga as a deviation from the classic manga proper, with abstract panel layout that is notoriously hard to read. As I mentioned before, Thomas LaMarre exemplifies essential style of manga with *Hadashi no Gen* (Barefoot Gen) by Nakazawa Kenji: "This classical style is a combination of Tezuka's child-orientated story manga and the adolescent-orientated gekiga" (LaMarre 2010: 288). He goes on to sketch out basic principles of the "classic style"[45]:

> Perception provides unambiguous orientation: if we see a character looking or listening in a certain direction, we subsequently have a presentation of what the character sees or hears. Emotion is rendered iconically for the most part, with a limited range of facial expressions in conjunction with emotion lines (surprise, anger, confusion, delight). Dialogue neatly stitches up any gaps between actions and emotions. If the limited range of facial expressions sometimes runs the risk of conflating different emotions or flattening emotions into a limited set of responses, dialogue at once dispels ambiguity and broadens the palette. (LaMarre 2010: 288).

Hadashi no Gen is an example from the time when generic conventions were gradually invented and then established, the original serialisation was between 1973-1985[46]. Azuma suggests that the database-type of consumption began to prevail in 1980-1990. It

[44] This also results in an absence of actual historical research into shōnen and seinen generic tropes, and history of the genres traced through magazines is not yet available. So far, there is no comparative analysis or historical materials available on genre development and contemporary state of gender division and related magazines in Japanese popular culture.

[45] LaMarre comes back to the female genres and female mode of address as distinct from male genres in *The Anime Machine* (2009), although discusses both anime and manga rather than focusses on manga as a media.

[46] 1973-1974 in *Shūkan Shōnen Jump*, 1975-1976 *Shimin*, 1977-1980 *Bunka Hyōron*, 1982-*1985 Kyōiku Hyōron*.

appears to correlate with the solidifying of generic tropes[47], however, more quantitative research into genre history is needed to truly claim that.

Shōnen and seinen genres are indeed easier to use when illustrating story-manga literacy. Shōnen demonstrates conventional tropes more overtly, placed in geometric panel layout that promotes sequential reading. Shōnen utilises a clear set of symbols, such as motion/speed-lines that reflect direction, speed and force of the movement, pictograms, such as sweat drops, popping veins or ultra-deformed characters' alter-egos, who visually reveal their innermost feelings and affects in a humorous way.

It is sometimes hard to draw a distinct line between stylistics of shōnen and seinen. Most difference is in the age of characters, and related quality of violent and sexual scenes. A large body of work, especially aimed at younger adults and older children overlaps in style and content. However, one may distinguish the tendencies in limit cases.

It is important to note, that shōnen genre is rather dependent on intertextual literacy, which can be likened to the "database". However, as a "universal" narrative it is also one of the more popular databases. Generally shōnen style reiterates commercially successful formulas and pleasure of repetition with the occasional surprises plays a big role in consumption[48].

Protagonists are boys and teenagers, who aspire to excel in some field: sports, martial arts, etc. They frequently have recognisable manga-proportions, big eyes, round faces, iconic costumes/accessories[49]. Character relationships are focussed on friendships and family, while romance is used to catalyse male character's actions. Shōnen titles do not necessarily offer diverse female characters; girls are typically sidekicks, with limited narrative value. Although Fujimoto Yukari notes a recent change in her comparison of *Naruto* and *One*

[47] However, Tezuka, Nakazawa and other classics are still used as examples of basic manga tropes.
[48] This is similar to contemporary shōjo manga, which I will address later
[49] In many shōnen titles character's don't change costume, it becomes a part of their personality and becomes easily recognisable symbol even if the artists change the style, also it is an attractive feature to use in cosplay.

Piece; she surmises that more developed female characters are a nod towards female readership that also proves to be a commercially successful move.

Shōnen titles frequently recycle popular tropes, character types, world settings. References and repetitions give the schematic worlds substantiality and add to the interactivity of the narrative. The characters and their interpersonal struggles and quests hold most of the narrative together. For example, in this thesis my shōnen manga case study is *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* [Circumstances of Kunisaki Izumo], a shōnen manga about kabuki theatre. This title uses kabuki milieu as a setting, however skips excessive explanation of kabuki theatre and hierarchy of rien, conveying all the necessary information through interpersonal relationships of the colourful characters.

Seinen manga includes a lot of shōnen tropes, however, it is much more diverse and opened to formalist and narrative diversity, sometimes even gender-fluid. Panel layout is similar to shōnen, clear and sequence-oriented. On the whole the genre uses less exaggerated tropes, some titles forgo icons, speed-lines or exaggerated deformations. While it is called seinen, and references adolescent and adult males, from early on seinen genres offered stories aimed at wider audience. It is currently the site of most fusion and experimentation in genres. However, seinen manga primarily features stories which will be approachable for the male reader, and imply a male protagonist, while remaining more or less inclusive of the female readers.

Fusion in seinen is sustainable because seinen story-manga does not depend on the database, other than general manga tropes. The worlds and characters are given more depth and detail, introducing settings, characters and narrative developments within the story. Even when there are references to other body of work, the reader, who does not understand the reference, is not excluded. Aimed at the male readership primarily, seinen genre usually follows reserved and clear visual style. On the one hand, seinen manga typically has clear panel layout, less symbols, sometimes no speed-lines or any excessive deformations.

However on the other hand, in seinen manga there is more diversity in linework and graphic style. Brushstrokes, hatching instead of screentones, elaborate character design or purposefully sketchy artwork and other elements give more tangibility to the creator's touch.

Fusion in seinen is also related to the female manga authors who switch to seinen genre as their popularity and careers progress. These authors also diversify aesthetic, stylistic and narrative palette of the genre. Seinen as career step-up also reinforces the hierarchy between male as universal narratives and niche – shōjo. We can see such tendencies with Yoshinaga Fumi, Est Em and others. Arguably, even if renowned shōjo manga authors expand into seinen genre, it does not necessarily open the gates of shōjo manga to male fans of their seinen manga.

Female genres are frequently singled out from an ambiguous discussion of manga proper, and discussed in terms of "deviation" and improvisation. Shōjo manga builds and expands on manga proper, "breaking" certain rules, such as clear sequential panelling. LaMarre describes the shōjo manga as follows:

> […] in certain lineages of *shōjo manga* […] the panel structure dissolves into scattering flowers, streaming lace, or washes of stars; or panels appear to float on wisps of cloud or ocean foam, while characters wearing exquisitely patterned clothing seem to oscillate on the threshold between the flow and form (LaMarre 2010: 285).

LaMarre goes on to examine how this volatile mode of expression still leans into structure, which produces sequence and coherence in the narrative. He notes that his analysis of shōjo genre goes against frequent assumption that shōjo genre is subjective and abstract. He suggests that despite decorative, symbolic elements panel layout and other elements of the narrative are coherently structured, however, they use different tools to achieve the sequence, (LaMarre 2010: 285-286)[50].

[50] For shōjo manga generic specifics Oshiyama Michiko's tome on cross-dressing girl offers an extensive account of the panel layout, character design features, linework and other formal details.

Shōjo genre is very inventive with the line as figure. It introduces many alternative character designs and visual styles, it uses line's symbolic implication as well as plays with the visceral effect various media and line quality may produce. Shōjo manga frequently includes impressionist panel layouts that appear to obscure reading sequence, yet illustrate character's feelings. Even in more reserved styles panel layout and fragmentation are a part of overall aesthetics, and convey atmosphere and mood of the narrative[51]. Emphasis on character's emotional world is reiterated through emphasis on eyes and detailed facial expressions. Another shōjo trademark is elaborate character design and decorative-metaphorical elements, such as flowers, flairs, wind, etc that symbolise character's personality and emotional states. Shōjo narrative style is subjective, it can be likened to first person narratives, and emphases the emotional involvement with the characters. The world and character's adventures become a background for an unfurling emotional drama. Visually and narratively the female manga is an intersection of first-person narratives of the protagonists through extended monologues, visualisations and the use of eye close-ups to enhance readers' empathy.

While there are multiple examples of decorative and abstract shōjo manga proper, contemporary shōjo manga experiments with linework in different ways. The line can be flowy and elaborate or sketchy and minimalist; however, it is always used as a figure, a decorative and narrative element in one. Lavish designs of Takemiya Keiko or Nakamura Asumiko are similar to austerity of Yoshinaga Fumi's or Est Em's panelling in the sense that all these styles provide a holistic visual experience. The symbolism of decorative elements, works with an extensive database of character-types, character-relationship patterns, and narrative tropes. Shōjo manga includes most of the elements of classic style and expands and elaborates on them. Moreover, shōjo manga narratively works with a lot of referencing, citation and homages, recycling popular tropes. Citation of the previous body of work and

[51] For example the austere design of Yoshinaga Fumi, edgy minimalism of Est Em or sketchy style of Ono Natsume.

primacy of characters, and frequent first-person narrative elements may result in schematic worlds used as mere decorative backdrops for character relationships.

Shōjo and shōnen share dependency on intertextuality. Shōjo builds on universal basis, but demands additional knowledge. However, because of the strong patriarchal bias shōjo is seen as harder to read and unnecessary to read. Magical girl shōjo manga and anime offer an exception. Saitō Tamaki addresses how these narratives are consumed by male otaku in the context of the moe aesthetics. While there are otaku-centric works that mimic the aesthetics of shōjo manga with costumed heroines fighting evil, shōjo genre itself generally refrains from acknowledging this very specific audience. Moe genre imitates shōjo tropes but within narratives that cater to male readers with far more explicit contents.

Therefore, although this type of cross-genre consumption demands consideration and attention, focus of this dissertation is on the practice of inviting non-target audience with citation of the formalist conventions which reveal this intent, as Bauwens-Sugimoto, Fujimoto and others note.

Having the basic manga literacy combined with shōjo manga literacy, the female readership is omnivorous. .Due to the industries interest in female fans certain elements of shōjo permeate male genres: seinen and shōnen. So, Muleyesque expectation of female readers to adjust to male genres is gradually changing to male genres inviting new readers. Most research into such fusion of genres is focussed on female readers being welcomed by the industry and catered to, however in this dissertation I claim that another facet that has to be addressed is of male readers being exposed to the female genres. Male readers learn to consume as "masculine" topics and aesthetics that had been up until now labelled largely as "feminine".

This demonstrates the paradox of manga[52]: while imposing gendered genre-division, it undermines and transcends these self-imposed boundaries. Further I will interrelate this

[52] And most Japanese popular media.

with gender of the reader, gender of the character and through it with critical potential that commercial genres pose and how they accomplish it.

Multiple readings of manga that Berndt defines as language that connects different taste-communities allows for a variety of performances within the scope of manga reader, including otaku, fujoshi, cross-genre reader and others. However, when the genres begin to morph and cross-pollinate, what does it mean for the reading as a gendering act?

1-2-2: Fusion in Genres

Fusion in Genres

After 2000 the change from female readers reading male genres and male genres addressing the female readers appears to be a growing trend. Bauwens-Sugimoto elaborates that gendered genres responded to their mixed audience not by trying to segregate themselves, or win back their intended (male) audience, but by completely embracing the situation and catering to the new audiences:

> Instead of trying to win back their target audience, many editors and artists are interested in making sure their works please the readers they demonstrably have. A possible reason for this is that even the largest shōnen manga magazine, Weekly Shōnen Jump, while still selling over two million copies a week, has trouble achieving sales anywhere near the level of its heyday in the early 1990s, when the print-run was six million copies a week. Catering to the needs of their current readers and customers, more and more male artists are incorporating elements that appeal to female readers (Bauwens-Sugimoto 2016: 112).

Many popular titles infuse generic narratives with elements that speak to the alternative readerships, while otherwise remaining within the framework of their respective genre. The following sub-chapter is focussing on representation of gender and genre-specific character's gender/sexuality, as examples of generic titles addressing audiences that are not

associated with this genre directly. It combines consideration of character's gender as a trope with critical potential of manga.

Alternative and even queer readings are anticipated in many titles now a day, some magazine especially the seinen magazines, such as *Ikki* (discontinued) or *Comic Beam* specialise on narratives with elements of fusion. At the same time, major seinen magazines, such as Kodansha's *Morning* and *Afternoon* also demonstrate versatility and awareness of female readership. Bauwens-Sugimoto's data shows that 50% of *Morning* readers identify as female. Tendencies to cater to wider audiences are reflected in genderless pennames of the authors'. Many popular titles themselves too appear to forgo specific gendered tropes like *Mushishi*[53] by female mangaka Urushibara Yuki published in Kodansha's *Afternoon*, while the bestselling Mori Kaoru's *Emma* is a romantic story with a female protagonist and depicts class-discrimination. It was successfully serialised in seinen magazine *Comic Beam* between 2002 and 2006.

Also related is the aforementioned tendency for prominent female manga authors, such as CLAMP, Yoshinaga Fumi[54] , Ōno Natsume[55], Est Em[56], to expand from shōjo and josei manga to seinen manga. Looking beyond the genre hierarchy this implies, these new titles appear to introduce a variety of generic conventions into male genres. Concurrently, these authors address these female readers from within the seinen genres, as CLAMP stated directly in case of *Chobittsu* [Chobits] (*Young Magazine* 2000-2002) (LaMarre 2009: 218).

Citation and Homage as Additional Readings

I will focus on the potentially critical trope of queer/subversive gender, which LaMarre and Bauwens-Sugimoto both emphasise. This theme is linked with *Hana no*

[53] Receiver of Excellency Award 2003 on Japan Media Arts Festival and Kodansha Manga Award. *Mushishi* was later adapted into a successful anime and live-action film directed by the famous *gekiga* manga auteur - Ōtomo Katsuhiro.

[54] *Kinō nani tabeta?* [What did You Eat Yesterday?], *Weekly Morning* (2007-present)

[55] *Saraiya Goyō* [House of Five Leaves], *Ikki* (2006-2010)

[56] *Golodrina,* [Golodrina] *Ikki* (2010-present)

nijūyonengumi [花の 24 年組, The Magnificent 49ers]. The group of innovative shōjo manga artists, who began domination of shōjo manga genre since late 60s and throughout 70s. The 49ers introduced a variety of novel stylistic and narrative tropes, as well as sophisticated plots and eloquent poetic language[57]. Their works included critical themes and topics (queer gender, racial discrimination, poverty, etc), and were the first shōjo manga to be critically acclaimed by male critics, such as Murakami Tomohiko and Hashimoto Osamu and others. Hagio Moto, Takemiya Keiko, Ikeda Riyoko, Yamagishi Ryoko and others are now considered classics of shōjo manga[58]. The Magnificent 49ers brought complex topics into mainstream narratives without alienating their younger readers through creative story-telling techniques that balanced representation of critical topics with entertaining plots[59]. This way they appealed to diverse readerships. Most critical elements could be read as melodramatic twists, securing these works' not only critical but also wide commercial success. In 1980s next generation of creators, such as Yoshida Akimi, Akisato Wakuni, and others diversified shōjo genre further with new less ornate styles and themes.

By 1990s female genres were sub-divided into shōjo, josei, boys' love manga with own magazines, tropes, themes, and styles. 50 years later the tropes are ingrained in shōjo and boys' love. In combination with what Azuma describes as change in reading practices contemporary manga may still use tropes that reference critical themes of earlier works, however they are used as overdramatic twists: sex scenes, spiced with dubious consent, exotic racial element, and drama of alternative genders. It is even possible to read critically acclaimed texts from the 70s and 80s as pure gratuitous melodrama or even erotica.

[57] These tropes were further adapted and reimagined by the next generations, especially after 1990 when boys' love genre became a separate genre.

[58] My insight into The Magnificent 49ers in Part 2 will also address the recent change from celebrating Hagio Moto as the titular artist of that generation to appreciation for Takemiya Keiko and her exploration of human sexuality. In this climate a thorough investigation of Takemiya Keiko's ground-breaking works is absolutely required and I hope to contribute to it to the extent of my ability. Therefore, I use case-studies of Takemiya Keiko.

[59] Some of them are still active.

This brings me to another important point that is explored in this dissertation – critical potential of manga. While there are still exceptional works in female genres being produced, some by the still-active 49ers, it appears that mainstream of shōjo manga is mostly based on reiterating popular elements with a twist.

Another facet of female manga readership related to critical potential is the fujoshi community. From the beginning of the female genres community played an important part, an atmosphere of intimacy between creators and readers gave rise to The Magnificent 49ers, as I will discuss in Part 2. Contemporary fans of boys' love manga appear to follow in these footsteps and are frequently addressed as critical in their practices. For example, in "Theorizing comics/manga genre as a productive forum: *Yaoi* and Beyond" (2010) Mizoguchi Akiko discusses *fujoshi*[60] community as based on equality and communication. She describes it as a support network that granted these women an emotional safe space uncensored by men. In this space they share their sexual fantasies, discovering own sexuality and subjectivity towards fictional men and even sometimes earn an income from these shared fantasies[61]. Patrick Galbraith throughout his inquiries into boys' love and in his recent article "*Moe* Talk: Affective Communication among Female Fans of *Yaoi* in Japan" (2015) similarly emphasises the liberating and subversive potential of community in case of fujoshi.

Saitō Tamaki, discussing fujoshi, challenges discourse of their critical potential, suggesting that a casual fujoshi reader neither reads the works critically nor evaluates the political potential of the community. However, these queer mass reiterated consumption patterns, especially within boys' love taste community as well as related embodiment of fujoshi ontology may critically influence the society without conscious intent on the behalf of the agent (Saitō 2009: 161).

[60] [Female] fans of *boys' love*, a sub-genre of female manga which depicts quasi-homosexual romances between male characters.

[61] However, Mizoguchi does not focus on the novel agency of this community towards so called male-genres, as demonstrated by *Young Black Jack*. Mizoguchi maintains that it is necessary to segregate these women, protecting them from male censorship. She refers to community, based on mutual interest in boys' love as "virtual lesbian space". The participants share, create and sell materials that sexually arouse them, with a goal to arouse another female reader, which she likens to lesbian sexual activity. She further suggests that these communities comprise a new economic structure, a source of male-independent agency (Mizoguchi 2010: 148).

The discourse of critical potential of shōjo manga in the era of The 49ers was based on gender representation within the narratives, however, contemporary inquiries focus more on the readers and their practices. In this thesis I attempt to demonstrate the value and potential of textual analysis. However, I intend to go beyond representation.

Recently, in representational analysis more attention is given to seinen as a genre with critical potential. At the same time, seinen recently appears to borrow from the female genres. I begin my discussion with consideration of representation as one of the critical potentials of manga. I look at the representation of queer gender in seinen manga, and suggest that queer gender may re-acquire potential to be read critically within seinen manga.

Inquiries by LaMarre and Bauwens-Sugimoto demonstrate the value of such approach. In her article "Queering *Black Jack*: A Look at How Manga Adapts to Changing Reading Demographics" (2016) Bauwens-Sugimoto provides an example of critical themes of queer gender represented in seinen genre that is reminiscent of The Magnificent 49ers. Her case-study is Sakamoto Shinichi's *Innocent* (*Weekly Young Jump* 2013-2015); this manga is an homage of Ikeda Riyoko's *Berusaiyu no bara*[1] [The Rose of Versailles] (*Margaret* 1972-1973). A heavy weight male oriented magazine *Weekly Young Jump* even had covers featuring naked beautiful boys instead of usual half-naked girls because of extreme popularity of *Innocent*. *Innocent* is set in the era of French Revolution and boasts decadently aesthetic style, all male and female main characters are perfectly beautiful (even if they were not historically) with somewhat ambiguous sexuality. In this title Sakamoto paired meticulous detail in depiction of lavish costumes and baroque settings of the era with the story based on the life of chief executioner of Paris – Charles-Henri Sanson.

As a seinen manga, *Innocent* is full of action, extreme graphic violence in scenes of torture and execution, as well as rather explicit sexuality. At the same time, the characters are complex, psychologically relatable and invite empathy. Sakamoto uses shōjo-manga like internal monologues and dramatic flashbacks to bring the characters closer to the reader. The

narrative demonstrates a high level of self-consciousness and juxtaposes surprising humour with otherwise dramatic action[62] (Bauwens-Sugimoto 2016: 116).

The author himself in interviews mentions his interest in alternative sexuality and power-structures, demonstrating intent. His female characters are powerful, especially Marie-Joseph Sanson (executioner's younger sister), and Marie-Antoinette. These women are complex individuals, arguably more popular than male protagonists even among male readership. This is proven with a spin-off manga *Innocent Rouge* (*Grand Jump*, Shueisha 2015-present), which focusses on Sanson's sister, Marie-Joseph, who is overtly modelled after Ikeda's Oscar and gained overwhelming popularity as a part of *Innocent* (Bauwens-Sugimoto 2018).

A much lighter example is *Young Black Jack* by Ōkuma Yūgo and Tabata Yoshiaki (a remake of the famous Tezuka title) currently being serialised in *Young Champion* (2011-) a magazine on the borderline between shōnen and seinen. *Young Black Jack* does not have an explicitly gender-queer plot, or scenes of sexual or even romantic nature within the manga. Narrative is focussed on adventures, medical-dramas, and over the top characters. This makes it even more surprising that it boasts a variety of semi-homoerotic official artwork and merchandise with nude and semi-nude protagonist, sometimes embracing other male characters. In light of this additional artwork, Bauwens-Sugimoto suggests that multiple scenes of character's vulnerability, anguish, and torture can be interpreted as erotic (Bauwens-Sugimoto 2016: 121). This title addresses female readers twofold, with implications on official artwork and with reiterated scenes of protagonist's vulnerability positioning him as the object to the reader's gaze. At the same time, it does not compromise interest of male readership. Although characters are aesthetically pleasing within the manga as well, and Jack gets frequent scenes of excessive anguish and physical turmoil that expose him as an object, the plotlines are otherwise typical for shōnen manga.

[62] for example, it includes Marie-Antoinette's twitter feed or a chapter where all characters are performing a Takarazuka Review musical play

To sum up, these two narratives use female manga tropes to address the female reader in different ways. Sakamoto directly represents the critical topics within his manga and even goes so far as to discuss in his interviews the gender-queer elements of his narrative as social critique and his supports of LGBTQ. *Young Black Jack* on the contrary appears to aim to entertain and titillate. Yet, there is a distinct critical potential in *Young Black Jack*. Such titles offer male audience a male character as an object of the gaze. Moreover, they expand the definition of shōnen manga protagonist, which is the most prominent identification anchor. This highlights the second type of critical potential – critical potential of performative text – which to my knowledge has not been discussed before, and which I address in minute detail in Part 4.

There are also parodies and pastiches of certain recognisable female elements, which demand at least partial literacy in the genre, which is being parodied, for example, Mikami Honemaru's *Tsumi ka batsu*[63] [Crime, Flower, Punishment] which parodies boys' love. Similarly, Hirakawa Aya's *Kunisaki izumo no jijō*[64] directly includes homoerotic elements, cross-dressing characters, playing both with moe elements and homoerotic subtext. In both examples the queer elements are ridiculed, yet at the same time presented in a humorous and sympathetic way.

Many gender-queer characters in contemporary shōnen and seinen manga (and further media-mixes) are protagonists or major characters like in *Innocent*, *Young Black Jack*, and all my later case studies. They are interwoven into the narrative, and appear an integral part of it, not as a deliberate parodic citation. It is easy to imagine that otherwise the male reader would not engage with such materials enough for a prolonged serialisation to be possible. In other words, preserved hierarchy of gendered genre division makes possible for queer contents to reach male readers as well.

[63] *Jump Comics SQ* 2007-2010
[64] *Shūkan Shōnen Sunday* 2010-2014

PART 1 Chapter 3: Centrality of The Character

1-3-1: Soulful Body

Character

Manga is a character driven media, and character is at the centre of discussion when alternative readings of manga are concerned. For example, Berndt, Fujimoto, Mizoguchi, and many others note the ways fujoshi [65] re-contextualise male characters and their friendships and rivalries into romantic scenarios. Similarly, Saito Tamaki notes how fans of moe genre consume magical girl shōjo manga and anime in search of moe-aesthetics and triggers for affect.

The character is also central to discussion of how seinen and shōnen invite female manga readers. LaMarre sees the kernel of shōnen or seinen manga that invite the female manga reader in a relationship between characters that are outside of conventional patriarchal gender-structure. He also explores the "soulful body" as addressing the female reader from within the seinen narrative on example of CLAMP's *Chobits*. Bauwens-Sugimoto places emphasis on a power-dynamics between the (female) reader and the character; she highlights visually objectified representation of the male protagonist. She suggests that representing the male protagonist naked or in a vulnerable situation such as in pain and emotional turmoil undermines his patriarchal agency. These are all traits which are present in a character type most associated with female genres and works of The Magnificent 49ers – the bishōnen.

Drawing on the popular conclusion that character is the centre of the narrative in case of many popular media and manga specifically, in the following chapters I analyse in detail how exactly the character is constructed in manga: narrative setting, design, depiction in panels, use of line, etc. Having this extensive list of features for the character which I choose to focus on – bishōnen, I then explore which representational elements of this character address the female reader from within the male genre.

[65] Fans of boys' love genre

I claim that bishōnen incorporates female genre to a degree that entering the diegesis his presence brings a potential to read the narrative as shōjo manga. For this purpose however, I first define what bishōnen is within the shōjo genre, his narrative patterns and visual tropes that are firmly associated with this character.

Azuma suggests that in the 1980s otaku-favoured narratives introduced appealing characters as entry points into the fantasy worlds, which were the focus of otaku interest. Gradually pleasure of empathy with the character became more important than individual stories or engaging world-setting. In this context and with a growing body of cross-referenced works (database), the narrative no longer needed to be consistent (Azuma 2000: 49).

Azuma, Ōtsuka, LaMarre and many others explore the character as the focus and driving force of database consumption. Azuma and Ōtsuka describe character as embodying potential narratives. The character is a mosaic of features that reference the previous body of works. Even the character's design, costume and accessories reveal character's personality and imply his role in the narrative.

Thomas LaMarre refers to character design as twofold. On the one hand, as Azuma and Ōtsuka he sees the character as a compilation of traits that reveal character's personality, however he also analyses the visual representation further. He looks at character design as constantly embodying character's interiority. He refers to this construction of the character as a "soulful body": "[…] bodies on which supposedly inner states, spiritual, emotional, or psychological tensions and conflicts are directly described, appearing on the surface in character design, implying potential movement of the body and of the soul" (LaMarre 2009: 228). "The soul, that is, movements of feeling and thinking, is inscribed on the surface, explicating itself in advance of any narrative explication" (LaMarre 2009: 230).

On the level of panel layout and other manga narrative tropes a variety of techniques introduce characters' perspectives, inviting reader's emotional involvement: eye-close-ups,

shot-reverse-shot sequences, extreme comical deformations that visualise characters affects and emotions, as well as internal monologues, and (especially characteristic of shōjo manga) symbolic visualisations of character's emotions that extend their body with costumes, symbols, decorations and other elements.

Similar to LaMarre's "soulful body" Ōtomo Rio analyses characters in shōjo-manga. She, however, goes a step farther claiming that in shōjo manga the character does not just embody his/her interiority, but character's body extends onto various layers of manga from character to design to background and panel layout itself. Each element of page serves to visualise the character's personality and emotions – to the point when all levels of narrative structure are extensions of the character and a part of the character.

I surmise from Ōtomo's analysis that shōjo manga is depicted through the first-person narrative. All elements of the narrative are depicted from the character's subjective point of view. Sometimes in shōjo manga the reader only has access to intersecting perspectives of different characters, which further explodes the narrative consistency and offers further multiplication of meanings.

Character and Media mix

Centrality of the character, and his/her prevalence over the world-setting and plot also facilitates media mix. Different fragments of the franchise supplement each other, offering a variety of experiences with the same attractive character, frequently dispersed over different media, such as manga, light novels, anime, games, etc. Azuma refers to the interrelation of narratives across media as a network of simulacra. Azuma uses "simulacra" in Baudrillard's sense – derivative materials and copies that start as derivative or a copy, yet acquire weight and agency of their own, while initial version becomes one of the versions. Azuma sees simulacra reflected in media mixes such as *Neon Genesis Evangelion* franchise. *Neon Genesis Evangelion* was originally created as an anime by Anno Hideaki (Gainax

1995-1996) extends over a variety of media, anime, anime for cinematic release, games, light novels etc (Azuma 2000: 37). Henry Jenkins refers to similar phenomenon as "convergence culture" when narratives across different platforms supplement each other, adding to each other, and decentralise the franchise.

Similar to *Neon Genesis Evangelion* many popular narratives offer alternative twists even to the same plotline. For example, CLAMPS's *X* franchise: the *X* manga (*Monthly Asuka* 1992-2003, 2016-present) due to hiatus has no ending. However other media offers two alternative developments for the same plotline. A full-length animation *X* (1996) offered one possible outcome for the events, and a TV anime *X* (2001-2002) explores completely opposite alternative ending. Similar flexibility is shown by my case-study for Part 2 – *Pintokona*, shōjo manga about kabuki by Shimaki Ako (*Cheese!* 2009-2015). The series had become the bestseller and was made into a live TV drama *Pintokona* (2013) before the manga series ended. As the manga series was still being produced, the live-action deviated from original script significantly. Producers changed the personalities and narrative importance of the characters with a focus on male characters. Live-action also resolved the love-triangle between the three protagonists before the manga did.

Some media mixes move between genres, like CLAMP's *Card Captor Sakura*, published as shōjo manga and later adapted into anime, was revived with the same cast of characters but completely different plot-twist as *Tsubasa Reservoir Chronicles* this time shōnen franchise. Furthermore, the same cast of characters appear in *xxx-Holic* franchise, which is considered seinen. Each of these franchises has distinct features of the genres they were published in and can serve as a perfect example for comparative study of generic tropes, however they preserve essential relationship-dynamics between recurring characters. As a result several homosexual relationships are included into shōnen and seinen spin-offs.

All these examples demonstrate the centrality, attractiveness, and versatility of the character that can be extended over so many platforms. The crucial element of this paradigm is that any single element of the franchise can also be a satisfying product in itself.

In this dissertation I take a step further, and attempt to focus on the bishōnen character type as one of the most diverse character types of shōjo and josei genres. After I define basic tropes of bishōnen, I demonstrate how he is a popular citation across genres; and how the bishōnen elements blend with generic elements of seinen and shōnen genres.

Bishōnen and bishōnen-like male characters who are open to objectification are closely related to the critical potential of the female manga genres and by extension of female reading of male manga genres. Diversity of genders that disrupts patriarchal continuity in shōjo is manifested in bishōnen. Throughout this dissertation I suggest that female mode of address manifests the most in seamless transition of bishōnen into shōnen and seinen. I begin with exploration of bishōnen. Derived from previous research I suggest a definition of bishōnen and explore expressive means to trace faculties of this image. I also compile an insight into the way critical potential of bishōnen is discussed.

In order to further limit the scope of my inquiry, I specifically focus on cross-dressing bishōnen on the example of onnagata (female role specialist actor) in titles about kabuki (traditional Japanese all-male theatre) across shōjo, shōnen and seinen genres. Using this recurring scenario allows me to demonstrate the main issues this dissertation is concerned with. Butler notes how performance inherently encompasses subversive potential, yet refrains from direct critical statements. Unlike drag which is a meta-performance. However, even drag and other meta-performances are not necessarily seen as critical of patriarchy. Drag can appear as parody and be depicted in a way that reinforces the superiority of conventional gender-practices. The meanings of the signs multiply and become relational, changing depending on the context of the reader. Looking at the way onnagata character type is depicted in shōnen and seinen I discuss how these specific examples deal with a cross-dresser and depict a cross-dresser's gender as opposed to male charters or female characters in the same narrative. I explore how male in drag references masculine and feminine manga tropes.

I suggest that depicting even schematically the male character as onnagata gives the character most criteria to be seen as bishōnen. Cross-dressing onnagata is a quintessence of being-looked-at-ness. From all the titles I have encountered so far, as well as all titles mentioned in this research in depth or in passing onnagata vis-a-vis gaze of the intradiegetic spectators is a central theme. However, as I explore further, there are different ways to contextualise this gaze and character's relationship with the gaze. As I stated above, I will confirm onnagata as a bishōnen character by analysing the formalist tropes used to depict this character as well as scenarios he is presented in. I explore to what extent seinen and shōnen manga borrows from shōjo manga formalist elements when addressing this particular character.

1-3-2: Bishōnen and Cross-Dressing Character

Cross-Dresser

In her older article "Transgender: Female Hermaphrodites and Male Androgynes" (2004) Fujimoto Yukari recounts a variety of cross-dressing manga across genres, comparing how male and female crossdressers are portrayed. She compares male and female cross-dressers. First, she focusses on the girl who is cross-dressing, because in her circumstances femininity is a liability to her. When cross-dressing the girl is enjoying various agencies that her adopted gender allows her. However, everything changes when a girl finally meets her love interest. Her femininity is gloriously revealed and she becomes subservient to a man, trading her own agency for the protection and intimacy of her male counterpart. After the girl finds her man, she stops her "masculine" performances, and even loose agency she had towards other characters.

Fujimoto proceeds with her negative analysis of femininity by analysing how male cross-dressers are portrayed as super-men. When they cross-dress, men dress-down, as a

result their "flaw" is counterbalanced with their other extraordinary abilities. Fujimoto gives negative readings based on the resolutions of these dramas, and does not focus on the potential temporary subversion of power-relationships.

While Fujimoto herself has long since changed her view on gender in manga, unfortunately she did revisit the theme of cross-dresser. However, even though this article is based on preconception that women are conditioned by society to hate other women, there is valuable observation that I will employ in my discussion. Fujimoto notes that girls move along the agency axis, and costume is directly involved in this transition. I want to draw attention to another popular twist. While the girls are in drag their male counterparts become attracted to them. The comedic or dramatic tensions rise as male characters struggle with accepting that they may be gay. At this stage of the narrative, the agency of these male characters is undermined, as they temporarily accept the agency of the crossdressing girl, and both the cross-dresser and his counterpart do not have a clearly established hierarchical agency.

In a Shakespearian twist the gender tension may be resolved with the girls being put back in their place of an object, by changing into conventional clothes. However as Alison Solomon notes in her exploration of Shakespeare in *Re-Dressing the Canon* (1997), while the narratives may have conventional patriarchal endings, the reader spends a lot of time/most of the time with character in drag, as well as enjoys the changes in the character's gender performance and fluctuating agency.

Largely cross-dressing can be separated into two groups: when character is constantly in-drag, and when the character alternates between drag and conventionally gendered clothes. Each type reveals that character is cross-dressing in their own way: cross-dressing is contrasted to a naked body, or contrasted to conventional clothes. Rarer are scenarios where the reader is asked to believe without any visual evidence. These two large groups can offer further nuance when the cross-dresser interacts with another character.

Sometimes other characters are aware of cross-dressing, but in a lot of cases the enjoyment is derived from the way the other characters learn about it half way through, and finally, sometimes (usually background) characters are not aware of cross-dressing, misled by the "fake" gender. Of course, these three scenarios can appear within the same narrative. There is a recurring tension between the gender the character performs and the gender performance that is expected from his/her biological sex.

First type can be exemplified with manga like *The Rose of Versailles*. Cross-dressing girl Oscar does not appear in female clothes, apart from one moment when she tries to wear a dress to appeal to a man she likes. In this instance however, the design of the dress in starkly different from the over exaggerated crinolines other female characters are wearing. In the end, Oscar comes to terms with the advantages and agency that her uniform provides her, and consolidates that part of her gender with being a woman. Moreover, everyone in the narrative knows that Oscar is a woman, which creates the tensions with some characters but overall is accepted. Therefore we see a cross-dresser who is perpetually in drag and is not trying to pass. Her clothes represent her status and military rank, they embody her agency. Oscar's gender is juxtaposed with her physical sex that is symbolised not with another set of clothes, but with her implied sexed body and sometimes her nudity. Oscar's opponents hold her body against her as undermining her agency, while her father and her lover André agonise that she does not get to enjoy her "female happiness", because of her status and the clothes that visualise it. However, as she herself decides, and as the manga depicts her Oscar's gender is indeed the amalgam of agency, vulnerability and sensuality that is beyond binary, that changed according to the context she was in.

The same construction of cross-dressing is present in a shōnen manga *Stop! Hibari-kun*, here the protagonist is a boy, who for a comedic effect decides he wants to be a girl. Hibari is always in drag, although sometimes other characters stumble upon him in the bathroom or other nudity-related setting. It is widely known in his household that he is a boy, and although his father is always on the verge of a heart attack from Hibari's antics, his

flamboyant and fun persona is accepted by most of his close friends. This title makes a pastiche not so much of shōjo manga, but rather the fanservice in male genres, with constant panty-shots and other salacious angles. While following to the letter dynamics of male-oriented romantic comedy with erotic undertones, it constantly reiterates the punch line, of this attractive character being in fact a boy. Yet, according to Fujimoto Yukari (2004) it became a success with female readers too.

Onnagata characters, however, tend to be associated with type two scenarios that juggle cross-dressing with conventional clothes. The on-stage cross-dressing and how it influences character's offstage image are at the epicentre of drama and humour in these narratives. These scenarios are more commonplace and popular than characters who constantly maintain their drag. The onnagata I look at all wear drag onstage (and sometimes offstage), appear in men's clothes, and have different opinions on the femininity they perform and diverse motivation to cross-dress. The duality is closely related to positions of subject and object and mediated by the gaze.

Perhaps in comedies, which are more episode-driven rather than depending on continuous development of an overreaching plot, the formula that utilises the change of costume is more prominent. For example, *Tamasaburō koi no kyōsōkyoku* reiterates the scenario of character's cross-dressing and revelation of his biological sex in each chapter. Tamasaburō's cross-dressing serves as a special super-power that he uses to solve his friend's problems. The protagonist appears in a variety of costumes from female western clothes, to female stage kimonos to casual female kimonos, and also wearing baroque, lace and frills adorned male costumes. The shōjo manga rejoices at all the elaborate clothes with fascinating decorative linework, moreover, with each costume he also changes his persona and behaviour, adjusting himself to the gendered stereotype the costume implies, and to the mood of the linework that depicts this costume. There are also scenes of semi-nudity (which Tamasaburō also enjoys) when his flat chest reminds other characters that he is indeed a boy.

None the less he is courted by girls, homosexual men, and heterosexual men, who begin to question their sexual preferences.

In a similar vein, shōnen manga *Ranma ½* [Ranma ½] by Takahashi Rumiko has a character who does not cross-dress, but changes into a girl occasionally because of a curse. This story makes fun of a boy who has no interest in cross-dressing, but grudgingly becomes object of desire for his male friends and rivals. His gender and sexed body and the hilarious discrepancy between them give a variety of titillating and humorous moments for both female and male readers to enjoy.

To sum up, there is a variety of narrative structures that rejoice in the discrepancy of gender and sexed body, in most scenarios these characters instigate gender conflict within characters who are involved in close relationships with them, especially romantic.

Onnagata character would be intrinsically a type of character who is portrayed with at least two sets of gendered behaviours in and out of drag[66]. Any type of scenario involving onnagata as a prominent character would most probably use the costume of onnagata in comparison or conflict with his gender, or a possible gender and his sexed body. This gives me a foray into exploring the aspects of character's physicality in media of manga. I explore how the use of costume in this seinen manga in combination of panel layout and linework differentiates between costume, body, gender, and how such discussion which onnagata necessitates borrows and resonates with shōjo manga. I explore his power-position in the narrative and scenarios of his relationship with other characters. I aim to reveal the modus operandi of multiple meanings in manga on an example of reading one title from the perspective of shōjo manga, following the imbedded triggers.

References to sexed body of the cross-dresser are casually used to ground the narrative. As I mention above, they can involve nudity, conventional clothes, textual references to the sexed body beneath costumes and combinations of all of the above. Largely, the narratives use sexed body in order to imply the "real" gender of the character, sometimes

[66] At least in narratives about contemporary onnagata, as I will discuss later here.

excessively referencing patriarchal heteronormativity. At the same time, the sexed body in combination with multifaceted genders and agencies can also be read as the source of subversion. After all characters' colourful genders are superimposed upon these sexed bodies, and reveal new sources of agency. All these cases suggest that the agency that cross-dressing gives to the character cannot be analysed without taking into consideration how the character is contextualised out of drag, his or her power-relationships in both modes of existence and a role of sexed body in construction of their agency.

This gender-ambiguity and scrutinized sexed body are essential tropes that constitute the image of bishōnen, which I will address in the next part. In Part 3 and 4 I will use cross-dresser as a type of bishōnen – a character, which allegedly opens up the male narratives to female reader. In the next part I will lay the foundation for analysis of a cross-dresser with careful consideration of relationship of gender, sexed body, costume, inter-character relationships in combination with tropes of female genre, character settings and design, panel layout, linework, use of icons and decorations.

Cross-Dresser and Narrative Structure

Finally, as I mentioned above, a narrative of cross-dresser offers the reader several entry points to contextualisation of queer behaviour. The excessively prolonged serialisations of popular manga titles postpone the ultimate ending, focussing on the process sometimes even more than on the eventual resolution. Resonating with the overall structure, the cross-dressing narrative spends most of the time with character in drag. In *Re-Dressing the Canon*, a discussion of cross-dressing in Shakespearian plays, Alisa Solomon argues that the resolution is not as important as the process of the cross-dressing itself. She emphasises that in a cross-dressing scenario, even if it is resolved with a heteronormative ending the cross-dressing is what propels and carries the narrative (Solomon 1997: 21-45).

The emphasis on the process is inherent in the narrative structure of most serialised story-manga, with some popular titles continuing for decades. Stevie Suan explores similar tendencies in anime throughout his book *The Anime Paradox* (2013). He suggests that prolonged serials are facilitated by the structure of the traditional storytelling. He focusses on the rhythm associated with traditional storytelling – *jo-ha-kyū*. It starts slow, transitions, and then has a climactic fast part; each three-part structure resolves into the next segment, segments are a part of bigger three-part structure. The smaller narratives are placed inside bigger narratives exponentially. In manga this rhythm appears in the way small climaxes of each chapter are summed up into a bigger climax at the end of an arc and subsides into a new arc, which are all loosely interwoven into the overall narrative without necessary clear end goal[67]. The overall narrative is vague, therefore it can continue for decades, or if necessary for commercial reasons, be ended at any given time. This structure works especially well with magazine serialisation, where popularity is easily assessable.

Jo-ha-kyū is the rhythm of storytelling, the ebb and flow of small narratives that maintain the tension of the prolonged serialisation. This rhythm in overlaid over traditional structure of Asian narratives, *ki-shō-ten-ketsu*, which Jaqueline Berndt discusses in "Ghostly: 'Asian Graphic Narratives,' *Nonnonba*, and Manga" (2013a):.

> In contradistinction to the European three-act structure with its succession of set-up, confrontation, and resolution, the rhetorical structure of *ki-shō-ten-ketsu* consists of four steps in accordance with the four-line compositions of Chinese poetry from which it was derived. First, something happens (*ki*). Then, this occurrence is elaborated on, taken in (*sho*), or made acceptable, by considering several aspects in a way closer to spatial juxtaposition than linear succession. A plot-oriented reader may get the impression not of two different steps, but of an excessively long introduction. [...] For manga readers, the second phase serves as a process of relationship building with the text, which may be enjoyed for its own sake (as the journey being the destination) or taken as a preparation for the shift. The twist (*ten*) often appears protracted, and it does not bring the narrative to a close. A kind of epilogue follows, wrapping up the story without providing any moral (*ketsu*). In many cases, this looks like an open ending to those unfamiliar with fictions

[67] This structure differs from for example reminiscent super-hero comics in US. American comics may go on for decades, instalments can be created by different authors, and timelines do not necessarily align, as some works are seen as alternative universes.

> other than classic representations leading to resolution or dialectic sublation (Berndt 2013: 373).

Ki-shō-ten-ketsu supports the relational meaning construction in manga. The narrative that unfolds depending on the popularity, changes constantly through consideration of the readership, branches out into side-stories and additional character developments.

> Rhetorical structures such as *ki-shō-ten-ketsu* set priority onto the reader's affective participation, often at the expense of linear argumentation. This participatory potential made *ki-shō-ten-ketsu* an attractive model for structuring manga narratives to be serialized in special weekly or monthly magazines, which, in the Japanese comics market, began to become standard around 1960 (Berndt 2013: 375).

