Gender Performativity in Japanese Animation
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
English Education
University of Puerto Rico
Mayagüez Campus

2018

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Abstract

In this thesis anime is studied as a cultural text and, when analyzed, demonstrates through its characters culture's fabrication of gender. This thesis also explores how Japanese anime, as a transcultural popular culture product, can be studied as a cultural industries text. By doing so anime can be analyzed as a text and explored through critical theories, such as feminism and gender theories. More so, how each character through their gendered acts, depicts the performativity of gender. Furthermore, Japanese culture depicts within its performing arts having a wide arrange of personas who are known for their gender fluidity and androgyny. This acceptance of gender fluid characters is reflected within cultural products, such as anime. Lastly, one can see the impact of society and cultures norms on gender roles, via anime as a cultural product of Japan.

Resumen

Esta tesis pretende el estudio del anime en su contexto cultural japonés y su análisis a través de sus personajes y la fabricación de género a través de la misma. También explora como el anime japonés, el cual es producto de la cultura popular, puede ser estudiado como un texto de las industrias culturales. Realizando esto, el anime puede ser analizado a la luz de las teorías críticas, tales como: el feminismo y la teoría de género. Cada personaje a través de sus actos de género demuestra la performatividad del mismo. Además, la cultura japonesa demuestra dentro de su amplia variedad en las artes, a varios personajes; los cuales son conocidos por su fluidez de género y androginia. Esta aceptación de la fluidez de los personajes del género, es reflejada dentro del contexto y de los productos culturales, tales como el anime. En resumen, se puede observar el impacto de la sociedad y las normas culturales en los roles del género, mediante el anime como producto cultural japonés.

Acknowledgements

This thesis and its completion would not have been doable without the following people:

To my mother, for always being so loving and understanding, whilst encouraging me in my academic and life goals.

To my committee, Professors Jose Irizarry, Nickolas Haydock, and Nancy Vicente, for all their hard work and patience in working with this new and complicated subject matter.

To Stephan for always being patient and being my unpaid editor. For always being there when I needed a reminder for why I am doing all this craziness.

Thanks for all the love and support!

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Chapter One: Introduction

In 2009, Taro Aso, prime minister of Japan declared that, "Japanese content, such as anime and video games, and fashion draw [sic] attention from consumers around the world" (McCurry). This declaration establishes an official recognition of animation as an important part of Japan's exportation of popular culture. In the book, *Manga & Anime Go to Hollywood* by Davis Northrop, he also concedes to the prime minister's acknowledgement of anime and manga influence, where their "impact extends into fashion, advertising, art direction, video gaming and fine art" (1), but as Northrop points out the effect outside of Japan is widely perceived through its comics and animation.

Anime is a chief medium through which western audiences view Japanese popular culture. John Storey in his book *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* defines popular culture, but for this thesis Japanese anime will be seen as a type of popular culture that originates from the people (10). This definition of popular culture by Storey goes in conjunction with Hesmondhalgh's cultural industries concept of cultural remittance. Which is defined as an "ensemble of ideas, values, and expressive forms introduced into societies of origin by products of another culture" (Hesmondhalgh 2), meaning the culture represented by anime with all its cultural remittances is how western viewers perceive Japan. Though anime is widely accepted by western audiences, there are cultural specific elements which are: a) accepted by the viewers, or b) clash with the viewers. This is where cultural industries come in, which are "involved in making and circulating of products…texts that have influence on our own understanding of the world" (Hesmondhalgh). Anime for this study are seen as texts, can be said to have sway in displaying gender in Japanese culture. Cultural industries, as David Hesmondhalgh describes in *The Cultural Industries*, helps one understand how texts take the form they do, and why they are

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able to play such a central role in society. This is crucial when analyzing the performativity of gender in anime, its reception and interpretation by western audiences.

The manner in which western viewers see Japan with its cultural depictions of gender are all perceived through an orientalist point of view. Western audiences perceive the expressive forms of gender within anime as exotic, as a new but fascinating way in which gender is performed, not as a unique depiction of gender as being a part of the Japanese culture. Orientalism is used in this thesis as a framework to understand how western audiences perceive oriental/Japanese products such as anime (Said, 1). Gender within anime acts as a cultural remittance of Japan, but when interpreted through an orientalist framework by westerners, it is being misunderstood as a product of the 'orient', not as part of a cultural artifact exclusive to Japan. De-orientalizing anime for this thesis, is needed and is done by using the theory of orientalism as a tool when explaining how western audiences interpret anime as an oriental product.

First of all, the Orient is a made-up reality formed by another party, in this thesis it is how westerners interpret anime as being part of an 'other' culture. The Orient, is viewed as an 'other', a secondary power, a type of culture that is similar to one's own, in this case western culture, but at the same time inferior (Said, 4). The way western audiences interpret anime, and come to terms with it's 'otherness' as an oriental product, while making their own assumptions and concepts on what Japanese culture is supposed to be is called Orientalism (Said 4). Hence, anime as a cultural product "promotes an orientalist view of Japan" (Illogicalzen), since anime is a cultural text that incorporates elements of Japan's culture, when researched it becomes an orientalist medium. Said makes it clear that anybody, in any profession, when they research about the orient, that by studying, it becomes orientalism. Meaning, when an individual not part

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of the orient starts to research on the orient, their perspectives and ideologies are going to be inherently present. Whether the researcher is aware of this Orientalizing process or not, it becomes Orientalism (Said, 3).

Gender performativity with in Japanimation is a cultural product from Japan which requires an understanding of Japanese culture. De-orientalizing Japanese cultural products such as anime as seen by western viewers is necessary. For this to occur understanding anime is essential, more so, when analyzing the cultural nuances depicted in anime through tropes, characterization and narrative, thus ultimately being able to comprehend how all these factors come into play to perpetuate gender roles within anime as part of Japan's culture and not the orient. In the end being able to perceive gender performativity in anime as a cultural remittance of Japan and not simply as weird and entertaining acts from another culture.

Many westerners find it difficult to see the appeal anime has for its fans. For it seems the same as any cartoon aired in the United States. One of the reasons anime is attractive, is because it is different in its aspects, such as character development and it is visually appealing, thus enabling the viewers to become captured by its marks of difference from American cartoons. Though at the same time anime is a product that has been adapted to suit its global viewers and this is one of the ways the 'orient' is made to suit the occident's taste. While American cartoons are aimed at two audiences, children and adults, Japanese anime has shows not only dedicated by age, for example those for children, young adults and adults, but also a variety of genres, such as, mystery, mecha, *shoujo*, *shounen*, fantasy and slice of life, etc. The themes for children's cartoons in America are mostly humor or adventure (Fairly Odd Parents, Ben 10) and educational (Blue's Clue). Though there are cartoons made for a mature audience (Futurama, American Dad) these tend to satirize or parody reality with dark humor. Another aspect that

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differentiates anime from American cartoons is its narrative plot and storytelling. Anime has episodes dedicated to the development of its characters, from one episode to the next and is aired by scheduled seasons, spring, summer, fall and winter. Sometimes dedicating a story arc, this being a set of episodes dedicated specifically towards the development of certain characters, an example would be when a story arc is around defeating a certain villain and the next arc is centered around a new character, this sequence of storylines gives the audience a chance to get a better understanding of the characters. American cartoons generally have no continuity from one episode to the next. Having the same set of characters go through a variant of the same narrative episode after episode. Continuity is not the norm for western cartoons.