Many narratives progress according to the *ki-shō-ten-ketsu* structure, having small climaxes, yet postponing the resolution wrapped in a bigger narrative that is evolving gradually and unevenly. As a result, such a narrative allows the serialisation to span indefinitely, guided by the ebb and flow of the title's popularity.

In onnagata narratives, where cross-dressing is juxtaposed with conventional clothes, cross-dressing scenarios would be separated as following. 1. Cross-dressing is a part of the *ki-shō* and sex of the cross-dresser is revealed in *ten.* Usually, a short scenario is provided why the character cross-dresses, then a prolonged series of events of the cross-dressed shenanigans follow, culminating in a turn that reveals character's sex or resolves the necessity to cross-dress. 2. Sometimes the climactic-*ten* is the part where character cross-dresses similar to magic-transforming girls in order to resolve the situation. In case of onnagata narratives, on-stage cross-dressing is frequently used as *ten*, onnagata rises on stage to portray his role and simultaneously resolve the drama of the episode. The following *ketsu*-epilogue frequently makes it obvious that this series of events may recur. This structure appears in all of my further case-studies, some use both. For example, in the case-study for Part 4, *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* uses both. The protagonist casually cross-dresses for his part-time job in maid café, and pretends to be a girl for various other reasons. However, his kabuki-stage onnagata costume appearances predominantly serve as *ten* both episodically

and within an arc. Onstage cross-dressing resolves main conflict between other characters with an emotional catharsis.

In Part 1 I have created an overarching framework for further in-depth discussion of multiple meanings that are facilitated by a performative text. Via theories of Frahm and Butler I have looked into manga as a performative media that embodies through inconsistent narratives intrinsic multiple meanings and facilitates further diverse readings and usages. I looked at it from perspective of essential form of comics and specifics of manga in combination with postmodern consumption paradigm, drawing on Azuma. I suggested that within postmodern media scope, form of manga fits in and further enables taste communities, derivative works, and above all communication between readers from different walks of life.

As a filter for my further inquiry, I discussed the centrality of character, which is emphasised by Berndt, LaMarre, Azuma and others. I specifically highlighted "soulful body" that evokes character's personality and presupposed further scenarios that character operates in. On this premise, I introduced main focus of my further attention, the recurring presence of bishōnen-like character in male genres, which had been noted by LaMarre, Bauwens-Sugimoto, and Fujimoto.

I continue to discuss the male cross-dresser as an example of bishōnen, arriving at the onnagata character whom I explore throughout my thesis. Centrality of the character's "soulful body" within the genres that rely in storytelling on references to the previous works allows me to shape the methodological approach to bishōnen in male genres. I analyse further how presence of bishōnen offers the reader a focus through which to recontextualise shōnen and seinen manga as shōjo or boys' love manga. I suggest that onnagata as a recently popular character in all genres when depicted realistically becomes similar to bishōnen.

Therefore onnagata[68] does not have to be recognised as a citation of bishōnen from female genres to be consumed by male readers. At the same time, presence of a bishōnen-like character invites the female readership and opens the narrative to gender-subversive readings.

My further analysis follows up on the hypothesis that bishōnen addresses female readership and expands on it through combination of formal analysis and contents. In Part 2, I make an extensive analysis of bishōnen in female genres I analyse all aspects of bishōnen's existence: scenarios, character setting, his relationship patterns and depiction of him in relationship with the reader, design, associated panel layout, linework, etc. I derive a set of essential elements that are more or less common to bishōnen and his function in the narrative. I defined bishōnen in shōjo manga and provide an insight into his popularly acclaimed

[68] Onnagata are male actors performing female roles in traditional theatre – kabuki. Kabuki is a proto-modern theatre, originating in early 17th century. Kabuki was a part of Edo popular culture, it was a dynamic entertaining drama abundant with sexuality, violence, and humour. Historical onnagata specialised in only female roles and tended to lead a stylised version of female life-style off-stage as well, becoming socially accepted alternative gender. Contemporary onnagata are not required to do that, however through my analysis of contemporary media I make an assumption that they are still positioned as non-phallic males. Onnagata gain social agency by being purveyors of traditional art and dedicated professionals. Due to the nature of their performance, it appears that the audience largely expects them to be in some way queer in real life. The actors' off-stage persona thusly perpetuates the mystique of their profession.

PART 2: Bishōnen in Shōjo Manga

Subverted gender and power-relations that defy patriarchal hegemony are frequent staples of shōjo manga, embodied by cross-dressing heroines and sexually ambiguous bishōnen characters. These gender-queer themes are extensively addressed by research. Since 1990s contents and readers' practices are explored from a variety of perspectives by Fujimoto Yukari, Mizoguchi Akiko, Ōgi Fusami, Nagaike Kazumi, Aoyama Tomoko, and many more. Special attention is paid to the works by The Magnifficent 49ers (*Hana no 24 nen gumi*) in 1970's who revolutionised shōjo manga by introducing new themes of gender and sexuality to their young readers.

There are two popular ways to look at the critical potential of female genres: 1 – from the perspective of representation of critical motifs in manga; (mostly related to gender) 2 – from the perspective of the practices of female fans, such as objectifying male body, accepting own sexual desires, participating in [critical] community, cos-play, etc..

I will focus on the critical motifs through textual analysis. Continuing my discussion of character as central to the narrative and as an amalgam of citations within genres, I focus on the queer gender of bishōnen and how he is depicted within the female genres. I define the specifics of male protagonists in female genres and refer to them anachronistically as bishōnen. I look at bishōnen beyond boys' love. Expanding the amorphous definition of "bishōnen" beyond beauty/objectification or age-restriction, I classify the criteria of bishōnen, focussing on the way he is depicted through character design, panel layout, linework, etc.

Part 2 Chapter 1: The Origins of Bishōnen

2-1-1: The Rise of Bishōnen

Critical Community

Ōgi Fusami, Mizoguchi Akiko, Nagaike Kazumi and other sources on shōjo manga history highlight that shōjo genre developed with a strong sense of sharing contents, mutual learning and communication of reader and writer. And from 1970s a great deal of this communication was about sex, sexuality and gender. Contemporary discourse of the community around shōjo manga, spearheaded by Mizoguchi Akiko mostly focusses on the fujoshi community. Mizoguchi describes it as close-knit, based on equality and inherently subversive, suggesting that fan-practices are gradually changing the society in her 2015 book *BL shinkaron: bōizurabu ga shakai wo ugokasu* [Theorising BL as a Transformative Genre: Boys' Love Moves the World Forward]. While this is a fascinating perspective directly relevant to the current direction of my research, and I plan to address it more in the near future, in this thesis I refrain from focussing on reception studies. Due to time constraint, I focus on the textual analysis.

Ōgi Fusami gives historical perspective on the connection between subversive themes in shōjo manga and the perceived equality of the community members from early 1960s. Ōgi Fusami focusses on contents representation, and connects new topics with the peer-to-peer relationship; however she does not do reception studies per se or looks into how these themes were represented from formalist point of view. Ōgi especially analyses subverted gender that shaped the image of shōjo manga. In her article "Shōjo *manga and the "West"* (2004) Ōgi Fusami describes the change that happened in 1950-60s that led to the rise of The Magnifficent 49ers, a group of artists credited with most innovative and critical shōjo manga created.

It began with young female authors replacing male authors of the shōjo genre. These authors, sometimes as young as 15-16 themselves fostered an appearance of shōjo creating manga for shōjo. Initially the impression had been artificially constructed as the industry downplayed the role of male editors and/or the existence of male scriptwriters. However, even this perceived intimacy between reader and writer instigated a crucial change in how the readers communicated with the stories. The relationship of authorial hegemony had been undermined from these early stages of shōjo manga, as the readers felt more sisterly connection than a strict hierarchy. Ōgi Fusami suggests these two practices resulted in the overt critique the next generation of authors aimed at the industry (Ōgi 2004: p 549). The same sentiment Takemiya Keiko expresses in her recent essay *Shōnen no na wa Jirubēru* [The Boys' Name is Gilbert] (2016), where she recounts dissatisfaction she and her fellow authors felt as they took it upon themselves to create new stories.

Ishida Minori emphasises how this new wave of authors in the 70s authors put a lot of effort into coaching the readers into creating manga themselves through various manuals and virtual lessons, published alongside their manga in the magazines. They also wrote extensively on their inspirations, introducing the readers not only to technical manga drawing tropes, but also raising overall literacy of gender-critical and aesthetic literature, movies and other materials. The readers were encouraged to become the next generation of creators, and also to create works that raised questions. As a matter of fact, the practice of readers becoming next creators is still supported by the magazines with a variety of contests. This helps the stylistic commercially successful continuity of the magazines.

Coming back to the contents of the manga, I take a step back to 1960s to the onset of the new era of female creators. As the reader's community was being established, "princess" was one of the prevalent aesthetic ideals for the earlier readers. However, at this complex post-war historical junction, rather than Japanese influences, the princess was associated with exoticised "western" setting. This "West" became one of the most recognisable tropes

of early shōjo manga. The "West" was mostly Pan-European and was popular in 1970-1990's. By the 2000, Japanese locations and characters became more popular.

At first glance, such a foreign setting and multitude of non-Japanese shōjo characters appears to intrude between the Japanese girl reader and Japanese girl-mangaka. Ōgi however, suggests the blond girl protagonist was a manifestation of the shōjo self-image as cosmopolitan, not bound by "Japaneseness," and implied the unification of the interiority of shōjo and shōjo desire across the world. The princess character and her aristocratic lifestyle were at the centre of a girls' desire as the epitome of the universal shōjo (Ōgi 2004: p. 552). Furthermore, many of the characters with light hair and eyes were half-Japanese, living in the "West". Later on, Japanese characters also came to be portrayed in the same colourful way. Ōgi suggests that identifying with such colourful imagery helped the readers create safe distance between themselves and the images of oppressive Japanese femininity prevalent at the time (Ōgi 2004: p. 548).

Ishida Minori observed that the West in shōjo manga was a fantasy, which maintained roots in "reality", and that precisely the reiteration of "realist" elements grounded the ephemeral and symbolic characters granting them corporeality (Ishida 2008: p. 145).

However, according to Ōgi, it was this "West" that in a roundabout way gave birth to bishōnen. It is very important to also note, that Ōgi's article observes bishōnen as a part of shōjo manga with heterosexual scenarios as well as boys' love. The "West" was not depicted as a superior to Japanese setting (therefore America was largely bypassed); it was rather the ephemeral and elegant Europe of previous centuries. The "West" as a space for shōjo dreams did not go hand in hand with a representation of it as domineering or masculine. In the context of shōjo manga, the hegemony of the "West" itself became objectified through re-appropriation to suit the shōjo manga narrative. Ōgi suggests that the "West" was made into an object to the girl-subject by replacing strong, dominant male protagonists with beautiful boys, who look hardly masculine, and were mostly underage. This character type associated

with this new setting truly defined the face of shōjo manga. These boys could perform simultaneously as objects of the female gaze and as vessels for identification because of their visual (feminine objectified) representation. The masculinity of males and the masculinity of the "West" were subjugated to the girls' agency (Ōgi 2004: 546-548). From within this complex causal chain, the bishōnen (beautiful boys) arose, and had become a staple of shōjo manga.

Bishōnen is one of the main voices we hear in shōjo manga narratives – this character is quite versatile. Although the name "beautiful boy" suggests attractive character design, I will argue that "beauty" in this case mostly refers to the gender that is not framed by patriarchal binary, as it indicates the potential "to be looked at", to be subjected to the gaze of other characters, and the gaze of the reader. However, it does not define him as just object. It is not a simple case of reversing Mulvey theory. Ōgi mostly emphasises the suspect agency of bishōnen and rejoices at the male character in heterosexual shōjo manga being objectified. However, Ishida Minori talks about bishōnen as looking, being looked at, and displaying themselves deliberately. Without citing any gaze theory, Ishida explores complex mechanism of back and forth of the gaze between the boys and the new agency the unfixed subject-object holds. Nagaike Kazumi notes an important aspect of boys' love – respectively, potential for not only objectification, but also of identification with bishōnen, both with his agency and with him as desired object. Nagaike also suggests that bishōnen offers another valuable function – distance in times of violence or non-consensual sex being portrayed.

Before discussing if bishōnen was objectified, had phallic agency towards male or female counterparts or any other power-positions. I want to draw attention to a crucial feature of bishōnen's tangible depiction. The novel feature of the bishōnen was the detailed revelation of the boys' inner voice in female narrative; his motivations and emotions were as elaborately revealed and symbolically portrayed as female protagonists'. He was surrounded with decorative symbols and had poetic internal monologues, inviting empathy and identification with the character on the same level as the female protagonists. For the female

reader it presented a new power-position to enter the diegesis, and participate in a romantic situation from various standpoints. The impressionist panel layout of shōjo manga is geared to present the narrative through the lens of characters' subjective emotions and perspectives. In combination with emphasised internal monologues, shōjo manga became both narratively and visually first-person narratives with intertwined subjective perspective of different characters supplementing, overlapping and contradicting each other, while the objective "truth" is highly evasive. Such multi-perspective plotlines suggest the relational nature of reality in shōjo manga, presenting potential for interpretations and re-contextualisation even within the diegesis.

Bishōnen and Sex

While Ōgi sees roots of bishōnen in objectification of the West, a decade later bishōnen's potential to be objectified became the centre of active and critical discussion of gender within shōjo genre. It is safe to say, that bishōnen is probably even more associated with subversive gender representation in female media than the cross-dressing girl.

By 1970s a new generation of young manga artists felt let down by the previous generation refraining from crucial themes such as femininity and sexuality. In *Shōnen no na wa Jirubēru* (2016) Takemiya Keiko states the dissatisfaction and intention to change shōjo manga which was discussed between her, Hagio Moto and others in no uncertain terms. They felt entitled to have themes that they were concerned with included into the genre they associated with. Ikeda Riyoko, Takemiya Keiko, Hagio Moto and others decided to focus on the adolescent audience, grappling with puberty, and dedicatedly discussed themes crucial to these young women, such as sexuality, gender, power-relationships and others. The idea of shōjo writing for shōjo shifted from stories shared between daughter and mother to the contents hidden from mother and shared secretly between friends (Ōgi 2005: 549).

However, contemporary censorship was opposed to eroticised female images in media allegedly aimed at adolescent. Even the absolute bestseller *The Rose of Versailles* by Ikeda Riyoko (1972-1973) was heavily criticised for the heterosexual sex scene. Arguably it was the first shōjo manga that depicted adult relationship and sex. The cross-dressing gender-bending Oscar finally consummates her long arduous relationship with beloved André. The scene is tame and demure, placing the emphasis on the character's emotional bond, rather than on the physical mechanics of the act. However, it clearly depicts sexual encounter. It caused uproar, when it first appeared, and only popularity of the title appears to have saved it from more severe repercussions.

While heterosexual depictions of sexualised female bodies were censored, the censorship had a loophole that bishōnen appropriated. In Japanese censorship legislation of the time nude adolescent male bodies were not considered pornographic. However, this does not make bishōnen just a proxy or a masquerading girl. Rather he became an amalgam of authors' genuine interest in aesthetic homoerotic works by Hesse, Cocteau, Peyrefitte, necessity to bypass censure to talk about sex, as well as out of the consideration that it is beneficial to maintain the distance between the sexual and violent themes and the bodies of young female readers. Takemiya states in Ōgi: "It does not focus on a woman's body and her sexuality; therefore, she can enter it and can be an earnest reader of it. However, a man cannot help but reject a world where men's bodies, their own bodies, are sexually hurt" (Takemiya in Ōgi 2008: 164). The appearance of *shōnen-ai* (later *boys' love*) genre provided space for the negotiation of sex, sexuality and gender. The bishōnen character had been polished as a trope, and a plethora of new distinct conventions had been created around new masculinity that is now a recognisable staple of female genres.

Another important aspect of bishōnen, which is largely overlooked, is that by replacing female protagonist with quasi-homosexual adolescent male also meant that bishōnen started to play both male and female roles, frequently moving between power-positions within the same character.

Sex and its power-dynamics as a theme took centre stage in 1976, when Takemiya Keiko[69] opened her serialisation of *Kaze to ki no uta* with a very power-ambiguous sex scene between two boys on the very first page. This title arguably demonstrated if not created the true spectrum of a bishōnen character, bishōnen played objectified role in it, role of aggressor, role of faithful and supportive spouse, role of unhinged sexual deviant, victim, perpetrator and considerate emotionally available lover. All of these qualities were juxtaposed within the same characters as they moved between different relationships, demonstrating the fluctuating nature of sexual, romantic or friendship relationship dynamics.

Kaze to ki no uta was not the first text that addressed homoerotic themes in the framework of the commercial shōjo genre which targeted middle-class adolescent girls. Takemiya herself published short title *Sanrūmu nite* [In the Sunroom] already in 1969, afterwards Hagio Moto's *Pō no ichizoku* [The Poe Clan] (1973) and *Tōma no shinzō* [The Heart of Thomas] (1974) won critical acclaim; however these titles did not overtly depict sexual content. In 1974 Hagio Moto's *Tōma no shinzō* used allusions to sex as a form of ultimate violence and dismissed it as something pathological that victimises the many-suffering character Julismole. *Kaze to ki no uta* began its serialization in 1976, and was the first female manga that did not speak about the sublime adolescent homoeroticism, or about the dangers of sex, but rather dealt with a variety of positive and negative aspects of love, sex, and related power issues.

Drawing on Nagaike's insight into boys' love, I will explore in detail how these new bishōnen opened up a variety of power positions for the female reader to explore and relate to the theme of sexuality. Positive and negative scenarios were played out by boys who took on variety of fluctuating roles, shifting the agency between themselves and objectifying each other, as well as displaying themselves. Respectively, bishōnen fully developed as the

[69] Takemiya spent 7 years developing a story that was sure to sell, *Farao no haka*, gaining recognition from readers and the experience that secured her more freedom in the publication of *Kaze to ki no uta* (Ōgi 2008: p. 150).

character with male sexed body, which performed both "femininity" and "masculinity"[70] sparingly in response to the situation. New bishōnen, which was involved with another bishōnen, subverted socially imposed roles, demonstrating formation of a power hierarchy in the sexual relationship as volitional and unfixed. Not only have the boys chosen their roles, even when depicted within seemingly rigid relationship; bishōnen always possess the potential of switching the roles, or having another role in a different relationship.

The construction of bishōnen's gender resonates with Butler's "drag". Bishōnen cites recognisable tropes of masculine and feminine, however imbues these elements with alternative relational meanings. Drag is one of the most cited and controversial statements that Butler uses to illustrate the non-biological and performative nature of gender. Although initially mentioned very briefly, Butler was forced to come back to this stamen again and again to clarify it (Butler 1988: p. 527).

> The transvestite, however, can do more than simply express the distinction between sex and gender, but challenges, at least implicitly, the distinction between appearance and reality that structures a good deal of popular thinking about gender identity. If the reality of gender is constituted by the performance itself, then there is no resource to an essential and unrealized 'sex' and 'gender' which gender performance ostensibly express. Indeed, the transvestite's gender is as fully real as anyone whose performance complies with social expectations" (Butler 1988: 527).

Drag may reveal gender as a fragmented social construct with relational meaning. However, such vivid parody facilitates perception of self as fake rather than exemplary. Similar hesitation can be observed in the way bishōnen's gender is questioned by research. Bishōnen in shōjo manga juxtaposes the two modes of gender performance narratively and visually. This led to claims that bishōnen is a girl with male genitals, here male sex signifies agency. So he is an artificial amalgam of femininity and agency. Bishōnen was also theorised as a boy who is "feminine" because he is sometimes depicted as object. Therefore, he lacks agency. These conflicting views are only facets of a combination agency of

[70] Borrowing patriarchal terms

bishōnen that illustrates Butler's theory of alternative agency constructions that can open up and deconstruct the dominant discourse.

In *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997) and *Undoing Gender* (2004) Butler elaborates on meta-performance and its specific agency via Althusser's theory of the subject's interpellation. For Althusser the subject is made coherent by the discourse, when discourse hails the subject by one of the valid patriarchal names. Butler looks at how alternative gender-constructions are deemed incoherent by the patriarchy and given a derogative name, referred to as a copy or a fantasy. Then she theorises how a reiterated "fake" name embodied by a significant group of people gradually gains agency, because of its consistent reiterated performance (Butler 2004: 216).

> How is it that drag or, indeed, much more than drag, transgender itself enters into the political field? It does this, I would suggest, by not only making us question what is real, and what has to be, but by showing us how contemporary notions of reality can be questioned, and new modes of reality instituted. Fantasy is not simply a cognitive exercise, an internal film that we project inside the interior theater of the mind. Fantasy structures relationality, and it comes into play in the stylization of embodiment itself (Butler 2002: 217).

In such a way, when included into discourse of queer, drag, fake, etc, bishōnen embodies and reiterates alternative gender behaviours all of which are superimposed upon a male body. Butler specifically emphasises the physicality of embodiment. The paradigm of the body as a source of gender, at the core of patriarchal gender performance can be turned on its head as the physical embodiment of alternative "fake" genders consistently in a period of time en mass creates recognition in society and turns the derogatory name into locust of agency. Bishōnen is recognised as a pervasive, reiterated and cited established character-type. He gains more and more popularity and recognition and as we will see further, now a day he crosses over into male genres as a protagonist, gaining more and more loci of agency to supplement the perceived lacks. Bishōnen gradually becomes identification anchor for the readers with male body as well as female.

If we look at a bishōnen, even if he is a character type in a specific genre of manga and his physicality is the physicality of lines on paper (or screen), he is a consistently reiterated performance that is depicted as a juxtaposition of signs of subjectivity and objectification. As a result, what I aim to emphasise is that the "masculinity" of bishōnen does not establish him automatically in position of power, but rather demonstrates fluidity of power, and interchangeable agency. At the same time his "femininity" does not take away his agency or undermines it. The gender ambiguity inherent in the term "boy" manifests the fluid power-relationship between object and subject, rather than age, body type or narrative role.

2-1-2: Agency of Bishōnen

Gaze

A valuable tool in exploring narrative and visual traits that constitute bishōnen's agency is "gaze" theory. Going back to the tug of war between the research that defines bishōnen as objectified masculinity, and the research that defines him as the inherently girl-protagonist with regalia of agency (penis is equalled to phallus).

Gaze, the one who looks and the one looked at, subject and object, these terms are widely used in discussion of female manga and gender. It is necessary to give an overview of the theories that are cited directly or indirectly. Lacan, Zizek, Butler use Hegelian dialectics as a starting point to discuss agency as dependent on subjugation of the object. The same power-dynamics is observed in the movement of the gaze between the two. Following the Hegelian concept of master-slave dialectics, Lacan discusses the gaze as being on the side of the object, an object as returning the gaze and conditioning the subject. Possessing the object would destroy the balance of desire, desire can never be fulfilled by possessing the object.

Lacan compares gaze to phallus, working with the patriarchal dichotomy. By being placed or placing itself, the object manipulates what kind of gaze and in what way will be directed at the object. Consequently, Lacan likens the gaze to the phallus being signified by woman's lack of it. Woman, the object of the gaze, becomes the signifier of the man's phallus, she inaugurating the penis into the symbol of superior patriarchal power-position, however, this power position only exists through this signification.

Zizek further focusses on the gaze as being returned prior to the subject aiming their gaze at the object. He compares situation to the horror film with an empty house on the hill seemingly following the protagonist with a "gaze". Both Lacan's imagery of a painting and Zizek's empty house are inanimate objects which are brought to life through the neurosis of the subject. Lacan compares this situation to the phallus, the void agency produced by anchoring one's gaze on partial objects, which create the whole of the object as subjugated. Through this mechanism the agency of the subject comes into being.

Furthermore, the "object" is also a construct, a complex mechanism that signifies the agency of the subject; therefore a female body is a lucrative sight for production of objectified ontology. Consequently, from the perspective of the patriarchal society "woman/object" is a performance that only exists as a symptom of the relationship of a man/subject to the phallus/agency (Evans 1996: 221-222). Without this performance phallus fails to come into this specific "existence".

Objectification of bishōnen and his exploitation through gaze are frequently recurring themes in female genre research. There is a distinct historical development in bishōnen analysis. Although there was a lot of positive response from male critics to the works of The Magnificent 49ers, the research that followed had been initially suspicious of the novel desire of a girl for quasi-homosexual boys' romance. In the late 1980s and 1990s shōjo and especially boys' love manga research, the conspicuous figure of bishōnen had

been viewed as a girl, who adorns herself with a phallus striving for agency[71]. Androgyny and lack of anatomical detail in the more critically acclaimed titles with adolescent male protagonists had been used to assert that these androgynous youths are proxies for the girls. It was postulated that girls cannot imagine a female character with agency unless the girl is cross-dressing or ultimately is turned into a boy altogether. Within this approach the beautiful faces of male characters were popularly defined as "feminine", because the beauty of these characters had been displayed as objectified. Tendency to equal objectification with femininity was further used to imply that these characters are masquerading girls (Ōgi, Matsui, Mizoguchi etc). No less negative was manga critic Fujimoto Yukari in her seminal work on shōjo manga *Watashi no ibasho ha doko ni aru no* [Where is My Place] (originally published in 1998). She sees the replacement of the female body with a male body as the quintessence of female hatred of self and other females, although she gradually changes her negative views in her later research. The pathologising of bishōnen reaches its apogee in the works by Nakajima Azusa, where boys' love and bishōnen is discussed as a symptom of Multiple Personality Disorder as well as a psychological transgenderism of the reader[72].

Early works of Mizoguchi Akiko address concern that gender roles depicted in boys' love manga are mimicking the patriarchal binary, and the division into submissive/aggressive partner reinforces established gender stereotypes of patriarchal discourse. While she addresses the more masculine bodies of the aggressive partners, the androgyny of passive partner is almost equated with femininity

Apart from outdated dependency on patriarchal gender dichotomy, this approach further resulted in research complete ignoring the titles that depict masculine characters with alternative genders, such as running bestseller by Aoike Yasuko *From Eroika with Love*, works by BELNE and other titles, which introduced novel type of androgyny by juxtaposing masculine body with vulnerable personalities and glamorous outfits.

[71] Not to be confused with "phallic shōjo" coined by Saito Tamaki to address gun slinging girls in *otaku* fiction (Saito 2009: p. 160).

[72] For more discussion on this topic see Nakajima Azusa *Komyunikēshon fusoku shōkōgun (1995)*

For example, Ōgi Fusami describes male characters as "feminised" and therefore validated to become object to female gaze/agency. However, not only in contemporary shōjo titles, but already from the 70s, authors like Aoike Yasuko, Yamagishi Ryoko, BELNE etc introduced depictions of muscular adult males. Gradually the depiction of male protagonists divided into more masculine and more androgynous types, roughly in accordance to the two main influences. The 49ers were inspired by the androgyny of Herman Hesse's, Jean Cocteau's protagonists, images of Visconti and Fellini. More adult looking and masculine aesthetics appear to borrow from glam rock scene, especially David Bowie's image.

It is important to note that bishōnen are also not always positive characters. Another innovation that the 49ers brought was the construction of a villain as a type of bishōnen. Famous examples include, Auguste and Gilbert from *Kaze to ki no uta*, Umayado no Ōji in Yamagishi Riyoko's *Hi izuru tokoro no tenshi* [Prince of the Land of the Rising Sun] and many more. An attractive villain is a complex archetype. His beauty reveals him as the object of the gaze, yet his demeanour and role is frequently powerful and domineering. At the same time, the villain's interiority is revealed, and he is constructed as an empathy or even identification anchor through the revelation of his emotion, his inner thoughts, motives and most importantly – the childhood trauma that made him this way, a period when he was objectified by another subject. In most cases this suggests a possibility of forgiveness and empathy through the contextualization of his actions.

For example, villainous decadent Auguste in *Kaze to ki no uta* had been raped and abused as a child. He sees sex as defiling, yet can only imagine love as sex. His sexual, psychological, and physical abuse of his son Gilbert stems from his inability to cope with his love for the boy. Despite being an antagonist, Auguste also is a frequent narrator, providing the reader an opportunity to experience his perspective and relate to his anguish. At the same time the reader is learning to objectify the beautiful face and body of a more adult male.

Commercialising of the genre in 1990s further diversified male body types associated with the genre, although androgyny remained a popular trope. With these changes,

perspectives of the research also shifted. Starting from the early 2000's, bishōnen and his physique is addressed less as a powerless female proxy who is objectified by the more masculine character, and became more viewed in the object of the female reader's desire.

Nagaike Kazumi elaborates on multiplicity of relationships of the (implied female) reader to the male protagonist from the perspective of the text itself, and looks at the contemporary works as well. Her approach is based on Freudian psychoanalysis. Nagaike speculates how voyeuristic orientation of Freudian female sexuality is reflected in the way the reader consumes the boys' love materials. Nagaike highlights threefold relationship of the female reader with the male characters. Looking at *boys' love*, where all gender roles are performed by male characters, Nagaike speculates, that the female reader is not pushed to identify with more "feminine" character. She suggests that female reader may indeed objectify the bishōnen character, or may identify with one or another character (and objectify another character through his eyes), or identify with both characters, and simultaneously have a possibility to read the narrative from dissociative point of view. Nagaike defines one of the main innovations of female genre – a protagonist which does not mimic, but extends reader's idealised self-image, thusly allowing for new gender formations and experiences for the reader herself (Nagaike 2012 117-118). The distance that the male body puts between the reader and the violent experiences of the character further offer a leverage in addressing important and traumatic themes (Nagaike 2004: 185).

Volitional Agency

I suggest that the duality of bishōnen can be traced on narrative and visual levels if one follows the direction and dynamics of the gaze. Bauwens-Sugimoto mentions the "female gaze", as opposed to Mulvey's Lacanian analysis that completely rejects a non-female object. This tendency is visible in the dynamics of the gaze in boys' love both in respect to the gaze exchanged between the characters and the gaze of the reader.

While objectification seem to play an important role in identifying bishōnen, Bauwens-Sugimoto builds her argument about the way the character appearing visually exposed and sexualised may indicate "female gaze" within seinen narrative. However, objectification is not the only feature of bishōnen. Also, objectification, as I will argue further, is not necessarily a position that lacks agency.

Early research into boys' love note a facet of bishōnen the alleged agency of bishōnen. Although they equate it with the implied penis the boy possesses. Bishōnen's agency does not come up in more recent research that focuses on the female-reader's agency towards bishōnen's body instead. The agency of bishōnen simultaneous with his objectification needs to be taken into consideration as yet another fact of female reader's relationship with the character. Bishōnen has agency yet is objectified within and outside of the narrative. At the same time, bishōnen himself may objectify other character within the same narrative. There are many combinations to bishōnen's agency, but all these faculties amount to the same result – that agency of bishōnen is fluid, and fluctuates both within the same relationship, or between different relationships. It is not static patriarchal dominance that is constantly threatened and protected, but a fluid volitional construct that is negotiate between characters and the reader. However bishōnen's agency does not stem or is confined to his masculine body or masculine behaviour. When research denies bishōnen male body, it stems from a Lacanian (and Mulvean) mind-set, that equates masculinity itself with agency and any agency with masculinity, and vice versa, object is always feminine and feminine is object.

Bishōnen is depicted frequently as object, with sequences that may be likened to the way Mulvey describes the glorified objectification of Marlene Dietrich. He is fragmented into a recurring set of sexualised body parts through panels and is decorated with flowers, patterns and other elements that. Bishōnen characters are depicted as a gratuitous spectacle through facial close-ups, full body shots in elaborate costumes, and a fetishist focus on body parts. While this looks like reverse-Mulvey, Ishida convincingly relates this depiction to

aesthetic close-up like descriptions in Hermann Hesse's novels. Hesse described character's beauty as if a camera moving from one close-up to close-up, describing characters attractive features in great detail. He portrays vulnerability of his young protagonists, implying victimisations that he describes in his novels. Putting this into panel layout, The 49rs created elaborate collages of beautiful facial features and sensual body-parts, guiding the gaze of the reader and depicting the gaze of another character looking. Ishida laments that such gratifying depiction forgoes the dark undertones that such objectified beauty implied in Hesse's novels (Ishida 2008: p. 92-93).

The 49ers portray the gaze, relish in the beauty of the object; however, they turn the tables almost instantly, as the looked-at bishōnen may return the gaze in the same scene. While portrayal instances indeed look like Mulvey's description of an object in film noir, in Mulvey's text, gaze is always male and directed at the female. The Lacanian "woman as object" that Mulvey cites, cannot return the gaze. Even scenes of facial close-up of Dietrich's face appear from the perspective of the man (Mulvey 2006: p. 350). Mulvey ascribes masculinity/agency to the Cartesian perspective produced by monocular lens of the camera and extends it onto the contents of the narratives. She derives masculinity of the gaze from the physical limit of the media within a specific cinematic genre. However, the Cartesian perspective is hardly ever relevant in manga as a media. Due to panel layout and representation of time as space, perspectives in manga are inherently multiple, and come into existence between the text and the reader. The reader is mostly presented with several perspectives, and frequently focalised from different character's point of view, already on the same page. In shōjo manga, also the emphasis on the eyes and utilisation of shot-reverse shot sequences the gaze moves in multiple directions.

Lacan is determinist in relating sex, gender and subject/object. For Lacan since only female sexed body can be an object. Object influences subject, and thus has an extended roundabout agency, which however object cannot exercise or enjoy volitionally. Lacan

cannot see male as object, steeped in Freudian direct correlation of sexed body and gender and gender with agency. He sees the dialectic correlation, but the slave cannot become a master in it. However, following Butler, when we differentiate the object from biological sex, specific social category or any other constraint, it becomes a part of gender performance as a volitional choice. This becomes a source of agency. Ishida draws a similar picture, with bishōnen manipulating, attracting and using the gaze of the onlooker for their own gain or pleasure. This situation is also reversible.

Butler rather shifts the agency construction to the mechanism of interpellation that comes from the big Other. Phallic agency is one of the ways for the penis to exist within the patriarchal context; gay, transsexual, transgender, transvestite penis still exists, yet is not involved in the patriarchal hierarchy overtly. This penis and the body attached to it may assume the role of object, opening the patriarchal male body to possibility of becoming an object.

Form a less explicit methodological position, Germaine Greer's observes in *The Beautiful Boy* (2007) on multiple examples that a penis can exist marginally as a tool of pleasure, but not mastery. Greer focusses on an adolescent penis, which does not strive to sire an heir; it is rather shared between the youth and his lover as a tool of mutual pleasure. Greer defines an opening between asexual childhood and patriarchal adulthood in which boys are not defined by someone's lack. In this respect that "boy/youth" in bishōnen as signifying a fluctuating relationship to the gaze and volitional agency is just a name in patriarchal vocabulary that can be expanded to talk about alternative agencies.

Very similarly, expanding from his Lacanian analysis, LaMarre on an example of a sexless/masturbatory relationship of youth and android explores alternative power-balance and intimacy outside of patriarchal values and constrictions. He sees the unconsummated relationship that shifts sexuality onto masturbatory pleasures, while maintaining an emotional platonic connection to the sentient android as a perpetual intermediary state. Satisfaction through attachment to partial object extends indefinitely, and fulfils both

participants of this relationship. Here as well, the intermediary state is similar to that of a "youth", who discovered pleasures, but refutes patriarchal "responsibilities". While agency is ephemeral and dialectic, this "youth" stops halfway there, exiting the game that society imposes on most individuals with a penis.

I will argue that in boys' love despite frequent appearance of penis or references to penile pleasure, this penis is constructed within a discourse that appears to have a potential to escape the necessity of becoming a phallus in order to gain agency. As neither of the boys is "lacking" as a "woman[73]" as object needs to be to present the phallus as a superior ontology, the subject and object positions are fluctuating, volitional and mutual.

Moreover, Ishida Minori theorises agency within the being-looked-at-ness itself. She notes that bishōnen actively display themselves, attracting the gaze, and manipulating it from the position of the object. Self-objectification is staged as a source of agency (Ishida 2007: 46). This is opposite to Lacanian analysis of the gaze of a picture as conditioning the gaze that comes from a place where real gaze cannot originate. The object gazes on the subject from the position from which the subject does not see it, in order to condition the circumstances in which he will attract and manipulate the gaze. He also will return the gaze from a position of power. Bishōnen's gaze is an ouroboros, the cause and effect are reiterating to the point when it is no longer known or relevant whose gaze began the cycle. And the drawing of the bishōnen's body embodies this duality and paradox exactly because it has, to the best of our knowledge, a penis.

The alleged object (only ascribed as object because it appears to sexually perform the receptive role), literally receives, returns and entices the gaze. As the gaze of the bishōnen turns to the reader, again we see the role reversal and fluctuation as the female reader appreciates and objectifies the bishōnen as well as identifies with him and his fluctuating power-position liberated from binary imposed by patriarchal ontological appropriation of physical bodies. Bishōnen's potential to both manipulate and project the

[73] Not a biological woman, but "woman" as object.

gaze is visually represented by the use of focalising shot/reverse shot sequences and internal monologues. Moreover the physical appearance and linework associated with bishōnen, as I mentioned before, if also the same linework and depiction tropes as are used for the female protagonist. I will address this problem in the next Chapter.

PART 2 Chapter 2: Physical Body and Visualisation of Interiority

2-2-1: Bishōnen's Sexed Body

Body as Visualised interiority

What is bishōnen's body, where does his masculinity come from, is it the graphic depiction of his penis, or flat chest, is it his self-identification in the dialogue lines? In shōjo manga bodies, genders and visual tropes are all extensions of each other, portraying characters perspective on the happenings within the story. LaMarre in discussion of the android body of CLAMP's character Chii from *Chobits*, claims that shōjo manga cancels the physicality of the character, his bodily presence, and instead replaces it with decorative surfaces of elaborate clothes, that imply the sexed body and visualise interior personality of the character. Interpreting Butler's theory of performativity Ōtomo Rio alleges that androgynous bishōnen lacks physical body altogether. Ōtomo suggests the sexuality and gender are freed from physical constraints of physical body in manga. Gender and sexuality manifest within the relationships characters have. Reader identifies with the relationship beyond the gender (Ōtomo 2015: 150). Indeed the reader does not necessarily see the naked body of the character, which manga itself is an abstract media. Based on Frahm's analysis one may suggest, manga suspends disbelief however also reveals the absence of actual body. However, negating the notion of sexed body in manga, or the impact that manga tropes have on the reader should not be so generally underplayed. As Butler herself says, cognition

predates physicality, and ontology gives matter to a body. In this case ontology gives matter to bishōnen's body. I will now look at how sexed body is constructed in manga. I will differentiate sexed body from a body as visualisation of character's gender, sexuality and personality. I go into the minute details of layered visual representation in Chapter 2 and 3.

In order to speak about the body of manga characters in general and specifically gendered physicality in gender-queer characters, I will employ Butler's notion of physicality as secondary to ontology. In *Bodies that Matter*, *The Psychic Life of Power* and *Undoing Gender* Butler envisions an alternative order in relationship of gender and sexed body. She claims that due to our attachment to the discourse, physicality of the body has to respond to ontological inquiry within patriarchal discourse to become coherent and gain actual matter (Butler 1997:32-34, Butler 2004: 20). This notion provides a novel vintage point onto the physicality in female genres that is comprised of a coordinated performance of plot, character setting, characters design, linework, and panel layout among other things.

The fixation on the male/female dichotomy is still very evident in the discussion of gender in manga. It becomes clear that bishōnen is problematized or celebrated because his alleged male body appears in conflict with his ambivalent, objectified behaviour. In the discourse of bishōnen's objectification there is a noticeable urgency to somehow downplay, redefine or negate masculinity of bishōnen's body. Male sexed body seems to not fit the paradigm of objectification.

One very recent article by Ōtomo Rio celebrates bishōnen's alternative progressive gender, however does so at the expense of his sexed body. Ōtomo suggests that the reader is mobile between associating with the characters, aesthetics of the title as well as with the relationship between the two boys itself. This fluidity is possible because character's physical body is a visualisation of his personality. This personality is extended onto panel layout, decorative elements, background and other parts of visual depiction. Therefore, bishōnen is not confined or defined by his physical sex. Ōtomo proclaims the liberation from gendered physical body altogether. This logic feels apologetic and in retrospect only

enforces the idea that sex of the body and gender are related, because it cannot imagine a liberated gender with a male sexed body.

This approach does not really pay attention to the sexed body and the body having sex, reading these as pure visual symbols of the emotional involvement of the characters. The male character's bodies in contemporary titles are more and more exposed, objectified and sexually explored as identification possibility. These depictions have a potential influence on the reader's physical body, from her relationship with her body and gender continuity to more visceral sexual responses to the eroticism in the stories. Nagaike Kazumi is a rare author who broaches this subject.

Nagaike elaborates on the importance of the bishōnen's male body, not as a symbol of his patriarchal agency or superiority, but from the perspective of his sexed body and his male genitals. She specifically looks at the penis in sexual depictions of boys' love genre. This penis participates in production of pleasure and pleasure-based hierarchy, that subverts linear image of inserter as one with agency and insertee as submissive. Focus on penile pleasure positions the one gaining most pleasure at the top, it can be the receptive partner or penetrator or both. She looks at the sexual practices depicted in boys' love titles and the feedback characters give on the pleasure they receive from penis-centred sex acts. Such focus on male genitals may seem to alienate female reader, however for many it does not. Nagaike raises the question of fluctuating agency with this example (Nagaike 2004: 185-186). Throughout her book, she ties the body and sexual genital activity to the fluid gender formation that frees the reader from the alleged binary through association with one or both characters and their fluctuating gender traits. Nagaike also notes that knowing the body is male allows the female reader a necessary distance when approaching traumatic themes.

There is a variety of ways to construct the diegetic physicality. Using the fragmentation of the body characters sexed body comes into ontological being. The two penises are established even if they are implied through flat chest or masculine pronouns.

The physicality of the bishōnen's body is rooted in ontology, supplemented with a variety of symbolic signifiers that imply the "body", make it tangible even through layers of clothes. At the same time, doubtlessly the same body can fulfil the function of visualising characters' interiority. There are instances where these two functions are distinct from each other. There are other instances when they are conflated, or are just two possible readings of the same depiction. I will explore the visual tropes that are involved in creation of these functions of character's representation.

Therefore, in order to define bishōnen, his physical design tropes, his gender, his relationships, I look at the physical attributes of manga that comprise it: first - visualised interiority; second - bodily affect. By using Butler's theory of performativity, I define the body of bishōnen as male sexed, and further inquire into how this sexed body relates to the fluctuating gender and fluid agency. In order to do so, I will look into visualisation of the body and at the physical aspect of expressive conventions of manga – respectively, panel layout, character design, linework, etc.

By looking at the body and at the gender construction separately and at their interrelation, I will follow in Butler's footsteps, attempting to analyse how gender, gendered body and physicality of the body are performed in manga.

Oshiyama: Gendered Conventions

So far the two main elements of bishōnen seem to emerge. One is the fluid agency that stems from his unfixed position in an object/subject relationship. And another is his availability as an identification anchor, which is achieved because his interiority is explored on the same terms as interiority of the female characters. As I have mentioned above, the insights into bishōnen rarely if ever make deliberate distinction between the many media which convey this multifaceted character. In this chapter, I suggest a novel approach, I differentiate narrative and formalist elements (of manga specifically) and then create a

tentative blueprint of bishōnen in manga which I can use to identify bishōnen characters in seinen and shōnen manga and to analyse how this character opens the narrative to novel interpretations.

In the beginning of this chapter I look at the gendered elements of the soulful body, which includes actual character design as well as symbolic elements that imply character's emotional states, such as panel layout, linework and others. As LaMarre and Azuma suggest a character visualises his own role in the narrative as well as his potential to appear in certain kinds of narrative. In this thesis I will take it a step further and suggest that such semantically loaded character may offer novel potentials to the way a narrative may be read. Especially in case of manga, which is – as Berndt and others suggest – a part of media cluster, which depends a lot on the reader's interpretation. I will trace how these elements are gendered and how they participate in the way character is objectified or imbued with agency and how these elements open the character up to be identified with or in what way the character may be distanced from the reader. Moreover, I will analyse these elements from the perspective of multiple readings that stem from the specificity of manga's form.

Manga is a more prolific media and more experimental than animation due to its lower cost. Since shōjo genre in comparison is less represented, and more specific, its main media of expression is manga. As a result, female readership research is mostly centred on materials in manga form, with inclusions of light novels and some rarer examples of anime, however this research is very rarely focussed on the specificity of the media.

In the previous chapter I have addressed shōjo manga research focussed on the allegedly subversive contents representation predominantly with little to no consideration for the media. However, manga offers much more than contents and their direct representation. Analysis of its expressive conventions reveals how the form of manga adds layers to the reading, fluctuating between commercial success and potential for critical interpretation.

Continuing with the critical potential related to the image of the bishōnen, I will address male form in shōjo manga by focussing on the generic conventions used to depict it. I will focus on the construction of sexed body and gender in shōjo manga, and relate it to the content's representation. I will observe the depicting and relationship between the body and its design conveying corporeality and when it is visualised interiority.

Visual and narrative conventions of shōjo manga have been addressed from the perspective of generic conventions and shōjo-manga literacy by various authors, including Natsume Fusanosuke, Takekuma Kentarō, and Itō Gō. A common tendency is to consider shōjo manga a deviation from the manga proper, which is defined by masculine genres. Thomas LaMarre defines "classical style" as a combination of Tezuka's children's style with realistic elements of gekiga (LaMarre 2010: 288).

Symptomatic of shōjo manga are impressionist panel layout, metaphoric use of flowers, scenery, flairs, sparkles and all manner of decorative symbols. Character design is centred on the expressive eyes, elaborate hairstyles, and pays a lot of attention to the garments. All these decorative elements also serve as metaphors of characters emotional states and create atmosphere for the scene. Sometimes all these layers appear flattened to project characters perspective akin to first person narrative, conflating multiple points of view, creating a tapestry of subjective narratives. Recently female genres widely experiment with visual styles, visual aesthetic conventions range from extremely decorative to edgy, minimalist, or sketchy. One thing remains clear, emphasis on the line itself, its expressive figural power and beauty is used as an important part of shōjo manga's aesthetics both as means of signification as well as means to elicit affective response. Lines that depict the characters communicate with the lines of the background, panelling and other elements, creating synergy, contrasts and other effects. This might appear somewhat uncharacteristic of the shōnen and sienen titles, which construct narrative more objectively, even when a prominent character is the central voice in the story, the panelling and backgrounds are

aimed at situating the character and setting atmosphere for the scene or support the overall tone of the narrative, rather than covey the subjective perspective of the character on the situation. None the less linework and its combinations are evocative on many levels.

As a matter of fact, genres notwithstanding, trained reader assesses the atmosphere of the story before the contents, immediately perceiving the mood of the manga, by registering the emotional impact of the line work, shading, black and white balance before paying attention to the signification of the visual images or plot. This "mood" and visual style is frequently the decisive factor for reading the new title.

In order to address bishōnen from the perspective of his fluctuating agency, I will begin with Oshiyama's analysis of line as gendered. And see what role the gendered line may play in assessing character's agency, or him or her as object. In her book *Shōjo manga gendā hyōshoron* [Gender Representation Theory of Shōjo Manga] Oshiyama Michiko, while addressing the cross-dressing girl trope, explores shōjo manga conventions from the perspective of gender. As bishōnen is a character who also appears to play both gender roles, the insight into the linework may shed light on the way his demeanour as well as the way other characters see him changes through the linework. Oshiyama is largely focussing on the narrative and visual signification of generic conventions. In her discussion of *The Rose of Versailles*[74], she distinguishes between "male" and "female" elements in character design, that are juxtaposed to create individual genders, inscribed upon the bodies. Eye-shape, shape of the face, hair style, costume-design, form the gendered soulful body of the character. The design is further extended with flowers, ribbons, flairs, metaphoric scenery etc. All these elements are gendered, and convey protagonists' personality in tandem with their power-position within romantic relationship. Oshiyama traces how in case of cross-dressing

[74] *The Rose of Versailles* focuses on Oscar François de Jarjayes, a girl raised as a man to become her father's successor as leader of the Palace Guards. A brilliant combatant with a strong sense of justice, Oscar is proud of the life she leads, but becomes torn between class loyalty and her desire to help the impoverished as revolution brews among the oppressed lower class. Also important to the story are her conflicting desires to live life as both a militant and a regular woman as well as her relationships with Marie Antoinette, Count Axel von Fersen, and servant and best friend André Grandier. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Rose_of_Versailles

character these design elements change drastically in between their gendered personas, and she further notes how it is also fluid if less overt in case of other characters.

Oshiyama focusses on character design and setting, and separates recurring visual traits and concurrent gender-related behaviours into masculine and feminine. Table below is an approximation of the discussed traits.

Masculinity	Femininity
Face: Narrow eyes, less emphasized eyelashes, longer face, high nose, bigger mouth, emphasized brows Hair: Shorter hair, dark or subdued colored hair (brown, dark blond, blue-blond on illustrations), appears dark on the monochrome drawing, limited highlights. Body: Bigger body frame in relation to other characters, wide shoulders, broad frame, musculature Clothes: Masculine clothes, suits, uniforms, emphasized masculinity of the body-shape.	Face: Wide eyes, round eyes (innocent), long eyes corners turned up (promiscuity), long eyelashes, round face, small nose, small mouth, thin brows Hair: conventionally light hair (blond) or colorful hair, longer hair, curly hair, a lot of highlights showing the glossiness of the hair, elaborate hairstyles. Body: Smaller body frame in relation to other characters, narrow shoulders, narrow body, no muscle Clothes: Feminine dress elements, flowing fabrics, frills, lace, patterns, emphasizes the smallness of the frame.

(Oshiyama 2008: 165-170)

In her analysis of Ikeda Riyoko's *The Rose of Versailles*, Oshiyama demonstrates how eye-shape, length of the eyelashes, and in case of colour-illustration also shades of hair colour convey Oscar's gender ambiguity, and her fluctuations between various gender-roles and power-positions.

Since Oshiyama's case-study for that particular chapter is *The Rose of Versailles*, which typically for 1970s is set in the romanticised France, Oshiyama equates femininity with Caucasian traits, big blue or green eyes, round faces, and blonde wavy hair. More generally, feminine is depicted with lighter colours and soft curved lines flowing costumes and additional decorative floral or lacy motifs. The epitomes of such femininity are young Marie Antoinette and Rosalie. Generalising visual impact further, Oshiyama also suggests

that female are supposed to look more juvenile than male. Strong and independent male characters are distinguished by smaller eyes with less emphasised eyelashes, and elongated thin faces, and predominantly dark (shaded with screen tone or inked black) hair. They are clad in uniforms, accentuating angular forms of their bodies.

Oshiyama observes how the traits she describes are unstable even within the same character, features change beyond just facial expressions not only with emotional states, but also reflecting the social functions characters are performing. For example, when Oscar takes command of her troops, her eyes are narrower, eyelashes are less emphasised. Similarly, through reiteration of these elements Oscar is contrasted to the femininity of Marie Antoinette and Rosalie. However, Oscar has bigger shiny eyes, longer eyelashes in romantic scenes with André. Even the shade of hair colour changes in colour-illustrations depending on who is depicted with Oscar, a male or female character. Likewise, male protagonists undergo similar transformations. For instance, André becomes visually indistinguishable from Oscar in the scenes of their intimacy, only length of the hair or hair-colour discerns them. Similarly Marie Antionette and Fersen become even more alike and feminised in their romantic scenes as well.

Another assumption I draw from Oshiyama's analysis is that in the scenes when the characters look at each other lovingly, or touch each other, the sensations are conveyed through the change in design: the softness of hair may be conveyed with strands turning into wind, limbs become flowers of branches, textures of characters body and the emotions they experience are all overlaid onto each other and extended with shimmery clouds, flowers, textures etc. It concerns both male and female characters. In *Kaze to ki no uta*, the repeated panels with hands give the reader tangible sense of character's aestheticized tactile presence. Enlarged eyes offer the entry into characters emotional apogee. In other words, the feminine line is both depicting character's tender emotions, associated with femininity, as well as making characters tactile. This demonstrates that male characters are depicted both as

identification anchor and as and is involved in being objectified equally to female character in scenes of heightened emotion and romance.

By comparison, the more masculine features appear when characters are in control and exude agency both male and female. Such instances may include among other things when they seem distant and untouchable, when they exchange blows in the fight, when they are logical and business-like or cruel. In scenes of action and agency the eyes become narrow, and face becomes more masculine with larger jaw, thinner lips etc, even in case of very feminine female characters who are defiant, angry or scheming. Some expressions became iconic and are recognisable tropes, or even a trope defining a character type. For example, a scheming character would have a thin smile as he pushes the glasses up, his eyes are narrowed in a squint or the glasses may produce a flair hiding his eyes. The narrowing and sharpening of features would be read as masculine according to Oshiyama, and creates sense of distance and agency.

Now a day, explicit color-coding is mostly a retired trope, although warm and cold palettes maintain their symbolic significance. For example, cold and artificial looking white-haired villains became popular already in the 70's, such as Auguste in *Kaze to ki no uta;* and black-haired ordinary-looking protagonists gained popularity, as they referenced familiarity of Japanese (Ōgi 2005: 557). Similarly in 2000s shōjo manga became centred not on an ideal princess, but on an every-day girl, and set in Japan, in familiar environment more and more.

None the less, a lot of these conventions still apply. From more genre-neutral elements such as round (childish) soft lines, round eyes signifying innocence and narrow eyes with upturned outer corner imply villains, tricksters and or sexually charged characters as well as aforementioned colour scheme. To the genre-specific elements, such as impressionist linework and decorative elements that extend that character across background and even across panels. Correspondingly, the gender fluidity of the characters is depicted with softening and hardening of linework.

The modern title *Pintokona* by Shimaki Ako is a good example of classical shōjo manga conventions seamlessly utilised in a contemporary title. It demonstrates how much of the classic shōjo tropes are still in use. Moreover, it includes the cross-dressing character of kabuki onnagata, female role specialist. Throughout my dissertation, I will use an example of onnagata both to explore the male cross-dresser across the genres, and also compare the figure of onnagata and social impact of his embodied queer gender.

Kabuki is a theatrical art form that dates back to the beginning of the 17th century. Its development is inseparably linked with the development of the art of onnagata. Onnagata are male actors who specialise in female roles. However, the "female" in Kabuki is not a realistic female role, nor is it an idealised manifestation of patriarchal femininity. The physical male body of the onnagata and the personal gender identity of the actor are as important as the elements of femininity and costume that are employed to portray the "female." When combined, they produce a multifaceted gender formation both on and off stage, which is explored in manga titles about them.

As a manga character, onnagata (a cross-dresser by occupation) can be represented as one who enjoys cross-dressing, has been forced into it, or takes pride in it as a skill or job. In other words, there is a wide range of ways in which they can perceive of their own performance. This character bodily interacts with both gender constructions, and his presence in the narrative frequently catalyzes and is in some way compared or conditions the genders of other characters[75].

[75] For example, in *Pintokona* (which I referenced in Part 2 of this thesis), the onnagata character, Ichiya, is cunning and goal-oriented. He is shown as cold and aloof, living for his art, and ready to sacrifice other people for the sake of his own success. After he is told that he lacks understanding of his role, he seduces his teacher's daughter in order to learn from her natural femininity and eroticism. He goes on "learning from female experience" for his roles. *Pintokona* presents an essentialist view of "female emotions" as something directly connected to female physiology. Accordingly, it is impossible for Ichiya to understand his female roles without observing the emotions of a "real girl." Moreover, *Pintokona* portrays the onnagata character as sexually aggressive and deviant, creating further dissonance between his true feelings and the feminine emotions he has to portray on stage. *Pintokona* also introduces subtle humorous homoeroticism between Ichiya and *tachiyaku* (male role actor) Kyōnosuke, implying that Ichiya would be the *seme* in this relationship. Therefore, though it plays with gender in many forms, *Pintokona* still paradoxically pathologizes the cross-dresser in comparison to the innocent tachiyaku. Not to mention, that ultimately he does not get the girl, either, romantically losing to the tachiyaku.

In contemporary *Pintokona*, innocent female protagonist Chiba Ayame[76] is depicted with light hair and round eyes with long eye lashes, sparkly reflections etc. Ayame is involved in a love-triangle with two kabuki actors with opposite personalities. Hiroki (Sawayama Ichiya) dedicates his life to becoming a top kabuki actor, after he makes a promise to Ayame in elementary school. Since he is not from a kabuki family, he has slim chances to get to the top without help. He is goal-oriented and does not shy away from using and manipulating people around him. He is under tutelage and protection of Sawayama household, pretending to like the daughter of the family in order to follow his dream. While he is not a villain, he is portrayed as devious and sexually aggressive. He is visualised as tall blond, with athletic thin body, which is showcased on many occasions. He has sleek hair with a fringe. Ichiya is frequently depicted looking from under his fringe with a sly smile. His eyes are narrow, with raised outer corners - a typical convention of sexually devious character. He is also wearing glasses, that represent him as intellectual, yet scheming. Throughout the whole series he is sometimes addressed as "*do esu megane*", "super-sadistic-glasses", as a meta-reference to the visual trope. He is similar to the role-type of sympathetic devious genius, and *Pintokona* does not really attempt to break the mould.

Another romantic interest is Kawamura Kyōnosuke, a hereditary kabuki actor who lost his motivation. Ayame supports him and leads him to becoming a good actor. Visually he is depicted as typical naïve positive character. He has dark unruly hair with some strands sticking out, rounded dark eyes, less sophisticated, yet attractive features, with a wide smile. His character fits with the visuals. Initially, he appears arrogant, to hide his boyish insecurity. He is kind and honest. He is also a virgin, and although he is also shown in various stages of undress, he is shy about showing his body when someone is really looking.

When addressing formal conventions of the character's body, research pays special attention to the reiterated elements that are categorised into the database of character types.

[76] Reference to famous 17th-18th century onnagata Yoshizawa Ayame I. See more in Part 3

In this respect Thomas LaMarre utilises previous theories by Ōtsuka Eiji, Azuma Hiroki and others and introduces a concept of a "soulful body", initially derived from Azuma's database theory. Following Ōtsuka Eiji, who talks about references and citations in Japanese popular products that evoke whole narratives through the design of a character and how this characters inner states are further conveyed through movement, functions of the costume, panel layout, symbols and other visual elements that both symbolise and affectively covey character's personality. All these elements are recognisable within the scope of generic tropes. Azuma Hiroki theorises how the database reliant narrative construction is a new type of consumption that includes the reader as a co-creator of the contents of the canon narrative as well as suggests further derivative products. LaMarre elaborates and adds to the construction and functions of the "soulful body. He suggests that character design is a combination of recognisable elements, hair, costume, colour-scheme, in this context, Oshiyama's division of male and female trait also falls into database concept. Character designs visually imply a significant portion of character's possible background, personality and role in the story. Depending on the genre, character design plays bigger or lesser role. In shōnen manga the character settings can be limited and formulaic, character design references database and thus adds potentials to the character, which fans further re-contextualise into characters' relationship dynamics, sometimes further translating this potential into derivative materials.

In shōjo manga, character design and character setting frequently matter more than world-setting, plot and backgrounds becoming secondary to the emotional drama. In these cases again, database references previous body of work and both fills the gaps, as well as suggests further avenues for fan-practices. This is not to say that seinen genre, which frequently presents much more complex plots and world-settings does not utilise the database elements, as we will see. However, it also allows for the elements from other genres to be successfully integrated through thoroughly establishing stable causal relationships in

the narrative. In this way titles like, *Chobits*, *Mushishi*, *Kabukumon* and others which I will discuss as fusion genres, remain coherent for multiple audiences.

I will analyse visual signification of these "soulful bodies" as ontology that make these drawn physical bodies tangible for the reader, approximating physical experiences, so that the readers viscerally participate in their pain, arousal or feel the touch and the smell of these bodies through interplay of cognitive clues and more subtle visual triggers such as line work and panel layout.

2-2-2: Linework and Physicality in Manga

Shōnen Conventions in Shōjo

In story-manga predominantly characters age, get hurt, and even die; their bodies are subjected to variety of changes, which the reader may empathise with on different levels. While there is an established notion that male bodies were used as barriers between the sexual violence and the female reader, I would like to suggest to pay closer attention to the way the body of the character performs two roles, a stylised depiction of the character's physical form, and depicted body as visualisation of character's interiority within the specific media of manga. Both actual depiction and mode of reading can move between these two functions. As a result the reader can identify with character's feelings and physical experiences, however also depictions can create distance and interrupt identification. As an example I suggest looking at the frequently reiterated postulate that male body of bishōnen gives female reader necessary distance approaching violent or sexually dubious themes.

"Soulful body" dangerously leans towards dismissing the character's body as a reference to physical existence. While indeed character's body can represent his personality, his role in the narrative, possible relationships etc. This body can relate the character to a

specific genre and ultimately manga as a media. However, it still remains a form that is created to make the reader recognise and emphasise with character as a physical being. What I would like to propose is that the physicality is not inherently absent in manga, "soulful bodies", character design and setting create a powerful sign to recognise and empathise with.

Ōtomo adds symbolic decorative elements and even panel layout and backgrounds as extension of the character that conveys characters emotional states symbolically or through atmosphere. From the interaction of three elements of character's body, clothes, and supplemental decorations, interiority is embodied and visualised in physical elements of manga. However, clothes or backgrounds have also a potential to situate the character in certain scenario, epoch etc. If fact this is how Ishida contextualises them, she suggests that in early shōjo manga the precision in costume, architecture, interior details, scenery was what grounded ephemeral characters in physical reality, allowing the reader to feel their physical presence. These two functions don't have to necessary contradict one another, and both need to be acknowledged. Even is shōjo manga frequently is told from first person perspective, and backgrounds, clothes etc can be depicted as character's subjective view, they ca extend the character and simultaneously give the reader a sense of character's physical environment and experiences.

I focus largely on the costume. In case of cross-dresser, the costume plays a major role both in the visualisation of character's interiority, but also enhances character's physical presence, fluctuating between various diegetic function.

There are incomparably fewer examples of male cross-dressing in shōjo-manga than of female cross-dressing, which is established as a recognisable trope. Although bishōnen characters frequently skirt the borders of cross-dressing, blurring the lines with their elaborate costumes and the lines of their costumes as both aesthetic and symbolic extension of their bodies, however they rarely cross the threshold completely. Bishōnen wear clothes with ruffles, lace, elaborate patterns and soft pastel colours, which Oshiyama ascribed to the

indicators of the femininity. However, by and large all these exotic or historical designs remain within the boundaries of male attire.

I continue my exploration of what bishōnen is and look at several examples, starting with *Kaze to ki no uta* by Takemiya Keiko, one of the bishōnen-centric classic titles that defined the character-type as we know him today. Takemiya Keiko mentions in her seminars how unnatural the static decorative male characters seemed to her. She borrowed shōnen manga tropes, such as speed-lines and dynamic motions to give physical masculine presence to her boys. A combination of shōnen action tropes and decorative shōjo tropes rendered her bishōnen as viscerally tangible as boys, emotionally opened to identification, and at the same time accessible as objects. Similar sentiment is expressed by Ikeda Ryoko in Oshiyama's book. Respectively, Ikeda Ryoko felt the need to study human anatomy and body in motion in order to depict the physicality of military action. She conflated realistic depiction of action with gekiga. She later went on to call herself gekiga-artist and referred to *The Rose of Versailles* as gekiga on the premises of drawing style and emphasis on the physical action. Taking into account such development, stylistic differences between male and female lines within shōjo manga could be related to the borrowings from shōnen manga when depicting male characters more realistically and physically tangible.

While *Kaze to ki no uta* does not emphasise the significance of the clothes directly, visually Takemiya's characters are distinctly separated with the clothes they wear and how they wear them into: decadent, equalled with gender fluid; and gender-"appropriate", oftentimes synonymous to virtuous. In this way, tragic sexual deviants Auguste and Gilbert wear flowing gowns, Greek togas, baroque shirts with lace collars and bell-sleeves, they are followed closely by (psychologically damaged) Rosmarine. Down to earth positive characters such as Serge, Carl, Serge's father wear simple every-day clothes without special adornments. Asexual Pasqual wears ill-fitting suits. And decadent hedonistic artist Bonnard - Gilbert's unfortunate first sexual partner, appears frequently in heavy embellished fur coats

and hats that look borrowed from an image of flamboyant excess reminiscent of Slavic aristocracy.

Taking a closer look at how the clothes translate into linework, Gilbert in *Kaze to ki no uta* is a good example of such gender, fashion and line-work juxtaposition. His body flows out of a naked form into a flurry of curly hair, extended with endless ruffles of his baroque shirts and further fused with backgrounds through gusts of wind, that turn his hair, his limbs and clothes into elaborate patterns and flowers. While at school Gilbert mostly wears uniform with shirts undone pooling in soft folds around him, with his neck ribbon flying after him in smooth extended line. In his leisure time he is dressed up or is dressing himself up in the most elaborate frilly shirts sometimes forgoing pants altogether. His eccentric lovers dress him us as Greek deity in togas and sandals. His nudity also is a frequent recurring motif, either hinted at with dishevelled clothes or depicted directly, while his limbs and hair transforms into flowers and gusts of winds. However he does not cross the line into cross-dressing, the line is blurred with the expressive linework of the frills that appear to extend his decadent and sensual nature.

However, Gilbert and *Kaze to ki no uta* encompass masculinity on another level. Character's movements are accelerated with speed lines, the boys are shown gesturing wildly, running in the hallways, getting into fights etc. In other words, as Takemiya Keiko explains, she borrowed a variety of shōnen manga tropes in order to create an active, masculine/boyish behaviour with shōnen manga tropes. Movements and speed lines, behaviour itself and depiction of behaviour are in contrast to the decorous exterior of Gilbert and other bishōnen in the title. The slow-motions, close-ups and other embellished accents on Gilbert's ethereal beauty are depicted from the point of view of the onlooker combined with Gilbert actively displaying himself. However, Gilbert's boyish character frequently contrasts with his beauty. *Kaze to ki no uta* combines objectifying perspective that fragments and displays Gilbert in static poses with dynamic movement of boyishness and closeness to nature inherent in Gilbert's character. Gilbert's agency is non-static and volitional.

To make the manga even more physically tangible Takemiya Keiko uses special trope, not only the close-ups of the eyes inviting us into the character's interiority, but multiple recurring close-ups of the hands, that suggest tactile and physical presence of the characters, weather he is touching various surfaces of his environment of he is touching and is touched by other characters. Additionally, Takemiya Keiko and the rest of the 49ers meticulously studies and replicated European buildings, cities, furniture and other elements to make the backgrounds realistic and give further weight and tangibility to the characters and their environment.

By comparison the actual male cross-dressing manga of the same period *Tamasaburō koi no kyōsōkyoku* by Kishi Yūko[77] is reliant only on the shōjo manga conventions of the time to depict the cross-dressing protagonist(s) and in comparison appears static and decorative. The backgrounds are mostly replaced with decorations of flowers and sparkles, among which characters float, seemingly without touching the ground. The protagonist Tamasaburō is a specialist in Japanese traditional dance, *nihonbuyō*. Tamasaburō cross-dresses for his art, and also casually because he finds delight in elaborate costumes. The title utilises a variety of gender-bending scenarios: such as cross-dressing, homosexual innuendo, gay bars, SM etc. It combines a variety of gender-queer references, such as Tamasaburō, references the famous onnagata performer Bando Tamasaburō V, while another beautiful boy is called Akihiro, in honour of the prominent cross-dresser and performer Miwa Akihiro, other references include famous fictional onnagata Yukinojō and historical figures, such as Amakusa Shirō and many others. Unlike cross-dressing heroines of the same time-period who sacrificed their femininity to fight for some cause or escape complicated fate through cross-dressing, Tamasaburō does not have a drama around his gender-bending. In different comedic scenarios he and other flamboyant bishōnen characters enjoy cross-dressing and attracting everyone's attention. Frequently it is directly shown that they enjoy the power their beauty holds over men and women alike.

[77] Originally published 1978-1985 in *Besatsu Shōjo Komikku*

In this title protagonist and other bishōnen characters are constructed as even more decorative and ethereal than the female characters. Tamasaburō appears as a series of splash pages, full body costume expositions and facial close-ups, but he hardly ever really moves. This title is full of talking emotional heads and exposition of countless elaborate gowns, kimono and jewellery. Tamasaburō is immobilised in the frames, completely displayed, even the dance scenes do not really recreate the moving body instead depicting a string of static beautiful poses superimposed on one another as collages on single page without panel frames. These poses demonstrate beauty of kimono or character's face or his elegant bodyline, but forgo the smooth, languid movement and significant muscle strain of actual nihnbuyō (Kishi 2010: Vol 3 90; 156). Bishōnen in this title are watched by girls and the reader is invited to participate too. No matter what Tamasaburō does he is displayed as a spectacle, and displays himself as a spectacle. Tamasaburō is both Ōgi's objectified masculinity and Ishida's object manipulating the onlooker.

Oshiyama genders elements of the character, even going so far as to gender the linework and colour scheme or ratio of black and white. Her analysis can benefit from combining it with LaMarre's differentiation of line in manga. LaMarre goes further taking physicality of manga itself beyond signification. Manga itself possesses corporeality that pre-empts signification. LaMarre analyses visceral interaction of the reader with the line as figure informs the reader's relationship to the character on a level of bodily response. He does not gender the line in his article; however, he divides the lines into sign and figure. Sign is a type of line that conveys the meaning with least attention to the line itself. Figure is the type of line that stands out on itself, impacts the reader on a visceral level, before it conveys a meaning. These two lines are not necessarily strictly divided, however LaMarre explore the limit cases and potential for merging of these two lines. I further suggest that these two levels of impact may also be two functions of the same line, or even two ways of reading.

He differentiates this from symbolic functions of the line. When line is a symbol, it embodies a variety of bodily experiences that the reader can empathise with. Aging, pain,

sickness, sexual arousal, senses of touch, smell etc. The absence of physical "body" is replenished with the powerful impulse of ontology[78] in combination with visceral response to figurative line.

By combining Oshiyama's analysis of gendered lines with LaMarre's consideration of line as a sign and line as form, I further analyse which line is associated with position of a subject and position of object. Then I analyse what lines help the reader to identify or create a distance between the reader and the event depicted in manga. I will therefore use this approach to create a portrait of bishōnen's "soulful body". I explore his functions of identification, objectification, dissociation from the point of view of his depictions via line and paneling. I explore how line renders his interiority through his body and how his physical sexed body is conveyed.

Part 2 Chapter 3: Plastic Line and Structural Line: Interiority and Corporeality

2-3-1: Plastic Line and Structural Line: Cognition and Affect

Plastic and Structural Lines

In his article "Manga Bomb: between the lines of Barefoot Gen" (2010) LaMarre inquires beyond signification, exploring affective response and influence of the visual elements of manga, specifically the lines. I look into the visual components of manga, and at the way meanings are multiplied between various levels, such as signification or affect. I will combine the motif of male cross-dressing and gender bending with insight into the development of generic tropes in shōjo manga. To do that I will look at the line work of the

[78] Butler's discussion of primacy of ontology to the physical body, making the physical coherent within the discourse. In other words, the physicality of the body being performed and reinterpreted within the contexts of inquiry in order to come into being for those who are sharing the discourse (Butler 2007: 217).

male characters in shōjo manga on the example of *Kaze to ki no uta*, as the title that introduced most of the tropes used now a days, *Tamasaburō koi no kyōsōkyoku* to approach the early shōjo manga image of cross-dressing bishōnen, and finally I will compare it to the contemporary work *Pintokona,* that combines both consistency of generic tropes and cross-dressing motif as well as being a very successful contemporary shōjo manga[79]. On the example of these titles I would like to look into the established aesthetic and signification continuity of shōjo manga tropes.

Thomas LaMarre explores the direct impact of visual conventions, such as figural force of the lines prior to the comprehension of the contents: "the stroke doesn't need form to have a figural force. A line is an incipient figure. It doesn't have to be subordinated to a form in order to exert an effect (LaMarre 2010: 277). "

He divides the lines into plastic and structural. The plastic line, he also refers to as the "cartoon line" is self-sufficient figure that generates meaning and produces affective impact that precedes recognition of the contents, even when taken out of its' context: "[...] the plasticity of the cartoon line tends to keep open the play between different levels of synthesis, such that we see and feel its dynamics across levels. The structural line is subjugated to signification and conveys the contents as directly a possible, without drawing attention to the line itself: the structural line encourages a subordination of lines to forms, and forms to structures (icon to signification, and time to space)" (LaMarre 2010: 276).

LaMarre differentiates these lines as follows:

THE PLASTIC LINE	**THE STRUCTURAL LINE**
LEVEL 1:	
The cartoon line (and calligraphic line)	The ruled line
Point between two lines	Line between two points
Non-Euclidean	Euclidean
LEVEL 2:	
Figure	Form
Form of expression	Form of content

[79] It was made into a live action with endorsement of Shochiku in 2013

Character	Panel
LEVEL 3:	
Differential	Structure
Timing, rhythm	Genre
Affect	Action, emotion
Fabulation	Representation1
Disjunctive synthesis	Conjunctive synthesis

(LaMarre 2010: 285)

The term "plasticity/plastic line" is derived from Sergei Eisenstein's analysis of Disney's animated animals. Plastic signifies the ability of characters to visualise life-force by transcending their own physical barriers as well as the physical barriers of others. When being impacted, they spring back, their body freely changes shape in visual response to outside factors. Ultimately, plasticity represents life-force and immortal body of the character throughout the duration of the narrative or in a concrete situation.

LaMarre focusses on mortality and immortality, and analyses Nakazawa Keiji's *Hadashi no Gen*, by comparing graphic depictions of two types of violence: acceptable and unacceptable violence. The "acceptable violence": punitive violence in the family, children play-fighting, even Gen's anger at the war, state and powers of exploitation, is contrasted to the "unacceptable pure violence" of war, war-machines, and atomic bomb. In the first case, the reader knows that these blows don't hurt and will not damage the character, the character's body becomes softer, lines are rounded, the character literally bounces back. Acceptable violence is depicted through plastic lines that embody the immortal life-force.

> Immortality of the protagonist Gen, his life-force is conflicted with pure destructive, pointless violence of the atomic blast, war machines, and dying bodies of the radiation victims. The structural line conveys mortality, as they constrict the form, yet lack in figural power in on themselves. They convey fragility of the form that is devoid of transformative elastic potential (LaMarre 2010: 280-282).

Formalist criteria for structural lines are less obvious, LaMarre starts with ruled lines of the panel layout that frame and structure the narrative as a limit case of structural line. He then, brings into discussion Otsuka Eiji's analysis of the precision and realism as subjugated to conveying the form in depiction of the machinery and robots. These realistically depicted

devices as well as architecture convey physical presence of the depicted object, and imply fragility and mortality as well as destructive potential. In character design, he separates rectilinear design of military-related adults likening it to the machinery and its destructive power, a trope that is familiar throughout genres. Finally LaMarre extends definition of structural line onto liquefied depictions of victims of the nuclear blast. The bodies of disintegrating victims, are not geometrical, however the sketchy shading, and detailing highlights and constrains their form, respectively, disintegrating dying form that cannot bounce back. The form devoid of its transformative power visualises victims as mere husks made of human flesh, driven by nothing more than physical suffering. They are indeed soulless bodies.

Especially in the scenes where Gen is depicted next to the victims, the contrast of his light wholesome roundness, and messy, darkly shaded, decomposing bodies of the dying victims is stark. By means of this contrast, Gen's immortality is even more tangible. Bouncy and transformative lines of his design appear to convey Gen's life force visually. However, does it automatically mean that the walking dead atomic bomb victims do not viscerally impact the reader as a form, or that the sharpness of the villains face does not convey discomfort that his dubious character reinforces? Further I will look into this question. If immortal bouncy life-force produces an empathic response in the reader, the sharpness may figurally convey antipathy, while a sense of lifelessness exuded by the disintegrating victims certainly makes a very vivid uncanny impact.

If one separates the lines in lieu of LaMarre's discussion of "soulful body", I would like to suggest relating "life-force" and "figural" force that LaMarre identifies to the interiority of Gen, and further to the "soul" of the "soulful body".

In this context, the victims of the blast have no more "soul", they have no interiority, no personality, they are meta-soulless bodies, hardly counting as separate "characters", they appear like uniform manifestation of instinctual suffering. However, while they lack their individual souls the minute detailing on their bodies focusses reader's attention on the

materiality of flesh and physical suffering. They should be seen as parts of the background that convey the horror and despair as well as highlight the miraculous unscathed survival of Gen. The affect that the reader feels towards figural force of the line, overlaps with comprehension of the disfigured human flesh. Another important element is the absence of eyes (mirrors of the souls) that give us inkling that these forms should not be perceived as characters, rather as a part of realistic background on which safe character of Gen anchors identification, and allows the reader to participate from the position of safety. The suffering is placed on the body, these characters are not created to empathise with the torment of their "soul". This depiction creates distance between reader and the trauma of the bombing, while being able to reconstruct the tragedy in realistic detail.

LaMarre amends this contradiction himself in his brief mention of shōjo manga panel designs: "These two tendencies that I have established on the basis of the line are limit cases, which never appear in pure form" (LaMarre 2010: 285).

Merger of plasticity and structurality could be further elucidated by applying Itō Gō's concept of manga's half-transparency. Itō develops his discussion starting with Azuma Hiroki's insight into "realisms" in manga. Itō suggests that manga is always half-transparent. Transparent being the naturalist realism in modernist literature, when words were chosen as directly as possible, to not draw attention to the text's specifics, but make reading "transparent". The reader would access the information ideally without noticing the media of expression. It is opposed to the "non-transparent" mode of expression; more elaborate forms of expression that constantly draw attention to the medium. Itō continues that the deformed and eclectic visual nature of manga text fluctuates between acknowledging the formal capacity of the line and at the same time allows reading manga through emphasis on signification. The media has potential to become transparent, when read through the prism of manga literacy, with emphasis on the structural sequence. Yet it also may draw attention to

the way the contents are mediated though the conventions, proving to be half-transparent (Itō 2012: 452-453).

Respectively, lines may fulfil both functions, attract attention to the line itself, to its figural force, and at the same time the lines may be read transparently as signifying the form and contents. In other words, while specific styles and conventions might gravitate towards one or the other, in effect, the same lines may possess both structural and plastic capacity/function. This implies that structural and plastic may also refer to the reading modes as well.

Therefore, further I would like to explore plastic and structural functions of the lines in shōjo manga, and see further the role mortality and immortality play in relation to gender.

Mortality and Immortality

Next I apply plastic and structural line theory specifically to shōjo manga visual conventions. I ask: what representation makes acceptable violence painless (and body immortal), while unacceptable violence hurts (mortal body)? Why do bodies bounce back when swatted by their loved ones, yet bruise and break when assaulted with true menace. Which further prompts the question: what is defined through linework as true/unforgivable violence and what is playful/forgivable violence, how linework communicates such semiotically laden value-system on a physical level. Why and how are plastic and structural functions applicable to lines in shōjo manga and how they relate to gender in female genre?

Oshiyama Michiko analyses visualisation of gender in formalist conventions of shōjo manga. If we look at how Oshiyama analyses masculine elements: long angular face, straight lines of the uniforms, long narrow eyes, no lace, excessive curls or eyelashes; we will notice, resemblance to the structural lines, specifically, to the antagonistic male character designs of *Barefoot Gen*. Angular, geometric lines appear to be associated with "masculinity", however, this does not mean male characters are constructed through these

"masculine" elements. Individual genders are devised through juxtaposition of "masculine" and "feminine" elements. Moreover, character design visually changes depending on the situation beyond facial expressions. For example, Oscar's masculinity is brought out in the scenes of physical confrontation by making her design more angular and geometrical. In these instances, the strain of the body is accentuated, the corporeality is heightened, and the reader reacts affectively to the depicted bodily functions, muscle strain, pain, etc, rather than aesthetics of the line. It also happens in the heat of political discussion or during Oscar's acquisition of political knowledge, when she is positioned as confronting the realities of the world, and society. "Masculine" elements signify Oscar's focus on the objective reality that exists outside of her body. Structural line contains the form, and therefore grants it a sense of corporeality, a sense of material existence, where the physical body and the outside factors that influence this physical body are separated. Therefore, they cannot merge and any confrontation will be physically painful if not lethal. The structural line separates and, consequently, predicts mortality.

Structural lines in depiction of historical setting, architecture, that LaMarre mentions, are a staple of shōjo manga as well.

Ishida notes, that they ground corporeality of the symbolic characters that inhabit these settings. Or, conversely, structural backgrounds contrast the plastic emotional reality of the character with the reality of their physical experiences. As a result, we have two plains of existence for each character, as a physical body and as an extended interiority.

I will illustrate it with scenes of intimacy, where the bodies either merge as an extension of ecstatic souls, or clash, hurt and violate each other's physicality as in the rape scenes and other scenes of dubious consent.

What I notice here, is a general trend to relate mortality, physicality to masculinity, and thusly define masculinity as "other" and "on the surface/superficial". Oshiyama concludes that "male" elements signify the wider world, while "female" imply movement

inward into intimate emotional matters, "within". However, this alleged "masculinity" and "femininity" exists as a facet of the character, and fluctuates according to the situations.

Frequently both male and female shōjo manga protagonists are depicted through "female" symbolic elements, and also plastic/feminine lines, especially in scenes of emotional upheaval. Interior monologues and scenes of romantic intimacy are most obvious examples. Characters' bodies are transformed into visualised interiorities. The lines are softened, we see more curves, swirls, prolonged and unfinished lines, like in the intimate scenes of Oscar and André in *The Rose of Versailles*, or Gilbert and Serge in *Kaze to ki no uta*. Characters extend their physical boundaries, and physical boundaries of other characters, they merge with decorative elements, and backgrounds. Even panel layout is liquefied and becomes an extension of the character's truly soulful body. The design of the character's body becomes visualised interiority; its physicality gives way to the pure flow of the character's emotions, or visualises relationship with other character, as Ōtomo suggests. The sequence itself changes from temporal to following the ebb and flow of the emotion in internal monologues or intimate scenes.

Already from the 1960s the bishōnen protagonists were depicted with plastic lines, merging with the panels, surrounded by decorations, crafted through elaborate line-work that visually emphasised their personalities. The mergers and flows of their lines, similar to female protagonists, drew the reader into their "soul", elicited affective response that momentarily deferred "otherness" signified by masculinity of their sexed body. Their visual representation was rendered in plastic lines that communicated with female reader, transcending and linking the layers of the expression.

Plasticity and structurality therefore are two plains of character's existence, that are mediating reader's affect between the figural force of the line and affect elicited by the form. The lines' effect oscillates between identification with the interiority, affective response to corporeality or even dissociative viewing.

Recalling the discussion of LaMarre's victims as portrayed via structural line. The liquidated, yet meticulously shaded victim-design constrains their corporeality, just like ruled line of panel layout frames the action. They are the extreme limit of corporeal mortality devoid of interiority.

Structural designs connect "otherness" to the "outside", such as wider world and society. Outside is frequently aggressive, hence unforgivable violence such as war and politics or more personal power-struggle such as rape are depicted in structural lines. Corporeality is vulnerable to the forces of this physical world, including aging and dying.

Contrariwise, plasticity discards these limitations, extends the boundaries of bodies and worlds, or as LaMarre puts it, it explodes physical world. The world itself becomes character design. Visualised interiorities focalise the action from the subjective perspectives, transform the character into a collage of their vision and other character's vision. Line transcends signification and the panel layout, decorations, backgrounds, and clothes become a part of character's interiority or in LaMarre's terms "soul". The whole sequences are flattened into one layer.

While plastic line visually prevails in shōjo genre, also in part due to general inclination to centre on intimate internal problems. Mortality and corporeality still are a significant part of the narrative conventions. It is their interrelation the builds the narrative of characters who are tangible, alive, and mortal, yet are also emotionally engaging personalities that draw the reader into identification. If we look at the tragic stories such as *Tōma no Shinzō* and *Kaze to ki no uta*, both have extensive depictions of the characters that have corporeally died, while their interiority transformed into another form of existence, of memory, inspiration, longing. Plastic scenes exist right next to the structural depictions of the character's deaths. Gilbert's degradation from alcohol and drug abuse results in his gruesome slow death. The scene culminates in very structurally drawn extremely rare depiction in shōjo manga of physical finality of death, as Gilbert's black polished coffin is taken out of the house. However, in the following sequences transformative power of plastic

line softens the blow of his corporeal demise, as he goes on living in Serge's heart and heart of Auguste, influencing their lives.

In this context one must wonder if victims of nuclear blast are characters at all, or are they a part of the background? Are they overall structural physical manifestation of the destruction? Most of them are not introduced as characters to begin with. Their interiority is absent; only their physical reflexes drive these empty shells. They also are contrasted to Gen's family, who all passed away with their faces and grief intact. Incidentally, they proceeded to become parts of Gen's drive to survive and thrive.

La Marre's theory is mostly applied to the character design and movement. He touches upon panel layout as an example of structural line that frames and confines the sequence. While structural line threatens to restrict the sequence, the impact is softened with plastic elements within the panels that extend the narrative beyond the frame of the panel and onto the next page. Therefore, structural and plastic lines are not polarities, but are interrelated within manga texts. They can also be the modes of reading the text.

2-3-2: Violence and Sex in Shōjo Manga

Case Studies

Having looked at the character design, I have noted that in shōjo manga extensively plastic sequences of internal monologues appear to flatten character design, background and panel layout into one layer that boundlessly extends character's interiority. LaMarre does not specifically analyse shōjo manga lines. However, when he notes in passing, how shōjo manga panel layout may appear plastic, yet retains structural function, he accentuates the close intermingling of figural capacity and form.

> The tendency of the plastic line to de-structure or deform the edge of the page is striking in certain lineages of shōjo *manga* in which the panel

> structure dissolves into scattering flowers, streaming lace, or washes of stars; or panels appear to float on wisps of cloud or ocean foam, while characters wearing exquisitely patterned clothing seem to oscillate on the threshold between the flow and form.
>
> Yet this is not pure plasticity by any means. These two tendencies that I have established on the basis of the line are limit cases, which never appear in pure form. Even though in my broad examples I associate the dissolution of panel structure in shōjo manga with plasticity, I should add that this sort of characteristically shōjo page layout calls forth formal and structural tendencies precisely as a material limit to plasticity. Simply put, rather than a pure liberation of the figural force of the plastic line, rather than pure flows, the strategies of composition and elements in the composition often become exceedingly formalistic. The edge of the page is deformed, rendered informal and fluid, but then is limited by a sense of form and structure at the level of the composition of flows. The page is liquefied but not liquidated, to produce formal flows. (LaMarre 2010: 285)

In shōjo manga, sexual violence is not unanimously negative trope, the non-consensual sex has a variety of implications in female genres, from expression of brutality to the expression of love. I analyse further how the lines and visual symbolism are the visceral indicators of the moral undertones of the particular situation. The lines allow the reader either to identify and enter the flow of the character's emotional interaction, or restrict the empathy by confining physicality with structural lines.

In the female genres the rape is ethically differentiated as "out of love" and "as a violation" by affective impact it produces on the reader. Takemiya Keiko introduced this complex theme through interaction of two male characters. She mentioned how this type of depiction was inevitably too traumatic had it been depicted in a heterosexual scenario. While the acts and character's reactions (at least initially) may be the same, visual representations divide the two starkly. Visually, these two types are differentiated by the level of the character's they touch: his body or his soul.

The unforgivable rape is generally happening on the surface, the bodily functions are emphasised, so that the actuality of emotional trauma is deferred. Not necessarily the sexual act itself, but, as I will explore further, the whole setup of the scene shifts to being more precisely situated in the physical plane. Structural lines are employed, the background information is detailed and bodies gravitate to formal depiction rather than figural. The

emotional impact is spatially distanced from the detail of the physical assault. And contrariwise, the rape-for-love frequently explores the characters emotional makeup, usually elaborating at the gradual change in the feelings of the characters, showing when the "rape" turns into consensual love-making by venturing into extreme plasticity.

Bonnard in *Kaze to ki no uta* is a secondary character, an artist and a friend of Auguste, he assumes that protagonist Gilbert (aged 7 at the time) is a kept boy-prostitute of Auguste (Gilbert's father), steals him and rapes him. For Gilbert is it one of the most traumatic experiences in the whole narrative, and perhaps, for the readers we all.