Northrop Davis in his book titled *Manga and Anime Go To Hollywood*, comments on the "key difference between Japanese and American [cartoons is] storytelling…there are more genres and subgenres in Japan then in the United States" (94). Japanese anime, as Susan J. Napier in, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*, mentions, "anime works include everything that Western audiences are accustomed to seeing in live-action films—romance, comedy, adventure, even psychological probing of a kind seldom attempted in recent mass culture Western film or television" (6-7). Anime has various genres ranging from age group, shounen, shoujo, seinen and josei, to plot themes such as, mecha, romance, slice of life, action, yaoi, hentai and eicchi. The massive variety of content to view, which is only seen in the United States through television, is one of the many reasons anime has become such an attractive cultural product to many.

What is it about anime that makes it worth studying? It is one of the main popular culture texts, for this study anime are seen as texts as suggested by Hesmondhalgh "texts…have influence on our own understanding of the world" which creates an awareness of gender

performativity with in anime. Anime's influence as a transcultural product is important due to its globalization. To better understand anime within the global context as a transcultural product an understanding of cultural industries and as an orient product are needed. Cultural industries at local/national levels are involved in the making and circulating of products, such as anime, that due to global exportation have an unprecedented influence on world-wide audiences and their understanding of the world. For purposes of this study these products will be referred to as texts. As these texts increasingly circulate and become popular across national/cultural borders their cultural capital increases accordingly. Illogicalzen author of "Does Anime Promote an Orientalist View of Japan: or, a Case of 'Lost in Cultural Translation'?", discusses whether anime as a globally acclaimed medium promotes an orientalist view of Japan or if it's simply not understood, the author debates for both sides back and forward but focuses mainly on Japanese historical and cultural influences within anime. Illogicalzen uses the term 'lost in cultural translation'; meaning "where the historical, and socio-cultural meanings and significance of anime are lost or overwritten through the process of adopting or adapting the work into another culture and language." Anime when lost in translation is adapted to fit a culture that is perceived as an exotic text of entertainment, but at the same time intertwined with familiar themes, this exoticness and recognition of the familiar are attractive to its viewer, which in turn makes it a very popular commodity as a cultural product. Though anime is a transcultural product the cultural ideologies that it contains are not. Therefore, the images, sounds and narratives taken and adapted from a Japanese context are valorized by members of other cultures and places on an unprecedented scale, producing a new popular culture. This results in a transcultural hybrid of understanding, but at the same time, for some, mistakenly assimilates a false sense of Japanese

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cultural authenticity. One cluster of Japanese cultural values that circulates through anime is that of gender.

Popular culture is described as a sugar pill that is easily distributed to masses by Yayoi Aoki in *Broken Silence: Voices of Japanese Feminism* (15). Although Aoki discusses Japanese popular culture, the term sugar pill allows one to discuss in general terms the cultural beliefs displayed by popular culture. One can view anime as an impactful and vital medium through which power structures convey gender standards. Anime displays gender in a way that is considered natural and inherent in Japanese culture. These naturalized ideologies support the construction of anime characters. The purpose of this thesis is to explore gender within anime and its performativity in its characters, thus exposing the way gender is constructed for the masses.

Anime is a cultural artifact or an item of cultural interest, which is exported from Japanese popular culture globally. These television programs, films, with various genres have storylines aimed for all ages and sexes in Japan. When anime is exported outside its cultural context, western audiences are exposed to a varying perspective of gender portrayal and relationships. This clash of cultural gender fabrication is an example of cultural intertextuality, which is the independent way texts (in this case anime, as defined by Hesmondhalgh relate to one another. The interaction of anime with the culture at large produces meaning and this is what is referred to as cultural intertextuality. The meaning produced by cultural intertextuality is what this research will look into; particularly the significance these texts produce when concerning gender. The analysis of the characters in anime and particular tropes that define gender roles will bring about further understanding of cultural fabrication of gender. Another aspect that will also be looked at is the narrative, specifically for understanding the action of characters and the

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development of plot, as it relates to gender performativity and gender's intercultural translation to a western audience.

By utilizing Judith Butler's book *Gender Trouble*, popular cultural ideologies of gender are clarified through Butler's theories of gender performativity and other current feminist intersectional issues. Gender performativity is key to understanding gender in characters through its tropes, characterization, actions, and plot. These aspects are all further developed by using variant spectrums of gender theory with writers such as Sandra Buckley, whose book focuses on varieties of Japanese feminism, Rebecca Murad and Melanie Waters, who analyze popular culture through a postfeminist lens, Setsu Shigematsu, whose book delves into Japanese women's movement and lastly the theory of materialist feminism used in order to further delve into Japan's feminist perspective. To understand certain aspects of Japanese culture and Japanese feminism utilizing the theory of materialist feminism is a viable tool. The line of inquiry established by Japanese feminists, specifically, to certain cultural aspects which affect women's reality defined by key institutions. Also, how such aspects of Japan's culture have changed and affected its society as a whole. These theories will further expand on anime as a global popular culture product.

This thesis explores the importance of gender roles and gender performativity within Japanese anime. This focus leads to a greater understanding of gender performativity in anime as a popular culture product. Thus, allows one to analyze gender performativity through anime characters, within specific anime shows to explain this cultural phenomenon, using various perspectives, such as, Western and Japanese feminism, Materialist feminism, tropes, and gender theory within the context of popular culture. This thesis will also discuss the possible

consequences and influences of these cultural imports on promoting the changing of cultural norms.

Thus, my thesis analyzes gender performativity as presented in anime while focusing on narrative and characterization. This study may further help us to understand the possible use of anime in a classroom as a resource for cultural studies, within popular culture. Specifically, those interested in researching the influence cultural products have on its consumers and its effects toward cultural understanding. For purposes of this study, it is understood that popular culture is a tool through which a society's general norms on traditional customs and ideologies are rendered and contested. The following research will analyze gender's performativity within Japanese anime and its meaning outside its own culture.