In terms of metaphoric decorations, Bonnard's assault on Gilbert is one of the driest scenes in *Kaze to ki no uta*. There are no decorations that would otherwise soften or romanticise the experience. Even Gilbert's pain is not melodramatic; it is a very straightforward, very rough piece of reality. The room's interior is reiterated and characters are constantly positioned in it, in the present and physical reality.

Gilbert's physical body is brought to the forefront, while his mind is drugged and bewildered. It begins with Gilbert coming out form his slumber (Takemiya 1995: vol. 3. 154-155 [Fig 3.]), the bigger unframed panels convey Gilbert's consciousness muted and dulled by visualised dark "smoke" of drug's influence. Physical sensations, Bonnard's manipulations are placed into panels that fragment Gilbert's body focussing on selected body-parts, assaulted by Bonnard. The structural panelling and scenes of physical confrontation are intersected with a panel of Gilbert's confused arousal (Takemiya 1995: vol. 3. 161, which is instantly contrasted to the next double spread (Takemiya 1995: vol. 3. 162-163) of physical assault framed into the slanted narrow panels. Gilbert's body reminds of the atomic blast victims, his blank eyes are reiterated, visualising inability to process the happenings. Blank eyes are a stable recurring trope in case of extreme violence, grief, and helplessness. His body is fragmented in the panels, following the progress of his physical turmoil, while his mind goes blank. The lines are not ruled, but like the victim's lines, Gilbert is liquefied, and devoid of ability to bounce, of transformative power. The lines are

sketchy and dirty, same line lined/sketched several times, as if the character's body and the artist's hands were shaking. Gilbert's body is trapped in the turmoil that is perpetuated upon him from "outside" (Takemiya 1995: vol. 3 pp. 162-163). The room and its decrepit interior are constantly reiterated, positioning the character in the structurally defined reality. Broader view of the interior is reiterated in the calm spacious and strongly framed panels of Bonnard preparing a bath only to return and find the space empty and the boy escaped. Although some elements of Gilbert's depiction are very similar to atomic blast victims, referring again and again to Gilbert's physical pain, there is a stark difference, respectively, Gilbert is a complex fleshed out character, whose feeling are elaborated on in other episodes. Therefore, it is even more obvious how the shift of the focus from emotional soulful body onto the physicality of the body mediates and postpones the trauma of this rape for the reader.

In the framework of Nagaike Kazumi's discussion of multiple points of identification and dissociation in boys' love, I would suggest, emphasised physical reality stimulates dissociative reading by pushing the reader out of the character's interiority. Therefore the psychological trauma is suspended. Visceral reaction to the physical pain and discomfort replaces the violation of the character's "soul", or suspends it until it may be resolved. In *Kaze to ki no uta* case, it is resolved later in another dubiously consensual sex scene of Gilbert and Auguste.

Consequently, the Bonnard's rape of Gilber scene lends itself to the reading as structural. The straight and cold lines of the spacious room and its interior are reiterated as a physical space that grounds the bodies of the characters. The heaviness in angular straight lines of Bonnard's body reminds of militarised adults of *Barefoot Gen*. Moreover, the dirty shaking lines of the lifeless doll-like Gilbert, while conveying physicality and mortality, frame and constrict the physical form. Gilbert is a husk devoid of transformative power that stems from the character's "soul". At this point he is also several times depicted as male, vague, but present genitals further reiterate the "otherness" and superficiality to put a distance between the reader and the character. Perhaps it is not coincidental that most

prominent depiction is on the same page double-spread as the single revelation of interiority and Gilbert's unwanted invasive arousal, visualised as a thorny rose.

But is it purely affect stemming from the recognition of the form, or is affect initiated through the figural force of the line distinguishable in this scene. The recognition of the assaulted human body is intermingled with the force of the line stroke. Ruled line of the panels, dirty, anxious, sketchy line of Gilbert's assaulted body, long straight lines of Bonnard, they convey cold, anxiety. Devoid of transformative bouncy power, the strokes invite the reader into the emotion associated with uneven strokes of the quill, on the double spread (Takemiya 1995: vol. 3. 163-164), which up the level of anxiety character experiences through the figural force of the line. The scene demonstrates structural and plastic as the two functions that are interwoven into the fabric of the narrative and materially demonstrate the communication between the layers of expression.

Takemiya Keiko uses opposite approach in depiction of the second rape in *Kaze to ki no uta*: when Auguste rapes/reclaims Gilbert out of misguided possessive love. While it starts with Auguste entering the dark room, and closing in on the bed with heavy drapes. As he starts touching the boy, the physicality is accentuated, however as Gilbert starts to respond and acknowledges Auguste, the gears shift into plasticity. The mode of depiction if not forgives, at least allows to grasp character's motivation and overwhelming emotion. The physicality of the violence is suspended with the focus on the associated emotional apogee.

Similarly, in *Tōma no Shinzō* by Hagio Moto, while actual rape of protagonist Julismole by demonic senior is not depicted, the sexual assault is divided into two separate parts. Protagonist Julismole implies he was raped by reiterating "My wings were taken from me" this statement is frequently accompanied by a beautiful image of a fallen angel without wings. However, the actual incident is described on black gutter page, referring to physical past and is mostly sketchily drawn bodies and facial close-ups. No decorations are used, only some speed-lines, that imply force (Hagio 1995: 443-444).

While the trauma is beautified dramatically, made almost melancholic rather than devastating by the use of decorative elements, the focus on the material bodies being hurt in the scene of actual assault produces affective abject feeling, and distances from the emotional devastation of the scene.

In the sequence of *Kaze to ki no uta*, when Gilbert and Serge finally consummate their relationship with equal sex. Plasticity overcomes, panels burst, flowers and wines interlace the dissolving frames. Character's lines transform into flowers, tree-branches and gusts of wind. Lines on all the levels: character, background, panel-layout cannot be separated as a specific physical form, specific action, everything serves the emotion, that stems already from the flowing transformative line itself (Takemiya 1995: vol 5. 181-182). The bodies of the characters visualise their souls, emotions and these souls expand onto the whole double spreads. Plasticity is interrupted and contrasted with a page depicting the other dormitory inhabitants innocently playing. The space of the other characters is defined in precise forms and strict panels (Takemiya 1995: vol 5. 183-184), while Gilbert and Serge are depicted outside of reality, on another plane of existence. Reiteration of the window to their room, reminds that the whole new universe of senses and emotion explodes exponentially beyond the darkness of this window. The window marks the barrier between the outside and the inside, depicted with structural and plastic lines respectively[80] (Takemiya 1995: vol 5. 181-182).

These examples however are not the specific style of one author, Takemiya Keiko was in many respects innovative author, her innovations firmly rooted themselves in the genre, they are still largely present in contemporary titles. For example, in *Pintokona* we find similar distribution of the line work, and effects that are mediated through affect and signification. Although the protagonists are delaying consummation of their romantic

[80] Takemiya remarked during a lecture, that metaphysical depiction was also partially conditioned by her growing concern with censure, and fear of suspended serialisation. Therefore in later volumes, nudity and sexual intercourse is depicted in more symbolic ways.

attachments, a side character Yuna, who is in love with Hiroki, ends up having sex with him. The scene is depicted from Hiroki's point of view, he is the one the reader is more likely to identify with, as he is a more developed character, while Yuna is a secondary character who is mostly used as catalyst for misunderstandings and drama in the love-triangle of the three main protagonists. The scene is romantic for Yuna, although as the reader knows she tries to manipulate and monopolise Hiroki. However for Hiroki it is a mix of guilt of using Yuna's innocence, which makes him feel pathetic tenderness, while in reality he uses her as a field study for his art on stage. The scene is ambiguous, but it is not violent, as both characters are lost in their own ambitions, and passionate about their goals. The sex is barely elaborated on in that instance, however, in several flashbacks the same image of them entwined is depicted romantically over complex backgrounds (Shimaki 2010: 158). It becomes an emotionally engaging visual symbol of their complicated entangled relationship, and an instance that clearly positions bishōnen as identification anchor as well as object to Yuna's desire.

Next, Yuna is coerced into a sexual relationship with another side character who is in love with her and jealous of Hiroki. He ends up blackmailing Yuna after (at her request) he causes strife in Hiroki's relationship with Ayame. The physicality and lack of romanticism in this relationship is presented post factum not in a flashback, but implied from the scene right after they had sex. Yuna's clothes are depicted one by one in separate panels, leading to her crouching in the corner. The sex scene is omitted altogether, but mutual remorse is evident in the coldness of the scene (Shimaki 2011: vol 5 26-27). Her assailant is lying defiantly on the bed, facing away with empty eyes, as if he was the one violated. The room is then shown in a panoramic view from the above (Shimaki 2011: 28). The characters are situated in a physical realm, depicted in precise structural lines in spatial relation to each other and the environment.

Furthermore, even within the same relationship the dynamics of line work changes. At later point Hiroki discovers Yuna's infidelity, yet he decides to continue to use her body as field study to grow as an actor. However, now he is free of his initial guilt of manipulating

the innocent girl. The sex between them is shown in physical detail (as much as shōjo manga would allow); the lines of the body are definite, without embellishments or any other decorative effects (Shimaki 2011: 126-133). However, characters tryst is placed upon the background of Kyonosuke's dance practice; physical sex is contrasted to the artistic elation of Kyonosuke, sexual act's physicality is negatively contrasted to the pure physicality of artistic expression, which is extended with decorative elements.

Hierarchy of Sexual Depiction

Pintokona abides by the standard hierarchy of sexual depiction in shōjo titles. Sex that is depicted through emotional perspective with emphasis of bonding and romanticism is superior to the depictions of sex as physical pleasure and definitely more superior to the sexual violence. However, it is the lustful or violent encounters that are depicted in more physical detail, and as a consequence may end up having stronger erotic effect on the reader. The visualisation reveals negative implications of physical sexuality. Respectively, the minute sexual depictions may elicit the sexual reaction, which in the context of forced sexual relationship is automatically guilty. The alleged visceral "shame" physically implies moral distinction. The formula is distinctive in the line-work of the manga such as *Kaze to ki no uta* or *Pintokona*. The sex as physical gratification is depicted similarly to the violent sex, it is happening upon the body, but the "soul" is left untouched by it, however, the physical ministrations both in Bonnard's scene and in Auguste's scene are much more pronounced. In *Pintokona* same patterns are repeated.

Therefore, the plasticity and structural lines appear to bear moralist signification that is recognisable as generic convention. However, as I have argued above, physicality and "exteriority" allows the reader a distanced approach to the traumatic topics as well. The reader spared identification with an abject act on an emotional level. Reader of shōjo manga, the apocryphal female readership, or readership of female genres appears to (or is expected

to) gravitate towards the soul-centred, plastic reading of the text. While corporeality, mortality and other structural qualities and functions play an important role, the soul provides possibilities for connections and empathy.

Affective response in the reader is dual. The pre-signification affect towards the figural force of the line delays signification; this is what LaMarre refers to as plasticity. The reader affectively responds to the flow and rhythm of the image. However before signification of the plot, there is also affect towards the recognised form, especially the functions of the physical body. This affect is between signification and figural force. For example, one would instinctually shrink away from an image of a disfigured body, even if it is a body of a villain being punished for his crimes.

Similar logic applies to the sexual depiction I have discussed above. Following patriarchal logic, frank sexual scenes are devalued, however they affect the reader. The arousal of the reader is therefore implied as somewhat shameful by the context of the sexual depiction. The balance between the linework therefore visually indicates the legitimacy or shamefulness of the reader's affective arousal.

Emphasis on the more direct sexual depiction, therefore, relies on the double recognition: the physical affect towards depiction of sex, and then signification of the context in which the sex is placed. Signification triggers uneasiness in relation to the frank depiction[81], which according to LaMarre would also relate to the mortality and fragility; and contrastingly legitimises sexual arousal that is depicted in plastic lines, and connect the reader to the immortal soul of the character.

The emphasis, visual and narrative on the interiority that is ascribed to shōjo manga and to the female mode of address could therefore suggest that female mode of reading would be also gravitating inward by focussing on the plastic function of the lines and symbolic significations.

[81] Of course the rape-for love trope subverted this paradigm, however, I will leave this discussion for another paper.

In Part 2 I used the premise of my Master's research to define basic elements that comprise bishōnen as a "soulful body" in shōjo manga. I used the term "beautiful boy" in order to interpret two most common traits of bishōnen: "beauty" as a potential to be looked at/objectified, and "boy" as signifying bishōnen's fluid agency that extends beyond phallus and is reminiscent of non-phallic stage of an adolescent boy.

I suggested that bishōnen invites identification of the female reader despite his maleness, because he is portrayed in the same way as female protagonist, specifically, as visualised interiority, opening his inner world to empathy. These female readers were consuming an identification anchor that significantly differed from their implied conventional image of self[82]. Using Lacanian notion of gaze and dialectic relationship of subject and object, I further focus on bishōnen's "beauty" as an aspect of being involved in mutual gazing with female protagonist or male counterpart. Unfixed gaze results in agency that is established via the ability to choose between positions of subject and object.

Having defined the narrative tropes, I moved to formal conventions of bishōnen. I compared Oshiyama's discourse of male and female elements of character's depiction and LaMarre's theory of plastic and structural line. I combined femininity with plasticity and interpreted this line as implying immortality and interiority, while masculine line resonates with structural line and denotes outside world and the other, as well as physicality and mortality. I also suggested reading structural and plastic modes of portrayal as two functions of the linework.

[82] In case of bishōnen, without a thorough empirical research it is hard to claim what came first. Were the female readers so used to reading works with male characters as protagonists outside of their genre, it is probably not a surprise that within their own genre they crafted a type of male character that directly invites identification. Or maybe, because male protagonist is such a common trope in female genres, reading shōnen and seinen male characters as bishōnen is easy and attractive. It is probably safe to say, that current generations juxtapose both practises.

On example of case-studies I analysed what lines and how are involved in portrayal of bishōnen. Using *Kaze to ki no uta* I emphasised how the tropes developed. Consequently, I used *Pintokona* as an example of perseverance of tropes. I surmised that in shōjo manga male protagonists are depicted in plastic lines that transform all aspects of manga, portrayals of the character, costume, panel layout, decorations and other elements. Structural line is also used, but in the scenes when focus is placed onto physical body. I used examples scenes when identification is purposefully truncated, such as violence and non-loving sex, to reveal the balance of plastic and structural lines in bishōnen. Bishōnen's body appears as plastic visualised interiority in emotional scenes, and his physical presence is evoked through structural lines when female readers may be traumatised by emotional insight into rape victim's experience or experience of pain and death.

Bishōnen as a "soulful body" is defined by specific relationship dynamic with other characters as well as with the reader. Therefore, bishōnen influences genders of other characters, who are involved in a power-relationship with him. As any agency comes into being in a dialectic paradigm, so does bishōnen facilitates new gender and power-structures in his loves and rivalries. I suggest further, that this is both an aspect that helps to recognise bishōnen, but also as one of the criteria of bishōnen's subversive potential. In order to explore my theory, I will proceed with an analysis of a seinen manga by prominent *gekiga* artist, which centres on kabuki and introduces cross-dressing characters. I will look at the way the protagonist's genders are negotiated in relationship to a cross-dressing male character. I will look at how the narrative introduces several elements of female mode of address, and how the female mode of reading is constructed from these elements and the elements of the seinen manga by negotiating affect and signification of the line-work and other formal elements.

PART 3: Critical Potential of Cross-Dressing Bishōnen in Seinen Manga

In Part 3 I do a close reading of *Kabukumon* by Tanaka Akio and David Miyahara (*Morning* 2008-2011). By combining consideration of plot and contents with formal depiction, I explore linework, role of costume, panel layout in portrayal of onnagata. I combine formal insight with the role of onnagata in the narrative.

I do not aim at undermining the perspectives of Mizoguchi, Ōgi Fusami's or Nagaike Kazumi who explore the gender-critical potential of historical and contemporary female genres. I aim at supplementing this research with consideration of the fusion in genres as having subversive potential within the male genres.

Seinen genre has a long-standing tradition of touching upon social issues. In the cases I look at, a more critically informed genre of seinen portrays characters, themes and scenarios that are reminiscent of the earlier tradition of gender-criticism in shōjo manga. I raise doubts that alleged critical potential should be directly related to reading these works as proxy shōjo-manga, or to recognition of citations.

I focus on the first type of critical potential – directly addressing themes that can be perceived as socially critical. I present examples of several titles that depict gender-queer elements both on the level of scenarios and on the level of visual representations of characters.

I begin with analysis of onnagata historically and in contemporary media, comparing onnagata as a separate gender in Edo period, and onnagata as cross-dresser in modern media. I conclude that onnagata are similar to bishōnen, when portrayed as realistic aspects of kabuki. In this context I address my case study of *Kabukumon* that employs two onnagata characters in prominent roles alongside the protagonist.

I combine Lacanian gaze theory with manga studies to explore how the visual formal depictions (character design, linework, hatching, and panel fragmentation of the bodies) portray the exchange of gazes and the resulting power-dynamics that deviate from patriarchal binary. Through this analysis I explore onnagata as fluctuating between agency and being an object, which resonates with the way bishōnen are portrayed in shōjo genre, as established prior..

PART 3 Chapter 1: Onnagata as Bishōnen

3-1-1: Non-Phallic Onnagata

Origins of Onnagata

Tamasaburō V states simply: "to perform a man performing onnagata, that is what makes onnagata" (Mezur 2003: 135). By exploring the historical development of onnagata, his specific gender performance and contemporary role, I compare him to the fictional trope of bishōnen. I suggest that certain elements of actual onnagata when translated into manga narrative inevitably appear like tropes of bishōnen. As a result emphasis and prominent role of onnagata character in shōnen and seinen opens up a space for bishōnen character to enter seamlessly into these narratives. It can be read as citation and it can be read as a part of narrative, a character explored and carefully integrated into the narrative without necessity of recognising female manga tropes. I begin with brief inquiry into the actual art of onnagata in kabuki, in order to formally relate onnagata to the image of non-phallic male in female genres.

Due to a prolonged period of peace and relatively high literacy in the Edo period, vibrant merchant and citizen culture had emerged, which can be likened to contemporary popular culture. Pleasure quarters and kabuki theatre lay at the centre of this rich new culture.

Kabuki is a proto-modern theatrical genre that was initially aimed at the merchants, artisans and other types of citizens, but gained significant popularity among the military aristocracy (*bushi*)[83] class as well. As it became an integral part of popular culture in the Edo period, kabuki constantly transformed, reflecting and (frequently trailblazing) the fashions and attitudes of the day. Kabuki derives from the verb *kabuku*, which means "to be extravagant," or "to deviate from the norm".

Despite fascinating gender-bending performances in all-male Kabuki, little gender-specific research is available both in Japanese and English. Instead, the main body of kabuki research consists of theatrical criticism and history. I will rely on Kathrine Mezur's innovative thesis *Beautful Boys, Outlaw Bodies: Devising Kabuki Female-Likeness* in my discussion of onnagata gender, and supplement it with a plethora of historical resources in English and Japanese. I will also refer to primary sources such as Ihara Saikaku's novels and *Yakusha Rongo*[84].

Although actors of male roles had been the protagonists of most kabuki plays, the history of *kabuki* itself is tied in with the history of onnagata performance. And the modern onnagata performance is connected to the Edo Period onnagata performance, reiterating alluring and nostalgic images of the past, both the image of marginal and queer gender-bending and the image of the idealised Edo-period femininity. Kathrine Mezur infers: "In contemporary performance, an onnagata enacts a fiction of the female-likeness created during the Edo period (1603–1867) (Mezur 2003: 5)."

Ironically, the onnagata became more "Japanese" and more "traditional" through its association with the Edo period image of constructed female gender roles. Today, the onnagata stands out as a major representation of the nationalist retrenchment of "traditional"

[83] *Bushi/samurai* – military aristocracy class

[84] *Yakusha Rongo*, a collection of 18th century kabuki-related texts, including *Ayamegusa* by Yoshizawa Ayame.

Japan: kabuki is considered a living icon, a "national treasure," saturated with the longing for a fictionalized past (Mezur 2003: 135)[85].

However, historically kabuki was an eclectic ever evolving art form that catered to all levels of society, primarily focussing on its lower classes. Kabuki borrowed extensively from various art forms, both elite and folk, these borrowings were reimagined and appropriated to lower class entertainment concerned with sensual pleasures, violence and physicality (Mezur 2005: 135). The flamboyant and violent performances were frequently attacked by the government, and as a result, the art of the kabuki and especially onnagata has been shaped by legal prosecution as much as by artistic innovations (Shively 2002: 32-33).

Kabuki is officially dated to 1603, the year of the establishment of Edo *bakufu*, a military government with *shōgun* at the helm. That same year a woman called Izumo no Ōkuni began her performances on the bank of the Kamo River in Kyoto. Her performances consisted of humorous skits centred on situations from the pleasure quarters as well as dance-numbers derived from ceremonial dances. Her troupe earned their living through prostitution, with the performances largely serving as displays for the clients (Shively 2002: 34).

Izumo no Ōkuni cross-dressed, combined male and female clothes, and mixed Japanese and Western clothes and accessories. Meanwhile, some male performers in her troupe cross-dressed in female attire. The humorous skits depicted the purchase of prostitutes and similar scenes from the brothels, during which Ōkuni would play the role of the customer and male actors would play the roles of prostitutes. However, these were not yet the onnagata performers; rather, they presented a comic contrast to Ōkuni's cross-dressing erotic allure (Mezur 2005: 1).

[85] Though I will examine the historical development of the art form, I will refrain from excessive analysis of the onnagata as a symbol of the romanticised past, as it exceeds the scope of this paper.

Ōkuni's performances became popular and spurred a variety of imitations. Some of the troupes were all female and licensed courtesans picked up the popular cross-dressing act. In Edo period female courtesans were not the only objects of popular adult male interest. Following monastic tradition of brotherhood bonds and military tradition of samurai and his page having sexual relationships, in Edo period a tradition of very hierarchical same-sex male relationship was commonplace. Wakashū, the adolescent boys, who did not undergo coming of age (*genpuku*) ceremony (when their forelocks would be shaven off) were legitimate object of adult male's erotic consumption. They wore long forelocks, and long-sleeved *furisode* kimonos, with lavish patterns and decorations much like female kimono. Therefore, on par with courtesans, wakashū prostitutes (*iroko*) reinterpreted and adjusted the act of cross-dressing for their own purposes. From 1609 onwards, an actual *wakashū*[86] kabuki troupes gained in popularity, its appeal rooted in homoeroticism (Mezur 2005: 3).[87]

The popularity of these eroticised spectacles yet again had been related to socially disruptive behaviour. However, it is not the sexual conduct per se that gained the scorn of the government; rather, the biggest threat was seen in the intermingling of classes. Samurai, merchants, and poor people alike favoured the performances, sometimes starting fights over performers. This was even more problematic, as actors themselves officially were the untouchable, a cast that were not even counted during records of population, alongside prostitutes, criminals and several other defiling occupations (Shively 2012: 40). Deemed indecent in 1629, women were banned from the stage first, although the bans had to be repeated several times. After women were officially banned, *wakashū* kabuki and the allure of adolescent boys came to the fore. With wakashū, the beginnings of the onnagata-specific acts were established, as the boys were performing allegedly female roles, yet enticing the

[86] *Iroko* is term for adolescent male prostitute, while w*akashū* means simply "adolescent male". For more information, refer to Pflugfelder 1999 and Leupp 1996.

[87] *Shūdō* (short for *wakashū*-dō – the way of the youths), had been a specific brand of hierarchical male-male sexual relationships, that were strongly associated with samurai culture and monastic culture. Warriors frequently had young pages serving them and learning from them, while replaying with sexual services for the patronage. In monasteries young acolytes (chigo) entered "brotherly bonds" with older clergy. For more information, refer to Pflugfelder 1999 and Leupp 1996.

viewers with their boyish sex appeal. The actors were mostly very young, hardly over 16 years old, and their stylized acts revolved around their attractive looks. Boys' specific hairstyle with forelocks was a socially accepted symbol of their status as objects for adult male erotic consumption.

In 1652, bakufu yet again interfered on the same grounds and banned young boys from the stage. All actors were to be over the ripe age of 14 and undergo a coming-of-age ceremony – genpuku—which meant the shaving off of the forelocks, which would end their tenure as available submissive partners for an older male. The ceremony denoted the boy's entry into phallic adulthood; consequently, all actors who were categorized as "objects of the adult male gaze" [88] were removed. In doing so, bakufu attempted to undermine the fluctuating intermediary status of onnagata that signified them as objects for erotic consumption[89].

However, in effect, bakufu have achieved the opposite – namely, the erasure of age-limit as a factor of the sexual appeal of onnagata in *yarō* kabuki. Yarō kabuki onnagata learned how to style their hair with scarves (and later wigs) to conceal their bald patch, and from early 18th century they also wore female or female-derived costumes offstage as well. Eventually, these techniques gained their own sexual appeal. As a result, some female wigs in specific Kabuki plays feature a purple scarf on the pate of the head. Correspondingly, the scarf symbolising onnagata's sexual and social status became as erotically appealing as the forelocks of wakashū or female hairstyles. The age limit for non-phallic position was prolonged exponentially, attached to the occupation rather than a sexed body or specific age. Most onnagata offered sexual services in the beginning of their career. While some actors achieved fame and significant wealth, less prominent actors earned their keep as prostitutes, referred to as *kagema*.

[88] In Edo period discourse of sexuality revolved around adult males as consumer of females or adolescent males (wakashū). For more information, refer to Pflugfelder 1999 and Leupp 1996.

[89] Discourse of sexuality in Edo period was centered on adult male's consumption of women and boys. Female sexuality was not discussed, it only figured in the discourse as object of the male desire. For more information, refer to Pflugfelder 1999 and Leupp 1996.

The art of onnagata started to mature, as the actors were able remain active on stage much longer than wakashū. They also started to document their techniques. First actor who left an account of onnagata art is Yoshizawa Ayame I (1673-1729). At the change of 17th and 18th centuries Yoshizawa Ayame I began the practice that most onnagata followed until Meiji – *maonnagata*: performing only female roles and living as onnagata in everyday life. Maonnagata meant that actors were wearing women's clothes, using female speech, and performing female roles in social functions (Mezur 2005: 40). Off-stage onnagata were banned from becoming the leaders of their respective troupes. On-stage, onnagata were always a side dish for the male protagonists' story (performed by *tachiyaku*). Only dance-numbers were traditionally onnagata's milieu and came at the very end of the matinee). Yoshizawa Ayame I stressed that the cornerstone of onnagata performance is always the *keisei* (courtesans). Thus, the source of his inspiration came from women who were also bound to perform a specific type of femininity instructed by men (Mezur 2005: 40).

Onnagata as a Gender

With a variety of agencies, social functions, and their status in respect to patriarchal regime, onnagata gradually became a gender in their own right, a new power-position in patriarchal society, which did not correspond with the adult male body that was present under the costume and mannerism. The juxtaposition of traits they adopted in their lives became solidified and embodied with the way they wore their purple scarves, female kimonos and only performed female roles onstage. Therefore, I suggest, onnagata were no longer cross-dressers – a person who dresses and behaves against the gendered behaviour expected of his sexed body. Onnagata dressed, behaved and otherwise embodied a specific gender expected of them on a large scale, completely written into the social structure of the time.

Wakashū had the clear-cut position of an adolescent boy on the threshold of maturity, who learns from an older male the ways to be adult before transitioning into the phallic stage of their existence. In other words, the specific fluid gender-position they occupied had an expiration date. The gender of the onnagata appears to have existed in two capacities in relation to the social context. They were a legitimate object to adult male's erotic desire, alongside wakashū. Onnagata performed "female" roles on stage and frequently sold their bodies offstage as kagema[90]. Simultaneously, they could also have wives and children, or younger lovers of either sex.

For example, the renowned 17th century actor Yoshizawa Ayame I started out as a boy prostitute and due to the support of his patrons reached the top position as an onnagata performer. However, he was also married and fathered four sons, who later introduced their own onnagata linages[91]. Some of them gained wealth and respect in their communities, despite the ban on becoming the leader of the troupe. Furthermore, onnagata unequivocally became the experts and models for females to imitate, as men they had the social weight of instructing and shaping the desirable femininity, and could be said to govern the aesthetics of erotic object in general.

Mezur suggests: "By banning women from the public stage in 1629 and boys in 1652, leaving only adult men with the privilege of professional stage performance, the government strengthened the attraction of kabuki onnagata, maintaining male supremacy in the representation of all genders. Because they were not women, onnagata had the freedom to create their own kind of female-likeness with their male bodies (Mezur 2005: 4)."

To sum up, onnagata were neither in the same position as women, nor was their performance of "female likeness" complimentary to females. The femininity they constructed was a portrayal of a perfect object, as a quote from Bando Tamasaburō V states

[90] Female customers could buy their favours as well. However this aspect is poorly documented, as general Edo discourse of sexuality revolved around male pleasure.

[91] For more information refer to Kominz 1997

in the beginning of this chapter, onnagata portrays onnagata onstage. This gained a new meaning further in contemporary onnagata performance, which I will turn to in a short while.

Mezur states that onnagata "female roles" in kabuki were never performed in imitation of real women. Rather, onnagata was built on the original boy body aesthetic, mixed with exalted idealised femininity of courtesans. Seeing the "woman" in kabuki onnagata is recognising theatrical elements and techniques—such as costuming, wigs, makeup and a choreography of postures, gestures, and locomotion—as kabuki female-likeness (Mezur 2005: 6).

The Edo period onnagata costume did not construct them as token women in drag. On stage it was important to them to appeal to the audience which could be swayed by shūdo aesthetics, and offstage they used elements of femininity to craft further an image of object to male gaze. The whole complex gender performance, its agencies and lack of agencies were formalised, and written into the patriarchal social fabric alongside another male object of masculine desire. In a turnabout way one may compare this specific type of gender, gender-role and agency formation to the depictions of bishōnen, although the character is purely fictional, he has a set of traits that are reiterated visually and narratively that portray him outside of patriarchal dichotomy, constructing their own specific agency.

By the end of the 17th century, the foundation of onnagata art had been laid, and gradually actors began to record the kata for the next generation to emulate[92]. However, only in the 20th century did kata become the strict system it is now. In the Edo period, kata were citations of previous famous performances by popular actors, evocative of how Azuma

[92] One of the first onnagata who left their legacy in writing was Yoshizawa Ayame I, his *Ayamegusa* is a series of short anecdotes and instructions about lifestyle and stage performance of onnagata in late 17th beginning of the 18th century (Mezur 2005:10).

defines the database. As a result, kata were layered with each new prominent performance (Mezur 2005: 40).

Documented tradition inspired dialogue with the previous masters. It also created a set of reiterated tropes that constructed the performances of onnagata, which some onnagata modified to suit their personalities. Under these circumstances, the onnagata's art and associated aesthetics gradually bifurcated into two distinct avenues. Physical beauty and womanliness were associated with attractive onnagata like Yoshizawa Ayame I[93]. However those onnagata who were said to be less conventionally attractive gradually created a "performance of beauty," an exaggerated stylised *kata* that symbolised beauty through movement, makeup, and costume. This performance is frequently associated with Segawa Kikunojō I (1693-1749), who was not considered beautiful but gained immense popularity by devising kata that simulated beauty. He successfully played young female roles of princesses and courtesans even as he aged. As opposed to Ayame, who tried to go back to male roles when he started aging, Kikunojō gained his highest recognition at the age of 52 (Mezur 2005: 80). Both types, however, lived as onnagata offstage as well.

> [...] when we reconsider onnagata stylization as constructed gender acts, their stylized acts of female-likeness contradict any concept of an "essence of femininity." Instead the female-styled construct and enact a male-body-styled fiction of femininity (Mezur 2005: 5).

Heavy costumes and make up were meant to be seen from ill-lit stage, and a variety of kata of onnagata are erotically appealing via revealing the male body beneath. These kata are especially involved in scenes where these women demonstrate their "feminine" beauty and vulnerability. The movements and body parts which were seen as elements of female beauty and sex appeal, such as display of the nape of the neck, elegant movements of hands or display of elegant feet movements in tall geta, in onnagata sparingly reference the masculinity of the body.

[93] Ayame tried to switch to male roles when he gotten older, however his *tachiyaku* technique was not successful.

> The kabuki stylization of female-likeness generally emphasizes smallness and a soft, graceful line of the body. Therefore, on stage the basic onnagata tenet is, kneeling or standing, to place the body slightly upstage and lower than the male gender role actors, with a slight diagonal facing to enhance the line of the body (Mezur 2005: 5).

For example, the *eriashi* (the scoop of the back of the neck) revealed in the low riding collar of the kimono is one of the most erotic zones of both onnagata and geisha makeup. The white makeup is applied to the neck and shoulders, the parts visible from the collar of the kimono. However two long lines remain unpainted, simulating the "hairline" at the back of the neck, complimentary to the arrangement of the collar and wig. These lines reveal the actual skin of the wearer, and in the onnagata's case, reference the "raw" male body concealed by makeup and costume (Mezur 2005: 193).

In contemporary performances, this play between female and male adds an edge and dangerous charm to onnagata's image. Spectator is gambling their own gender and sexuality, as they allow the onnagata to enthral them. "The onnagata's "play" between gender role conventions and glimpses of his own body beneath adds a sensual, yet disconcerting edge to his gender performance art" (Mezur 2005: 192).

> When spectators see the onnagata's own skin and hairline, they see his body beneath. The spectators may read the gender role and the male body simultaneously or voyeuristically. But no matter what, the revealing is performative, a part of the onnagata gender act (Mezur 2005: 193).

After the Meiji Restoration, kabuki gained the status of traditional theatre. However, in order to be considered a high art, kabuki had to be purged of its more violent and erotic elements. As a result, onnagata were censured yet again. Firstly, in the 19th century, the *tachiyaku* began to intrude upon onnagata territory, playing certain female roles such as strong warrior wives (*sewa nyōbo*) or "evil women" (*akuba)*. The *tachiyaku* appeared less interested in playing the roles of princesses and courtesans (Mezur 2005: 111-112).

The practice of maonnagata[94] and living as onnagata offstage became a choice rather than a rule and gradually disappeared altogether. Imported western contempt for homosexuality also put an end to onnagata's legalised kagema[95] practices, stopping the necessity of appealing to this audience as well. In other words, the onnagata as a gender and social status with its own set of agencies disappeared and gradually onnagata became truly a cross-dresser that separates two distinct genders in their own performance.

Witnesses of transition attest that the Edo period onnagata were in fact manlier than those who came after. As Mezur cites, this was due to the necessity of incorporating onnagata gender acts into their daily lives, as well as appealing to the patrons interested in shūdo.

> Critics like Gunji, who have witnessed several generations of onnagata, affirm that onnagata act their *kata* with "too much femininity and lack that *iroke* which goes with the gender ambiguity of earlier kabuki." (Mezur 2005: 59).

After the Meiji era, the onnagata ceased performing as kagema and assumed esteemed positions as bearers of traditional art and culture. Nonetheless, the gender of the onnagata in society was diminished in the patriarchal hierarchy because of the stigma surrounding cross-dressing exacerbated by imported Western disdain for homosexuality.

Ironically however, the onnagata gender became so firmly associated with the male sexed body beneath that attempts to bring the actresses back on stage failed during the Meiji period and later. The reasoning for preservation of this tradition are multifaceted and non-lateral. Body-related essentialist theories of the superiority of onnagata to female actresses were in vogue among Meiji era critics. Leiter cites as a rationale the fact that the female body does not produce the desired shape when wearing the costume, or that a female actress would lack the physical strength to manipulate the costumes, which can weigh up to 30 kilograms[96]. A further rationale is that only a man knows what a "perfect" woman is,

[94] Pure onnagata, an actor who only plays female roles.
[95] Licensed male prostitution
[96] Such arguments would seem to be irrelevant given modern practices within Noh theatre, which now openly accepts female actors as well as actors non-related to Noh households.

stemming from the view of women as inferior and popularised by the infamous *Onna Daigaku* (Leiter 2012: 213). This piece ironically echoes the Lacanian "absence of the woman" and the concept of "woman as a symptom of a man".

The motivations may have been unclear, yet the tradition survived into the 21st century. Onnagata remain exclusively male, executing staunch control over the image of ultimate nostalgic femininity and successfully selling it to the contemporary viewers seeking the ideal past. Peculiarly enough, their association with cross-dressing and therefore being an object of the gaze is interwoven into their offstage performance, as they appear to surrender a part of their masculine agency.

Through the lens of deconstruction, the onnagata gender ontology is inseparable from the male body beneath. While still operating within the context of the patriarchy and gender binary, it reinterprets the relationships between sex and gender by insisting on the necessity of the masculine body to embody this particular ontology. It demonstrates how genders are artificially associated with the sexed body, by demonstrating how the same body may be fluid between artificially imposed patriarchal binaries, depending on the context. It is a tangible example of the multiplicity of possible genders and the concept of gender as a social construct.

3-1-2: Elements of Onnagata Performance

Contemporary Image of Onnagata

In popular culture, the onnagata is mostly portrayed as the "other". In many contexts the onnagata is isolated from daily reality, both put on a pedestal and simultaneously marginalised, as their agency is confined to the realm of kabuki, more so than male role actors.

Contemporary onnagata art[97] is governed by kata that appear to significantly curb the creative freedom of the performers. Although kata has variations for each role (the legacies of different old masters), the actors are not allowed to change the performance further or create new kata for a classic repertoire[98]. Texts written by onnagata actors such as Onoe Baiko V and Nakamura Utaemon VI attest to this fact.

Mezur quotes a contemporary leading onnagata, Bandō Tamasaburō V, who "points out that onnagata performance skills depend on the execution of the "fine details" that constitute each gender act. Every kinesthetic, oral, or visual expression has particular requirements and highly refined elements, which require attention and concentration. He refers to Baiko VI's *geidan*[99], *Ume no Shitakaze*, as a collection of these details in the context of scenes, characters, physical acts, and speech acts (Mezur 2005: 56). "

> Tamasaburō V calls these, "*komakai diteeru*," […] (fine details), essential to performing an onnagata gender role. Here, Tamasaburō V is not only speaking of the specified gestures, timing, and speech patterns, but also of nuances that an onnagata must learn to fill out or complete the *kata*. For example, the shading of a line of dialogue, the matching diagonal lines of three kimono hems, the slight stressing of a vowel, the tilting of the neck, the lengthening of a tone, and the pulling on the outer edge of a sleeve are the refinements of the stylized details that an onnagata may use to intensify his performance. Tamasaburō V plays with these details until they vibrate with the life of the role type. When an onnagata performs his *kata* with such detailed refinement, he is said to *kurosu uppu suru* (make a "closeup"). […] That is, he rivets the audience's attention, making their focus zoom in like a camera and take a close-up picture of his *kata* (Mezur 2005: 135).

Each movement is described and explained, leaving little to spontaneity; however, renowned actors express their vision by saturating the kata with alternative emotions. For example, in the famous play *Kagotsurube*, courtesan's smile directed towards a lowly country bumpkin had been portrayed as disdain, mercy, or mocking alternately by different actors. In manga about kabuki, this is one of the aspects of kabuki that is repeatedly criticised and broken. Manga comments critically upon the rigidity of the art form.

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[97] After the Meiji period

[98] Of course there are innovative performances, however they exist outside of traditional milieu, and have more freedom to hire actors unrelated to kabuki households, even women. However, these novel theatrical forms exist separate from what is defined as kabuki.

[99] Instructions and essays by actors

After the Meiji period, Western-style psychological realism strongly influenced the theory of acting in Japan. In his interviews with four leading onnagata, Samuel Leiter (Leiter 1966: 391-404) asks each of them about Stanislavky's acting method. Their opinions are divided: some suggest that behind the kata there are always realistic emotions, which are then stylised; therefore an onnagata who acts relies on his experience of these emotions to put behind the kata. Others reject the necessity of psychological realism, relying on kata to convey the symbolic idealised emotion. In either way, kabuki never relied on looking realistic, but rather remained open to interpretations both by actors and the spectators. Mezur suggests that this is the reason why onnagata roles remained male dominant in kabuki, despite attempts to replace them with female-actors (Mezur 2005:5).

As mentioned before, kata of onnagata do not necessarily reference femininity, rather an amalgam of erotic appeal characteristic of onnagata. Now a day the body of the onnagata is fragmented into areas that create a link both to the fiction of femininity and to the materiality of the sexed body of an actor. Kimono is intrinsic part of onnagata's performance, the straight lines conceal most of the actors body shape. It is especially prominent when onnagata strikes poses, which use the lines of his body and kimono as extension of the overall line and space design of the stage decoration and other characters. Face is heavily made up to resemble a mask and at the same time makeup of the high-ranking prostitutes. Same goes for the costume, which is similar to female costumes, but with more pronounced paters and exaggerated accessories. Body of an actor completely defuses within the geometric shapes of the costume. Nape of the neck, hands and feet are the only raw parts which the spectators see. These are the same body parts which also are seen when a woman wears kimono, and therefore have an erotic significance in case of heterosexual desire.

These fragments invite Lacanian analysis as *objet petit a.* The transitional object fetishistically replaces and suggests the completeness of a "woman" that expands from such

object. Lacan theorises how man and woman are interdependent ontologies which within the context of patriarchy construct male as an active subject. "In Lacan's psychoanalysis, the partial object (*objet petit a*) creates a connection to the hidden/non-existent whole, temporarily satisfying the desire to replenish the fundamental lack. Costume, or emphasis on a certain body motions, like movements of the hands or feet, construct a (whole) femininity – an object of desire – through focussing on a single part of it" (Evans 1996: 221-222).

It allows the man to overcome his own fundamental lack (which arises from separation with mother) by fixating on the illusion of the "woman", which he derives from *objet petit a*, as a temporary substitute. Combining this with Bulter's theory of performativity, the fragments that serve as *objet petit a* may vary and be juxtaposed in any number of ways, without any specific one element necessitating the illusion of femininity to be more or less valid. One may speculate that this includes a female sexed body. In contemporary onnagata's case the male body, acknowledgment of it or suspension of disbelief are multiple means of engaging with onnagata's performance. Male body out of which onnagata's gender acts arise exists in a liminal space, as I noted, onnagata art divided into two main artistic approaches, beautiful onnagata who used their own charm and onnagata who used kata to create performance of beauty. These two artistic approaches are further expanded with contemporary onnagata performance. Explicitly their liminality and ambiguity is revealed in the two cases, of Tannosuke III and Utaemon V, demonstrate the cases of partial objects in onnagata art.

Tanosuke III who lived at the end of 19th century, was injured in his early 20s as he performed a torture scene, as a result his legs and parts of his hands had to be amputated. He went on to perform for another 10 years, adjusting the kata to suit his condition. He could only kneel on stage and had to hide the disfigured hands in his sleeves, which he nevertheless manipulated masterfully. He rejected artificial substitutes, such as gloves or prosthetics, choosing to manipulate the costume draped over his mutilated body (Mezur 2005: 125). The balance between the beauty of his face, concealed disfigurement of his body,

and simultaneous imagined femininity and wakashū allure brought the public to tears. Utaemon V similarly had a sickness that left his legs paralysed, and had adjusted the kata around his kneeling body to great success (Mezur 2005: 127). In each case, their actual sexed bodies could not be (conventionally) eroticised as objects; however, their performances of female and wakashū charm became even more independent and powerful. They embodied the ultimate fetish that was constructed through the gaze of the audience and completely took over the bodies, the spectator found gratification in fantasy that could never be fulfilled.

Onnagata are professionals at commanding and channelling the gaze of the spectator, their performance is geared towards being perfect object. On the stage, where Cartesian perspective of a monocular camera lens does not exist, onnagata possesses an arsenal of close-up techniques that draws attention to their presence and performance, even in the scenes led by male actors.

Just like fragments of onnagata's performance may lead the spectator to see them as feminine, at the same time, the same elements may lead the gaze to recognition of the erotically charged male body of onnagata/kagema. Relationship between onnagata and spectators gaze changed significantly in modern times. The distance between the spectator and the actor grew exponentially, moreover now a day homosexuality is no longer a commonplace factor in attraction of onnagata. As a result, the homoerotic element acquired novel reading. Onnagata presents a text that acquires meanings between onnagata and the audience. The body is fragmented into a variety of symbolically charged elements that diversifies possible perceptions both as signifiers and on the level of the affect:

> The idea of the body beneath is virtually inseparable from how an onnagata is perceived by spectators. Spectators interact in their imaginations with the onnagata's surface articulation and his body beneath. A spectator's perception of the body beneath is shaped by individual, cultural, racial, class, and sexual differences. [...] They may experience desire and attraction, loathing and revulsion, or any number of feelings, all of which are charged with personal and cultural taboos. [...] Without the viewer's awareness that onnagata are constructing and enacting a female-likeness with a male body beneath, there is no kabuki onnagata (Mezur 2005: 9).

In modern kabuki heterogeneity of onnagata onstage performance and offstage performance is more prominent. Contemporary onnagata are no longer socially separated from a patriarchal male. However, their representation in mass media is still strongly influenced by suspicion towards their gender. Shifting to modern kabuki and modern onnagata, I would like to analyse media persona of the most celebrated contemporary onnagata – Bandō Tamasaburō V. Tamasaburō is a rare case of contemporary onnagata who focussed almost exclusively on female roles throughout his career. He expanded his creative pursuit beyond kabuki. He performed with modern dancers and played female and male roles in films. He is hailed as above human, hard-working, living for the stage only.

Tamasaburō's off-stage persona is carefully crafted. When he wears suits, they always appear a little bit too big for him, suit shoulders hang off his narrow frame, the sleeves are rolled up a little bit, or pants seem too long and baggy. When he wears a male kimono, it is very tightly shut around his body, allowing no sliver of extra skin to be exposed. Contrariwise, due to his off-screen hobby of diving, it is not uncommon to come across his photos in swimming trunks or in skin-tight diving suits. In the special Tamasaburō-centred edition of popular hobby-magazine *Waraku* (2009), on the last pages his smiling face appears to show his more human side, yet the text infers that his diving is an example of how he overcomes human limits, indicating he dives without oxygen tanks at the age of 63.

The visual representation of Tamasaburō's image is therefore dependent on the male body beneath, however, the masculinity of it is not eroticised. Moreover, this male body is inadequate, uncomfortable in the gender role of the male, hence, the unfitting suits. The elaborate kabuki costumes arranged onto his body, on the contrary, appear as an extension of his persona. Tamasaburō looks perfect, complete, and erotically alluring only when the body is moulded into the on-stage image. Costume completes and extends what is constructed as his interiority by the discourse around him.

Kabuki today aims at an educated, affluent, middle-aged audience, who are fostering their nostalgia for idealised past and aspire as connoisseurs of traditional arts. A look at the ticket prices, twice or three times more than any other theatre (including Noh) supports this assumption, as does the scheduling of the performances in the morning and early afternoon, when working people cannot attend, unless it is a weekend show. Nevertheless, Tamasaburō still manages to sell-out within days[100].

He appears frequently in *Waraku*, a life-style magazine that introduces traditional culture and expensive pastimes. There he is posed as expert on art, aesthetics, and femininity. He is shown delighting in traditional hobbies, gorgeous costumes, small trinkets, makeup, and a variety of lady-like activities. A 2009 special photo-book edition of *Waraku* magazine dedicated to him was titled *Bandō Tamasaburō: subete wa butai no bi no tameni* [Bandō Tamasaburō: Everything for the Beauty of the Stage].

Tamasaburō's eroticised on-stage images appear to be mostly aimed at affluent middle aged women, who assert their agency over these images. His recent anniversary edition photobook *Tokubetsu aizōban: Godaime Bandō Tamasaburō* [Special Edition: Bandō Tamasaburō V] (2008) included a piece of a kimono he wore on-stage, an imprint of his face makeup, and an autograph, all arguably very personal and erotically charged attachments. This luxury edition is still available for 500.000 yen through his web-page on demand[101].

Looking at the magazines Tamasaburō appears in, otherworldly presence yet non-threatening objectified masculinity, it is not far-fetched to suppose, that his image is largely aimed at female audience. Tamasaburō's role as an onnagata puts him in position where his sexuality is popularly suspected. But this too is not a trait that is aimed at homosexual male fans, but rather adds dramatism of forbidden to his outward austere image. To the generation of "good wives, wise mothers", he is unthreatening masculinity, open to objectification. In a

[100] Tamasaburō's Kyoto *Amaterasu* show in 2014 sold out within a week.
[101] http://www.tamasaburo.co.jp/goods/index.html

sense he lends himself to similar analysis as the bishōnen aimed at the shōjo readers of the 1960s-70s.

PART 3 Chapter 2: Onnagata: Critical Gender Representation in Seinen Manga

3-2-1: Onnagata and Bishōnen

Onnagata in Seinen Manga

Historically seinen manga branched away from gekiga – manga aimed at older male audience, with violent and erotic stories and realistic depiction. Gradually it became a middle-ground between shōnen and sexually explicit material aimed at adults, offering complex narratives in a variety of thematic genres. Frequently it is hard to differentiate between some lighter seinen and more adult shōnen narratives apart from furigana that helps shōnen readers with complicated kanji. The limit cases differ with explicit sexual contents and violence and portray older protagonists. Seinen is separated into magazines according to how heavy, violent or sexualised the stories are. Consequently, certain magazines are more open to inviting female readership. There are also magazines (like *Morning, Ikki, Comic Beam*) that are specifically famous for publishing narratives with overt elements of fusion that expand both contents and formalist conventions. In recent two decades seinen gradually changes from narratives that aim at male readership and are read by female readers who accept masculine narratives as a "universal story" (as Berndt puts it) to narratives that overtly adjust to the female reader, while aiming to primarily satisfy the male reader. However, as Bauwens-Sugimoto notes, these changes in expression did not necessarily alienate male readership, who remain primary target audience. I suggest that one significant reason for such acceptance is that elements addressing the female reader acquire new

meaning within seinen framework. The tropes is worked into the narrative as a part of it, rather than citation, and the meaning is expanded as it moves between the genres, without necessarily changing the form of the trope itself. Respectively, seinen manga uses the core specificity of manga as a media – a potential to generate multiple readings, and caters to the widest audience by fluctuating between gendered addresses, while refraining from completely cutting off one or another audience[102].

As a case-study for this Part I explore seinen manga about kabuki by Tanaka Akio and David Miyahara *Kabukumon* (Morning 2007-2010) from the perspective of direct depiction of critical topics and characters representative of shōjo manga in seinen manga. I differentiate between citations of female genres, intrinsic critical potential of seinen, and non-critical direct reading of *Kabukumon* as a story of protagonist who triumphs over his competitors.

Kabukumon is one of several titles about kabuki that had been published as seinen manga in the recent decade. All of them portray onnagata with ample details that introduce different historical and social aspects of onnagata existence and image. However *Kabukumon* is the most articulate example of title inclusive of shōjo manga tropes that do not break the fabric of seinen manga. In other words, the same symbol acquires different meanings existing simultaneously in between seinen and shōjo contexts, catering to both.

Before *Kabukumon* I look at two examples which use image of historical onnagata. One is *Juntarō* by Murakami Motoka (*Big Comic* 2010), the other is *Kabuki Iza* (*Comic Beam* 2011-2014). One portrays onnagata via explicitly seinen tropes, and the other overreaches into shōjo manga losing its seinen consistency. Both titles use specifics of historical onnagata gender to inform their narratives. These two examples demonstrate two opposite approaches to the introduction of new themes in seinen manga.

[102] Bauwens-Sugimoto does not define specifically which theory of the female gaze in particular she bases her analysis on. From the context it is understandable, that female gaze is a gaze that objectifies male characters in manga, even though Cartesian monocular orientation of camera, that Mulvey relates to objectification is not present in manga.

Realistic Onnagata in Seinen Manga and Bishōnen Onnagata

Juntarō is quintessentially seinen, created by the best-selling author Murakami Motoka, it offers a psychological portrait of onnagata protagonist. The character was traumatised as a child and later finds himself in the middle of political intrigue in Meiji period. Reminiscent of modernist literature, major historical events are depicted from the perspective of a struggling individual, demonstrating how one life is swept away by the hostile currents of politics and intrigue.

Murakami is popular across genres and has a significant female following[103]. His manga *Juntarō* (*Big Comic* 2010) has many elements that appear similar to shōjo manga; it has an onnagata protagonist, homoerotic scenes, cross-dressing, and internal monologue of the protagonist. However, it does not read like a shōjo title. The precise linework, realistic character and background design, as well as the plot and monologue/dialogues all appear to serve an objective narrative that places an emphasis on the distance between the reader and the character instead of suggesting identification.

Although the reader is privy to first person narrative of the protagonist, the tone of it and depiction differ significantly from shōjo-manga. Murakami Motoka has a very precise style, strict panel layout and realistic character design with moderate realistic facial expressions. His style in *Juntarō* is a limit case example when comparing seinen and shōnen manga. There are no symbolic evocative elements, or bodies extended and merging into flowing lines that invite the reader into character's experience. Primarily all action is depicted from an objective vintage point. The reader is placed as an objective judge of the character. Character's five senses that are emphasised as part of emotional component in female genres are also unavailable. There are very few shot-reverse-shots form character's perspective that would provide insight into how he experiences the world around him. Shot-

[103] especially after the popularity of his time-slip title, *Jin* (*Super Jump* 2000-2010)

reverse shots depict what the character is looking at, but not what and how he sees it. Even when he is having sex or is gravely injured in the end, it is the levelled outside view of him in the physical realms of rooms and scenery that prevails in depictions. This manga does not visually use plastic and structural depictions to create a hierarchy of the character's actions[104].

Interiors of rooms, panorama of the city, and other precise structural scenery maintain the objective perspective, fostering detached understanding without emotional involvement. Characters are placed in precise backgrounds, with excessive panoramas, expositions and other shots that reiterate characters in historical spaces.

This lack of emphasis on emotional identification with the protagonist is the prime indicator that this manga does not address readerships of mainstream female genres or younger readers in general. At the same time, precision and clarity of sequence makes the title generally much more accessible to a reader who is not familiar with comics and manga.

Juntarō focuses on the onnagata's off-stage persona and his involvement in a political intrigue. Protagonist does not dwell on femininity[105] or question his gender; stage is an escape for him from reality. The dance poses mostly are used as chapter covers or a mood-setter, exemplifying the elegance and fragility of the roles, which echo the complex and vulnerable psyche of the protagonist torn between political forces. When Murakami depicts the *Sagi Musume* (Heron Maiden) dance in more detail, he follows a series of static recognisable poses (*mie*) which are used within the dance to display onnagata as an object, a combination of beautiful lines and surfaces. As a result, the dance looks static. While the movement would draw the reader viscerally into the motions of the dance and lend to the sensual understanding of characters feeling, Murakami makes the reader watch from outside and focus on the semantics and symbolism[106].

[104] I refer to my analysis of sexual scenes in Kaze to ki no uta, where visual representation that creates scene of intimacy with visualised emotions and distance with focus on physical body.

[105] Although his excessive beauty lands him in trouble, when he is attacked as a child, as a result he is given a knife by his father to protect himself. Next time he attacks his assailants, proving his manliness and making friends of his former tormenters.

[106] Kabuki uses a lot of stop-motion poses, likened to a close-up or a zoom of the camera by some theoreticians. When the actor momentarily slows down to create a striking static line on stage. These poses

While there is little strain between onnagata's gender and his sexed body and no confusion on the part of other characters, physicality itself plays an important role. Juntarō is mesmerised by historical onnagata Tanosuke III, who was disfigured after a gruesome accident during the early days of his career and lost his legs and parts of his hands. Juntarō glimpses Tanosuke's performance as a child. He is smitten with complete dedication to the stage of a man who is rolled out in front of the audience on a small wheeled platform. This injured disfigured body commands the awe of the audience and for Juntarō Tanosuke becomes a symbol of absolute triumph of art over reality. In the end of the narrative, protagonist loses one of his arms, and uses his costumes to conceal that, as he continues dancing, like Tanosuke. It is not the maleness of his body that is problematized, but his broken body that can be complete only on the stage.

A more pronounced example of queer gender in this title is present in historical recreation of maonnagata – Juntarō's father. He lives his life in female costume, fluctuating between all facets of historical onnagata gender. He is a caring father to Juntarō, and he sells his own body to feed and shelter Juntarō. Later, however, he talks about taking his son's beloved girl for his own lover. He is bisexual and he recalls how in his day, he started out as *iroko* (boy-prostitute). However, these facts are depicted as information, without any sensual insight into his motivations and emotions behind his complex conflicting actions. The lack of insight into father's interior makes him another surface, which remains impermeable. Objective, structural depiction also makes this fascinating gender construct unlikely a citation of female genres. Distance from female genres is also visible in overtly misogynist treatment of female characters. All women in this title are powerless pawns without distinct personalities; they die one after another giving motivation to the protagonist.

Juntarō does not rely on the recognisable elements of soulful body or genre as a database to supplement the narrative. It is an example of seinen manga's critical potential

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frequently can be seen pictured in glossy photographs, which are sold in theatres between the performances and grace the covers of photobooks. The poses are beautiful, but they are the static part of the dance.

and its independence of database. *Juntarō* integrates onnagata character into seinen narrative, without any apparent citation of female genres. The result is a character that has a fascinating complex and doubtlessly emphasised non-patriarchal gender, compliant with bishōnen-gender. However, he is viscerally inaccessible and does not invite identification. I suggest the distance this manga creates extends to male readers as well. Of course it is open to the female mode of reading, but I suggest this title as an example of seinen onnagata that is not addressing the female reader plot-wise and in visual representation.

Kabuki Iza[107] is an example of the opposite, published in *Comic Beam*, a seinen magazine renowned for its experimentation with style and expanded contents. This manga visually looks like shōjo manga or even boys' love manga due to its character-design, panel layout, emphasis on identification with character's emotion, as well as the plotlines itself. The story is emotional, flamboyant, romantic and filled with homoerotic elements. The only reference to seinen manga in this title is the fact it was published in seinen magazine.

However, it is also indicative of where the trend of female mode of address may be going. *Kabuki Iza* and other similar titles demonstrate that these publications expect their male readers to be privy to the female genre tropes, expanding the scope of gendered expressions that male readers are accessing within their own context. Arguably, the label seinen is what allows the male readers to access these new expressive modes without social stigma associated with reading female genres. I will expand on this in Part 4 on example of a shōnen manga that overtly offers a sympathetic pastiche of female genres and builds its humour on recognising the parodied shōjo manga tropes.

Kabuki Iza (Comic Beam 2011-2014) by newcomer Sakura Sawa gives a light-hearted view of Edo kabuki. Gender-fluid characters with ambiguous sexualities are placed in elaborate costumes across excessively impressionistic panel layouts. Stage performances are a blur of costumes, flamboyant panelling, and close-ups, resembling onstage depictions

[107] *Kabuki Iza* is currently listed and boys' love on amazon, although it does not contain a homosexual plot.

of *Pintokona*. Both titles do not necessarily aim at education about kabuki, although both Sakura Sawa and Shimaki Ako base the elements they do depict on adequate research.

Sakura Sawa has above else a distinct aesthetic linework that translates into flowing soft character design. The line is a figure in itself, its beauty and softness is emphasised as an artist's trademark. Character's feelings are constantly highlighted, with elaborately decorated shot-reverse shots and eye-close-ups.

Yanosuke, the onnagata is portrayed as Edo Period onnagata, in other words, he is not a cross-dresser in the full sense of the word, but is depicted as a separate gender from male and female characters. He wears female costume, delights in accessories, works as male prostitute, and at the same time he is brash and cheeky friend to the protagonist. His overtly masculine/boyish personality is obviously a deliberate contrast to his alleged feminine status. The historical depiction of onnagata in this title is recognisable as bishōnen through the way he is visualised in panels with flowing linework, flowers and decorations that accompany his emotional inner monologues. Contrastingly to his beauty, his acting style is aggressive as is his actual rude and mischievous personality. The embodiment of onnagata gender consists of the way he wears kimono loosely, juxtaposing beautiful poses with brash manly behaviour, sitting cross-legged, flailing in anger etc. Sometimes the shaved pate of his head is revealed; sometimes long hair is brushed over it. He behaves and is depicted as a bishōnen, both an object of the gaze and subject. His gender is not represented as confusing to other characters; rather as Edo period setting would suppose, he is accepted in all aspects of his existence as onnagata.

However, the author does not necessarily exaggerate rather than elaborates on the historical truths of the queer gender of onnagata. Opposite to *Juntarō*, where visual depiction supports onnagata character as historically accurate rather than draws upon representation tradition of bishōnen, Yanosuke is foremost a bishōnen, and being an "accurate" portrayal of historical onnagata "excuses" his presence in seinen manga.

These two examples do not emphasise onnagata as a cross-dresser or explore him in and out of costume. Because kabuki changed greatly between the Edo, Meiji, and contemporary eras, my main examples are set in modern day, allowing more representational consistency as well as supporting my main emphasis on onnagata as a cross-dresser. *Kabukumon,* as will be addressed below presents all the criteria of a seinen manga while also including elements of female mode of address, unlike the extremes of two opposites *Juntarō* and *Kabuki Iza*. Narrative and formalist structures of *Kabukumon* involve all areas of an actor's existence both on and off stage. It has meticulous characterisation and anatomically precise depiction of the stage movements.

3-2-2: *Kabukumon:* Multiple Readings: Between Realism and Citation

Multiple "Femininities" in *Kabukumon*

Below I will look at the most prominent recent manga about kabuki within seinen genre, *Kabukumon* by Tanaka Akio and David Miyahara (*Morning* 2007-2010) through applying LaMarre's notion of the female mode of address and soulful body.

Kabukumon is set in the contemporary kabuki milieu, and is one of several kabuki manga serialised in seinen genre in this decade. It first appeared in *Weekly Morning* (2007-2010) by Kodansha, a leading seinen manga magazine that published bestsellers such as Inoue Takehiko's *Bagabondo* [Vagabond] (*Weekly Morning* 1998-present), but also featured gender-ambiguous titles, such as *Kinō nani tabeta* [What did you eat yesterday] by Yoshinaga Fumi (*Weekly Morning* 2007-present). *Kabukumon* provides precise, factual insight into kabuki and uses Tanaka Akio's anatomical drawing skills to recreate the complexity of kabuki choreography. The physical body of the actors and their movements

are emphasized in a style that is similar to the depiction of intricate fighting scenes in martial-arts and sports manga. However, the scenes are supplemented with internal monologues, emotional motivations, and insights into the characters' complex interior lives and traumas. The drama of the characters is played out through their stage performances.

Kabukumon tells the story of its protagonist Shinkurō, who is a young aspiring tachiyaku[108] with no blood ties to a kabuki clan[109]. He has an exceptional talent that enables him to sense the mood of the audience and bring the stage to life. His trademark is romantic/erotic scenes (*nureba*), which he performs with onnagata counterparts. Shinkurō gets involved in a political battle between orthodox and innovative Kabuki factions. The innovative faction takes interest in Shinkurō's talent and gives him the opportunity to showcase his art. The traditional faction (rien) feels threatened by an outsider of increasing popularity, sees danger to their hegemony, which leans on the patriarchal heredity of the art from father to son. Keeping art in the families promotes the myth of being born with artistic inclination and brought up with tradition. Consequently, subverting patriarchal values, represented by rien, presents similarities to the way Butler deconstructs the patriarchal notion of essentialist gender.

There are four major arcs in *Kabukumon*, introducing different established actors and their skills, each performing a famous play with Shinkurō. Two arcs position Shinkurō vis-à-vis tachiyaku and in the other two, onnagata. These four actors —tachiyaku Sōtarō and Ginnosuke, and onnagata Koishirō and Tsukinosuke, either test Shinkurō's art or attempt to thwart his career. The performed on-stage characters represent each actor's personality. Meanwhile, Shinkurō's changing roles illustrate his personal maturation and the evolution of his art. Shinkurō's talent touches all the actors who perform with him, changing adversaries into friends, making him a link between the traditional and innovative factions. In the end, it

[108] Male role actor.

[109] Kabuki art is mostly transferred within kabuki families, between blood-relatives. The names of famous actors are used as titles within the family-based hierarchy. Sometimes the successors can be adopted into the family.

is revealed that Shinkurō himself is a descendant of a legendary Edo period actor, who propagated the "living art" and changed the kata as he saw fit. Therefore, the traditional faction is obliged to recognise his birth-right, although Shinkurō is advocating innovation. Shinkurō refuses to accept his hereditary status and join the traditional faction, thereby demonstrating that perfected traditional technique becomes stagnant without the emotional involvement of the artist.

I will explore and compare the two onnagata-related arks of the story. The first arc which I will look at, focussed on protagonist's relationship with onnagata Koishirō, appears to have more overt visual citations in depiction of onnagata as bishōnen. Koishirō is beautiful and prone to display himself to other characters in a suggestive homoerotic way. Manga borrows generously from shōjo manga tropes in that way the character is depicted with emphasis on his eyes, lips, and sensual hands. The second arc with onnagata Tsukinosuke looks more like a physical confrontation that seinen manga prioritises, even though is it wrought with sexual tension, which is resolved within a romantic love-hate stage-performance. The arc is more violent, and manly Tsukinosuke does not look like a bishōnen. However, the similarities in development and key-moments of Koishirō and Tsukinosuke arcs, and the way Tsukinosuke as onnagata negotiates the gaze of the audience facilitates reading Tsukinosuke as bishōnen. Furthermore, Koishirō's arc begins the series, setting the potential of reading further materials as addressing female readership. Unlike *Juntarō, Kabukumon* also implies identification potential emotionally and affectively with all these attractive characters, even if they have some negative facets or are hostile to the protagonist in the beginning.

Readers with a common knowledge of generic conventions will most likely recognise *Kabukumon* as a seinen manga. The lines employed are prevalently form-oriented. The character design is aesthetically reserved. The eyes are small and recognisable as Asian, unlike shōjo-manga saucer-eyes with reflections. The male bodies look anatomically

accurate and masculine, even in case of younger, more androgynous characters. Not only are they relatively realistic, *Kabukumon*'s characters do not merge with the background or are extended with elaborate decorative elements. Instead they are fragmented.

Kabukumon has a geometrical panel-layout, characters do no break out of the panels, and panels do not merge into multi-layered collages. Panelling appears structural, though, the rhythm of the panelling changes from scene to scene. Panels become more fragmented when emphasising the complex physical movements and emotions; similar to the slow-motion trope in seinen fighting scenes, there are several spectacular one-panel double spreads and several moments rendered in brush and ink.

Kabukumon does not employ decorative elements such as flowers or sparkles, or the wide use of metaphoric scenery. It also lacks the speed-lines and exaggerations typical of shōnen manga. Characters bodies are depicted getting hurt, exhausted, sick, aging, and dying from disease or old age. All these scenes are depicted without excessive romanticism. The overtly plastic line is therefore rarely used, although it does not mean that plastic function is not being performed by the structural-looking lines.

In *Kabukumon* costumes and character designs sometimes substitute for the decorative elements, speed lines and other icons. *Kabukumon* does not use tone paper for the shadows on characters' bodies and faces, or the solid surfaces; details such as shadows, folds, and creases of the costume are inserted in hatching. While on first glance, the line appears to be a precise signification of the form, the uneven hatching nonetheless adds a layer of physicality to the drawing. The use of pressure to achieve an uneven line adds a level of figural force and tangibility to *Kabukumon*'s materiality as a drawing. Delight in the longer, more flowing lines, and in short-hatching, creates a rhythm. Hatching and lines of the folds of the costumes guide the reader's gaze in the direction of the movement. By adjusting the hatching and its angle the force of the movement is conveyed. Hatching doubles as speed or motion lines, as it is aligned with the angle of the movement. Moreover, the most emotionally charged moments are partially rendered in brushstrokes, which even further

accentuate the strength and direction of the artist's movement. Most frequently, brushstrokes are used on the shouting speech-balloons.

Upon a closer inspection, swooping lines of the body, the body-parts in close-ups, and the repetition of the same element or angle serve the decorative and symbolic function. Elegant line-work typical of Tanaka Akio's works in general arrests the sequence, drawing attention to the aesthetic or grotesque. These lines move the reader, creating emotional and tangible characters, they integrate female mode of address into the fabric of seinen visuals. Combination of visual and narrative with elements of female mode of address presents a variety of re-contextualisation possibilities and meanings.

Consequently, the subversive gender and female address are inserted into a narrative structured as familiar competitive battle scenarios in action seinen manga such as Inoue Takehiko's *Vagabond* (*Morning*, 1998-ongoing) or Tanaka Akio's other work *Shamo* [Shamo] (*Weekly Manga Action*, 1998-ongoing). Tanaka Akio as an artist is mostly associated with action titles in seinen genre. As a result, *Kabukumon* appears to adhere to the seinen conventions, and appeals to a seinen manga readership, yet simultaneously it encompasses several elements of the "female mode of address" inviting the female readership as well. Moreover, *Kabukumon* introduces controversial representations of gender to the seinen manga readership.

Kabukumon presents a variety of characters as identification anchors both protagonists and antagonists are depicted with emphasis on their interiority, and intricate psychological motivations are elaborated upon through internal monologues, as well as through frequently violent confrontations between the characters. Seinen too frequently uses internal monologues as a tool to reveal the psychology of the characters. Depending on the visual tools with which it is combined, monologues are not necessarily recognisable as a female manga trope, yet a combination of emotional monologues with aestheticized slow-motion sequences in *Kabukumon* appears to harken back to the staples of shōjo manga.

The theme of subversive gender which is representative of the "female mode of address" is an underlying current throughout the whole series. In *Kabukumon,* all protagonists are male, and there is no love-related plotline in the off-stage part of the narrative. Instead, romance is replaced with onstage performed romances. On-stage romance becomes almost homoerotic as actors are shown to develop on-stage infatuations with each-other beyond the roles. On stage, Shinkurō has two onnagata love interests: Yoshizawa Koishirō and Namiki Tsukinosuke, who represent the liberal and orthodox kabuki factions respectively. Koishirō remains a recurring character after appearing in the second volume, and his story spans two tankōbon-volumes. Tsukinosuke's arc is last and spans almost four volumes of the tankōbon out of eight-volume serialisation.

Although the lack of female characters might appear misogynist and typical of masculine genres, at the same time the way the quasi-romances are developed and character's gender-roles divided in this manga is reminiscent of boys' love. In BL I would argue, the male bishōnen plays in alternation all facets of gender, so a distinction between male and female becomes obsolete, and the female protagonists become redundant.

As opposed to *Juntarō,* in *Kabukumon* the attention is constantly drawn to the alternative gender-constructions of the protagonists their contextualisation of femininity, and the balance of power between them. *Kabukumon* onnagata arcs are full of binaries that metaphorically convey gender and power-hierarchy. The on-stage image of a woman that onnagata actors create reflects the characters' interiority. However, there is no unified femininity in *Kabukumon*. The two onnagata play two very different female role types: a beautiful courtesan and a disfigured vengeful ghost. Correspondingly, Koishirō is inspired by the beautiful acting of Shinkurō, while Tsukinosuke is full of hatred and desires to prove his agency. Koishirō becomes Shinkurō's mentor and, contrastingly, Tsukinosuke is led by Shinkurō to become a better artist.

I will follow in LaMarre's[110] steps and examine the dual power-relationships of the protagonists through Lacanian and Butler's theories. To do so I will look into the way Lacan explores dialectic relationship of subject and object. I will focus on the role of costume as partial object, mediating the gender of onnagata and shaping the representation of the other protagonists' gender through relationship with onnagata.

Costume as *objet petit a*

LaMarre specifically focuses on the "woman" as an inconsistent construct within patriarchal discourse, which symptomizes man's relationship to the phallus. In his analysis he focussed on the gender of male protagonist vis-à-vis female shaped android (LaMarre 2009: 205, 230). However, I will look at "woman" that onnagata creates as a symptom of onnagata. I will combine it with insight into the power-relationship that onnagata enters with the male protagonist.

The phallus is signified by "woman's" lack of it; correspondingly, subject is signified by object being looked at by it. Object of the gaze and subject of the gaze, "woman" and phallic man are the driving dichotomies of patriarchal discourse. In Lacanian analysis the object is formed in response to desire[111]. It reflects the desire. However, object cannot fulfil the desire, because object has no natural core, it is only a projected construct. It symptomizes the man who seeks it out. For Lacan object is same as "woman". Not a female sexed body, but a female sexed body that is through discourse shaped into an object. It is impossible to truly possess the object/"woman" because an actual woman cannot embody the

[110] I focus on the costume as the primary gender defining factors in narratives without explicit nudity. Costume that addresses the female audience was explored by LaMarre and also highlighted by Bauwens-Sugimoto. Onnagata is dependent on the costume, both actual onnagata, and especially the onnagata in manga are dependent on the costume to mediate, contradict and communicate the various facets of their gender. Previously I looked at how Oshiyama explores the elements of costume and accessories that extend the character's body and define certain scenarios and emotions as gendered through costume. LaMarre analyses specific depiction of the costume which becomes a part of "soulful body" that addresses the female readership from within seinen manga.

[111] The fundamental lack stems from the incest taboo and separation from the mother, from the initial oneness that in Lacanian and Freudian terms is the ultimate trauma. The Law of the Father separates the man from the mother, destroying the oneness with the mother, the sense of wholeness, which is then replenished by attaching to the partial objects. Furthermore, woman signifies the phallus by her quintessential lack (Lacan 1975: 41-44).

man's desire seamlessly. The object can only promise the fulfilment when it is not reachable (Lacan 1975: 41-44). Woman, by acknowledging her subjugation, accepts a man as the phallic authority, signifying man's possession of the "phallus". A man is therefore in a dialectic relationship with the woman. However, this relationship is illusionary, in Butler's terms an inconsistent performance that is bound to fail, as it is reiterated between these two heterogeneous contexts (Lacan 1975: 41-44; Evans 1996: 221-222).

Costume as a part of soulful body in female mode of address is analysed by LaMarre as partial object. He suggests that because there is no sex[112] in shōjo manga, the gaze slides over a shōjo costume away from the physicality beneath. Visualised through the costume, interiority overcomes the physical body. The boy, who is looking at shōjo, is therefore not a phallic man, but it at the stage of relying on partial objects for masturbatory purposes (LaMarre 2008: 230).

Objet petit a (partial object) appears as an aid in transitional stage of a boy becoming a phallic male. Partial object implies an object without giving the boy a mastery of it. Costume, eroticised body parts, movements of the hands or feet, construct a (whole) femininity – an object of desire – through focussing on a single part of it. It appears in instances where actual sex is unavailable, and serves masturbatory pleasure. It does not yet establish a boy as having mastery over a woman, but is a transitional stage at which the boy learns to perceive a "woman" as an object[113]. The partial object (*objet petit a*) creates a connection to the hidden/non-existent whole, temporarily satisfying the desire to replenish the fundamental lack[114]" (Lacan 1975: 41-44; Evans 1996: 221-222).

[112] LaMarre underplays that Chii's (un)sexed body is what shapes her and Hideki's sexual relationship. He ascribes this absence of sex to "female mode of address" (LaMarre 2009: 224) [112]. I emphasise how Chii's physical body of a robot dictates her rules in this relationship. While the costume draws attention away from the fact that Chii is not female, because she is a machine, it is the body beneath that guides the narrative of celibacy, agape, belonging. Chii's body and unstable gender shapes the relationship with Hideki, making the agency fluid between the two of them. As a machine, Chii is extremely powerful, but this facet of her is supressed by her learned "girl" aspect. The "girl" aspect is interrupted with the mechanical unattainable make up of her body.

[113] When a man enters a relationship with "woman" as object, and establishes sexual dominance over her, sires a child, he socially is seen as having the phallus, a symbol of patriarchal agency

[114] "Phallus" is a symbol of agency, the unity with his mother gave the boy agency. This agency is lost when mother is claimed by his father.

I will analyse "woman", created by onnagata in relationship with the protagonist Shinkurō, and in relationship to the onnagata themselves. Both onnagata in *Kabukumon* embody their multifaceted gender through dressing their sexed bodies in male and female costumes. Multifocal movement of the gaze within the narrative is visualising the connection between the costume and the body beneath the costume. I combine costume as *objet petit a* and LaMarre's concept of the "soulful body". I further analyse its structural and plastic functions.

> [...] the "soulful bodies" [...], bodies on which supposedly inner states, spiritual, emotional, or psychological tensions and conflicts are directly described, appearing on the surface in character design, implying potential movement of the body and of the soul.
>
> [...]
>
> In fact, character design, especially when it comes to soulful bodies, always implies an intimate relation to clothes and accessories. (LaMarre 2009: 264)

Both Oshiyama and LaMarre focus on the way costume visualises emotions and facets of character's personality. The costume can be an extension of the "soul" of the body, the costume styles and character's personalities are matched. The costume can become plastic, flowing and merging metaphor and extension of interiority.

Ishida, however, describes the precision with which early shōjo manga artists recreated backgrounds, settings and other artefacts of the world to ground ephemeral characters. *Rose of Versaiiles*, *Kaze to ki no uta* and other historical pieces place significant focus on the costume, these elegant dresses position characters in the historical period and geographical location. Consequently, precise historical costume makes character physically tangible.

Sexed Body of Cross-Dresser

I combine these perspectives: the costume as visualisation of interiority and the costume as a part of physical reality of the character. I pay attention to the way the clothes

behave in concrete situation to distinguish between plastic and structural functions as well as analysing the overlapping of these functions.

In *Kabukumon*, while doubtlessly lavish, the meticulously depicted costumes reference the actual plays and add realism to the representation of kabuki. On the other hand, the roles themselves are used metaphorically, and alterations to the costumes and makeup, reveal the actors' internalising the roles to solve their conflicts. While costume is a part of the diegetic physical reality, the fragmentation of it and reiteration of its elements substitutes for what in shōjo manga would be a flowery background that draws the reader into a character's interiority. Characters pay a lot of attention to the costume as a material to visualise their understanding of the role, like Shinkurō changing his costume of Einojō, which changes an image of a gigolo into a dashing romantic hero, or inventing the ghostly makeup for Iemon to express his vision of the role without breaking the physical kata. The way the costume is depicted, and the costumed body is depicted through the panelling, fragmentation and other visual conventions combine the symbolism of the costume in kabuki and in *Kabukumon* through symbolism in manga.

In kabuki costume and make-up symbolically represent the character's role type, personality, and social position. Alterations and manipulation of the costume conveys the emotions of the character. At the same time the costume frames body parts that are symbolically feminine, such as the nape of the neck, hands, and so forth. It draws attention to these parts and away from the masculinity beneath. Costume therefore is a partial object. Yet, the erotic parts of the onnagata's body are the same parts that may reveal his masculinity, as his costume also frames his masculinity. Costuming in kabuki is a text that presents the audience with a variety of possible meanings with which to engage.

For a cross-dresser the costume makes the body into an object of the gaze, yet the body itself embodies agency and shapes the relationship. Interplay of costume and sexed body visualises the dynamics of agencies. As a result non-patriarchal gender comes into being to accommodate relationship with the cross-dresser.

On this basis I take a step further and create a wholesome picture of the way costume defines and mediates the sexed body of the character and his gender. Since manga is essentially a compilation of abstract lines and signs, the sexed body is performed on the same level as gender. It is constructed from fragments of visual and textual information, fragmented and mostly never revealed completely.

I suggest looking at the costume as a part of gendered embodiment, in Butler's sense. The body is shaped to represent a social experience (gender, profession, income, etc). The gap between the embodied experience of gender and the sexed body is what presents the actual mechanism of gender performance. Therefore I insist that costume needs to be analysed in relation to the sexed body. And for this purpose, one also needs to pay attention to how the body is depicted, fragmented, clothed, undressed, etc. Depicted parts of the body as well as the absence of depiction of certain parts of the body are all important elements of character's physical and "soulful" presence.

PART 3 Chapter 3: Case-Study *Kabukumon*

3-3-1: Onnagata Koishirō: Femininity as Agency

Fluid Agency

Yoshizawa Koishirō appears very early in the story, in tankōbon he is introduced at the end of first volume. He brings Shinkurō into the big politics of kabuki world. He rose to his position through his effort and talent, despite having no blood-relation to a kabuki family[115]. Koishirō is interested in Shinkurō's art and gives him a chance to prove his worth. At the same time, Koishirō intends to use Shinkurō to showcase himself in favourable light.

[115] Koishirō's character setting appears to be referencing a current leading onnagata, Bandō Tamasaburō, who also had been adopted into a kabuki family. This is apparent from the many Tamasaburō's publicity photos which are used as models for Koishirō's portrayal.

Yoshizawa Koishirō partially references Yoshizawa Ayame I and Bandō Tamasaburō. Koishirō appears to follow the onnagata image inspired by Ayame's writing and Tamasaburō's image as well in being an outstanding actor yet an outsider to the rien. Koishirō casually extends his onnagata persona to all the areas of his life. He believes in living art, and does not gender the emotions that he portrays, bringing them from within himself; therefore he can sustain his onnagata persona offstage as well. His main principle is not "femininity", but "beauty". He demands that everyone maintain "beauty" in their performances. Echoing Ayame and Tamasaburō, he turns every emotion into art through aesthetic symbolism and stages his persona among elegant backgrounds on and off stage.

The concept of "beauty" and "living art" dominates Koishirō's arc and Koishirō's image. Like Tamasaburō, Koishirō's media image is a connoisseur of the tradition. His lifestyle includes a variety of traditional pastimes. Koishirō is sexually ambivalent and makes gay innuendoes. When he is shown in the company of women—e.g. he is entertained by several elderly geishas—no romantic affiliations are implied. Koishirō makes passes at Shinkurō instead, because he finds his art beautiful.

Hierarchically, in Koishirō and Shinkurō's relationship the latter is in an irrevocably subordinate position. Koishirō takes him under his patronage, and even offers to adopt him and pass on to him his name, further complicating attempts to locate the phallus in their relationship. Yet Shinkurō refuses. Koishirō also sets in motion a plan to reveal Shinkurō's actual heritage as an heir to the famous Edo period actor, protecting his charge and subverting the power of rien.

Kabukumon reinforces the contrast of Koishirō's fragile, eroticised looks and ambivalence towards patriarchy with his decisive role in the backstage politics of the Kabuki world. His powerful and controlling internal monologue clashes with his exterior of elegant onnagata.

Off-stage interactions take less space than on-stage action in *Kabukumon*, though there are enough such interactions to provide wholesome characterisations. Stage scenes also serve as dramatic metaphors for characters emotions.

Apart from onnagata costume, Koishirō is presented in *Kabukumon* off stage in several male attires. When he is discussing business he is wearing a black suit, constructed from direct solid lines. When he is entertaining Shinkurō, he has taken his jacket off and his shirt-collar is undone, with the line full of small folds and crinkles. Koishirō wears a light kimono during the repetition and in his dressing room that accentuates the nape of his neck, hands and feet. He is never shown without his clothes; the absence of any type of nudity or semi-nudity reinforces the androgynous mystique of onnagata. It is contrasted to later depiction of nude and semi-nude Tsukinosuke.

All Koishirō's outfits emphasise body parts that onnagata displays on stage as "feminine". Face, nape of the neck, hands and feet. Throughout manga Koishirō is always depicted with close-ups of his eyes and lips. In fact he is the only male character whose lips are shaded in, similar to how female made-up lips are depicted. Generally, these reiterated close-ups are focalised from the perspective of the mesmerised Shinkurō.

When Koishirō wears masculine clothes, he is sometimes slips into his onnagata persona. These shifts are revealed by fragmenting his body into alluring segments, and the same body parts are depicted in a panel next to it, but in stage-costume. Such expositions are placed within shot-reverse shot sequences from the point of view of the onlooker. In other words, other characters, "see" his face transform from the suited male Koishirō into Koishirō dressed as one of his elegant female roles. In the episode when Shinkurō first meets Koishirō, a bigger panel shows Koishirō's "male" face that is then fragmented into eyes and lips with makeup. These fragments come together as a whole in a single-panel page of Koishirō

wearing a costume of a courtesan's role-type[116]. This panel fragmentation structure is repeated every time Shinkurō comes face to face with off-stage Koishirō (Tanaka, Miyahara 2008, vol. 2: 66-67).

Shinkurō latches onto the partial objects that Koishirō manipulates. Koishirō invades Shinkurō's personal space, until Shinkurō can only see the fragments of him, as they are too close. The visuals of manga construct close-ups through fragmented small panels of reiterated body-parts (Tanaka, Miyahara 2008, vol. 4: 132-133). This is then followed by a larger panel that displays them both in a humorously compromising homoerotic position. Exactly because of the fragmentation and primary focalisation of the narrative from Shinkurō's point of view, an awkward equilibrium of heterosexuality is maintained. For the reader as well, the narrative is suspended between the recognition of homoeroticism or satisfying oneself with partial objects that allow reading Koishirō as a "female" in the instances of confronting onnagata.

Analysis of *Kagotsurube*

Shinkurō and Koishirō perform *Kagotsurube*, a romantic play about the courtesan Yatsuhashi (Koishirō), who flirts out of mercy with the country bumpkin Jirōzaemon (Sōtarō). Jirōzaemon falls in love with Yatsuhashi and pursues her only to be rejected. After his rejection he kills Yatsuhashi and her beloved Einojō (Shinkurō) with the famous sword Kagotsurube. Yatsuhashi is a *yakugara*[117] (role-type) of the *oiran*[118] courtesan, who loves a (frequently undeserving) man, but cannot be with him, and meets her demise because of this

[116] A redrawing of Tamasaburō's photograph as Yatsuhashi

[117] *Yakugara* (role type) is a concept comparable to LaMarre's soulful body. Character is visually represented through regulated costume and props for a specific type of personality and social setting. Role-types gain personality through the actor's input.

[118] Kabuki female roles are role-types, characters who symbolise one aspect or another of socially sanctioned femininity (prostitute, wife, young innocent girl, tender princess, old woman, tormented female ghost etc). *Oiran* is the main incarnation of femininity on the kabuki stage. A woman, but a construct to purely attract the male gaze and desire, *oiran* had been an icon from which the onnagata art was derived. Yoshizawa Ayame, the 17th century lead onnagata actor left in his notes the guidelines for future onnagata to learn from courtesans to be always an image of youthful, perfect beauty.

love. The courtesan is the most erotically flamboyant role-type, supplemented with exaggerated costumes and elaborate wigs in order to mesmerise the gaze (Mezur 2005: 148).

In Kabuki, the costume helps to physically integrate the actor's body into the play's aesthetic; it shapes the body, indicates the character's role type, and implies affiliations with Kabuki families. Similar to manga, costume is also utilised as a visual metaphor for the emotional state of the character by being manipulated, distorted, and undone.

Koishirō's lean, pliant body naturally morphs into an elaborate courtesan's costume. As he dresses, various parts are fragmented in separate close-up panels: made-up face with covered hair, kimono, wig, uchikake, obi, and then shown as one whole (Tanaka, Miyahara, 2008: v.2, 172-173). Koishirō's personality slips behind the grand exterior of Yatsuhashi, bringing her to life from reiterated visual conventions. The costume and the fragments of the costumed body can be read as partial objects that anticipate the whole, and conceal the whole at the same time (Evans 1996: 128). This precise fragmentation that focusses on onnagata's "feminine" kata makes the femininity of the onnagata temporarily possible, flickering from one fragment onto another. While the semblance of a woman is created through performance, it is revealed as inconsistent, fragmented and unrelated to biology.

The manga character Koishirō embodies elements of the kabuki discourse on the female and feminine through emphasis on costume and movements. He constructs "femininity" by driving attention away from the physical wholeness of his body beneath the costume. Fittingly, the "woman" that Koishirō creates symbolises his overcoming of the sense of lack imposed upon him by the patriarchal rien.

Kabukumon combines the visual language of kabuki with the conventions of manga[119] to create the performance on stage of an onnagata, not of a woman, but of a man

[119] Oshiyama Michiko, in her analysis of masculine and feminine conventions in shōjo manga character design and setting, breaks down the body of the character into feminine and masculine elements: long wavy hair, big eyes and long eyelashes indicate the feminine; a square face with shorter hair and narrower eyes the masculine. Moreover, these gendered elements can fluctuate in the depiction of the same character, changing

who is channelling a fantasy of the constructed feminine. While the panel layout is rather geometrical and paced, the emotionally charged, or aesthetically striking moments are depicted with minute detail through fragmentation of the body. This is clearly noticeable in the first scene of Yatsuhashi's appearance on stage. Yatsuhashi is performing *oiran dōchū* (courtesan parade) – one of the key-images of *Kagotsurube*. Koishirō's feet are stressed as an element of erotic appeal, as he performs the *hachimoji* (figure eight steps). The deliberate dragging of the tall wooden clogs in the hachimoji pattern is a part of the actual oiran parade, and on the kabuki stage one of the most recognisable onnagata sex-appeal elements. In *Kabukumon* this kata becomes the emotional pinnacle of the scene through reiteration, the slow-motion effect, and close-ups.