The second chapter of this thesis will review the sources and arguments used to explain gender and other concepts that are pertinent to this study, which will provide a deeper understanding of anime, as a cultural study within popular culture. The third chapter will examine differences between Japanese feminism and western feminism and how the concepts within each range of feminism will be used to analyze Japanese culture and its depiction of gender. This will include Post-feminist and Japanese feminism and its correlation with Japanese culture and an analysis of Japanese feminism through a materialist point of view. The fourth chapter will be an illustration of gender performativity utilizing Butler's gender theory by depicting it through anime characters and analyzing their roles. Finally, the last chapter will include a discussion of cultural importation, its effect on gender and its implication with suggested studies.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This study will use anime as a cultural text to demonstrate the manner in which gender is depicted in anime, and to understand the nature of cross-cultural performativity of gender through its characters. This analysis is made possible because of anime's unique standing, as a global cultural product, arising from Japanese popular culture. Being a popular culture product anime reflects the modern manifestations of gender and as a transcultural product has a diverse audience. Anime as a global cultural capital has many viewers, its context is translated and edited for its diverse viewers to comprehend.

Anime

The term anime is used by western audiences when referring to all Japanese animation. Northrop defines "manga [as] Japanese comics and anime [as] Japanese limited-animation, which is a form of animation that utilizes fewer frames" (1) than American animation. Anime is a global phenomenon that has become a transcultural product. In anime there are Japanese-specific cultural ideologies that are inherent and are directly incorporated. One example of this is the manner in which gender is depicted through its characters, this is mostly seen when a majority of a character's physical appearance are veritably androgynous, but this is typical for Japanimation.

Two series that will be used in this thesis are *Baka to test to Shoukanjuu* and *Gekkan Shoujo Nozaki-kun*. The anime *Baka to Test to Shoukanjuu*, AKA: Idiots, Tests and Summoned Beasts, created by Kenji Inoue, was aired in 2010 (Clements, Location 4120-4121). These two shows are chosen for their more recent use of gendered tropes. Most of the characters either parody a well-known gender trope or reinvent gender tropes to befit the shows narrative in surprising ways. Inoue first started with *Baka to Test to Shoukanjuu* as a light novel, which are

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known as a style of Japanese novels targeted towards middle school and high school audiences. Funimation Entertainment acquired the rights of the anime on March 4, 2010, and began airing subtitled episodes' days after they aired. The series is set in Fumizuki Academy, which runs on an implemented class system, where students are placed into classes A through F. Class placement is determined by their exam results, "entire classes are assigned a grade that affects their access to seating, facilities, and materials" (Clements, Location 4128). *Baka to Test to Shoukanjuu* revolves around the characters' school life, where students can improve their environment, the quality of classrooms and facilities as well as gain a multitude of other benefits, through school sanctioned class battles called Examination Summons Battles (ESB). "The fighting avatars' strengths are index-linked to students' test scores in particular subjects" (Clements, Location 4139), where in these battles students fight with their Summoned Beings or avatars, which are miniature versions of the characters themselves, whose overall fighting strength is based on their overall class test scores.

The anime *Gekkan Shoujo Nozaki-kun*, AKA *Monthly Shoujo Nozaki-kun*, created by Tsubaki Izumi, was aired in 2014. In this romantic comedy, the main character Sakura Chiyo confesses her feelings for her classmate Nozaki, but this stoic teenage boy is a respected *shoujo* mangaka. The mangaka (comic book artist) Nozaki, is the author of a *shoujo* manga called "Let's Fall in Love." Chiyo confesses her love to Nozaki but a misunderstanding occurs and Nozaki assumes she wants his autograph, as she is his fan. Sakura then begins to work as Nozaki's assistant in order to convey her feelings. And it is through this apprenticeship that Chiyo meets the other quirky assistants (AnimeNewsNetwork).

Japanimation is the word that will be used throughout this thesis to address Japanese anime (Ueno 223). It is made up from two words: Japan and animation. Japanimation is also

another referential word that pertains to a group of people who are interested in Japanese popular culture products. Japanimation is used mostly when referencing to the subculture that enjoys manga and anime. Japanimation, as Toshiya Ueno states, is a phenomenon that has occurred due to globalization (223). Japanimation is the oriental version of Americanization, where cultural products from the United States of America have had global dominance over popular culture products, since the mass globalization of Japanese cultural products anime and manga has gained a substantial following (Ueno 224).

Anime depicts cultural fabrication of gender through the characters' interaction with their environment and the ways gender is played out, not simply through character presentation but also in actions and tropes. This difference in gender portrayal is made evident in Jennifer Ricard's dissertation titled, *Ugly Ducklings: The Construction and Deconstruction of Gender in Shôjo Manga*, which contends that the differences between genders in Japanese animation are not as pronounced as they are in western animation. Ricard depicts how "characters are similar in build: slender with long limbs, large eyes and delicate facial features… sexed differences of the body, breasts for example, are not generally pronounced" (14). Gender is physically and behaviorally multifaceted, depending on the cultural norms within a specific culture its boundaries can differ.

Japanese animation or Japanimation is an important cultural product to study for two reasons: "first, they are a key part of contemporary Japanese mass visual culture, and second, they play an increasingly important role in the global mediascape" (MacWilliams 5). Anime as a visual culture portrays to its audience a worldview of gender as a narrative text. Fluidity of gender in anime is one of the major differences between Japanimation and Western cartoons. Fluidity of gender appearance with gender ambiguity, and gender bender are concepts that

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differentiate gender roles depicted in Japanimation. Michael Hoffman in his online article titled "Gender bending in Japan: From Myth to 'Postsex'", describes gender fluidity in Japanese culture as "the female within the male, and the male within the female, seem closer to the surface in the Japanese tradition than in the standard Western ones." This description Hoffman gives is a perfect example of the depictions of gender fluidity within Japanimation.

Ricard also comments in her dissertation that within anime gender ambiguity is present, but mostly in the androgynous characters, where "male characters often have feminine appearances and many of the girls appear…boyish" (13). Characters that physically and personality-wise blur the boundaries of gender within Japanimation, more so, the lines between feminine and masculinity, are always loved by their fellow characters. It is because of their gender ambiguity that androgynous characters are treated as being part of a different gender. Gender ambiguous characters have a continual presence within anime. In the online article titled "Gender and Sexuality in Japanese Anime," the author mentions an important factor that occurs regularly in Japanimation, which are the "nonchalant presence of characters from sexual and gender minorities" ("Www"). The characters the author alludes to are ones that cross-dress, are bisexual, homosexual, essentially characters whose gender and sexuality are not part of the norm. These being characters that are crossdressers, bisexuals, homosexuals etc. As most characters in Western television shows, the main characters are easily identifiable as being part of a heterosexual dichotomy, male being masculine and female characters as feminine, "any 'gender play' or non-straight characters, are unusual," characters that stray from the norm are rare or used as comedic relief in western shows ("Www"). This is not the case with Japanimation, where gender ambiguity is culturally accepted and propagated in anime characters.