The motion is elaborated throughout the whole page first on page 176 (Tanaka, Miyahara 2007, vol. 2: 176-177), and then again on page 192 of the second volume of tankōbon. Moreover, an almost 10 page sequence is punctuated with panels of the clogs. The first is described from the perspective of the spectators watching the onnagata, while the second employs the perspective of Jirōzaemon: he sees Yatsuhashi making a show of the hachimoji, then turning around and smiling directly at him. Koishirō is depicted as creating a montage of his body through kata that symbolises an ultimate expression of sex-appeal: whitened bare feet[120] in tall clogs, a mesmerising gate, accentuated by the movement of the costume and finally an unexpected smile.

Manga constructs a montage of physical elements, which are strung together with an emotionally charged monologue. Throughout the whole sequence, Koishirō's internal monologue reveals that he is at all times in control of his creation; he commands the stage by using fragments of the constructed colourful and tragic female to attract the gaze of the spectators. Koishirō overcomes his trauma of never being accepted by the hereditary world

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according to the character's emotional state and in the context of interaction with another character. Physical characteristics are further correlated with the costume and the movement of costumes (and bodies). Frills and lace with flowing lines indicate feminine characters, straighter lines and "uniforms" signify men (Oshiyama 2008: 165-170).

[120] Courtesans traditionally did not wear *tabi*-socks.

of Kabuki through being accepted by the audience. Koishirō manipulates the spectators yet at the same time he reads them, and adjusts his performance constructing an artistic balance between himself and the spectators.

When analysed from the perspective of the "female mode of address", shōjo conventions come to light. To begin with, the theme of beauty and decadence prominent throughout the arc is narratively supportive of such reading. Koishirō's beauty also resonates with shōjo manga or even boys' love. However, looking at the specifics of representation and gaze dynamics further veiled citations become more noticeable. One of them is conditioning the subject through manipulation of the gaze by the object. In the clog-scene specifically, Koishirō reveals his competitiveness with the actor Sōtarō, who plays Jirōzaemon. Sōtarō, as Koishirō puts it: "imposes his art on the spectators" (Tanaka, Miyahara 2007, vol. 2: 193). The authoritativeness of Sōtarō's art stems from his connection to the traditional lineage-based system. By contrast, Koishirō takes pride in becoming a star through negotiating the gaze of the audience, partially adjusting to what the audience wants to see, and at the same time guiding and manipulating the audience. Koishirō accepts the injurious name of the outsider, yet uses it to create his legend, and reconstruct it as a position of power. Moreover, he literally, does it through attracting and manipulating the gaze of the spectators, by presenting himself as an eroticised object.

Ishida Minori analyses a similar gaze dynamic as crucial for male characters in female genres and especially bishōnen in boys' love. Ishida elaborates on the ways that a character, which is depicted as an object, is not just looked at, but also actively displays himself. The object thereby acquires agency in as much as he/she decides how to show oneself, whom to and for what reason. The object of the gaze returns and conditions the gaze, moreover, as both bishōnen are male, the object can switch to the subject position within the same relationship or with a different partner. Objectification and being objectified become

volitional positions endowed with agency that transcends the binary phallic hegemony (Ishida 2008: 72).

Einojō is Yatsuhashi's *himo*, a lover, whom she supports financially, in effect a gigolo. As the play progresses, Shinkurō is enthralled with Koishirō's amazing Yatsuhashi, her grace and beauty. He decides to reinterpret Enojō as a man worthy of Koishirō's Yatsuhashi. Koishirō's performance of femininity makes Shinkurō disregard the fact that the body beneath is male. Therefore the onnagata appeal in *Kabukumon* is addressed not only to the spectators but to the fellow actors as well. Koishirō is in return touched by Shinkurō's beautiful performance. The actors consummate their mutual artistic climax with an on-stage ad-libbed kiss (Tanaka, Miyahara 2008, vol. 3: 42-43). Such deviation would be impossible on the actual kabuki stage, but *Kabukumon* introduces the kiss as a symbolic element which represents how the living art is negotiated between the artists' technique, empathy with the character and faithfulness to the audience's desires.

The "beauty" power play is continued into the finale in the scene of Yatsuhashi's death, when Koishirō competes for the spectator's attention with Shinkurō's character Einojō. To win back the audience, Koishirō folds backwards into the *ebizori* pose[121], and this single movement is stretched over 10 pages (Tanaka, Miyahara 2007, vol. 3: 154-164). While it displays femininity at its most vulnerable, it is an extremely strenuous exercise, especially with heavy costume and wig. The manga display combines symbolic vulnerability with extreme physical ability. The sublime eroticism of Koishirō's male body that is suspended between vulnerability and agency holds sway over spectators. The whole page is dedicated to the way the foot and bent knee support the weight of the whole body, draped in the long kimono that opens up seductively to reveal the undergarment (Tanaka, Miyahara 2007, vol. 3: Tanaka, Miyahara 2008, vol. 3: 161-162).

[121] *Ebizori*: a pose when kneeling on one knee the actor bends backwards, almost placing his head on the ground. The pose is typical for onnagata, it is symbolic of erotic surrender, or death.

On the following double-spread, a brush painting of Koishirō shows him dissolving into an ink cloud, out of which a thinly traced face and hand emerge. The perspective changes from Koishirō's point of view to that of the spectators'.

The pinnacle of artistry overcoming the materiality of the performer's body is repeatedly depicted through single panel pages and double spreads. The figures fade into the white background, as in the kissing scenes and in the scene of Shinkurō's throwing himself into the audience in an improvised stage-dive. These scenes appear to imbue the bodies with Plasticity and with a type of immortality that signifies momentary transference onto another plane of existence. These scenes appear to be focalised from the point of view of a spectator (audience and other artist), not the self-image of the actor. While it frames the important moment in the narrative, it also emphasizes the figural beauty of employed visual conventions, such as lines, shading and spatial balance. In the structurally oriented precise style of seinen manga, these scenes are reminiscent of the plasticity of shōjo manga. They serve decorative functions, as well as depict charters, whose interiority extends outside the physical "body". Aesthetic depictions outside the frames, in combination with alternative media, such as brushstrokes and explicit hand-hatching, visualise the soul of the character, or in *Kabukumon's* case, a visualisation of actor's art itself.

The ebizori sequence plays with a contradiction: while Koishirō in his internal commentary recounts how this is his moment to steal the show and demonstrate the true power of his art, the "woman" character is shown to be at the most vulnerable and fragile.

The manga's elaborate fragmentation of the body, its attention to the foot and the clog, or on the hands and the opening kimono, appear to play the same role as the flowers and collages supporting internal monologues in shōjo manga. Its fragmentation illuminates the strain of the muscles, and this emphasised physicality allows the reader to affectively experience the movement. Physical strain represents the emotional peak in Koishirō's internal monologue, the bodily and emotional exertion merge. Furthermore, the physicality

produces a tangible erotic effect when it objectifies the male body (after all, the audience knows that the body beneath is male). The eroticism of the *ebizori* scene is further emphasised through the revelation of the other character's perspective: Shinkurō is shown to be stealing glances at Koishirō in awe.

Koishirō utilises the performance of the "feminine" to first overpower the performance by the "male" tachiyaku Sōtarō, the incarnation of the phallic authority of the kabuki patriarchy. Koishirō's triumph through impersonation of the female character Yatsuhashi positions him as a power outside the phallic hegemony. Moreover, the emphasised synergy of Koishirō and Shinkurō is represented with a romantic act, which fluctuates between material homosexuality deferred through the introduction of partial objects, which imitate heterosexuality, however, superficial heterosexuality does not cancel the warped power-relationship.

3-3-2: Tsukinosuke: Subverted Patriarchy

Woman as Other

While arc of Namiki Tsukinosuke visually appears more masculine and violent, this arc as well presents an elaborate narrative that deconstructs gender binary. It becomes even more potent because of powerful contrast of initial exaggerated masculinity and its transition into new agency that is gender fluid and based on artistic merit. Patriarchal masculinity is presented as obsolete symbolised in a confrontation of "hereditary technique" of Tsukinosuke and "living art" of Shinkurō. In this arc the phallic authority is represented by the high-standing onnagata Namiki Tsukinosuke, who is given the mission to sink Shinkurō's career. Tsukinosuke looks very manly; he is tall and broad shouldered with a

very masculine face. His body is portrayed as male and masculine in a variety of situations. He is also the only character portrayed having rather unromantic sex with his girlfriend.

A plethora of seinen manga tropes that reiterate and emphasise masculinity is involved in construction of Tsukinosuke. Tsukinosuke is not a beautiful boy; he is not even portrayed as handsome. By comparison to other characters, his masculine traits are almost exaggerated, and his behaviour is rude, competitive and imposing his agency. On top of that, he has high hereditary status within rien. In the beginning of the arc every aspect of Tsukinosuke's off-stage persona radiates phallic agency.

This overlaps onto Tsukinosuke's attitude towards his art. Onnagata is just a role for him, a demonstration of technics that he learned from his family. He does not have to dwell on femininity, he just performs the motions. When he portrays onnagata's kata during the rehearsal he looks grotesque, yet compelling. He can appear small and fragile by folding his shoulder blades and bending his knees under his kimono as his movements become delicate and weak. Criterion for Tsukinosuke's femininity is weakness and fragility. Unlike his strong masculine presence, his femininity reminds of LaMarre's description of atomic bomb victims devoid of soul. In the beginning this gives him an upper hand in portrayal of Oiwa a vengeful spirit of betrayed and tortured woman.

Tsukinosuke believes that the strict abidance by kata is the quintessence of the onnagata art. He is technically perfect at reconstructing his body to fit the "feminine" role, switching "femininity" on and off without getting emotionally involved with his character. He therefore distances onnagata performance from his own body and personality. Femininity is "other" to him, it is synthetic construct of submission and weakness, rather than fluid and glamorous ambiguity that Koishirō embodies. Visual contrast of Tsukinosuke's masculine looks, and his perfect imitation of "femininity" reference kabuki's approach, that emphasised kata above empathy with the role. Due to his high status, Tsukinosuke structures whole performance around his skill, demanding from other actors and Shinkurō to synchronise with

him completely. Tsukinosuke dominates everyone, and especially there is no place for Shinkurō's intuitive "living art" on his stage.

Relationship between body and costume, despite opposite visuals reiterates the structure of Koishirō arc. Tsukinosuke's "femininity" is initially achieved through body fragmentation, with the focus on hand gestures. Two rehearsal episodes relate how Tsukinosuke holds the short sword. In the first episode, he elegantly grips the sword with his thumb, slightly cupping the rest of the fingers, to make the hand look narrow and small, so that the sword appears to have no weight (Tanaka, Miyahara 2009, vol. 6: 167-171 [Fif. 19]). The manga contrasts these onnagata hand gestures with glimpses of male sexed body: once he grips the sword differently, he reveals how big his hands actually are. During the second rehearsal, Tsukinosuke performs an attacks with the short sword, but despite the resulting physical confrontation, he keeps holding it in a "feminine" manner, never physically going out of character (Tanaka, Miyahara 2009, vol. 6: 35-38). Similar to Koishirō's clogs which draw attention to the feet, Tsukinosuke's "femininity" is centred on the hands. Focus on the hands temporarily draws the attention away from the masculine body without make-up or costume. The scene is presented from Shinkurō's point of view: he "sees" Tsukinosuke becoming a (frightening and fragile) woman, or returning to being a man.

Tsukinosuke variously attempts to demonstrate his superiority and the superiority of his conservative art to Shinkurō. However, Shinkurō appears inspired by Tsukinosuke's talent instead of being humbled, proving that he is a "threat" to Tsukinosuke. Shinkurō's talent puts Tsukinosuke into a position of constant anxiety of losing to a new-comer actor. As this anxiety escalates, Tsukinosuke's patriarchal power starts deteriorating. Gradually Tsukinosuke develops a neurosis, his hierarchical position is questioned by Shinkurō, and he cannot help but to reflect and respond to Shinkurō as the Big Other. Power-balance tips in favour of Shinkurō.

In the beginning of the arc, Tsukinosuke is shown having sex with his female lover, but later even his erotic drive is lost due to identity crisis Tsukinosuke experiences (Tanaka,

Miyahara 2011, vol. 7: 58-61). He also starts high in the hierarchy of the conservative faction, but is discredited in the eyes of his superiors due to his inability to discredit Shinkurō.

Together with Shinkurō, they perform *Tōkaidō Yotsuya Kaidan* – a horror story about the ruthless villain Iemon, who poisons his wife Oiwa. Disfigured and disoriented by the poison, Oiwa accidentally stabs herself in frenzy. She turns into a ghost and haunts Iemon until she drives him to his demise. Both contents of the play and the demise of Tsukinosuke's health and sanity are depicted in violent detail. The physical violence counterbalances the gender ambiguity that is at the core of the arc.

Tsukinosuke's arc selects accurate depictions of kabuki that emphasise gender ambiguity and interlaces them with seinen-centric depictions of hard-core violence. As a result, the seine mode of address maintains consistency for a male reader, at the same time opening the narrative to the female readers. *Kabukumon* utilises *Yotsuya Kaidan*, as a gender ambiguous play. It is one of the roles, that allows the onnagata to choose whether to show more femininity or masculinity. Oiwa's character in the beginning is a proud beauty, who falls in love and marries Iemon, a ruthless villain. She is poisoned and is transformed into an ugly demon. Traditionally there are several ways to portray the transformation scenes, and following vengeance. Onnagata may choose to emphasise the femininity of Oiwa, and portraying the monster's tragic "beauty". Another way is to construct Oiwa's derangement and otherworldly quality through revealing masculinity of onnagata, merging the genders to convey the discrepancy and duality of her image (Mezur 2005: 150).

Respectively, Tsukinosuke starts with an image of weak submissive femininity that is contrasted to his masculine looks. However, through the awakening of his art, he ends up merging with Oiwa and finding Oiwa within himself, as a part of his gender, not a discrepancy, but as harmony.

For Shinkurō, it is a journey to understanding the kata, and finding the humanity beneath technicality of kata. He starts by imitating the kata to fall in step with Tsukinosuke's lead. However, it does not satisfy him. Therefore Shinkurō goes on a spiritual journey to find the emotions beneath kata, to learn how the kata were established. And since his role is a villain, he gradually loses himself in the quest for death and destruction. He seeks help from his ancestor, who appears to him in a vision, and guides him to the understanding of kata. Iemon is a ruthless villain; therefore Shinkurō's quest is full of violent episodes, depictions of physical violence and sickness. Shinkurō almost kills himself, exhausting and starving himself. Shinkurō manages to let his art complete the established kata, breathing emotion into the performance. Mutual antagonism brings to life hatred, pointless violence, and gruesome retribution of *Yotsuya Kaidan*.

As Tsukinosuke's hatred escalates, the on-stage action arrives at the sequence of Oiwa's metamorphosis after drinking poison. This episode combines seinen and shōjo tropes. Visually this scene is represented as monstrous and violent. Disoriented, Oiwa goes through the ritual of a wife preparing to meet her husband. She blackens her teeth, and puts on lip rouge. But her fragile movements and her initial stage of transformation create a jarring dissonance (Tanaka, Miyahara 2010, vol. 7: 5-7).

The manga dedicates six minutely panelled pages (Tanaka, Miyahara 2010: 7-13) to the crucial moment when Oiwa brushes her shedding hair. In this manga representation of *Yotsuya Kaidan*, Tsukinouke is shown manipulating his wig, brushing the long heavy hair that sheds in chunks and falls to the floor. Finally he hides behind his hair, brushed forward over his face and finishes the transformation of his character while hiding behind the wig. The face that emerges from under the flow of black locks has a bald forehead and a swollen tumour over the eye, appearing completely deranged.

The erotic act of brushing the hair, a marker of femininity and sexual appeal, is contrasted with the grotesque image of the monster. The way the *Kabukumon* panelling

stretches the moment before the final revelation appears to emphasise or even exaggerate the initial kata. Similar to Koishirō's arc, the slow-motion sequence is a setting for emotionally charged internal monologue, in which Tsukinosuke demands to be killed by Shinkurō. Tsukinosuke sees Shinkurō as superior artist; in an attempt to restore his dominance Tsukinosuke wants to sacrifice his own life for his art. As a result, he experiences a complete mental break down, putting the production in danger. The monstrous and tragic becomes an object to fascinated spectators' gaze. Similar to film noir femme fatale's hysterical breakdowns, Tsukinosuke seeks the gaze of the audience and gaze of Shinkurō as his psyche is crumbling.

Woman as "Self"

Tsukinosuke's hatred of Shinkurō, who becomes a symbol of his own insecurities, merges with Oiwa's hatred to the extent that he starts to embody Oiwa beyond external representations of gender: in the climax, he starts to see himself as Oiwa in the mirror. However, discovering Oiwa as a part of himself is not the demise of his sanity, rather it turns out to be a new artistic height for Tsukinosuke. He accepts being looked-at, and he breaks out of the kata (Tanaka, Miyahara 2011, vol. 7: 58-61).

Through identifying with the character, Tsukinosuke overcomes his breakdown and returns to the stage. More full-body shots and close ups depict a Tsukinosuke who is no longer shifting "femininity" between fragments of his body, but this "feminine" performance is an extension of his actual emotions. The face and eyes become very important. Panel layout is starkly different from Koishirō's arc. Action fluctuates between close-ups of the face and full body-shots. The costumes cease to be stage-props and become symbols of the emotional state of both Tsukinosuke and Shinkurō, surrendering structural function to plastic.

The hatred escalates, and culminates in Tsukinosuke attempting to kill Shinkurō. As Oiwa's "ghost" is lifted on the ropes, Tsukinosuke clings to Shinkurō. As a result, both are lifted holding onto each other on the ropes above the stage. Tsukinosuke threatens to drop Shinkurō to his death, and Shinkurō is ready to die for his art. As passions escalate the more and more plastic elements are introduced, the decorations on scene change into metaphorical scenery, background and characters merge, and disappear. Focalisation alternates between spectators in awe and two actors lost in each other's passionate art. Spectators see them hanging over the stage, however both Shinkurō's and Tsukinosuke's perspective has no background, only the two actors remain, facing each other. In a heightened moment, as they recognise their identical passion for art, hatred is replaced with admiration. The precarious harmony is expressed in a kiss, turning the horror scene into *nureba* (love scene) (Tanaka, Miyahara, vol. 8: 72-77). However, unlike the seduction of partial objects in Koishirō's ark, the internalised new power-balance of Tsukinosuke, surrendering himself to Shinkurō and to the art, appears to make the scene even more homoerotic than kiss between Shinkurō and Koishirō. Oiwa's vulnerability and desperate desire for vengeance that resonated with how Tsukinosuke saw Shinkurō, who took his position and security abot his art from him transforms. In the adlibbed ending both Iemon and Oiwa are seeking and finding each other, respect for their mutual art.

Tsukinosuke initially appears to "perform" the feminine as "other" which he can physically imitate, but does not emotionally empathise with because he sees himself as superior to other actors and to his female role. Through the painful process of relinquishing his faith in the patriarchal hegemony of rien, Tsukinosuke transcends the otherness of constructed "femininity" and internalises Oiwa's emotion as a part of himself instead. While the merger of Tsukinosuke with Oiwa starts off as a weakness and almost breaks him, it turns into strength. Transference from one gender into another corresponds with Tsukinosuke's exemption from the patriarchal hierarchy and his entry into a new fluctuating

non-phallic power-structure. On the one hand, he learns how to negotiate femininity within himself, similar to Koishirō, on the other hand Tsukinosuke becomes an ally with Shinkurō, who represents new power-formations in kabuki. As a result he reaches the ultimate goal in the *Kabukumon* value system – living through his art.

Kabukumon appears to have been designed to appeal to several audiences. It facilitates several different engagements with the text. As a result it offers a product that creates a common ground for different readerships. For each readership, new tropes are being introduced, while familiar tropes open the narratives to their readings.

Tanaka Akio depicts his onnagata by visually presenting a balance between different meanings of the same sign. The interaction of Shinkurō with onnagata leans towards the homoerotic, and the reader knows for a fact that these are male characters. On the other hand, the femininity of the onnagata is constructed through Shinkurō's point of view through shot/reverse shot sequences. Different aesthetic body-parts in fragmented panels depict how Shinkurō is focused on the *objet petit a* and affectively reacts to the "female" form of onnagata. For a moment he perceives onnagata as a woman. Looking from Shinkurō's perspective, the reader is distanced from the homoeroticism by a collage of forms that signify "female", and the cognitive awareness of onnagata*'s* masculinity is overridden with the affective power of form.

The narrative trope that defers and allegedly resolves the [homo]sexual tension is humour. When Shinkurō regains awareness of the masculinity of onnagata, the humorous exaggerated panic he experiences also implies that onnagata was female to him at the moment of erotic attraction. The eroticised and aestheticized fragmented body may be read at least through the two filters of the homoerotic and the heteronormative. The same sign references two databases simultaneously; the same partial object implies two imagined objects of desire: (1) objectified male form through the female gaze, or (2) the male transformed into female form through selective focus on partial objects. In other words,

while I read *Kabukumon'*s potential to challenge the gender critically, it is also possible to read *Kabukumon* without participating in gender-critical reading.

Furthermore, in regards to plot-development, overall ambience of physical violence and competitiveness maintains *Kabukumon's* consistency as seinen manga. Narrative patterns are generally similar to seinen and shōnen manga, where the protagonist is developing new skills as he faces new opponents. The effect is further strengthened by the visual conventions of dynamic physical action. Although most of the fight moves are replaced with the kata of the kabuki performances, *Kabukumon* has depictions of the swordfights and a variety of physical violence perpetrated by Shinkurō's adversaries. Therefore, inclusion of the female mode of address does not disrupt the possibility to read this title as seinen manga[122].

In this chapter I focussed on a critical potential of manga that addresses queer gender. The structural and visual similarities between the Koishirō and Tsukinosuke arcs establish a set of symbols that *Kabukumon* uses to explore gender. Focus on hands or feet, fragmentation of feminine movements into small panels, shot-reverse shots showing how Shinkurō or other characters see the onnagata momentarily as enchanting and desirable, etc. These "feminine" elements are opposed to internal monologues that express desire for control, political power, artistic dominance and other "masculine" desires that emphasise agency and dominance. In all four arcs as well the on-stage roles are used as metaphors for the character's personality and symbolise the human conflicts of the protagonist. The narrative of competition and winning or losing, subsequent changes in position in the power-structure of rien, these repetitive motivations deliberately sustain characters as seinen manga cast.

[122] Not like Yoshinaga Fumi's implicitly homoerotic *Kinō nani tabeta*, published in *Morning* as well, or Mori Kaoru's *Emma*, with its female protagonist, or Shimura Takako's *Hōrō Musuko* (2002-2013) about transsexual boy and girl, both published in the more gender-innovative *Comic Beam*.

Therefore, in case of onnagata arcs it is safe to assume gender is deliberately emphasised. The chimera-like gender of the cross-dresser is portrayed as the "real" gender of the actor/character. In Koishirō's case, the "woman" he portrays is depicted as a part of him, which he adjusts to the role. Meanwhile, Tsukinosuke discovers "woman" within himself, and with that acquires new agency. Both "women" resonate with the characters internal conflict. And these two arcs are the most prominent in the narrative, as Koishirō is the only recurring prior competitor, and Tsukinosuke's arc is final and longest. Each of the arcs ends with cooperation and understanding that both characters have their merits that add to a great performance. Shinkurō's flexibility, ability to adjust and cooperate, to feel his co-performers and the audience is what ultimately triumphs. After all, his name is "Shinkurō", which in Japanese sounds like "synchro-(nise)".

Quasi femininity stands in for a variety of social issues, and bigger conflict of orthodox and innovative kabuki factions. Affiliation with the "feminine" is revealed as a position of power beyond the patriarchal hegemony. Outdated patriarchy is subverted and the gender as a binary is deconstructed. Correspondingly, the protagonist's journey to revolutionise the patriarchal kabuki world begins and reaches its climax through associations with onnagata: one guides him; the other is guided by him.

All these elements are reminiscent of more critical shōjo manga titles, reintroducing gender-queer themes as well as unstable agency and power-relationships. However, in *Kabukumon* they are integrated seamlessly into seinen narrative. Character design, violence and physicality provide context for a seinen manga reader to engage with *Kabukumon*. For a reader of female genre, citations of bishōnen should be relatively clear, facilitating the reading as boys' love. Especially Koishirō arc is suited for such consumption; but generally the whole manga would be easily accessible as well. However, being able to read *Kabukumon* as boys' love or a title in female genre does not mean that it will be read critically from this perspective. As I mentioned before, it opens the title to reading it as homoerotic, and titillating, with energy of competition being easily translated into sexual

tension, which is realised with kisses within the manga itself. Which is a popular trope in female genres.

Finally, *Kabukumon* educates the readers about kabuki. *Kabukumon* introduces kabuki milieu, plays, explains *kata*, and even briefly introduces historical information. Comprehensive portrayal of Kabuki, clear sequencing, reserved visual tropes, that are self-explained within the narrative are all able to facilitate interest from a reader who is not necessarily privy to the complex databases that drive shōjo or shōnen. As mentioned prior, seinen manga appeals to wider readership, even readers who do not casually read manga.

To sum up, in Part 3 I demonstrate how a combination of visual tropes and recognisable narrative settings in *Kabukumon* appears to address female reader. Tropes, such as bishōnen, queer-gender, homoerotic episodes, internal monologues, lush costumes, and others open the narrative to reading as boys' love manga. Representation of queer gender and homoeroticism as well as gender-fluid characters are frequently associated with earlier shōjo manga, such as The Magnificent 49ers which facilitated critical reading. However, I question if contemporary critical potential is directly related to these tropes as citations of female genres.

Contemporary shōjo manga is no longer expected to be critical, the critically acclaimed authors are mostly seen as somewhat outside of mainstream, and they frequently venture into seinen genre as their careers progress. The gender-critical tropes that are related to the legacy of the 1970s have long since acquired new meanings within shōjo genre, mostly serving as erotic triggers and exotic decorations. In current atmosphere, such reading by female readership could be primary to any critical interest. Reading *Kabukumon* as boys' love does not mean its critical potential is being unfolded.

Moreover, in titles such as *Kabukumon* or *Juntarō* the quasi-citations are individually established within specific complex narratives, and do not necessitate

recognition as citations. I suggested former shōjo tropes gain a renewed critical potential because they are placed within seinen genre. *Kabukumon* therefore offers a variety of readings including: as an action and violence dominant seinen manga, as a spicy love-hate boys' love, or as a criticism of binary of gender or patriarchal society.

Kabukumon is an entertaining, action-packed narrative that follows an established competition-based formula of martial arts seinen manga. Elegant kabuki is intertwined with violent and destructive emotions that frequently are expressed with physical violence and cunning plotting against the protagonist.

Kabukumon within the context of this research is a clear testimony to the profound change that is happening in the gendered expression in manga genres. In Part 4 I shift my focus to look at another subversive facet of fusion genres. In this chapter, I look at how the fusion narratives open the new modes of expression and themes to the male readership and expect recognition of citations. I argue that fusion genres may be theorised as the forums for radical reimagining of subjectivity beyond heteronormative and patriarchal dichotomies. However, it still happens within the cautious framework of performativity as inherently ambivalent meaning construction.

PART 4: Cross-Dressing Bishōnen as Alternative "Self" in Shōnen Manga

In Part 3 I looked at seinen manga that represents critical topics and themes reminiscent of the early shōjo manga from a perspective of inclusivity of various audiences. Within less database-dependent seinen narratives the tropes that are cited and address specific audience, are integrated and reinterpreted within the context of the narrative and can be easily accessed by readers who are not aware of these tropes as citations.

Until now focused on the critical potential and traced the possibilities which the cross-dressing trope presents as inherently harbouring subversive potential. In the following chapter I will disconnect fluid positions of subject and object from the gender binary, and instead look at the construction of the gendered character, a gendered genre, and a subsequent gendering and self-gendering of the reader as elements that are mixed with a variety of other elements that constitute and contradict agency.

My next example *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* by Hirakawa Aya (*Weekely Shōnen Sunday* 2009-2014) builds a comedy on parodying tropes of female genres. It expects the readership to be able to recognise the tropes specifically as citations in order to enjoy the humour of the jokes.

I look at changes in visual aesthetics, narrative emphasis on emotion rather than action, and alternative image of male protagonist that extend definition of masculine content. However, this change is facilitated by retention of the patriarchal terminology that guides this consumption. Labelling these titles as masculine preserves the well-established hierarchy between "universal" masculine and auxiliary feminine contents.

PART 4 Chapter 1: Bishōnen as Protagonist of Shōnen Manga

4-1-1: Genre Parody in Shōnen Manga

Kunisaki Izumo no jijō

Kunisaki Izumo no jijō by Hirakawa Aya ran in *Weekely Shōnen Sunday* from 2009 until 2014 and has had 19 tankōbon volumes released. Although it is not the longest run for a shōnen manga, it is still a significant length that indicates popularity. The site of publication of *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* implies that it is a shōnen manga, and Kunisaki Izumo is its male protagonist. However, the predominantly pink colour scheme of the covers with a lavishly and colourfully dressed girly-looking Izumo, embraced by other male characters might suggest otherwise. Leafing through the volume, however the clean linework, comprehensive panelling, chibi-deformation, speed lines, icons, plastic violence, and fanservice-like moderately naughty depictions, re-establish it as shōnen manga.

The cute girl in lavish costumes adorning the covers is the male protagonist of this title, who is a cross-dressing onnagata. *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* works gender-queerness into the conventions of shōnen genre using the protagonist's misogynistic views and his striving for masculine agency as a punchline of cross-dressing jokes. At the same time, it builds a lot of its jokes on visibly borrowing visual conventions from shōjo, boys' love and moe genres, juxtaposing visual expressions for more pronounced comedic effect.

In *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* the depiction of Izumo on-stage, off-stage and when he sometimes cross-dresses casually, are all visually separated. The rhythm of paneling, the design of Izumo's face and the decorative details and fragmentation fluctuate between references to shōnen genre, shōjo genre and moe genre. As an accessible parody *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* utilises most casually recognisable shōnen, shōjo, and moe genre tropes to

create parody. Consequently, it demonstrates general preconception about genres which largely overlap with the way volumes on manga proper talk about genres as well. For example, *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* uses shōjo-manga borrowed flowers, sparkles and decorations that evoke characters' finer emotions. Panelling that resembles female manga however appears gradually with more shōnen-like panel layout in earlier volumes that becomes more and more complex as the narrative develops. Gradual change in panel layout demonstrates how the author guides younger readers through the narrative, teaching how to recognise shift in generic conventions and then how to read more complex emotional layouts. It teaches reader to associate recurring tropes, expression of emotions and specific scenarios with genre.

The plot of the story is making fun of super-hero like narratives, by replacing the hardboiled action with intense acting and romantic scenarios on stage. Faced with his family situation Izumo is forced to perform as an onnagata. However, he clearly sees femininity as inferior to masculinity, and feels antagonistic about being reduced to a "woman" in any respect. His future onnagata mentor Kagato helps him to reimagine onnagata art as a "superpower", Izumo himself as a superhero, and onnagata costume as a "superhero costume" which conceals Izumo's identity as he saves his friends from a variety of [almost purposefully evident] Oedipal problems.

Apart from onnagata "for-the-sake-of-art" cross-dressing, frequently due to some outlandish necessity Izumo ends up wearing casual female clothes. As a result, he has to conceal that he is a cross-dressing boy (to save his manliness). He goes on cross-dressing and tries his best to pass for a girl, until the incident is over, or a big reveal. The story parodies a standard shōnen narrative development: each arc has a new kabuki actor to initiate a conflict with Izumo or his kabuki household, and the conflict is settled on stage through onnagata skills. The narrative is cyclical with similar development of the episodic scenarios. Each adversary/rival/mentor helps Izumo to hone his onnagata skills and is overshadowed by

Izumo in the end. And each episode develops another outlandish excuse to recontextualise cross-dressing as manly.

Izumo incorporates feminine elements of gender performance by giving them alternative meanings that prove his manliness. For example, Izumo sees superiority and competitiveness as manly, therefore he has to excel in onnagata art. On several occasions, he agrees to play female role because it will save his friends (like a "real" man), or because this way he can pay a debt of gratitude. *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* builds the jokes around the construction of patriarchal agency and strive for phallicism, which brings protagonist to reinterpretation and expansion of the sources of agency available to him as onnagata actor and cross-dresser.

I examine how actions and personal qualities (proficiency in art, loyalty to a friend, saving the prestige of the family, and so forth) are attributed "masculinity" and "femininity" in unexpected ways in *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō*. I analyse how these alternative meanings of the gendered elements blur the lines that separate "feminine" and "masculine" into a binary. I will pay close attention to the way gendered conventions are used in representation of the feminine and masculine, how they are juxtaposed, what scenarios are gendered, and how they are gendered.

Before going further into analysis of representation I will introduce briefly contents of the plot. *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* is a story of a 15 year old boy Izumo, who is exceptionally beautiful and has an inherent talent for female impersonation. This talent comes from his heritage as a son of a kabuki family and had been brought up as onnagata from young age. At the same time, Izumo always feels very protective about being a man. He constantly has to protect his masculine status from people mistaking him for a girl. He even has a childhood trauma, he was so good as onnagata that his father (Kunisaki Yakumo) only gave him female roles. Having noticed this prejudice when he was eight years old,

Izumo stopped doing kabuki altogether. Izumo's ends up leaving his father's household with his mother.

The story continues eight years later, when Izumo's mother leaves on vacation and tells Izumo to go back to his father's household. On his way to his father's house Izumo is assaulted by a gang of delinquents. He is saved by elegant and strong onnagata Kagato, who performs with Izumo's father. Father Yakumo asks Izumo to come back to kabuki, but Izumo is against playing female roles. Faith however pushes him into assuming the role.

Unexpectedly his saviour Kagato collapses on the night of the performance, luckily Izumo still knows the lines of the play from the time when he was a child, so performs instead of him. This way, Izumo can mediate his cross-dressing by reinterpreting it as a masculine act of paying off a debt of honour. Izumo's spontaneous performance is a great success, and despite himself the boy ends up enjoying the limelight.

Having made this first step, Izumo gradually and reluctantly gets involved in the world of kabuki and assumes the role of onnagata, although every time he is cross dressing in order to prove his manhood: to repay a debt of honour, to save his household from bankruptcy, to help a friend, etc. There is always a reason that touches Izumo's sense of male pride and honour, or other obligation, which he associates with masculinity.

As with *Pintokona*, *Kunisaki izumo no jijō* skips an extended explanation of kabuki. It focuses instead on the contents of the plays as reflecting their characters' dilemmas and represents the kabuki milieu as an exotic, queer and sometimes conservative world where boys suffer because of having to struggle with Oedipal problems. Most of the conflicts Izumo gets to resolve are between brothers, sons and fathers, problems with the hereditary system of kabuki, and related themes. There are hardly any women involved; a few girls recur from time to time as supporting characters and further comic relief, adding variety to gender-bending scenarios. What is most surprising for a shōnen manga, is that there are a couple of male characters who develop sincere romantic feelings for Izumo throughout the course of the whole narrative, even after they know Izumo is a boy. The cross dressing and

gender stretching elements lend themselves to a variety of homoerotic and gender-queer jokes and situations. The cast of exotic and beautiful boys which might appeal to a female manga readership is constantly growing.

The story even introduces a one-sided homosexual love of character Sae. Sae starts as a silly character who is constantly viscerally responding to the *objet petit a* that constitute Izumo's feminine performance. This tendency grows into a real feeling, which changes from being a butt of boys' love jokes to appreciation and love for Izumo himself. By Volume 17, Sae even confesses and asks Izumo to go out with him, although he is rejected. Furthermore, manga addresses how Izumo feels about being loved by a man. He begins with affective rejection, yet grows to accept and respect Sae for this love, and even question his own affection for Sae. *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* is a developing narrative that presents a stark difference between earlier volumes and later. Tracing the development demonstrates how manga conditions the reader into gradual acceptance of more and more cross-genre tropes.

The typical repetitive narrative structure, with smaller climaxes incorporated into larger arcs and so on facilitates prolonged serialisation. Within these repetitive plotlines *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* introduces and sustains a deliberate visual interplay of several manga styles, direct and obvious citations become a major narrative staple of this series. While using most recognisable widely expected tropes, this title expands and includes more and more cross-genre detail to be learned and further recognised. So, it both relies on rudimentary literacy and expands this literacy. It overtly parodies shōnen super-hero genre structurally, laughs at exaggerated emotionality of shōjo manga, and at the objectifying eroticism of moe and boys' love manga. Specifically, the following three types of generic tropes are juxtaposed within *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō*.

1. Overall framework of shōnen manga dictates a structural panel layout, a fast pace of the narrative, significant gaps between scenes, boyish character design (one-sided grin, spikey hair, brows drawn at the nose), clean linework, use of

icons, chibi-deformations, and plastic violence. Shōnen portrays physical action and externalised emotions (chibi) as well as focusses on emotions of friendship or rivalry.

2. Shōjo manga stylistics in *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* demonstrate: detailed panel layout with emphasis on reiterated emotional close-ups, facial features are "feminised" (longer eyelashes, sparkly eyes), eyes as identification anchors, exchange of gazes, internal monologues, linework extended with flowing costumes, softer lines of the hair, occasional decorative flowers and flairs. Shōjo style portrays the scenes when characters' emotions and their emotional vision of plot events is brought to the fore.

3. Slapstick moe and boy's love (or *shota*[123]) intermissions are recognisable with: single panels of facial close-ups with docile expressions, frequently overlaid over full-body (submissive pose) exposition in a sexy costume. No reverse shots from Izumo's perspective. Visuals include: flushed and glistening skin and face, screen-tone blush and reflections on the "moist" skin, exploitative angles, fanservice, (implied) nude shots, and risqué jokes.

The cross-appropriation of generic tropes, in comedy especially, fluctuates between homage and parody, giving alternative meanings to recognisable tropes[124]. A lot of humour in *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* is based on discrepancy between how situation seems and what it truly is, including gender of the protagonist. Yet on another level, *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* utilises citations with its conventional meaning visually and narratively in emotional scenes. This borrowing and juxtaposition appears to anticipate the audience to recognise references used in this eclectic style.

[123] Shota is a boys' love subgenre, which depicts underage or underage looking protagonists with moe-like aesthetics.

[124] In Part 1 I discuss how Ole Frahm analyses comics as structural parody from the perspective of Judith Butler's [early discourse of] performativity: "I shall argue that comics parody the very notion of an original and therefore of something preceding "beyond the signs". They are a parody on the referentiality of signs[124]." Frahm refers to the specific relationship of text and image in the dualistic media of comics. He suggests that comics parody the presumed relation between signs and objects (Frahm 2001: 179).

It is not the first title to build narrative around genre-comedy. There are quite a few prior examples from shōnen and seinen genres that use citations from shōjo genre for different reasons: as homage (fanservice) to attract female readers, as a brief joke on female reader's behalf, as a pastiche or parody of the genre. Different facets of performativity and parody are used. Parody reveals relational meaning of signs; it is built on a symbol acquiring alternative meanings within different context. As a result it questions the existence of any natural origin for the sign. Parody emphasises literacy in source material, which is crucial to my argument about shifts in gendered contents.

Homage and Parody of Shōjo manga in Shōnen Genre

One of the premises of this Part 4, as mentioned above, is the role of literacy of parodied genre in the success of parody. There are several approaches to inclusions of female manga tropes, I have looked at above. I will situate my current inquiry in comparison to other ways of citation, homage and parody. I will focus on female tropes in shōnen manga. As I mention in the premise of my research in Part 1, I am discussing ways that female genres influence male genres and through this angle I look for the critical potential of manga towards gender.

So far I discussed how more and more shōnen and seinen manga engage with the tropes of the female genres. Subtle citations that attract female readers include developed female characters with more facetime or suggestive camaraderie of male characters. Bauwens-Sugimoto emphasises specific aesthetic and narrative tropes in character setting. She compares character design of the recent hit *Young Black Jack* by Tabata Yoshiaki and Ōkuma Yūgo (*Young Champion* since 2011) to the original *Black Jack* series by the manga legend Tezuka Osamu (*Weekly Shōnen Champion* 1973-1983). Bauwens-Sugimoto emphasises how the character design dramatically changed from handsomely masculine to

lean and beautiful similar to the conventional image of bishōnen in female genres[125]. These are demure citations that do not break out of the mould significantly, expanding rather than radically changing conventional generic tropes.

It has become a mainstream trope in contemporary shōnen genre to include jokes that either laugh at the elements of own genre, or parody other genres, such as female genres sporadically. Especially boys' love inclusions with parodic connotations are popular, such as accidental kisses between male characters[126] (for example *Naruto*) or other similar episodes. Shōjo-manga like decorative flowers or sparkles can be used to emphasise and ridicule character's exaggerated emotions. These inclusions can be read twofold, as homage to female readership, or as a joke on their expense. *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* includes a lot of such jokes.

There are fewer titles that sustain the parodic tone throughout the narrative, especially when borrowing tropes from other genre. Such experiments can easily alienate the core audience, but there are also success stories. Older title *Stop! Hibaku-kun* parodies both romantic comedies and fanservice-like jokes of boys' manga in the 1980s, with extensive playful eroticism. The stylistics of shōnen manga are not in any way compromised either. The running punchline of it is that the main object of all these suggestive jokes is a cross-dressing boy.

While from contemporary perspective the story may appear aimed to attract female readership, within its primary context it appears to mostly aim to ridicule sexy romantic comedies. The setting is a yakuza household with a significant counterbalance of yakuza jokes as well as a risqué jokes with exposing breasts or underwear of Hibari's sisters. The

[125] *Young Black Jack* does not feature any explicit sexual action within the narrative; but it includes highly aestheticized scenes of pain, anguish and torture that resemble orgasmic throes with the protagonist's body bending and writhing under the hands of his handsome male tormentors. Yet the most sexually suggestive visuals are centred on single images of promotional artwork and merchandise. In these images Jack is repeatedly depicted wet with a variety of liquids (including honey) and bodily-fluids (blood, saliva, sweat, etc), and partially or completely naked in order to showcase his multiple scars. He is sometimes shown embracing his older self or his antagonist (Bauwens-Sugimoto 2016). Some readers reveal on SNS how they feel betrayed that all this visual titillation never translates onto the pages of actual manga.

[126] Usually followed by reaction of disgust.

author himself appears to not have aimed at a controversial or critical approach, although, it is rather lenient towards homosexuality and, as Fujimoto attests, gained big female following.

Similarly, Takahashi Rumiko's *Ranma ½* (Weekly Shōnen Sunday 1987-1996) is an unequivocal bestseller shōnen manga based on the premise of a boy protagonist who is cursed to turn into a girl when he is sprinkled with cold water. The result delights all audiences with on the one hand erotic jokes of Ranma's accidental shapeshifting and resulting nudity, and on the other hand – the gender-queer innuendoes.

Recent overt parody of female genres is Mikuni Honemaru's *Tsumi ka batsu* (*Jump Square* 2007-2010), which uses excessive boys' love tropes. *Tsumi ka batsu* is a slapstick comedy about a perverted flower-shop owner Baramon and his long-suffering shop assistant. The shop owner is constantly sexually harassing his charge by taking the boy's nude photos and using them as posters, making cookies that look like his shop-assistant and licking his cookie genitals as well as subjecting the boy to his own nudity at every opportunity. Baramon dresses in elaborate garbs, which he casually takes off in public, exposing his body. He also makes ikebana, using his anus as a vase. To add more flavour, in later volumes the shop assistant's gay masochistic schoolmate joins the cast.