Three aspects used to depict gender performativity in anime are narrative, characterization and tropes. The narrative in conjunction with the portrayal of the characters provides an in depth look at how characters interact in society. Through character development the effect of cultural norms is displayed, which are connected to gender roles. The manner in which characters portray gender performativity corresponds with gender norms in Japanese society. Characterization in anime is demonstrated through various tropes. They are being specifically utilized for storytelling and are culturally based. Tropes are mostly used to denote character attributes through their actions. This is shown in such a way that the audience can decipher what kind of personality or role each character plays. A trope that is well known to Japanese culture is the *bishounen*, meaning beautiful boys. Ricard describes the unique existence of the beautiful boy. The *bishounen* "are not beautiful because they are feminine. If anything, their beauty arises from their ambiguous gendering" (76); the physical beauty of the *bishounen* is described as both feminine and masculine. Through this trope, we have a representation of the intermixing of gender attributes depicted in Japanese culture. Anime's characterization is done through exposition, which in anime uses tropes to express discerning attributes in characters. It is understood gender characterization is not as binary as it is in western culture, with its predominant feminine and masculine specific traits.

Gender Bending is another cultural specific attribute that is used to display gender in anime. Gender bender means that a character has undergone a complete physical sex change usually through some force, for example magic or a character that appears physically as the other sex and acts according to that gender's facets. The website TV Tropes defines gender bender in three laws and the third law of any gender bending character is "gender bent character will either embrace or be subject to all of the stereotypes associated with their new gender" ("Third Law").

Gender bending is one of the tropes and ways in which Japanimation has included gender play within its characters. Now there are anime in which gender play is simply used to reinforce traditional gender stereotypes. Sometimes, as the writer of "Gender and Sexuality in Japanese Anime" comments, "gender norms are assigned to the opposite sex, but they are just placed as a way to reinforce traditional heteronormative stereotypes, by hyper-feminizing the homosexual or bisexual characters, in a manner that can only be seen as comical and disregarded as a realistic persona" ("Www"). Gender is reinforced through some characters and collapsed by others. Anime, such as the ones being used in this thesis, will be analyzed for the portrayal of gender performativity. Since gender is portrayed in a parodic way when reinforced and in other characters' gender is collapsed into one another. Thus, displaying the gender ambiguity that is so regularly seen in anime. This is a crucial factor to be kept in mind when analyzing gender in anime.

Cultural Industries

The influence cultural industries have on anime and the massive viewership anime has gained is evident. Cultural industries are "involved in making and circulating of products" (Hesmondhalgh), which allow one to understand how texts take the form they do, and why they are able play such a central role in society (Hesmondhalgh). Western audiences' previous interaction with animated television shows and media entertainment, depict gender performativity, which creates a base for their own conception of gender. Western audiences' interaction with their own culture gender roles seen in popular culture, shapes the way gender is perceived. This cultural fabrication of gender in their own native culture shapes the manner in which gender is perceived and is contrasted with Japanese cultures spectrum of gender

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expression. It is by analyzing the texts created and circulated by cultural industries that one can perceive how these texts are central in creating the allusion of a natural gender and it is through gender performativity that one can obstruct such perceptions attributed to gender norms.

With the growth and intensification of a global economy anime is promoted through cultural industries and eventually global popular culture. In *The Cultural Industries*, David Hesmondhalgh, points out that cultural industries in contemporary societies display three key elements of relativity. The first element of relativity is the "ability to make and circulate products that influence our knowledge" (4) by understanding their influence. The second element is, "their role as systems for the management of creativity and knowledge" (4). This aspect is more on the socioeconomic side, which will not be delved into in this thesis. And lastly, cultural products serve "as agents of…social and cultural change" (4), which is essential for a better understanding of anime's influence as a transcultural hybrid product, to perceive its scope of influence on gender roles within Japanese culture.

For Hesmondhalgh, *texts* is a term used in cultural analysis for artefacts that have cultural meaning, essentially, it's a collective name for works produced by cultural industries (420). As these texts increasingly circulate and become popular across national/cultural borders, their cultural capital increases accordingly, an example of such an occurrence is with popular culture products such as comics and films, which are dubbed for other countries to enjoy them. Hesmondhalgh points out that anime as a cultural product has influence on the knowledge it delivers towards its viewers. Though anime is a transcultural product, the cultural ideologies that it contains are not. Conversely, Hesmondhalgh states that in fact cultural products reaffirm the "value of cultural authenticity" (2). These representations of gender in Japanese animation are taken as truthful depictions of gender, which for the viewers confirm untruthful ideologies of

gender. Cultural industries shed light on anime as an exported cultural product and how it affects consumers' understanding of gender within these texts. Anime is a cultural remittance, defined by Hesmondhalgh as "ensembles of ideas, values, and expressive forms introduced into societies of origin by products of another culture" (2), meaning the discourse of gender in anime changes when perceived by western consumers.

Anime must be understood as an "entertainment text" (Hesmondhalgh 4) culturally specific to Japan. The proliferation of Japanese culture through its promoted products, more so, gender roles as depicted within anime allows western audiences to engage in a "proliferation of cultural exchange within Asia" (Hesmondhalgh 291). Japanimation is a product that has a sustained its strong influence over one's knowledge and understanding of Japanese culture. Anime provides its viewers with a representation of a world, allowing a cultural authenticity to be understood from its context. Such influential "entertainment texts" (Hesmondhalgh 4), helps one establish gender identities within Japanimation. Cultural industries as a tool allows us to look at Japanimation not just as another entertainment text, but as a cultural artifact.

Japanimation is a popular culture product of Japan, with its depiction of its characters affects its consumers on the discourse of gender performativity. Anime as a global commodity has a lot of sway on how its viewers perceive certain aspects of Japan, for this study that is gender in Japanimation. With this new outlook on anime, as a global commodity influencing gender perspectives in other cultures, in relation to gender perception makes anime a worthy medium to be studied through cultural industries.

Popular Culture

The spectrum of popular culture is vast and cannot be defined in simple terms. First of all, popular culture is not what many educated readers consider to be worthwhile entertainment. Secondly, popular culture is not to be simply considered a low-class entertainment for the ordinary citizens, nor what is culturally mainstream. Lastly, popular culture is part of one's everyday life, it is everywhere and surrounds one whether most of the public accepts its influence or not. In present day, popular culture is a vast array of interests and subcultures, each with its own identity and fandom. From the music, one listens to, to the various shows, online entertainment sites, such as, Netflix, Hulu and Crunchyroll, the apps on one's mobiles, social medias, to film, fashion and food. Popular culture is not only what entertains the masses, or what is not considered elite, it is the essence that differentiates one person from another. For the purposes of this thesis popular culture will be seen as cultural activities, ideas, perspectives and cultural products that reflect, suit, are aimed to please, and influence the populace as a whole.