Tsumi ka batsu was serialised in *Jump Square* (2007-2010), which makes it an older tier shōnen title. Because of its publication site, the flamboyantly queer plotlines appear to be an unmistakable parody of the boys' love genre, taking every element of the boys' love genre to its extreme and rendering them ridiculous. A direct reading without the publication context though can easily lend itself to interpretation as a somewhat low-brow boys' love comedy, comparable to classic like *Patariro!* [Patalliro!] by Mineo Maya (*Hana LaLa Online, Melody, Bessatsu Hana to Yume, Hana to Yume Planet Zōkan-gō, Hana to Yume;* 1978 – present). Even the elaborate panel layout, excessive use of decorative elements and occasionally sincere tone seem adequate for an actual boys' love title. Moreover, overt depiction of homoerotic content walks the line between funny and unnerving to what an intended reader of a major shōnen magazine is imagined to be, namely an adolescent male.

The narrative tropes reference boys' love tropes consistently, with complex panel layout, flower-decorations, sparkles and other exaggerated recognisable tropes. The title reveals strong anticipation of a female readership. Yet at the same time, it reflects expectation from the male readers to recognise the parody. In other words, *Tsumi ka batsu* is a shōnen manga that almost passes as boys' love, dangerously balancing its dual nature. It reveals a level of literacy that is expected from the male readers of the magazine.

In the titles mentioned above, narratives use elements of the recognisable body of work of specific genre. These recognisable tropes however are given different meaning, they are not used to depict romance or sexually titillate, but are used to ridicule. In other words, the same sign acquires alternative meaning in a specific context. However, the humour arises only in a situation when the reader is aware of this juxtaposition. Otherwise, implied male audience would hardly ever approach such contents.

Butler suggests that parody as meta-performance reveals that citation ultimately has no tangible origin, as it moves freely between contexts assuming multiple new meanings. It becomes obvious that meanings are relational, and context shapes the way phenomenon is perceived.

It is from the perspective of relational meaning that I shall further look at how in *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* cross-dressing becomes a way for the protagonist to define and assert his masculinity. Foremost, Izumo's male body is a focus for his definition of masculinity. Whenever he is objectified, he lashes back with a phrase "I am a man". The male body is inextricably related to a code of masculine conduct that Izumo follows to honour the privilege that male body gives him. One of the main features is his competitiveness and need to be better than anyone who challenges him.

Agency, competition and superiority that appear at the heart of the phallic hierarchy are frequently the driving powers of shōnen characters. The character's agency is derived from him gradually besting his equals, his teachers and so on. The protagonist of a shōnen

title is destined to ultimately be the best at his chosen area of expertise. This title is not an exception. Izumo is better than anyone else at acting, picks up skills so fast that his superiors are baffled and awestruck. However, his specific skill is acting like a perfect image of femininity. Both as onnagata and in a variety of other scenarios it is instinctual to him.

He does not necessarily compete with other onnagata or women in being "feminine"; rather he competes on stage with his acting skill in general. Being specifically an onnagata clashes at first with his intent, however he contextualises it broader. He aims to be better than anyone in kabuki and chooses onnagata as his expertise. He develops a code of honour that allows him to redefine all the "feminine" acts as "masculine" and as loci of his agency.

4-1-2: Narrative Structure and Dual Source of Cross-Dresser's Agency

Judith Butler: Agency as Performance

Izumo's fixation on continuity between male sexed body and masculinity as agency is exaggerated and ridiculed. At the same time, Izumo's mantra about him being a boy is also what disarms all the homoerotic jokes, making the narrative unthreatening to a shōnen manga audience. Although discussion is not very nuanced, Izumo is attached to the maleness of his body as a filter for any of his own actions. Because he can fall back on this physically tangible source of agency, he is gradually allowing himself more and more experimentation with his gender. It is the interplay of cognition of the body as a source of maleness, which is associated with agency; and embodiment of this agency as a result. However it is the embodiment that in *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* is so unconventional.

Through focussing on male sexed body, Izumo can recontextualise any type of objectified and self-objectifying behaviour. The male sexed body for him is essentially

related to the code of male honour that he follows. He always finds a justification for his cross-dressing acts through following manly postulates such as keeping his promise (work in maid café), loyalty to his family (saving his household from bankruptcy by becoming onnagata), etc. Izumo steadily returns to recounting his male body as a source of his agency; which in itself may appear as a parody of patriarchal agency formation.

As a result, Izumo's gendered behaviour is a combination of fragments of conventionally masculine behaviours, conventionally feminine performances (when he needs to pass as a woman), performances as onnagata which centre around visualisation of his and other characters' emotions. This eclectic gender is placed in-between a variety of other gender-bending and conventionally gendered characters, therefore demonstrating the fragmentality and lack of unity in any gendered performance.

Such self-awareness on the part of the narrative provides a perfect segue back to the discussion of bishōnen and his male body as a source of agency and as an object to the gaze[127]. Now a day such rhetoric is outdated and many of the researchers who penned such theories in 1990s have changed their views. However, what remains relevant, is sexed male body as one of the sources of agency. It is significant as an element of juxtaposed bishōnen traits, such as objectified sexualised body, fluctuating gender performance, volitional and contextual agency and other traits I note in Part 2. As a part of this combination, male body becomes especially important, as it demonstrates the bishōnen as an amalgam of signs that denote subject and signs that denote object. Bishōnen does not have to sacrifice physical body in order to explore a potential of liberated fluid gender. Acknowledging patriarchal fixation on masculinity as agency also does not negate bishōnen's potential to be an object to the gaze of another bishōnen, his female counterpart, or a female reader. Rather it emphasises the subversive potential of this image.

[127] In older discourse of bishōnen, male body is frequently evoked as ultimate filter of agency. For example, very old-fashioned article by Matsui claims, that bishōnen needs male body in order for this "female proxy" to act in society from a position of agency.

When we turn to the discussion of this dissertation in particular, I suggest that maintaining physical male sex as he moves and settles in male genres, bishōnen brings with him a charge of gender-queer behaviour to the male reader, expanding the image of available identification anchors ("selves"), introducing new power-dynamics and structures of agency, yet maintaining his maleness and the assumed intrinsic agency that Izumo refers to.

A protagonist is expected to be the character the reader identifies with the most. Therefore, manga is created with panel layout and many visual tropes opening this character for identification and empathy. He becomes a borrowed "self". As a result, while these new characters are open to the female reader's female gaze they are also new types of agencies for the male readers to identify with.

Drawing parallels between how male readers may read *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* despite queer plotlines, because the genre is stated as shōnen and the way protagonist of the narrative clings to the agency of masculinity of his body, I will explore the underlying facet of critical potential of manga that stems from multiple readings.

The interrelation of sexed body and agency is addressed by Butler in *Giving an Account of Oneself* and *Undoing Gender*. Furthermore, her discussion of the role of sexed body in complex and multifaceted construct of individual's agency is indispensable tool in analysing the modus operandi of Izumo's character. Butler discusses gender as a part of multimodal eclectic structure of agency. She analyses agency formation as a dialectic fluctuating performance based on fragmentation, citation and reiteration.

Butler remains deterministic about the dominance of patriarchal discourse; however, she describes a system of acts that can lead to subversion from within the dominant discourse itself. In *Giving and Account of Oneself* and *Undoing Gender* Butler describes how performance due to its relational and unstable nature operates with patriarchal terms and gradually expands their meaning. Using multiple loci of agency to create a fluid, relational individual source of agency is main tool of subversion. By combining aspects of individual

performance that suggest agency with other aspects that may appear lacking in agency, the lacking aspects are infused with agency. Communal performance of the same aspect of lack (queer gender, female sex, poverty, disability or sickness etc) that intertwines with performances of agency gradually establishes new loci of agency.

Process relates to performativity in general and can be demonstrated on example of parody as a meta-performance. The same sign is used with another meaning; this provokes recognition (in parody frequently leading to a joke). Consequently, this reveals that initial meaning of the sign is also only relational and performative. Performance is less overt than parody. Performance may use a trope, and introduce it within new context, lending it the meaning, however not necessarily provoking recognition of citation.

Butler through her theory of performativity[128] beyond gender, is speaking about construction of the subject in society. She describes the mechanism of the subjection (becoming a subject) as appearing at the intersection of punitive power of dominant discourse and individual choice. Society (The Big Other[129]) validates an individual as the subject – the actor of a deed with social consequences. Of course the framework for validation is the dominant discourse of patriarchy[130]. Every function of an individual within the society becomes a facet of their individual performance of agency: family status, profession, gender identity, sexuality, etc. At the same time the Big Other curbs the subject's agency by being the one validating such agency and manages the context in which the subject is defined. An individual learns to accordingly embody ontology, which defines him/her, by designing his/her physical body to visually signify it (Butler 1997: 84, 91-92).

[128] She defines political power of performativity throughout *The Psychic life of Power, An Account of Oneself,* and *Undoing Gender*.

[129] Butler cites Althusser's theory, focusing on how the Big Other is represented in society as authority beyond a single individual (God, law, patriarchal discourse).

[130] To define the forces that participate within the process and their dialectic interrelation, Butler combines Foucault's theory of the state confining and shaping the subject, with the co-dependant dialectic of the master/slave construct of Hegel and of Althusser's theory of interpellation of the subject (Butler 1997: 84: 91-92).

Butler discusses this process of interaction between the Big Other and the individual being subjected as dialectic. The subject in return validates the Big Other by accepting the subjection.

Butler points out that society sometimes tends to classify individuals on premise of one or another qualification, like a profession, sexuality or race. Depending on circumstances different qualifications may be used to position an individual within a context. However for an individual it is impossible to only ever perform one possible definition of self. Each individual accepts multiple definitions of self, splits them into elements that comprise them, and finally rearranges these elements in novel patterns (Butler 1997: 96-97). Butler emphasises that terms that are available to define an individual as having or not having subjectivity and agency are always patriarchal. However, eclectic performances gradually expand definition of these terms[131]. She sees real change in extending the language and ontology of subject, which leads to re-contextualising the discourse of patriarchy itself. She describes the ways words change meaning and change collective consciousness (Butler 2004:217).

Individual has a power to answer to the terms which are being used to classify them or to not answer. Individual chooses which terms classify them, embodying these terms. The ability to make a choice is the subversive kernel and the way out of the limitations of the binary in Butler's further discussion of agency. She calls it "middle-power" a place where the punitive power of society and individual choice to comply or not meet. It is based on Hegel's master slave dialectic, as an individual chooses to accept the power of the Big Other, or society, or patriarchal discourse over them.

Izumo juxtaposes elements of queer gender performance with a variety of signifiers of masculine performance. In this way, masculinity in his interpretation involves especially

[131] Butler's occupation with language rather than gendered and sexed bodies that were subjected to social stigmatisation and discrimination drew criticism for its lack of consideration of any political and social impact, as discussed by McNay (1999), Jagger (2008) and others. The criticism led to her expanding and clarifying the political implications of performativity theory (Jagger 2008: 98-100).

extensive list of "feminine" acts and traits. He redefines the meaning of onnagata in the process. Another example is *Kabukumon's* Koishirō - a grey cardinal of rien. He embodies concept of onnagata, however him being an outstanding superior onnagata encompasses and even emphasises that he came from outside of kabuki clans. His superior position in rien is a direct consequence of his unparalleled talent as an onnagata. Embodiment of onnagata (self-objectifying) becomes a signifier of his superiority as an actor and his role as one of the main players in kabuki politics.

Judith Butler: Agency of Injurious Name

The punitive function of society labels individual outside of patriarchal coherency with injurious names, this undermines their agency. Such names can be based on minority race, unconventional gender or sexuality, income status and others. Onnagata, cross-dresser, transsexual and other gender-queer performances may be labelled as "fake", unnatural and otherwise inferior genders. Conscious and communal acceptance of labels such as "fake" or "fantasy" gender holds innate power. Similar to the ways "otaku" and "fujoshi" started out as self-deprecating insider-joke, which media forced on them as a derogatory term, which however was again re-appropriated by otaku and fujoshi themselves. Now these terms include a meaning of their strong community, subversive social practices, and consumerist power.

Butler exemplifies with gender-queer communities, such as transsexuals, drag-queens, gays and others. Individuals, who accept injurious labels, gradually form performative communities that support their self-identification and life-style and protect their physical bodies from persecution. The communal bodily performance gives weight to the novel gender. It changes the fake into the real, writing it into the language and providing it with discursive coherence.

> How is it that drag or, indeed, much more than drag, transgender itself enters into the political field? It does this, I would suggest, by not only making us question what is real, and what has to be, but by showing us how contemporary notions of reality can be questioned, and new modes of reality instituted. Fantasy is not simply a cognitive exercise, an internal film that we project inside the interior theatre of the mind. Fantasy structures relationality, and it comes into play in the stylization of embodiment itself (Butler 2004: 217).

The binary terms remain valid but they gradually begin to signify something else. For example, a transexual person's self-identification is accepted as valid; therefore the gender that was supposed to reference the sexed body now refers to bodies which are anatomically diverse (Butler 2004: 67).

In an entertaining and parodic way Izumo changes the definition of onnagata and definition of cross-dresser by juxtaposing a variety of traits that to him signify agency with the behaviours that he enjoys yet sees as inferior in patriarchal context. While Izumo creates elaborate rhetoric to define his emotions of love and loyalty as masculine, this title reveals that Izumo's true power is his nurturing connection with others, concern for their wellbeing, and readiness to help.

So far, I presented several examples of characters in manga who are defined as onnagata and embody it. I looked at how their agency is comprised of aspects that are conventionally seen as lacking in agency (cross-dressing, queer gender, objectified beauty) and the aspects that give them agency (male body, social status, skills in art, physical strength). Such characters are reiterated from one title to another, a plethora of them has a similar agency construction. This defines this new cross-dresser type in manga as a communal performance that expanded and subverted the role of a cross-dresser. This brings us to a related mechanism important to a discussion of bishōnen, as well as gendered genres, that is, the subtle and gradual shift in agency of certain demeaning terms through the aforementioned change in meaning. More than onnagata, bishōnen himself is a character with alternative agency that does not depend on the phallus. And in the following chapter I

will look at the way such bishōnen becomes a protagonist and identification anchor for a male genre.

I examine how the elements of female genres and male genres are visually and narratively defined in order to be juxtaposed and played with. In other words, I ask how the physical elements of manga embody gender. Addressing the multiple readings which arise from such juxtaposition, I will explore how manga communicates with the reader, and what agency it can offer the reader through conflating gendered genres in a cultural product which are gendered by its publication site.

PART 4 Chapter 2: Role of Literacy in Parody

4-2-1: Parodied Tropes

Shōjo, Moe

To begin with, I look at the way parody is constructed in *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* starting with recurrent parodied tropes. I analyse the tropes that reference moe, boys' love and shōjo genres to determine their specific construction and terms of application. Next I analyse how they are used in the plot: 1. as material for the trademark jokes, 2. as integrated into the narrative with similar meaning as they have in shōjo manga. Consequently, I analyse, what scenarios are gendered and how and what scenarios are emphasised, what role they play in the narrative.

In *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* there is a significant visual difference between earlier volumes and later volumes. Mostly the panel layout is sequence oriented, and clear to follow. However, later volumes introduce more fragmented movement, details of kata on stage and impressionist shōjo-like panel layouts with merging panels, flowers and evocative

decorations for emotional sequences as well. Such gradual change in style could be attributed to the authors growing confidence in depicting kabuki sequences. At the same time, gradual increase in cited tropes demonstrates how this manga teaches the readers these new modes of expression. Overall narrative focus shifts to emotional character development, portraying deepening and developing relationships between the characters.

Unlike *Kabukumon, Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* does not use kabuki (and Japanese culture) specific erotic references, such as the nape of the neck or specific hand and feet gestures. Only rarely are recognisable kata depicted, and they are not amplified rather they naturally occur as a part of kabuki sequences[132]. This remains true even in later volumes, although more movement is depicted as well as kata, the emphasis falls firmly on the facial expressions.

Therefore, Izumo's *objet petit a* as an onnagata is focussed on the facial features: eyes and lips, and then on the costume and parts or the body and costume. The on-stage "femininity" as well as casual cross-dressing and occasional spontaneous femininity of Izumo all depend on the facial expression, clothes and decorations within the frame of a panel that evoke beauty, sensuality and fragility.

Costume still plays an important part of depicting as well as ridiculing femininity in this manga. Izumo wears a wide array of clothes, school uniform, casual boys' clothes, onnagata costumes, fetish wear, and a variety of feminine outfits from yukata to ball-gowns. Costume is contrasted to other costume, but never to Izumo's nudity. Throughout the whole 19 volumes, whenever Izumo takes off his shirt, his chest is never shown. In bath scenes there are bubbles or towel, in scenes of his clothes coming undone, he always holds something over his chest. Even when he reveals his nudity to another character, his body is not depicted graphically; the reader does not see what the other character sees. Manga plays

[132] This probably demonstrates that reader is not expected to know more about kabuki than citation of famouse costumes and makeup.

with the reader, suggesting in text, but never visually revealing the actual sexed male body that Izumo constantly evokes.

Below I will analyse all instances of constructing the feminine in *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō.* I will focus on Importance of recognition of parodied shōjo and moe genres in order to consume them as a joke, and the role of direct citations of shōjo in scenes depicting emotion.

The character design of *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* looks basic mangaesque with large heads, thin bodies, huge saucer-eyes and colourful hair[133]. Style looks like it can be in any manga genre, and easily transforms into shōnen, shōjo or moe depending on panel layout, additional decorations, facial expression etc.

Clean linework and coherent panel layout in combination with plenitude of speed-lines, dynamic movement, onomatopoeia, and attractive and colourful character-designs balances between shōnen style and citations. General features, such as round innocent eyes, round face, and simple short hairstyle (that can be spikey when Izumo is angry and soft when he is more emotional) imply that Izumo is a kind, boyish and somewhat innocent character – a typical shōnen protagonist. He is small and short, hot-tempered and always ready for a fight, yet displays naïve exaggerated kindness and caring. His innocence explains away and renders harmless his exaggerated misogyny[134].

In *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* – Izumo the onnagata is the main character of the narrative through whose eyes the narrative unfurls. Falling in sync with usual shōnen dynamics, Izumo is the one who wins all the challenges, while his friends watch in awe. He is better than anyone at kabuki and cross-dressing. He is the one who undermines the patriarchal dichotomy of power at its very root. He is at the centre of bishōnen-filled narrative that

[133] On the covers and illustrations.
[134] Especially, since it is not directed at actual women in his life.

offers several queer[135] characters to the reader for identification. As the protagonist and the most prominent identification anchor of a shōnen narrative Izumo indeed is a surprising choice that deserves careful consideration.

Because it is a light comedy, the narrative mostly uses two different types of plastic line and very little structural lines, apart from simple panel layout and some background illustrations. Attractive, clean shōnen plastic line viscerally conveys the safety of the characters in their shenanigans. Panel layout is comprehensive and promotes sequential reading. The style itself implies it is a type of narrative safe and fun for the younger reader. No one in the story is depicted in real anguish, or experience excessive physical pain, they don't seem to age visually[136], or die. Characters are kicked and punched by Izumo, but they are never hurt. Izumo moves a lot, his masculine movements are broad and energetic, his body frequently surrounded with speed lines, and visually prominent graphic onomatopoeia. In sequences of slapstick jokes characters transform into chibi-selves, and pictograms of sweat drops and nerve-pinches are used to communicate their emotions.

The second plastic line is shōjo-manga plastic line. This plastic line represents the character as visualised interiority, portrays subjective perspective on the events of the plot. Panels become bigger and irregular shape, focus on close-ups, and more decorations appear within these panels. Kabuki costumes extend and visualise character's innermost emotion, occasional decorative elements symbolise various aspects of characters' personality. This depiction is less prominent in the first volumes, but grows to be a staple of all stage-performances and emotional exchanges between characters in some chapters overriding shōnen visual tropes.

[135] Sometimes actually homosexual.
[136] Although there are older characters.

Following Oshiyama's analysis of line, the binary of Izumo's masculine and Izumo's feminine side is implied with very comprehensible distinct linework. His "masculine" face usually has straight brows slightly drawn at the nose, and frequently a mischievous smile. Masculine face is seen in shōnen sequences. And masculine chibi-Izumo with wild facial expressions always appears as a punchline to jokes when Izumo is objectified.

Izumo's "feminine" self has round and raised brows; he has a soft smile, a calm kind expression, or looks surprised with small mouth shaped into a tiny "o". He displays a range of emotions, but all these emotions are visualised in subdued way that amplifies aesthetics of his face. Not only *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* establishes feminine and masculine traits, but these expressions are used in specific situations.

Kunisaki Izumo no jijō offers nuance that distinguishes between Izumo's femininity that symbolises his caring nature and empathy with someone, and femininity as an object to the gaze of people who are (superficially) sexually attracted to him.

The evident parodic citations are a distinctive feature of *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō*. They become the basis for jokes that make fun of Izumo as an object. Stylistically these jokes borrow from moe genre and boys' love genre with similar aesthetics. Visually and narratively they are close as they address Izumo as an object of desire and gaze of other male characters. Although completely different genres, these depictions are interchangeable in the role they perform in *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō,* respectively, in ridiculing soulless objectification of someone as a body.

These scenes are brief and serve as windows into onlookers' desire. Moe portrays isolated instances of complete objectification. The object of such gaze (usually Izumo) is never seen as a person, but only as a surface to project desire and use sexually (they sometimes do not care that he is male). Moreover, people who glimpse Izumo as moe character always sexually harass him with disregard for any of his protests. Luckily, Izumo

is strong enough to fend for himself[137]. Izumo's violent reactions are recurring punchline to these jokes.

The objectification is suggested by the most recognisable moe tropes, such as Izumo's excessively beautified face, empty eyes, and docile expression. Such moe intermissions happen both in and out of drag and both serve comical function, however they almost never happen onstage or when Izumo is wearing onnagata costume. When Izumo is not wearing drag there are times when his beauty transfixes other characters and they objectify him despite knowing he is a boy. Another scenario revolves around Izumo casually cross-dressing and having to hide that he is a boy. This is amplified comically, because in manga Izumo ends up working part-time in a maid-café.

Izumo is seen as a moe character by the onlookers, however, Izumo is never looking back, he is displayed from the point of view of the onlooker. Most of these depictions show Izumo first from head to toe and then in a close-up of his face. Even if his eyes are shown in close-up, it is not the real emotion of Izumo, but misconstrued image in the heads of onlookers.

The lack of Izumo's point of view in these depictions further emphasises that this is not how Izumo is trying to behave or display himself. It is the other characters fixated on the surface of Izumo – reacting to *objet petit a* affectively on a visceral level. Such superficial objectification is also presupposed by the scenarios of voyeuristic consumption, maid café, miss school pageant, Izumo taking a bubble-bath. As a rule, these scenarios depict people who are not concerned with Izumo's real feelings.

These scenes justify why Izumo perceives femininity as objectified, giving in insight into his image of it. Izumo has a very misogynist view of femininity. Oddly enough, his ideas do not spread to actual women. Rather he viscerally relates objectification and

[137] Apart from the rare times when he is placed in a situation where another male character needs to gallantly save him, not knowing that he is a boy.

femininity. Moe represents the femininity that Izumo fears, "woman" as an inanimate object that reflects male desire.

Facial expression is the main *objet petit a* of moe-Izumo. For example face is a focal point in the opening sequence. On the top of the page a small panel depicts the school building with a clock and another small panel shows the number of Izumo's class and his school-year. A slightly bigger vertical panel portrays a classroom where several students are looking back at something. A large horizontal close-up panel shows what they are looking at and how it is perceived by them. The panel depicts a close-up of bored/drowsy yet beautiful Izumo with a few petals floating around him. The next panel shows that almost all of Izumo's classmates are staring at him, discussing how cute he is, instead of listening to their teacher. In the magazine these pages were printed in full colour, making Izumo stand out also because of his blond hair and green eyes (Hirakawa 2009: 1 [Fig 26]). At this point tankōbon interrupts the narrative with a splash page of the first chapter title illustration, which shows Izumo the boy embracing Izumo the onnagata.

Turning the page, the reader sees Izumo walking defiantly through a crowd of admirers. Some run after him, surprising Izumo into turning around. A reverse shot reveals the point of view of these suitors once again. A close-up panel depicts Izumo's face with a tender and perplexed innocent expression; there are flowers in the background and some floating petals add to the impression of a fragile and docile beauty. However, this is not the insight into Izumo's interiority, it is an image of an object projected onto Izumo, a beautified surface that the male gaze surveys.

On the next page the joke reaches its apex, and the punchline is Izumo's frantic protest. Izumo's feelings are revealed chibi-self, which is an established manga trope. It is strongly associated with shōnen, because this is a gimmicky revelation of character's feelings that does not imply reader's identification. Izumo turns into a rampant chibi-devil with fangs and a nerve-pinch mark on his forehead. He kicks and punches his assailants with

vivid speed lines and flames on the background indicating his rage. Using a rude form of Japanese, he proclaims that he is a man, and if they are sexually frustrated they should get a real girl. Moe changing into shōnen illustrates the contrast between Izumo seen as object and Izumo as he sees himself as subject. The comical plastic violence continues. Izumo ends up defeating the "suitors" despite his small and delicate stature. This scenario will repeat frequently from this point on, echoing Fujimoto's claim that cross-dressing boys are frequently overall exceptional (Hirakawa 2009: 5-6 [Fig 27]).

These boys collectively objectify Izumo, reacting to the beauty of his face they attempt to claim their agency over him. However Izumo rejects the patriarchal diminishing misnomer he is being addressed with, repeating that he is a man and reclaiming his agency with violent display.

A cross-dressing moe-episode can be exemplified by a scene in Volume 3, which I will later explore in context. Izumo is tricked into working in a maid-café. He agreed before knowing the details, and cannot back out of this obligation (because he is a man and because they pay is so good). Izumo has no other option but to play along and to make himself pass as a woman in order not to be revealed as a cross-dresser. The convoluted logic of noblesse oblige and gender anxiety adds to the humour as he interchangeably feels insulted that people see him as a girl and proud that he plays his role so well.

This scene utilises both face as *objet petit a* and clothes as reference to the moe-genre. Just after Izumo is scolded for answering rudely to a customer, he is ushered to do the greeting. Izumo welcomes the customers in the most moe-like feminine way. In a large panel he is depicted kneeling in his frilly maid's uniform, the full-body shot overlaps with the close-up of his docile smiling face. Shot reverse-shot portrays customers entering, and the reader is shown Izumo from their sexualised point of view. Izumo's face is flushed and childish as he looks up from his kneeling position. The background of the panel explodes with roses and flying petals. On the lower tear, customers are smitten with Izumo's beauty.

Izumo in chibi form is trying to kill himself by jumping out of the window (Hirakawa 2011: v. 3, 28-29).

The costume Izumo wears is fetish-like maid uniform which is an iconic image of moe manga, it is both sexualised and it implies servitude, transforming woman into an object of the gaze. Frilly lace and Izumo's superficial passivity guide the gaze of other characters over the surface of Izumo's body and his feminine performance. Just like this example, in earlier volumes this manga does not depict actual innuendo, but implies the sexualised reading through recognisable citations of the genre – especially the clothes[138].

Izumo's face seems blank, and there are no emotions or reverse shots where Izumo would appear aware or responding to the onlooker with his eyes. Izumo's nose, cheeks and lips, as well as his exposed shoulders or elbows and knees, are given a blush and reflections as if they are moist and supple. Bauwens-Sugimoto notes similar fixation with flushed and moist skin in her analysis of *Young Black Jack* relating these depictions to pornographic depictions of women. Such visuals are frequently used in moe manga. Izumo's hair is elongated and embellished with ribbons and accessories that move in the direction of Izumo's movement, making Izumo's physical form more elastic, soft and decorative.

The linework is essentially uniform, however, details of Izumo's costume, elongated hair and hair ornament extend the lines of Izumo's body, while sparkly background sets the "mood". They construct a complex visual spectacle that draws the reader's gaze over Izumo's surface, effectively away from his emotions and feelings. Izumo becomes an attractive surface, reflecting the desire of the onlooker.

In this respect the boys' love jokes work on the same premise. In boys' love jokes, male characters know Izumo is a boy, but cannot fight the power of his erotic allure. Especially characters Sae and Izumo's father Yakumo are susceptible to Izumo's charms.

[138] In boys' love like scenarios certain clothes are also indicative of the genre, like shorts that expose the legs and shirt unbuttoned and falling off the shoulders.

Both of them are ridiculed for their exaggerated visceral reaction to the partial objects that are Izumo's clothes, movements of facial expression.

The way these two engage with Izumo is developed throughout the whole series, on the one hand friendship with Sae[139] and respect for his father Yakumo are the seminal aspects of the narrative. At the same time the two-panel jokes that depict their confusion vis-à-vis Izumo's charm are reiterated in almost every chapter. In later volumes the jokes are even extended onto full double-spreads or longer.

For example, a sequence-long boys' love joke in volume 15 is extended onto 3 pages. It uses visual tropes of passivity and childishness typical both in moe and in moe-like boys' love subgenres especially *shota* (boys' love with underage characters) (Hirakawa 2013: vol. 15, pp. 122-123-124). The joke starts with Izumo's father planning a performance where he and Izumo play lovers. On a double spread 122-123, page 122 top tier is divided into two panels, on the first one Izumo vehemently opposes to performing a love-scene with his dad. Meanwhile, the father goes into paroxysm of excitement as he imagines how a rehearsal would go. Lower panel takes up two thirds of the page; it portrays Izumo sitting on his father's lap, facing Yakumo. He is wearing short pants and top and is looking younger that he does otherwise, Yakumo wears his usual kimono. The short pants that make no secret of character's buttocks are a staple of uke. Izumo says in a flustered manner [140] "I cannot perform a love scene… between us – parent and child…" And his father replies: "Don't worry, Izumo…" On the next page on the top slanted panel from objective angle, Izumo is sprawled under Yakumo with his legs high in the air. Yakumo tells Izumo to forget that they are related when it's a rehearsal or stage-performance. Next is a large panel from Yakumo's on-top perspective, his sons legs are spread, shirt is lifted to his armpits, and his face is

[139] In Volume 17, Sae even asks Izumo to be his boyfriend. However, it is obvious that there is a big difference between the perspectives of Sae when he lusts after Izumo, and his perspective when he is in awe with Izumo's acting. Lust is based on false images of passive Izumo, while other portrayals depict Izumo as soulful body. The misguided infatuation gradually changes into unrequited love, and depiction of this love changes as well. These depictions fall into the emotional shōjo depictions that are associated with deep feelings of the protagonists, which I will address below.

[140] His speech is interrupted with "…"

flushed, with childish and pleading expression typical of erotic manga both. Lower panel is Yakumo jumping up as he is too excited by his own imagination. Turning the page, the drama is resolved with Izumo whacking his father on his head with a low-Japanese-style table (Hirakawa 2013: 124).

This episode displays a stark contrast to the bashful depiction that earlier volumes employed for the jokes. Earlier jokes depend almost solemnly on the power of Izumo's cute face and costumes recognisable as a reference to erotic genre, instead of direct depiction of the sexual innuendo. Skipping 10 volumes demonstrates how the narrative strategies evolved as well as the direction in which development is taking place. Althoough the joke perfoms the same function as in earlier volumes and narrative development remains uniform, the quality of introduces cross-genre materials changes. The author gradually adds and elaborates on the tropes from boys' love and shōjo genres, teaching the reader and changing the story themes and expressive means one step at the time.

Development of this serialisation clearly represents the changing dynamics of gender representation in male genres. The gradual change further exemplifies how the series use most recognisable tropes as foundation for earlier jokes, yet build on this foundation a new literacy for their audience. Moreover, the safe shōnen resolution to the boys' love jokes is maintained. This title definitely offers a lot to the female reader, and at the same time it is expanding the meaning of masculine genres, without alienating its core audiences.

4-2-2: Integrated Shōjo Tropes

Shōjo Tropes as a Window of the Soul

Next I will look closely into the distinct style that resembles shōjo manga, but is not used as a joke. These visual segments are largely associated with onnagata cross-dressing

episodes, however they also happen out of drag as well as to other characters in emotional scenes. They do not represent femininity, and are used in the similar way as in actual shōjo – they visualise emotions and character's emotional perspectives. As I will demonstrate lower, these tropes within the narrative appear in resolutions of small and bigger dramas. They are an emotional accent that showcases the most important developments of the stories.

Emotional shōjo scenes usually open with a panel/panels decorated with flowers, stars, and sparkles and is comprised of shot-reverse shots that portray character's perspective and conveys the feelings. Such sequences have a much slower rhythm of panel layout. Panels are bigger and action is more detailed. In earlier volumes, it was mostly bigger panels with decorations. In later volumes, panel layout is impressionist, with liberally shaped panels merging, disappearing, or characters exceeding the panel frames. It involves internal monologue and evocative decorations, especially flowers, petals, shimmers and gusts of wind. A combination of these elements is strongly associated with female genres, especially shōjo manga. The plasticity of these scenes revolves around inviting the reader into the inner worlds of the character, presenting their subjective views of the events. Another important feature is always exchange of gazes between characters. In these scenarios Izumo is being looked at and returns the gaze, sharing an emotional bond with another character.

The first time Izumo is introduced as an onnagata interrupts the shōnen visual style. In a flashback to eight years before, Izumo explains why he quit kabuki: "Because I come from such family…" It is an emotional moment, and it is showcased with change in panel layout and linework. The right page of the double spread depicts in several slanted panels close-ups of recognisable kabuki scenes with realistic detail, such as *Sukeroku* or *Renjishi*. It is a montage of most commonly recognisable kabuki images. Underneath on the lower tier the audience is shown in a state of anticipation. A foot in a tabi sock at the left-most small panel explodes into a splash page of Izumo entering in *Fuji Musume* costume, referring to

the famous onnagata solo-dance (shosagoto)[141]. Izumo in full costume strikes a cute pose in a frameless panel and a close-up of his delighted face looms behind his full-body depiction with flares and sparkles. At the bottom of the panel the audience rejoices at his appearance (Hirakawa 2009: 8-9 [Fig 28]).

From the first shōjo manga-like page the guidelines for the diegetic and stylistic embodiment of Izumo's performance as onnagata are defined. Although the linework does not change in quality, the lines are clean and light, with an overwhelming amount of details, small flowers, flowing hair and kimono folds which resemble the visual dynamics and impressionist plasticity of body and costume in shōjo manga. While the character's body remains within generically defined physical constraints, and the objects attached to it are not exaggerated, these actual elements of stage decoration are in stark contrast to Izumo's "masculine reality" and appear to extend Izumo's body and reflect the emotional saturation of the scene along with close-ups and added slow-motions that emphasise Izumo's eyes. In these sequences, Izumo's eyes invite participation and convey character's emotions. The scene borrows conventionally recognisable elements from the database of the shōjo genre.

In terms of composition, this particular single scene does not look much different from moe splash pages, however it is obviously reflecting Izumo's emotions and mood. This is the first action sequence in the visually distinct shōjo mode (unlike the static splash-page that introduced Izumo as a child-onnagata) and it demonstrates the general modus operandi of most of the shōjo manga like sequences in *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* from this point forward.

Izumo's first onnagata sequence is similarly structured; it begins on page 42 of first volume of tankōbon. In order to pay a debt to Kagato (his future onnagata mentor) Izumo has to replace him on stage as Yūgiri, a famous courtesan role from *Kuruwa Bunsho*. A double spread on pages 42-43 has mostly structural panelling, but the action is slowing down. First we see a full body onnagata figure in elaborate costume, with his face hidden behind a wad

[141] Onnagata dance numbers usually ends the matinée in a kabuki theatre, therefore audience comments that this is what they were waiting for.

of paper[142]. He slowly takes the paper away to reveal on the next splash page a gloriously beautiful Izumo with sparkles, flowers and slowly falling petals. His face is pensive, as the role dictates; on the next page he looks up and smiles gently. In the lower tier small panels show the audience's thrilled reaction, as some veteran spectators recognise him. In the next double spread a flash back explains why Izumo chose to appear on stage (Hirakawa 2009: 42-43 [Fig 31]).

Then the stylistics return to the shōjo manga style. First narrow tiers explain that in this scene Yūgiri can finally reunite with her one true love. A small panel zooms in on the opening of the sleeve; the spotlight in the large panel shows Izumo's fingers in an elegant gesture peaking from the long embroidered sleeve. The movement is accentuated and extended by lavish lines and patterns of his stage costume from the right page, continuing the motion to the left page. A close-up follows of the opening fan, and finally Izumo and his co-actor strike the recognisable pose. Panels are slanted, indicating the rising emotions. Izumo is immersed in artistic euphoria, but his attention is brought back by the ovation he receives; a close-up of his startled and thrilled face invites the reader to emphasise with this emotion. Turning the page reveals a splash page of both actors with their back to the reader and a panorama of a standing ovation in the theatre. Izumo's eyes are zoomed in upon, showing him stunned with his success and recalling in a two-panel flashback the elated feeling he would get when he was a child actor. The fragmented slow-motion panelling with emphasis on the emotional movement and linework is reminiscent of shōjo manga. On the next page we see the last panel of the shōjo sequence, as Izumo smiles genuinely and happily. In this episode the eyes are used as mirrors of the soul, as both Izumo's artistic inspiration and his joy at being on stage communicate with the reader and other characters (Hirakawa 2009: 44-47 [Fig 32]).

Shojo-like sequences are not limited to Izumo. In volume 1 the very first shōjo-sequence first appears in episode when Izumo is saved by Kagato from the bullies. Izumo is

[142] A kind of tissue paper, frequent accessory of a courtesan.

making his way to the kabuki theatre to meet his father after eight years apart when he is attacked by a group of bullies. Onnagata Kagato saves him. Izumo, who does not yet know that Kagato[143] is a man, is enthralled by the beautiful and strong "woman" who comes to his rescue. The shōjo-like representations are from his perspective.

In a shot-reverse shot sequence in a higher tear single panel we see Izumo's startled face from behind a flowing kimono sleeve. The kimono lines are used to create the movement of the wind corresponding with the direction of the gaze and accentuating Izumo's mesmerized face. Close-ups of Izumo's face and his surprised eyes involve the reader in Izumo's perspective. The page has only two panels, allowing two close-ups of Kagato in his ambiguous kimono. While Kagato's kimono is in a man's style, he wears it with an embellished obi-belt higher than a man's obi would usually be, creating a female kimono waistline and female hair ornaments with a chignon. Kagato's figure commands the double spread on both sides. Right page depicts a beautiful Kagato catching the man who assaulted Izumo by the wrist. Izumo's startled profile as he looks on is squeezed in at the left. On the left side again we see a close-up of Kagato from Izumo's point of view as a shot-reverse shot continuing from the previous panel. The close up is embellished with autumn bell-flowers, that convey Kagato's reserved, elegant more adult beauty. Kagato carries shōjo manga expression with him, panels with close-up of him have gradation back-ground are bigger and include flowers and flower-petals flowing in the wind, which other characters are squeezed in smaller simpler panels. The grandness and beauty of his gestures is depicted as shōjo manga, it is exaggerated and both depicts elegance and dignity of Kagato. Similarly shōjo-manga-like but more playful and cute is depiction of awestruck Izumo. Kagato looks away from Izumo, while Izumo is looking up at him from the lower tier (Hirakawa 2009: 19-20-21 [Fig 29]).

As the reader turns the page, the right side depicts a resolution of this little drama in simple panelling and rapid succession of action throughout small panels. Kagato reassures

[143] In this scene Kagato is wearing drag.

Izumo and the bad guys retreat in shame. On the left side another facial close-up returns the focus to Izumo's emotions. Kagato is going away in slow motion, with a close up of his face, directed at Izumo, and Izumo returning the gaze, mumbling "So very beautiful…" to Kagato's retreating figure. Kagato's hair and hair ornaments are swaying in the "wind" accentuated with floating petals. Izumo is depicted on a background of cute sparkles and flairs, his eyes are huge and transfixed in admiration (Hirakawa 2009: 22-23 [Fig 30]).

Such sequences are not restricted to Izumo, but rather accentuate emotional and aesthetically elated sequences, despite overall playfulness. These sequences draw attention to the expressive means such as decorative flowers and sudden abundance of gradation and patterned screentone. However this exaggeration is not portrayed negatively and clearly is associated with positive episodes. This is especially true in later volumes that depend heavily on pronounced shōjo manga representational tropes.

Shifting the focus to the gaze dynamics, the reader would notice that in this sequence Kagato is looked at by Izumo. In a shōjo tradition character's emotional perspective (Izumo's) allows for sensory identification. In later episodes with Kagato, it appears that such depiction also represents Kagato's aura as seen by others: elegant and dignified with demure decorative flowers. In most cases (as in this sequence as well), Kagato resolves conflict/comes to the rescue, and although his feminine charm and the "beauty" as on object of the gaze are prominent elements of the sequence, it is also obvious that "feminine" Kagato is strong and exudes agency. Not only is he defending Izumo, but his body is bigger and the black kimono he is wearing further makes his presence the most visually imposing in the sequence. Kagato's beauty is not sexualised or trivialised by any jokes in the sequence. As the reader suspects that this character is not a woman, the jokes are turned at Izumo, who appears to be infatuated at first sight.

The emotional shōjo-manga citations represent interiority of the characters. In other words, the symbol is used with the same meaning as in shōjo manga, unlike parody in jokes, where the same visual tropes acquire new meanings. Emotional sequences extend the tropes

of shōnen manga with the tropes of shōjo gradually. Each volume adds new expressive tools and borrows further conventions. This helps to read the narrative smoothly, comedic effect, emotional introspections are preserved, but don't overreach into realm of gag-manga. Izumo is at all times accessible to its implied audience, boys.

Teaching Shōnen Manga Readers How to Read Shōjo

Kunisaki Izumo no jijō extends the definition of shōnen manga. It includes jokes that necessitate recognition of female manga tropes. But it also utilises tropes that give introspection into character's emotion that look like shōjo manga and are used in similar context. Elaborate panelling, decorative elements that imply character's emotions, clothes and patterns that extend the bodies and symbolise internal drama. With each chapter and volume the emotional tropes are further expanded on, teaching the reader this new literacy.

Previously I discuss how this manga juxtaposes and utilises recognisable tropes of shōjo and moe to add to the gendered agenda and structure most of its jokes. In the next chapter I will look into the role of each mode of expression on an example of Sugawara Brother's arc. I build an argument, suggesting that *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* is a shōjo manga for shōnen manga readers through an analysis of narrative functions of generic tropes of moe, boys' love, and shōjo and how they mediate the narrative flow. Each type of depiction utilises specific generic tropes, they are spaced out in the narrative, jokes punctuate entirety of action, setting the light hearted tone of the whole narrative. Shōnen holds the narrative together, however there are no explicit fight scenes or dynamic action in shōnen style. Fights are usually fought by chibi-characters. As a result the classic shōnen style is not juxtaposed or contrasted to the borrowed tropes from other genres, it is the background overall basis of the narrative, an underlying canvas. Shōjo emotional sequences and later elaborate stage portrayals in combination with emotional sequences grab attention and give the narrative rhythm.

Part 4 Chapter 3: Rethinking Masculine Contents

4-3-1: Shōjo Manga for Shōnen Readers

Sexed Body and Agency

In this chapter, I look at the roles that aforementioned shōjo manga tropes play in the narrative. How and when are they reiterated, and how they tell the story. The Sugawara Brother's arc illustrates all facets of Izumo's gender performance, and includes moe jokes, boys' love jokes, serious emotional sequences etc. It features on stage onnagata performance, offstage onnagata costumed rehearsal, casual cross-dressing, Izumo as a boy as well as other characters in similar situations.

Unlike *Kabukumon* and *Pintokona*, where the characters which actors play on stage reflect their personalities and emotional struggles, in *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* the kabuki sequences reference the problems which Izumo's opponents face. The roles Izumo play serve as catalysts for his opponents, rather than for his own drama. Izumo shapes his performance to solve the problems of his opponent, like a superhero in shōnen manga who acquires new skills and techniques. What Izumo emotionally relates to are the dramas of his opponents. The whole premise is based on how deeply Izumo cares for people.

Sugawara Brother's arc takes most part of the third volume of tankōbon, although the brothers (Sugawara Umeki and Sugawara Matsuki) remain recurring characters throughout the whole series afterwards. In the story Izumo is an agent of reconciliation between two brothers, caught in an oedipal dilemma of succession over their father's kabuki name as a head of the household.