Popular culture is described as a sugar pill that is easily distributed to masses by Aoki Yayoi in *Broken Silence: Voices of Japanese Feminism* (15). Yayoi asserts that ideology "is not intrinsic to the individual… it is external to the individual and can be resisted…when it comes disguised in the media as self-determination, choice, or taste, like a sugarcoated pill, it's difficult to identify and counter…this process of unconscious internalization that is politically dangerous" (15). This metaphor emphasizes the subtle control popular culture and beliefs of the populace have on gender as a natural concept. As Yayoi cleverly describes, the process of ideology becomes internalized as a sugarcoated pill, a process that becomes so customary, such a small everyday occurrence and act, that the individual is not even aware of their own indoctrination. The sugarcoated pill ideology can be associated with the process in which gender is naturalized

in culture. To be successful the process of gender must be performed across various mediums of media, for example, magazines and role models such as idols and artists.

Popular culture is a wide milieu of entertainment, including various mediums such as, books, television, film, World Wide Web, music, fashion, this includes anything that is consumed by the individual on a day to day basis. To such an extent that popular culture is of great relevancy when understanding current cultural ideologies. Popular culture is prevalent because of its massive yet subtle influence upon society. This intertextual connection between spectrums of popular culture influences one's daily lives. Where the effect is such that one as an individual lives an everyday life without realizing it.

Cultural Intertextuality

The interaction of anime with the culture at large produces meaning and is referred to as cultural intertextuality. Intertextuality is a concept first introduced by Julia Kristeva in "Word, Dialogue, and Novel," in this essay she breaks the traditional concept that each text derives its meaning exclusively from itself or its author. Instead she argues that a "text is constructed of a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (66). Anime when it's in relation with other shows, and its culture, takes in the previous one and creates a new substance of textuality. This change in conceptualization of intertextuality is further described by Keep, MacLaughlin and Parmar, in "Intertextuality", in which they state Kristeva not only reformats the way one views a text, but that "they transform earlier signifying systems." The authors point out that regardless of the form of a text, albeit poetry, novel, or a television show, its interconnectedness to other texts, the interpreter, in the case of this thesis the viewer of

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anime, brings a new interpretation of the texts. Hence, intertextuality is an approach that is not rigidly defined, but used to critically analyze texts of various forms.

Kristeva's alteration of Bakhtin's theory of intertextuality expands its meaning by declaring "each word (text) is an intersection of words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read" (1980, 66). Which means she is expanding on Bakhtin's theory by not only applying intertextuality towards written literary words, but all texts of multiple mediums, which interact and influence one another. The author Maria Martinez in her essay "Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept," notices that by Kristeva adding text, a synonym, in parenthesis after word, Kristeva has broken the mold and has broadened Bakhtin's intertextuality concept (276). Kristeva focuses on the innovative meaning interpreters arrive at with their own knowledge of texts and interweaving of texts with other mediums. In contrast, the first theory for intertextuality focuses on the past influences within a text and what these influences mean for the text. This is where a new perspective has been opened up by Kristeva and is the approach used in this thesis. Where the theory of intertextuality will be applied towards cultural products such as Japanese anime, namely, with the clash of cultural gender fabrication when viewed by a western audience.

Whereas in western culture gender roles are understood as projecting certain aspects and descriptors, this view collides with Japan's perceived ambiguous gender descriptors. In actuality, what we have is an example of one culture intersecting another and creating a new hybrid cultural meaning. This hybrid is an example cultural intertextuality, furthermore, it seen through the popularity of anime. For instance, anime projects Japanese normative image of gender roles, but by being interpreted through a western audience's mindset of their cultural interpretation of

gender, a new interpretation emerges. To analyze cultural fabrication of gender this interpretation is possible through cultural intertextuality in combination with gender theory.

Narrative

The role gender plays in Japanimation when displaying its cultural remittances, has not always been translated to audiences of western culture. This entails that gender has a different connotation for each culture it is displayed in. Though most won't realize it, Hesmondhalgh makes it clear that cultural industries not only produce products of entertainment, such as, anime; cultural industries also have influence through the products made, the way an individual understands the world (4). By having an impact not only on what cultural products are released into the world, this increments the way cultural industries affect an individual's perception on culture. The texts we surround ourselves with each possesses their own narrative, this is due to the "narratives [being] borrowed and adapted from other places…producing new hybrids" (2); which undoubtedly mold the way one views themselves within society and culture as a whole.

Mieke Bal, in *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, notes that there is a clear cultural embeddedness within narrative (220). Just as there cannot be an individual who is influenced by their surroundings, the same can be said of a narrative. Narratives are written by individuals living in a culture, hence they are intertwined. Bal remarks that there is a continual presence of culture within narratives, and that narratology applies to every cultural object. Narratology being "the theory of narratives, narrative texts, images, spectacles, events" (3). Bal interprets this as cultures having an overall narrative aspect as it can be analyzed as a narrative (220). Narratology is a theory that is applied to narratives, more so to cultural artifacts or texts, that have narratives within them. These cultural artifacts have aspects of their culture imbedded in them and are analyzed as such. Thus, Japanese animation fits the attributes necessary for it to

not only be considered a cultural product, but also a cultural artifact that can be analyzed by utilizing narrative.

Richard Bauman, in his essay "Introduction: Genre, Performance, and the Production of Intertextuality," states that "interdiscursive relationships rest upon cultural repertoires of concepts and practices that serve as conventionalized orienting frameworks for the production, reception, and circulation of discourse" (1). A new narrative of discourses of varying cultures is formed. This occurs when western viewers interpret anime's culture in their own context. With cultural industries in conjunction with intertextuality are invaluable regarding the mass production and consumption of Japanese animation. Intertextuality helps one understand the hybrid narrative, within the mixture of culture and gender. Anime is then a cultural artefact that tells a story, it is a form of narrative through images, which expresses a story through its characters. It is vital being able to perceive how these concepts are all intertwined for it allows one to perceive gender performativity. It is important for this study to perceive the various aspects that undoubtedly affect the framework gender is based on in anime, which an audience can adapt as a narrative for their gendered identity.

On the website, *Literary Devices*, a website dedicated to defining and giving informative examples on various literary terms. Narrative is defined as "a sequence of connected events, whether real or fictional", meaning that anime, a Japanese popular culture, is a narrative. The writers continue to mention that narrative is a vital part of human experience, since it is vital for humans to communicate ("Narrative"). One example of such a narrative is oral storytelling, a type of narrative that has been part of many cultures. The writers of *Literary Devices* point out, that these stories reinforced moral lessons, passed traditions to its people, and shared values and norms for cultures ("Narrative"). Narratives are not only means of entertainment but help shape

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individuals and develop as part of a society. This is relevant, because by knowing what narrative is being used when displaying gendered characters in anime, for it helps to understand the performative nature of gender. Narratives are a tool that societies have used to create and communicate certain aspects of their culture. Specifically, when it comes to the way people identify themselves ("Narrative").

Anime is part of mainstream media culture in Japan. Mark MacWilliams, in his introduction of his book titled *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*, reaffirms this statement, stating anime is "an immense narrative universe" (MacWilliams, 4). There is a coherence, a connection between cultural and gender manifestation concepts within anime, which is reflected through is cultural context. The manner this narrative universe depicts gender roles in anime, determines the way characters in anime perform gender.

Characterization

In review anime is a cultural artifact that tells a story (Bal 3), not as a text composed only of language, but as a visual narrative, a cultural artefact such as anime, is based on images and spoken language can also be utilized. A narrative text is a text in which a narrative agent tells a story, for anime that would be the characters (Bal 16). But what exactly constitutes a character? Bal defines characters as "actors in the text which are provided with distinct characteristics which together create the effect of a character" (114). Bal describes the process of creating a character through three aspects, but for the purposes of this thesis, only two of these aspects will be mentioned. The first being a character must have pointers. The term pointers depicts "a characteristic that identifies a specific character, set of attributes per character" in anime tropes are these pointers (Bal 125)-- an example would be Hideyoshi's *bishounen* physical attributes. The secondary aspect for a character is accumulation. Specifically, the accumulation of

characteristics; the characteristics depicted by the characters are all presented and accumulate, thus coalescing. In continuation with Hideyoshi as an example, since he is a *bishounen* character loved by his peers, to the point where he has amassed a fan club that protects him and he is considered the school idol. By combining and complementing each other and this creates an image of the character within the texts (Bal 125).

Japanese animation is a visual narrative, embedded with cultural remittances which define gender (MacWilliams, 5, Bal, 4). Anime as a cultural remittance holds within it Japanese cultural aspects that differentiate it from other entertainment texts. Gerald Prince describes, in "Revisiting the Deconstruction of Narratology: Master Tropes of Narrative Embedding and Symmetry", a type of narrative called "mimetic orientation" which is the perspective that states a "narrative says something about and influences the world" (73). Narrative being embedded with culture is also a portrayed through Japanimation as it displays a specific cultural narrative for gender. This gendered narrative is imperative when trying to comprehend it as such an influential aspect when analyzing cultural products. It is an essential tool when describing gender roles in anime, more so when it is depicted by the characters in the anime's narrative.

There are two types of characters, Bal quotes Forster's division of characters into two categories, "round characters are like 'complex' persons, who undergo a change in the course of the story and remain capable of surprising the reader. Flat characters are stable, stereotypical characters that exhibit/ contain nothing surprising" (116-117). Characterization defined by the website *Literary Devices* as "the act of creating and describing characters" ("Characterization"). Characterization includes a character's physical descriptors, such as physical attributes, their hair color, eyes and facial features, and the character's personality quirks, which distinguishes them from the rest. Characterization is a literary tool used to create rounded characters, which is

integral to anime. Since anime is a type of narrative text that revolves around its characters, unlike western cartoons which are centered around plot. The writers of *Literary Devices*, mention two other types of characterization, direct and indirect characterization. Indirect characterization is when a character's attributes are shown instead of being described directly by the narrator to its audience ("Characterization").

Characters are created through characterization; Bal describes the formation of a character through its construction of content. Qualities implied are not always quickly understood by its audience. Though tropes do help with certain aspects of the character it is through the anime's narrative, throughout the episodes, where each character's distinct characteristics are revealed. Bal notes that throughout the narrative characteristics are repeated so often, that they emerge to the viewers with more clarity (125). Thus, repetition Bal states, "is an important principle [when] [constructing] the image of a character" (125). Through the anime series and western cartoons, tropes are used as a tool to designate specific characteristics that contribute to a character's overall roundness.

Tropes

Tropes are indirect characterizations since they allow the reader to infer about the character's personality through indirect attributes. In anime, there are stock characters, but the main cast of characters is developed, and this is essential because anime emphasizes its plot through its development of its characters. This occurs through character development and their interactions with their peers, the plot develops through the character's journey. One of the ways this is done is through the use of tropes.

Tropes are cultural codes, sometimes stereotypes, recognized instantly by its viewers who are familiarized with its nuances to Japanese culture. Tropes in anime are to be perceived as cultural remittances, where viewers must have prior knowledge of tropes within anime. Webster defines tropes as a "figure of speech" ("Tropes"). These tropes are more about conveying a concept to the audience without needing to spell out all the details ("TV Tropes"); thus, a method of indirect characterization. Anime makes tropes part of its plot by projecting characteristics that are integral to its narrative as a visual text. Tropes allude to specific identity pointers for characters. One could say that tropes are cultural codes of gender normative conduct. An example of a well-known trope is the *tsundere*, which is a Japanese term for someone who has "an outwardly violent character who "runs hot and cold", alternating between two distinct moods: tsuntsun (*aloof or irritable*) and deredere (*love-struck*)" ("Tsundere"). *Tsundere* is used to describe characters that when first met are violent and harsh towards other characters, but towards their love interests and close friends they begin to reveal a much softer nature ("Tsundere"). This *tsundere* trope reflects the mass narrative of gender roles within anime.

Western audiences, Northrop points out, "won't understand the nuances of the references because they only have a superficial understanding of Japanese culture" (270). This is usually a problem when it concerns characters' unexplained actions, since they continually act in a manner that is not seen as normal. As previously mentioned the *tsundere* would out of embarrassment beat up their crush, this is part of the *tsundere* characterization. Tropes are one of the tools used to express a character's content but are also cultural remittances, "ensembles…and expressive forms" (Hesmondhalgh 2) of Japan. Though anime is a transcultural product the cultural ideologies that it contains are not, thus, if the viewer has no prior knowledge to the culture they will not be able to understand the nuances that are influencing a character's characterization with

in the narrative. Northrop clarifies, that "some tropes may be misunderstood [sic]…elements that are simply 'weird' and incomprehensible to non-Japanese audiences" or viewers of Japanimation whom are new to its content (270).

It is crucial that the audience understand the nuances of Japanese culture depicted through tropes to perceive anime's "soft power" (Illogicalzen) of influence toward gender as a globalized cultural product. Anime as a broad medium of entertainment is considered a "'soft power'", as quoted by Illogicalzen, "that can change its form or shape depending on where it is" (Koichi, 2002). This means, anime can be adopted and adapted to any culture it chooses to be aired in and its 'essence' as an Oriental text will still be present, but as an exotic medium of entertainment. This negative connotation of anime applies more so towards animated series that have been dubbed. This is an erroneous conception and understanding of anime. For while it is true that anime while being continually adapted to fit the cultural perceptions of its culture when Dubbed[1]. When the shows are kept raw[2] and are only fan-subbed[3] or subbed, Anime with its cultural specific attributes are globalized. While the series used as texts in this study are fan-subbed, which is the way most consumers gain access to the most current aired episodes of anime, instead of watching them dubbed, where the language is changed and loses parts of its cultural remittances in the process of translation.