The Kunisaki troupe learns that their next performance is *Kagotsurube*[144] in collaboration with one of the leading kabuki clans, the Sugawara household, namely the two brothers: Umeki (older, apparent heir to the household) as Einōjō, and Matsuki (younger) as

[144] Same play as Shinkurō and Koishirō perform in *Kabukumon*.

Jirōzaemon. Umeki challenges the Kunisaki household, insulting Izumo. Izumo, who is always ready for a fight, stands up to the occasion. After accidentally meeting younger brother Matsuki, Izumo sets out to spy on their households, hoping to learn more about them. He goes undercover as a maid. But instead, he finds out that the younger brother hates his older sibling, because the older brother will inherit their father's name and receive the best roles. At the same time, the older brother skips rehearsals and behaves poorly, shaming the great honour he was bestowed. After further investigation, Izumo reveals that that the older brother behaves in this way in order to get himself disqualified and pass the name onto the younger brother, whom he respects as a superior performer. Izumo decides to solve this problem by making the play a success. Onstage he forces two brothers to face their conflict and see that cooperation is the way to resolve it.

Cross dressing here is used three-fold. 1. Izumo is enlisted to work at a maid café – he is a maid (most jokes are centred on this version). 2. Izumo going undercover as maid to infiltrate Sugawara house and faces Matsuki as a maid until final revelation (here maid plays a caring, supportive character). Matsuki doesn't know Izumo is the maid. 3. The onstage onnagata cross-dressing (serious and focusses on genuine emotions).

By tracing the development of the story through juxtaposition of generic tropes I attempt to expose the emphasis this manga places on female mode of address as rebuilding the narrative from within as shōjo manga.

The plot develops in a recurring pattern with a dynamic rhythm. Visual and narrative style of shōnen incorporates shōjo or boys' love jokes, moe interludes and emotional peaks in shōjo style. I draw attention to the way female genre tropes are used twofold. One way: the jokes that ridicule excessive emotionality of some characters, and boys' love jokes. The second: shōjo-like emotional close-ups with decorations used in most scenes that portray genuine emotions. Both jokes and emotional sequences are reiterated in every chapter with similar rhythm. Shōjo, boys' love, and moe jokes all share the same pattern of ambiguous

situation that looks like one of these scenarios; however the appearance is broken with explicit shōnen tropes following right away.

Parody and Citation within the Narrative Flow

For example, the very first chapter of Sugawara arc opens with boys' love joke. Kagato's and Izumo's faces are shown with close-ups, Izumo is flushed and flustered and Kagato looks devious. Izumo is asking Kagato to have mercy and not break him. Kagato in return asks, if he should finish it right now. The exchange looks like boys' love sex scene between uke-Izumo and seme-Kagato for a second, but already on the lower tier Kunisaki household members are lined up listening to further suggestive exchange with crestfallen faces, one suggesting that the two boys need a rest from practicing. Turns out it is a scene from Izumo's rehearsal practice and Izumo and Kagato have a competition of endurance. The joke is completed in a page and a half, like a four-coma manga in itself. The queer-looking scene is revealed as "masculine".

As they take a break a fax comes with their next performance. Kunisaki household will perform with Sugawara household. On the other side of the fax, however, a rude message is added, challenging and insulting Kunisaki household. Izumo decides, he has to show the rude Sugawaras who the better actor is. The scene is brief, utilises a lot of chibi-characters and is portrayed in shōnen style from panelling to character design. Izumo's manly pride is injured, so he rises up to the challenge immediately.

Cutting to the next scene, Izumo agrees to help his friend Kuroe in his part-time job. Turns out it's a maid café. Kuroe is cooking, and Izumo is waitressing, wearing cute maid uniform. Izumo's full-body shot in skimpy uniform, looking cutely outraged stretches over the length of the page in a recognisable *sutairu-ga*, however, it is placed on top of shōnen panel layout with comedic content – turns out Kuroe got this job because he promised to

bring Izumo, meanwhile Izumo is seething with rage. Izumo decides to stay, as now it's too late to back out.

Right after another moe interludes depicts how the customers see Izumo, greeting them in a spacious panel with flowers, sparkles, sheen on Izumo's skin etc[145]. In the lower small panel Izumo is trying to jump out of the window, mortified by how he just got objectified (Hirakawa 2011: v. 3, 28-29). As I mention above, the scene reflects how the customers see Izumo as epitome of their desires. Of course the maid café setting also presupposes that the waitresses pretend to be perfect objects, and customers are not interested in their feelings. It is a two-panel joke, which changes rapidly to the next scene. Izumo is used to his role and is doing better than anyone else. One page with small consecutive panels talks about how popular Izumo is and how he earned the shop five times the profit. Then the main scene of the chapter happens: the meeting of Izumo and Matsuki – one of the Sugawara brothers.

Up until this moment the narrative mostly consisted of fast paced shōnen with inclusions of frequent cross-genre jokes. Chapter opens with boys' love innuendo, then two moe jokes in cafe. Moe and boys' love "objectification" jokes do not contribute to the narrative development directly. Cutting them out will still covey the meaning, although they definitely give the narrative its flavour and are the defining part of it. They add vibrancy and set the tone for the actual queer narrative, providing a contrast to the emotional feminine tropes. Shōnen tropes propel the story and the exaggerated shōnen tropes (chibi-characters picking a fight) dissipate homoerotic tension.

Izumo's male body and the strict code of honour are the two axis of "masculinity", reiterated liberally after almost every joke. Usually, the code of honour is used when Izumo reinterprets queer situations to feel comfortable with (onnagata is a superhero, maid café pays good salary); the male body is evoked when Izumo objects to someone else objectifying him.

[145] The scene I analyse in previous chapter.

In later volumes, the jokes are growing bolder. Other characters don't just look at beautiful Izumo though *objet petit a*, they imagine a scenario which they would like to be in with Izumo, or are worried that someone might take sexual advantage over him. Izumo's representation becomes more and more sexual and leans into boys' love extensively. Predominantly the format of the jokes is two-panel, with one panel depicting objectified Izumo and next panel Izumo punishing the person who objectifies him.

As a result, the masculinity that Izumo professes is made into a joke as well. Every objectifying name that male characters call out to Izumo, Izumo rejects by citing his sexed body as a source of his gender and agency and proves his point with violence[146]. This is contrasted to Izumo's "code of male honour" that he uses to excuse his cross-dressing. In these instances, we see full-form Izumo making a conscious choice[147].

Parodic jokes that laugh at the expense of exaggerated qualities of shōjo genre demonstrate the level of awareness of shōjo tropes that manga expects from the reader. The gradual shift to boys' love parody caters to female readers as well as to the male readers, who by volume 10 gradually developed deeper knowledge of the parodied tropes.

4-3-2: Critical Potential of Citation

Shōjo Tropes and Fluctuating Agency

Parodic elements of *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* demonstrate the rising level of female trope awareness of the reader and the growth of this demand. However, the more demure elements of shōjo manga, which are cited in episodes where they retain the function similar

[146] Maleness equals agency and authenticity to Izumo, in volume 13 he is to perform in a new kabuki play that features a love-story between two men in Edo period. He is asked what he thinks about shūdo – the homosexual culture that permeated military aristocracy in Kamakura and Muromachi periods and later spread to merchant and other classes in Edo period. Izumo weighs in that he does not know how it is to love a man, but it seems to him that in such relationship you can be yourself. You can be dedicated to your obligations and the partner is bound to understand. You can be more of a man.

[147] Even if on a misogynist premise.

to their role in shōjo narrative, push the boundaries of critical potential of *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō*. A crucial aspect of the narrative, the on-stage emotional showdowns between a cast of characters with complex and frequently queer personalities that is mediated through Izumo's onnagata skill are always depicted with elements of shōjo. Moreover, by volume 10, all of them are highlighted through shōjo manga tropes.

These tropes include: movements with focus on body parts that allow sensory empathy with characters, reiteration of facial close-ups that depict exchange of gazes and show in the next panel the perspective of the character, mostly accompanied with internal monologues. Finally, the most recognisable shōjo manga tropes – the flowers, gusts of wind and other emotive decorations that extend, accessorise, and otherwise supplement visualisation of character's interiority.

Coming back to Sugawara arc, the first meeting of Izumo and Matsuki happens in a maid café, a sequence dominated with moe innuendoes. After the moe-sequence, Izumo is shown accustomed to his duties, happily smiling while delivering orders to the tables. The fast-paced sequence is interrupted with a half-page bust-portrait panel of a customer from Izumo's perspective. Izumo notices him because he is not looking at the maids, buried in a book. He is depicted from Izumo's point of view. In a reverse shot a large panel with a close-up of Izumo's face emphasises the importance of the scene. A close-up of Matsuki's face, still looking at the book, depicts how Izumo zooms in with interest. The moment is interrupted with a joke, as a mesmerised Izumo is bumped into and drops the ice-cream on Matsuki's head. A humorous chibi-sequence follows, as he tries to clean the customer only to have the man yell at him "I have no interest in maids!!!" Chibi-Izumo wonders why is he in the maid café then? Matsuki murmurs to himself: "He will never show up here…" Two slanted panels cut the page, raising dramatic tension, Matsuki finally *sees* Izumo. One panel depicts Matsuki's vision: a big slanted panel portrays Izumo smiling amicably on a shimmery background; his eyes are huge and beautiful, light wind tousles his hair and

ribbons. Izumo replies with a smile: “If you are here, you might as well enjoy it.” His honest demeanour catches Matsuki of guard, in a reverse shot of extreme close-up of Matsuki’s surprised eyes and part of profile on sparkly background (Hirakawa 2011: 30-31 [Fig 33]). The sequence is reminiscent of the romantic scenes in shōjo manga, when characters suddenly feel the stirrings of love in their chests as their eyes meet in exchange of gazes. The sentiment here is similar, as Matsuki gradually will develop infatuation with Izumo, which will become a recurring joke in later volumes too.

Plastic violence and shōnen sequences are interrupted with scene of genuine emotion that is shown through close-ups of the eyes, demure facial expressions and metaphorically emotional backgrounds. Furthermore, the emotional shōjo scenes mostly portray exchange of gazes. A precarious power-balance between Izumo and Matsuki, which will develop further with Izumo getting more and more upper hand in their emotional involvement, until he is ultimately the one to resolve the crisis between brothers. Each new step in their relationship, each moment Matsuki notices how Izumo gets closer to him is punctuated with such gaze-exchange sequence. They are moderately parodic, at the same time revealing characters’ sincere emotions and making a mild joke about gender-queer misunderstanding.

Exchange of gazes is interrupted with another joke. This time Izumo shows Matsuki his roguish side, intriguing him further. A waitress is harassed behind Izumo. Izumo grabs a frying pan and throws a hot rice omelette at the offending customer, hitting him square in the face. A big panel depicts furious devil-Izumo who says in polite language to the harassing customer: “Please, Master, be so kind and go home right now”. Izumo switches between his personas, responding to a situation, like a real drag performance, based on Oshiyama’s principles of masculine and feminine representations. The reader recognises the shifts that the humour is based on it.

The customer yells at Izumo, that they need to settle this outside, devil-Izumo cracks his knuckles ready for a fight, as chibi-Kuroe dangles off of him, asking to stop. Reverse shot shows chibi-Matsuki perplexed. The episode resolves in shōnen style, as Matsuki takes

upon himself to beat up the harasser. In Matsuki's vision Izumo is still depicted with round eyebrows and flowing hair as he discovers Matsuki's gallant act. Only in the last panel Izumo drops his maid act, he finds out Matsuki's name. Izumo's face reverts to the boy-Izumo with sharp drawn brows as he plots to investigate this mysterious Sugawara, as he does not look like someone who would write such a rude letter.

In this sequence, chibi-Izumo comes out every time to restore masculinity of Izumo as a punchline to the jokes. Even the sincere scene with gaze-exchange is broken with a chibi-devil-Izumo going at the misbehaving customer. Chibi is a manifestation of shōnen plasticity that portrays an immortal flexible, amorphous body that stretches, bounces and deforms without any lasting injury. Unlike shōjo-manga plasticity that inscribes emotions through body stylisation, or shōnen plasticity that implies character's immortality, chibi-deformations visualise exaggerated ridiculed emotions in gimmicky way that does not evoke identification on part of the reader. It is also the most "manly" of Izumo's forms. While there are sequences with cheeky bratty Izumo as himself out of drag, these are focussed on friendship and rivalry between boys. These sequences are not juxtaposed as the opposite of moe or boys' love Izumo incarnations. The "objectification" jokes' punchline is always the imp-like Izumo, who proclaims his masculinity repeatedly.

Emotion as Agency

In the next two chapters Izumo appears as a maid again in front of Matsuki, as he sneaks as a maid into his mansion and ends up cleaning his practice-room. As well as listening to Matsuki's grievances about his brother. Dressed as a maid Izumo speaks as a boy with rude male language, however he performs nurturing functions. Izumo stays in maid character the whole sequence and male language is what maintains his masculinity. The use of words is an anchor for the reader, a reverse *objet petit a*, a part that implies the whole and maintains the consistency of phallus. In the narrative it serves to further mystify Matsuki.

Izumo is direct, compassionate, and honest; he looks lovely in his frilly dress, yet the male language adds mystique as well as helps Matsuki to open up. Matsuki is falling in love with his maid.

Meanwhile the next chapter is dedicated to the boy-Izumo challenging Umeki at school, as the action moves towards grand finale. The pace of the chapters however remains the same, exposition jokes, leading to the plot development, fluctuating between shōnen and shōjo sequences. In the earlier volumes the emotional peaks are very moderately depicted in shōjo-like slow-paced facial close-ups. The tendency grows and develops, and in later volumes on-stage sequences are shōjo, with elaborate panelling, decorative flowers, metaphorical wind that whips around characters lush hair and emotional internal monologues.

The two brothers end up playing rivals on stage in *Kagotsurube* as Einōjō and Jirōzaemon. Izumo's role is Yatsuhashi who becomes involved in the love triangle and is killed. Coming to the scene when the killing should take place, the sequence starts with Izumo grabbing the sleeve of Umeki-Einōjō, and in a close-up of his beautifully made up face, with a cheeky smile demands in a masculine non-kabuki speech that Umeki stays on stage despite his part being over. Then Izumo returns to kabuki-like speech, and replacing the names of Umeki and Matsuki with Einōjō and Jirōzaemon passionately explains to Matsuki about Umeki's sacrifice. He is coming closer and closer to Matsuki's face. The reverse shot from Matsuki's perspective depicts the extreme close up-of Izumo's face from Matsuki's perspective. Izumo is blushing, with brows raised in sincere emotion, and with tears in his eyes. There are no excessive flowers in the panel, though Izumo slips into his feminine persona: his eyes are glittering with tears, eyelashes are very long, and he raises his brows. His lips are shaded and he is blushing. The brothers notice he is crying. And Izumo goes into a comical paroxysm of embarrassment, breaking the tension of the moment. The next page brings the reader back into an emotional exchange of gazes between the brothers. Umeki and Matsuki's exchange demonstrates additionally that shōjo-manga like depictions do not represent "femininity/objectification" (unlike moe and boys' love), they communicate

emotion, as all characters indiscriminately are portrayed through these tropes when their interiority is revealed to the reader. Shōjo mode of depiction does not rob characters of agency, the femininity of Izumo as onnagata in this sequence and all other sequences imply agency.

A whole page is devoted to Umeki and Matsuki exchanging glances in a series of close-ups, until Umeki finally and dramatically says in a large panel: "This was the only way I could do it…" as he walks off along hanamichi to an ovation (Hirakawa 2010: v.3, 124-125, 126-127). The slow-motion emotion-centric scenario, visual tropes, linework, and panelling all interact, involving the reader in the emotions of the characters with their personal drama. The incessant competition between brothers is successfully resolved when the agency is removed from the dialectic binary of subject and object, winner and loser. Both characters admit to weaknesses, mistakes, and come to a consensus of equality and cooperation.

It is more noticeable and consistent in later volumes, when the artist also gains more confidence and portrays more stage-movements in on-stage scenes. The visceral sensuality of the movement in combination with plastic lines that extend bodies with decorative elements such as wind, flowers, stars and other elements open characters for all levels of participation from the reader. These depictions are further enforced with emotional internal monologues offering these scenes as introspection into characters as their bodies gracefully take on exalted poses, making the emotional drama driving force of the story.

In this context both maid uniform and onnagata getup are embodiments of masculinity for Izumo. Maid uniform works in two ways. First, Izumo cannot back out on helping a friend and the payment is good. Refusing would be unmanly. Second, he uses it to go undercover to Sugawara house later. He makes friends with Matsuki and has to maintain the performance. In both cases, cross-dressing and wearing the uniform is embodiment of his masculine agency.

While Volume 3 of *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* tankōbon which I explored here is still predominantly shōnen in overall design and narrative progression, as we check in with volumes 10 and up, a gradual shift towards shōjo manga is evident. As the narrative progresses and more solid and emotional arcs are introduced shōjo-like panelling, decorative flowers and other elements overwhelm the shōnen style. Panel layout becomes much more spacious overall, and these bigger panels include plenty of emotional close-ups. The volume 15 for example, boasts a variety of beautiful, emotional panel layouts with flowers and decorations. *Yoshitsune Senbom Zakura* stage-sequence on pages 18-21, portrayals of individual performer's skill page 61, 85, 91, *Fuji Musume* sequence on pages 106-110, or rehearsal of Kagato and Izumo on pages 114-115 and many others in this and all other volumes.

A good example of stylistic relationship between shōnen tropes and cross-genre tropes presents itself in Volume 15[148], right after the boys' love sequence. Izumo glimpses Yakumo practicing *kata* of their shared performance *Sukeroku* (the dreaded play where Izumo and Yakumo will play lovers). The double spread on pages 128-129 gives a detailed depiction of Yakumo's beautiful and powerful movements. The background is blank, suggesting that it is the actual movement that Izumo is observing. Therefore this double spread can be read twofold – seeing it as a shōjo-manga, it can build a visceral kinaesthetic connection to the character, at the same time the depictions are similar to an action-centric shōnen sequence. On page 128 frameless close-up of Yakumo's face overlaps over his full body in the same pose, his expression is of concentration and inspiration. Between two pages a connecting panel is a close-up of Yakumo's arm and hand in a powerful kata. Next panel is his back with spread sleeves and finally a close-up of sweat running down his cheek like a tear. The next page depicts close-up of amazed Izumo, who discovers the true measure of his father's skills. The chapter ends.

[148] the same volume with boys' love interlude I quoted above

The first double spread of the next chapter on pages 132-133 is Izumo's vision of his father. Large top panel depicts the same full-body kata positioned over a space-like background black with streaks of stars. The panel underneath portrays a hand close-up with some stylised wind, and caption of Izumo's monologue, praising the power of the movement, lower still, another panel praises elegance of the performance with a background of water, symbolising the flowing harmony of Yakumo's movements. On the next page 133, Izumo is portrayed with a face close-up. His thought balloon reveals that he is conflicted, that his father performance touched him in almost romantic way. Izumo and Yakumo overlap, bodies merge into each other, on background of petals and flairs.

The crisp movement on pages 128-129 is almost the same movement sequence as on the page 132, the background, and internal monologue in the latter sequence however clearly use the shōjo manga tropes. Contrariwise, the first sequence while gives Izumo's perspective through shot-reverse shot and zooms on Yakumo's face and hands, implies that character is looking at the physical movements he is witnessing. Lack of background, demonstrates how Izumo is taken with Yakumo's presence, and gives a portrayal of tangible presence of the moving body.

I have discussed in Part 2 the two functions of plastic and structural lines. The visceral impact of structural line that gives a tangible presence of a physical body is used in the first sequence, while plastic function that reveals character as a full-body visualisation of interiority is a case of pages 132-133 (Hirakawa 2014: Vol. 15 pp. 132-133). This is related to my discussion of shōjo manga becoming a fusion genre long before seinen and shōnen attests to borrowing from the male genres as early as 1970s. In *Kaze to ki no uta* Takemiya Keiko uses shōnen manga tropes to depict boys. She uses both physically accurate movements when drawing boys in motion, walking, fighting, running. She even uses icons such as speed-lines to put an emphasis on physical presence of the characters. This is juxtaposed with more dramatic and decorative displays of close-ups, shiny eyes, merging bodies and embellishments that symbolise characters' emotional states and personalities.

Movement and bodily presence opens the character to the kinaesthetic identification, or can offer a necessary distance in abject scenes.

However one reads it, the shōnen-looking action sequences (especially when portrayed movements are beautiful and elegant poses of the kabuki kata in elaborate detail) do not disrupt reading *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* as a shōjo manga. Especially when the sequence begins with a shot that establishes following physical sequence as sympathetic bishōnen-character's emotionally charged perspective.

Looking at later volumes of *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō,* the overall panel layout and narrative rhythm can be easily compared to *Pintokona* or other contemporary shōjo-manga with a more conventional style. Even the shōnen sequences become more and more focussed on character's faces and eyes. The amorphous mainstream representation strategies eventually slant more and more towards shōjo, as the narrative progresses tackling complex gender-related themes in joyful light-hearted manner. Both Izumo and many of his side-characters face their own gender troubles.

Izumo's conflicted personality gradually develops from innocent, misogynist, anxious boy to a person who accepts all facets of gender and adopts a variety of gender-queer behaviours consciously. He ponders the role of his art, the role of *objet petit a*, as he discusses it with Kagato in volume 17 (Hirakawa 2014: vol. 17, pp. 106-107). Izumo asks if Kagato also falls in love on stage with his co-actors. To which Kagato replies that it is not uncommon and necessary onstage. Although he takes a jab at Sae, who cannot separate Izumo's acting from real life Izumo. In the same volume this topic comes up again, as Izumo gradually learns to accept Sae's misguided, yet earnest love for him, and even sees a possibility of eventually responding to Sae's feelings.

All instances of gender and sexuality that this title brings up add to Izumo's definition of being a man and being an onnagata. A vivid meta-example of this self-awareness is when Izumo discusses with his fellow actors (and Sae) a homosexual (shūdo)

play *Somemoyō chūgi no goshūin* they perform in volume 13 (Hirakawa 2013: vol. 13, pp. 120-129). Responding to the question of what he thinks about shūdo, Izumo replies that he cannot understand the actual falling in love with another men. However, he continues that he can identify with the way two of these characters have a deeper bond of obligation and risks their own lives for each other. He finds that very "manly" and very "cool" (Hirakawa 2013: vol. 13, pp. 122-123).

Kunisaki Izumo no jijō explicitly questions gender, social roles of masculine and feminine and definition of agency. It has bishōnen characters, who learn the value of gender-fluidity and gain their agencies through relinquishing the phallic paradigm of superiority and competitiveness as loci of agency. By comparison, *Pintokona* genders appear much more patriarchal and conventional than *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* or *Kabukumon*.

To sum up, eventually, what separates *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* from female genre? I suggest, it is safe to say that one of the main differences is the name of the magazine in which the series was publlished. While I cannot claim if it was particularly popular with the male readers[149], I suggest it is one of the best examples of male readers being introduced to the citations of female manga tropes. It catered to male readers as primary customers of fusion genre. It is evident in the way the cross-genre narrative tropes are gradually integrated into the narrative and developed throughout several volumes. It both promotes recognition of parodied tropes in jokes and at the same time facilitates acceptance of emotional shōjo sequences as intrinsic story-telling trope of this specific manga.

The protagonist as well remains an attractive identification anchor with his strong sense of obligation, competitiveness, and brattiness. Izumo's personality does not deviate from conventional shōnen protagonists, it is the obstacles and challenges he tackles that are

[149] Obi of latter titles advertise that readers can win a hand-drawn two panel gag about Izumo being objectified and taking revenge, suggesting that homoerotic humour became it's unequivocal selling point.

different from sports or action manga. The structure of Izumo agency is multimodal, it is inclusive of classic components of bishōnen, however the emphasised centrality of Izumo's sexed body and masculine personality skilfully mediates readers' possible anxiety towards gender-queer themes[150]. Multiple points of references, from bishōnen and shōjo to shōnen and action provide different points of engagement for the reader. However, as I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* unlike *Kabukumon* overtly implies literacy of the source material in its structure of jokes.

We know it was a sustainable title for several years and yielded 19 tankōbon without changing to another magazine or being prematurely terminated. The fragmentation of *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* through cross-generic sequences gives the reader several aspects of this narrative on which to focus when reading it. It functions like a drag, which can be seen as a performance of a man, a testimony to gender-fluidity, or a claim for femininity. Is it read as shōnen manga about kabuki, a shōjo-manga parody, or is it read as homage to shōjo manga?

Its physical publication site opens it to male readers, providing a precedence to approach the new themes and characters within the safety of male genre realm. As such it also opens itself to criticism as a title that fits or does not fit the genre of shōnen. In other words, this narrative presupposes male agency towards its contents. Therefore, the male reader can safely access it because of legitimate critical stance he can take towards it and accept or reject it. The male reader is the Big Other towards the contents published in seinen and shōnen magazines, a primary critic of "universal" stories to which women are invited as a guest. As long as the labels remain within the patriarchal dichotomy driven paradigm the expanding, multifaceted and subversive contents have a greater chance to extend and reinvent the meaning of these patriarchal terms, promoting actual change in consciousness and self-image of individuals who access these materials.

[150] All these aspects, for example, are missing in *Tsumi ka batsu*.

Gradual change in definition of male protagonists and accepted masculine narrative topics is evident in recent gendered genre development. *Innocent, Kabukumon, Young Black Jack, Juntarō, Kabuki Iza, Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* all present recurring alternations to the conventional seinen narratives. It gives credence to female readers of male genres and it offers male readers alternatives to re-define their personal definitions and performances of masculinity, (hopefully) including more gender diversity when constructing their agency in the realm of middle power.

CONCLUSION:

In this dissertation, I have discussed the versatility of Japanese popular narratives drawing on the media-specific example of manga, and traced how manga facilitates consumption within diverse contexts. My argument begins with the observation that manga readers no longer necessarily read along traditional lines of gendered genres, such as shōnen, seinen, shōjo, and josei. Moreover, in the last 15 years the cross-genre consumption began to manifest as "fusion" within genres. This is especially evident in the way shōnen and seinen genres appeal to the readers of the female genres by including shōjo manga tropes.

Gendering the genres becomes roughly correspondent to clustering works with similar aesthetics and themes by publication site, and may not reflect the actual readership; nevertheless this physical segregation embodies the patriarchal hierarchy that underlies the genres. Following this line of inquiry I have specifically focussed on the gender critical potential stemming from cross-genre consumption and fusion within genres.

Beginning with a focus on the previous research, I have looked at the male genres openly catering to the female readership through inclusion of references to the female genres via discussions by Bauwens-Sugimoto and LaMarre, who focus on the female readers' consumption of the male genres. I derived the term "female mode of address" based on LaMarre's discourse of the elements of the female genres, especially shōjo manga within "male" genres. I have presented a claim that fusion is mediated, first and foremost, by a male character type derived from the female genres—the *bishōnen*. I have examined the bishōnen character type on an example of

onnagata characters in recently popular manga about kabuki theatre. Using this recurring theme, I have demonstrated how thematically similar manga texts are reinterpreted within the framework of different manga genres.

The title, "Manga Drag" alerts the reader to the potential for critical analysis in terms of gender made possible by this approach. While recognizable tropes that override specific genres are incorporated overtly, at the same time, the notion of gendered genres remains relatively stable, thus inviting female manga readers. Following the discussion of male genres inviting the readers of the female genres, I have theorised a further step in this line of inquiry that fusion within male genres also opens these texts to intended male audience of shōnen and seinen manga, for them too to engage in new, more potentially gender-critical reading practices.

Methodologically, the thesis leans on Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity and Lacan's conceptualization of *objet petit a* in order to discuss manga's intrinsic flexibility. Butler's theory, offers a comprehensive structure for an analysis of manga texts as deliberately fragmented meta-performative narratives in the context of Japan's postmodern consumption paradigm. Therefore the notion of manga as drag resonates with consideration of basic genre-division of Japanese popular narratives in general and manga in particular.

I have used Butler's theory in order to structure my analysis by differentiating the meta-performance, or parodic performance, and performativity in general. In other words, manga as drag is a performance that deliberately draws attention to the constructedness and fluidity of meaning it allegedly conveys. Butler's approach

offers a new perspective to look at potentials of fusion in genres both for the female and male readers.

In order to combine insight into gender of the genre, gender of the readership and gender of the characters, following Butler's notion of fragmentality of performance, I have focussed on one specific generic trope – the character, on an example of bishōnen. The character is the essential aspect of postmodern texts, and mediates the narrative for the reader. Following Bauwens-Sugimot and LaMarre, I have specifically further narrowed the scope of my inquiry to centre on the gender of the characters as the main element of the cross-genre fusion. I have looked at this character as a "soulful body" – a term under which LaMarre combines two aspects of character's depiction: character design as referencing different aspects of character's personality through genre-specific tropes, and character's depiction in anime and manga as visualised interiority through the use of line, movement, costume, etc.

Specifically by looking at the "soulful body" of the bishōnen, I have suggested that the bishōnen embodies the changes in gender dynamics that are happening within the gendered genres and becomes a valuable object of analysis. In order to structure my theory I have re-defined the bishōnen within shōjo and boys' love genres through Butler's theory by looking at the gender performance associated with this character type, with emphasis on fluctuating agency and vacillating between being an identification anchor and potential for objective reading. In this aspect, I have utilised and updated on my Master's research.

I have suggested that within the "female mode of address" the bishōnen is the most recognisable trope, and at the same time, because he is a male character he is

easier integrated into male genres. Depending on the context, representations of the gender-queer character may vacillate between critical and political to deprecating and ridiculing. The scope of recent gender-dynamic shift is evident in prevalence of the bishōnen as important characters and even protagonist in seinen and shōnen manga. This is especially true for the recently popular manga about kabuki, where onnagata characters are almost always recognisable as bishōnen.

I have theorised that the bishōnen-protagonist in shōnen and seinen titles is changing the definition of "masculine" and "male" contents. I have further suggested that this may result in the gradual revaluation of the male "self" for the male reader of manga. Consequently, I also have addressed the maintaining of the separated publications for the genres, despite cross-genre readings. I have emphasised from the perspective of Butler's theory of agency formation and performativity that retaining of patriarchal terms while their meanings are expanded facilitate the process of subversion. I have surmised, the segregation of the gendered genres facilitates male readers accessing new themes and new representational strategies, specifically, because they are offered the safety of maintained hierarchy.

Throughout my research I have differentiated between the two perspectives into critical potential of manga via addressing the allegedly subversive "soulful body" of onnagata-bishōnen:

1. direct representation of critical themes (such as gender) within the narratives that are generally anticipated to tackle more mature topics[151] (such as seinen), 2. performative critical potential, non-overt subversion of existing terms and tropes, that leads to the expansion of the contents that are considered "masculine";

[151] They are not necessarily portrayed in overtly critical manner; however, they draw attention to the existence of the problem.

for example use of visual elements from female genres, or new gender-ambiguous male characters as identification anchors for male readers.

Using a cross-dressing male character as an example of critically-charged bishōnen migrating into male genres, I have analysed the onnagata, cross-dressing female role specialists in kabuki theatre. Thusly I have contributed to Japanese Studies and Japanese theatre studies by sketching out a new approach to the gender of the onnagata. By combining analysis of traditional theatre kabuki[152] with manga studies, I have concluded that when depicted realistically onnagata appeared to incorporate the crucial elements of the bishōnen, such as fluid agency and objectification of male body. I have conducted analysis of three case-studies set in a kabuki milieu with onnagata protagonists, one from each genre: for shōjo manga, Shimaki Ako's *Pintokona;* for seinen manga, *Kabukumon* by Tanaka Akio and David Miyahara; and for shōnen manga, *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* by Hirakawa Aya. I have combined close-reading of case studies with consideration of other manga about kabuki available in seinen and shōnen genres. This allowed me to tie in my previous research into alternative gender constructions in Edo period, such as onnagata and wakashū, which I have conducted in University of Latvia for my first Master's degree.

My process was divided into 4 parts.

In Part 1 I have created an overarching framework for later in-depth discussion of critical potential of manga based on the consideration of the

[152] Onnagata character also allowed me to incorporate my research conducted at the University of Latvia on alternative masculinities in Edo period. However, in this thesis I focussed on the contemporary *onnagata*.

multiplicity and flexibility of meanings of a meta-performative (drag-like) text. Building on Butler through Ole Frahm I have looked into manga as a performative media that utilises the gaps occurring between the two heterogeneous semiotic systems that comprise comics or manga: text and image. Drawing on Azuma, I have surmised how postmodern media of manga deliberately emphasises the aspects of performance: fragmentation, citation, reiteration in order to appeal to extended readership.

In order to analyse the flexibility of manga across the contexts, I have begun my analysis of gendered manga genres as manifestations of fragmentation, reiteration and citation in manga. I have defined generic tropes within the context of the cross-genre consumption of manga, consequently focussing on the contemporary generic tropes. I have expanded the discussion of cross-genre consumption of the "female mode of address" with the consideration of the male readers who are provided with new perspective on masculinity.

In order to focus my inquiry, I have utilised LaMarre's analysis of the character as a "soulful body", which combines two aspects of characters depiction. First, the notion that character's visual representation embodies potential personality and narrative role of the character, recognisable as a citation within the genre, which is derived from Azuma Hiroki, Ōtsuka Eiji and others. And second, it includes visualisation of the interiority (soul) via movement, panel fragmentation, evocative decorative elements and other additional levels of character's visual representation. Exploring manga's formal specificity, I have defined bishōnen "soulful body" as able to re-shape gender-dynamics of male genres. I have supported my claim with

recurring references to novel male character in seinen and shōnen manga found in articles by LaMarre, Bauwens-Sugimoto, and Fujimoto.

I have chosen male cross-dressing onnagata as an example of bishōnen. I have theorised that when depicted realistically onnagata is similar to bishōnen. Therefore onnagata does not have to be recognised as a citation of bishōnen from female genres to be consumed by male readers. At the same time, bishōnen invites the female genre readership and opens the narrative to gender-subversive readings.

Having fleshed out my main concepts, and introduced methodology, in Part 2 I have shifted my discussion to the definition of bishōnen. I have combined analysis of narrative tropes with analysis of formal genre tropes. As a result I have produced an inclusive definition of male character in female genres and used term "bishōnen" to address this particular narrative construct.

There are two popular ways to look at the critical potential of female genres: 1 – from the perspective of representation of critical motifs in manga; (mostly related to gender) 2 – from the perspective of the practices of female fans, such as objectifying male body, accepting own sexual desires, participating in [critical] community, cos-play, etc. In my dissertation I have focussed on the textual analysis.

I have begun with historical development of male character in shōjo manga and traced definitive elements that united versatile male protagonists of female genres, including male characters in heterosexual shōjo genre. I have built my argument on the recurring definition of the bishōnen given by Ōgi Fusami, Ishida Minori, Nagaike Kazumi, and Bauwens-Sugimoto's. Firstly, going against directly associating certain looks or age group with definition of the bishōnen, I focussed on

the way he deliberately fluctuates between being an object or subject, as well as represents new loci of agency (such as manipulation of the gaze). Secondly, I have defined the bishōnen's as an identification possibility. The bishōnen is depicted in the same way as female protagonists are in the female genres – as embodying their interiority, spread over different levels of the narrative, with panel layout, decorative symbolic elements, backgrounds and other elements extending his interiority and conveying his vision. Thirdly, I have looked at how the bishōnen offers the female reader a potential to read emotionally and physically traumatic scenes from a distance that the male body of the bishōnen provides.

I have highlighted the importance of his male body in subversion of patriarchal agency Because these characters have male sexed bodies their fluid genders and volitional agencies become subversive and postulate gender as embodied but not dependent on a sexed body.

Having defined the narrative tropes, I have moved to formal conventions of bishōnen. I have combined Oshiyama's discourse of male and female elements of character's depiction and LaMarre's theory of plastic and structural line, suggesting parallels between femininity and plasticity, which is implicit of immortality and interiority; while masculine line resonates with structural line and denotes outside world and the other, as well as physicality and mortality. I have also suggested reading structural and plastic modes of portrayal as two functions of the linework. Finally I have offered case-study analysis of *Kaze to ki no uta* and used *Pintokona* in order to demonstrate my theoretical approach.

Having defined bishōnen I have moved to analysis of male genres from the perspective of the two critical levels in manga: inclusion of critical themes and expansion of definition of patriarchal terms. In Part 3 I have focussed on the inclusion of critical themes into seinen narrative. *Kabukumon* within the context of this research is a clear testimony to the profound change that is happening in the gendered expression in manga genres.

Throughout Part 3 I have emphasised the necessity to rethink automatic association of queer tropes in female genres and critical reading. I have suggested that through seinen manga genre incorporating the critical elements from 1970s shōjo manga, these elements re-acquire their lost critical potential. Even though, it remains as one of the multiple readings among other interesting modes of engagement which I have demonstrated with analysis of *Kabukumon*.

After a brief insight into historical development of onnagata, I have focused on current media-produced image of prominent onnagata as a tolerated and celebrated queer "other", devoid of patriarchal masculine agency. Like bishōnen, they are approachable and objectified masculinity, catering to [frequently overt] female desire. I have suggested that this facilitates smooth translation of onnagata through bishōnen tropes, and inclusion of bishōnen-onnagata in masculine genres, as a part of kabuki realism.

I have used Lacanian psychoanalysis, especially gaze theory in combination with Judith Butler's theory of performativity in order to trace how the femininity and masculinity of a cross-dresser is constructed and contextualised within seinen narrative through fragmentation and reiteration. Using notion of *objet petit a*/partial object, I have analysed the tropes such as linework, fragmentation of character's

movement and body through panel layout, and internal monologues as object of desire that mediate femininity of onnagata.

Analysing the balance between "feminine" elements of performing as onnagata, being sexually fluid, displaying oneself, and elements of masculine agency, such as desire for control, political power, artistic dominance etc, I have defined onnagata in *Kabukumon* as bishōnen. The chimera-like gender of the cross-dresser is constructed from narrative and visual ques and is portrayed as the "real" gender of the actor/character. The way femininity in *Kabukumon* serves as a symbol of agency, further demonstrates how this title is encompassing more than just a realistic depiction of onnagata actor, but contextualises him as having alternative agency that surpasses phallic agency.

In the first case, the onnagata builds his agency by being in touch with his intrinsic "woman" inside of him. Meanwhile, the second onnagata discovers "woman" inside of himself, and with that acquires new agency. Both "women" resonate with the characters internal conflict. Quasi femininity stands in for a variety of social issues, and bigger conflict of orthodox and innovative kabuki factions. Affiliation with the "feminine" is revealed as a position of power beyond the patriarchal hegemony.

The gender-queer themes and unstable agency in *Kabukumon* are reminiscent of the critical shōjo manga titles, characteristic of the 1970s, however, they are integrated seamlessly into seinen narrative. Character design, violence and physicality provide context for a seinen manga reader to engage with *Kabukumon*. For a reader of female genre, citations of bishōnen should be relatively clear, facilitating the reading as boys' love. However, being able to read *Kabukumon* as

boys' love or a title in female genre does not mean that it will be read critically from this perspective. Rather the critical potential of *Kabukumon* arises from the context of seinen manga.

In Part 4 I have built an argument on the premise that retaining the labels of the gendered genres is exactly what facilitates male readers to consume female mode of address. Labelling these titles as masculine preserves the well-established hierarchy between "universal" masculine and auxiliary feminine contents. This consumption establishes critical potential of gendered genres beyond specific representation of critical topics. Having moved to the last point of my inquiry – critical potential that arises from gradual change in meanings of patriarchal symbols, I did a close reading of a shōnen comedy with elements of fusion. *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* opens the new modes of expression and themes to the male readership, redefining genre-specific image of masculinity.

My main theoretical background for this part is Butler's discourse of agency and subject formation (subjection) as multimodal performance that arises in the realm of middle-power, a dialectic space between the Big Other and an individual. I have disconnected subjectivity and objectivity from the gender binary, and instead looked at the construction of the gendered character, a gendered genre, and a subsequent gendering and self-gendering of the reader as elements that are mixed with a variety of other elements that constitute and contradict agency.

Kunisaki Izumo no jijō is a slapstick parody of shōjo genre, with an onnagata protagonist, who is deeply misogynist and constantly reinterprets his gender-queer actions into epitomes of masculinity. This title integrates shōjo tropes twofold: 1. as

parody of moe, shōjo and boys' love in episodes of risqué jokes, and 2. it incorporates elements of shōjo with the same connotation as source materials in emotional scenarios. Amount and quality of citations change from earlier more shōnen-like volumes to overwhelmingly shōjo later volumes. The gradual change reminds a learning curve that caters to male readers gradually elevating their literacy of female tropes. Just like the protagonist Izumo, the manga itself constantly recontextualises what is considered male taste, male interest and image of attractive "self" represented in protagonist.

The structure of Izumo agency is multimodal, it caters both to male reader and to the female reader. Izumo and other male cast demonstrate classic components of bishōnen, from visualised interiority to queer genders and overt homoeroticism. However the emphasised centrality of Izumo's sexed body and masculine personality skilfully mediates readers' possible anxiety towards gender-queer themes [153]. Multiple points of references, from bishōnen and shōjo to shōnen and action provide different points of engagement for the reader. However, *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* unlike *Kabukumon* overtly implies literacy of the source material in its structure of jokes. Consequently, it can be read as shōnen manga about kabuki, a shōjo-manga parody, or as an homage to shōjo manga.

Its physical publication site opens it to male readers, providing a precedence to approach the new themes and characters within the safety of male genre realm. As such it also opens itself to criticism as a title that fits or does not fit the genre of shōnen. In other words, this narrative presupposes male agency towards its contents. Therefore, the male reader can safely access it because of legitimate critical stance he

[153] All these aspects, for example, are missing in *Tsumi ka batsu*.

can take towards it and accept or reject it. The male reader is the Big Other towards the contents published in seinen and shōnen magazines, a primary critic of "universal" stories to which women are invited as a guest. As long as the labels remain within the patriarchal dichotomy driven paradigm the expanding, multifaceted and subversive contents have a greater chance to extend and reinvent the meaning of these patriarchal terms, promoting actual change in consciousness and self-image of individuals who access these materials.

This dissertation have explored new questions concerning the performativity of manga and mechanisms at work in both formal and narrative elements of the texts that shed light on increasingly diverse and more interconnected readers. I hope that the approach to possible "gender-critical" readings of manga outlined here will help pave the way for further research in this field. At the same time, a number of questions for further research remain. I hope to carry out further research into genres from the perspective of gender and toaddress the issues of historical and comparative research in greater depth.

One unexpected apparent absence is lack of research into specific gendered genres that pervade Japanese pop-culture industry. Lack of genre-specific research presupposes that comparative research of manga genres is also currently unavailable. From my perspective, I hope to further my research into genres from perspective of gender after I address the issues of historical and comparative research.

Another direction for my further inquiries that may be beneficial to research of traditional arts as well as gender is consideration of kabuki. In the cousre of my inquiry, I have discovered a surprising lack of academic approach towards gender in

kabuki in English and Japanese languages, with exception of uncontested Kathrine Mezur's *Beautiful Boys, Outlaw Bodies: Devising Kabuki Female-Likeness* (2005). However, overwhelming majority of materials focusses on the historical development, technical specifics of performance, or are examples of theatre criticism. In this thesis I attempted to sketch out my suggested further route of inquiry into gender in kabuki. With intent of continuing this line of inquiry in my post-doctoral research, I looked at the way kabuki and onnagata are presented in contemporary popular media.

Kabuki currently is experiencing a moderate renaissance. New young fans are drawn in by the kabuki actors, such as Izhikawa Ebizo, who expand their pursuits into stage productions, television programmes, films and other media. This interest is evident in prolonged interest in kabuki in manga, which is not only sustained, but appears to be growing. At the end of my research I have discovered new title on kabuki in manga form that ties in with light novel and anime media-mix *Kabukibu.* This and other recent publications indicate that demand and interest in this topic perseveres.

Especially gender in the context of kabuki from the perspective of representation of this traditional art in contemporary media appears a fertile ground for further inquiries. Even if kabuki world is notoriously cautious of its image and strict towards researchers, an analysis of representation in popular media offers a fascinating research field. I see potential in exploring this issue from perspective of images of nostalgic past that are utilised in building national identity. I particularly plan to look at this issue through further research into manga about kabuki.

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