For Illogicalzen once anime is dubbed for a foreign audience it loses part of its local culture. The author describes anime as "a product of a globalized and… Americanized culture." As anime is a culturally embedded medium, many signifiers, such as, tropes are lost within

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[1] Dubbing means a recording, where the voices have been filtered out and replaced, when applied to anime, its original Japanese voices are removed and replaced by English voiceovers.
[2] Raw refers to anime that has not been dubbed or subbed, shown exactly as it was aired in Japan.
[3] Fan subbed means fan-subtitles, where fans put subtitles on anime episodes.

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cultural translation. Tropes are seen and then interpreted by the viewer and create their own narrative of the characteristics attributed to the characters. This intertextual connection of the viewers understanding of the Japanese culture depicted by the characters and their translation of them through their own narrative of their respective culture, creates a hybrid narrative. This is the effect of anime as a transcultural product that is tasted by many and its interpretation of the cultural norms within are not as easily comprehended. Hence, the viewers fill in the gaps of the aspects of Japanese's culture they do not understand through their own and define cultural remittances and norms, such as gender, through their own means.

Tropes are cultural specific aspects that are not always translated properly towards the audience, who may not be familiarized with Japanese culture. Furthermore, signifiers of Japanese culture are lost in translation, one example of such cultural signifiers lost in translation is Japan's hierarchal language, when characters use words such as *senpai*, which designate the individual is a senior whether at school or at work, is lost when dubbed in English for there is no direct translation for such a term. Viewing anime in a western context loses its socio-cultural context, when translated solely for western viewership. Because in translation one culture is subbed for another, in order for the viewer to gain some understanding of what they are watching.

Gender

Throughout this section gender studies are further explored, through Sandra Buckley's book on Japanese feminism, Rebecca Murad and Melanie Waters, who analyze feminism within American popular culture, Setsu Shigematsu explores Japan's woman's movement and Judith Butler's theories on gender and gender performativity along with other current feminist intersectional issues clarify popular cultures' representational ideologies of gender. An

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understanding of gender performativity is key to understanding gender in Japanimation

characters through its tropes, characterization, actions, and plot.

The process in which gender can be contested is best explained by Judith Butler's theory

of gender performativity. Gender does (verb) it is not a doer (noun). Accepting this new

conceptualization of gender, which is not to be seen as a free-floating subject that knowingly

does preconceived gendered actions, we should instead view gender as a compilation of acts that

an individual does, which may subvert or align with the current gender ideologies. This propels

one to see the subject/individual as someone that cannot preexist gender, for gender is cultivated

in society and through a subject that is always a social being. In viewing the subject as the doer

of gender, Butler's theory of gender performativity challenges the acceptance of gender as

natural.

There are various concepts Butler uses to explain how gender can be analyzed. First, the

subject is one of Butler's main concepts. The subject is explained as not pre-existing gender, nor

as the source of gender identity, but rather the subject is a result produced through cultural

discourse. For Butler gender is not a performance, but "*a corporeal style,* an 'act,' as it were,

which is both intentional and performative, where '*performative*' suggests a dramatic and

contingent construction of meaning" (Butler 139). Before Butlers' performativity theory it was

assumed that one as a subject was free to perform ones' gender as they deemed fit. But for Butler

there is no performer behind gender, only a subject who depicts their gender with the options

available. The subjects' options are limited since one's options are socially made and ultimately

gender is constructed through one's culture. An example of a character who utilizes the tools

given to him to express his gender is Mikoto "Mikorin" Mikoshiba. Mikorin is one of the main

characters of the anime *Gekkan Shoujo Nozaki-kun*, his personality is the model for Nozaki's

(the protagonist) heroine Mamiko in his comic series dedicated to girls and romance. Mikorin is Mamiko's real-life example, for Mikorin is a *tsundere* with feminine characteristics.

Gender is formed by the very acts one uses to express gender identity; it is a sequence of acts with no prior performer. Gender does not preexist but acquires coherence through its practices. These acts of gender are shown on the body. The second concept is the *body*; this body is not to be confused with the physical aspect of the subject, but instead perceived as a canvas upon which power structures are reflected. "The surface of the body" (Butler 136), which is marked by cultural ideologies and structures, acts to conceal the true nature of gender. The surface of the body reflects to others a stable being whose subjectivity and gender identity are one. However, there is a discontinuity; this stable gender is "an enacted fantasy" (136). This enacted fantasy is "performative …sustained through corporeal signs" (136). Acts that designate one's gender as a subject are presented through the body. The physical signs which society uses to identify one as a subject and a body are just as unnatural as the assumption of a fundamental cohesion between gender, sex, and sexuality.

The last concept to be discussed in this study from Butler necessary for our approach is the mockery of preexisting gender norms through *parody*. Subsequently, there is no original gender; hence what is parodied is the assumption that there is one. Through characters that transgress the gender dichotomy, Hideyoshi and Kashima offer some trenchant examples. Characters self-consciously perform their gender, and through this performativity, one can perceive how the idea of natural gender is a farce. However, one must keep in mind, as Butler points, that, "parody by itself is not subversive…[it is crucial to distinguish] what makes certain kinds of parodic repetitions effectively disruptive…moreover, [others]…domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony" (139). These acts of parodic subversion when

repeatedly performed, can become absorbed within the hegemonic culture, robbing them of their subversive force

Feminism

This study also uses postfeminist theory, as outlined within the book *Feminism and Popular Culture Investigating the Postfeminist Mystique* by Munford and Waters, exploring how aspects of feminist theory are portrayed through western popular culture. Munford and Waters establish that one can analyze the shifting relationship between "femininity, female agency and popular culture" portrayed by female characters and the development of their roles (Munford and Waters 3). The analysis of shifting female perception across media is useful when comparing characters within anime that represent feminine traits, mostly attributed to the female sex.

For postfeminist theorists the body is a construct, which depicts heteronormative values of a stable gender. The assumption of a stable gender in western culture can be compared to Japanese feminism, which also has preconceived ideas of gender and its roles. Western feminism also has stereotyped roles and tropes within its culture. Gender roles within Western popular culture also "pitch [their] femininity effectively" (Munford and Waters 59), some examples of western tropes for femininity are the happy housewife, the girl image and the overbearing mother. The girl trope is a popular figure seen within western and Japanese culture. Munford and Waters describe the image of the girl as "an image of the future that is…posited as a locus of ambiguous temporality" (106). One can understand that girlhood is being interpreted as the stage of a female before entering society or tied by gender norms. In anime, the *shojou* girl, which translates to young girl, are female characters within middle school and high school, who are still developing their sense of identity. School can be perceived as a form of society where characters

depict their gender roles before adulthood. The anime characters analyzed in this study are all still young and within the school system, which allows the viewer to see how each is still developing a sense of identity and gender.

These gender roles portray the various gender discourses within western feminism. By continuing to delve into various figures of gender roles, such as the Cosmo girl, the single girl, housewives and many other prominent female figures in popular culture, one can determine how each has been influenced by gender constructs and the way Japanese culture depicts the female gender in anime. Western feminism and its concepts concentrate more on the individual, for it is based on a culture that admires independence and self-reliance. Japanese culture has an entirely different basis when it comes to feminism. Materialist feminism will is used in this study to understand the differentiating basis western feminism and Japanese feminism have. While for western feminism a theoretical framework based on Butler's performativity is used throughout this study, Japanese feminists base themselves more on the day to day occurrences of the culture, and how historically gender and sex have all been depicted and affect their current society.

Before delving further into Japanese feminism and how it can be perceived through materialist perspective, we might well ask: what is Materialist feminism and how is it different from Marxism? Stevi Jackson, in the essay "Why a Materialist Feminism Is (Still) Possible and Necessary," describes Materialist Feminism as "[referring] to perspectives deriving from Marx's historical materialism…as a method of analyzing relations between men and women as social rather than natural" (284). Material feminism uses the theory that originated within Marxism, but these writers have broadened the theory to better analyze women's material oppression within present day society. While western feminism derives from theories analyzing how gender has

been naturalized by culture, materialist feminism focuses on the different factors that make up a society and how the structures within a society oppress and exploit women.

Rosemary Hennessy, and Chrys Ingraham, in the introduction "Reclaiming Anticapitalist Feminism," further explain materialist feminist perspective and how it "emphasizes a perspective on social life that refuses to separate the materiality of meaning, identity, the body, state, or nation from the requisite division of labor" (1); how all these aspects of society, the body, identity, the nation itself, are not separate power structures that dictate one's social and cultural *existence*. Through material feminism "concepts that could be used to explain the social structures through which women are exploited and oppressed" (Hennessy 3), "[readdresses] ...the material realities that bind race, gender, sexuality, and nationality to labor" (Hennessy 2). All these power structures that make up a societies ideological background, such as, heteronormativity and gender roles, through materialist feminism are seen as separate entities that randomly influence one another. Materialist feminism perceives society as a whole entity and analyzes these interacting factors as such. In contrast feminism would place the blame for women's' oppression within society upon ideological concepts. An example of such ideological concepts are patriarchy and sexual division. Though these ideologies have an influence on one's acts and subject with in society, for materialist feminism, they are not fundamental issues. But perceived as part of the many issues within society that must be addressed (Hennessy 3-4, Delphy 86, Jackson 284).

For Japanese society, the differentiating basis has to do with the impact of the Emperor system on everyday life in Japan, in contrast to western feminism, which focuses on theoretical perspectives applied to the women's movement. This creation of a mass consciousness is perceived in popular culture. Following the end of World War II and the transition from empire

to democracy, post-war Japan began promoting a "heterosexist system; a woman could validate her existence only by becoming a man's wife and giving birth to his children" (Shigematsu 689). This concept of women obtaining validation through marriage and the procreation of a male heir has to do with the fact that Japanese family tree is patrilineal. This was all done to bring Japanese society as a whole under an ideal of patriotism, in which the female body was an instrument towards a better future. The roles given to women post-war were few and all related towards the good wife and wise mother ideology.

This cultural tradition of gender roles is perpetuated in Japanese mass consciousness. How each individual works for the good of the whole nation is denoted by gender roles created, such as the wife and mother. This concept of "nation as family" (23) as Yayoi labels it, is the national policy that is unique to Japan, a nation where everything from one's job to country as a whole is seen as a family. Yayoi describes this national policy as being "anchored in a family system that encodes the Confucian ethic of filial piety and imperialist historical view together" (23). This is where the Imperial household comes to fruition. A citizen sacrifices himself or herself voluntarily, demonstrating proof of loyalty and fealty towards the family/nation structure. In consequence, there are only a few acceptable gender roles that are determined by the fealty mentality, where male and female genders are compartmentalized for specific societal needs.

This propagation of the wife and mother was not only present within the household, but in society as well. This is one of the many examples where an ideal of dichotomized, gender male and female, are transported toward other spheres of a culture and society, such as the work place. Setsu Shigematsu, the author of *Scream from the Shadows: The Women's Liberation Movement in Japan*, makes this transference clear by mentioning that the "state and corporations worked together to reform a new version of this model… [towards cementing] a gendered

division of labor…women's place as managers of the home" (405-408). Japanese society began establishing specific roles for the female sex as wife and mother. These gender roles of nurturing female were being designed as the optimum role a woman could embody.

Conclusion

Anime as a globally sought text has continued to amass power with its influence, affecting the way viewers perceive Japanese society and culture within it as a whole. Gender ideologies in anime are shown by fictional anime characters, through characterization that depicts Japanese cultures' understanding of what gender is supposed to be. This undoubtedly plays a role in what it means to be a man or woman. The theory of cultural industries also depicts how texts, such as anime, portray the power and influence it holds over people's understanding of culture, in this case, cultures fabrication of gender (Hesmondhalgh 33).

To further understand the various manners in which characters portray gender in anime, the first accepted ideology that must be broken is the correlation between sex, gender, and sexuality. There is no immediate relationship between sex, the biological state of a person, gender, the act of being, and sexuality, whom one desires/attracted towards. It is by understanding how cultural fabrication of gender happens, through characterization, that one can perceive how in anime the characters subvert expected gender norms.

The following chapter will delve further into the way gender has been created within Japanese culture. Specifically, I will analyze how gender ambiguity has become such a well-known as part of its history. At the same time, an analysis of the progress of feminism in Japan will be discussed, comparing similar aspects in western feminism, utilizing materialist feminist theory.

Chapter Three: Japanese Feminism and Western Feminism

Contrary to common belief gender is a construction fashioned differently across diverse cultures and societal norms. Hence, these culturally specific gender constructions do not translate as they are depicted transculturally. A variance in cultural norms relating to gender suggests that some gender traits are uniquely found in Japanese culture. Through social interactions of characters in anime, gender is enacted, and its performativity can be viewed in variant gender roles. To further understand Japan's cultural fabrications an understanding of Japan's gender history is necessary. To be more precise, what follows is an explanation of how Japan came to have such a vast array of ambiguously gendered characters in its popular culture and how androgeny has become the norm.

Androgynous Figure

Japan has had a long tradition of admiring androgynous gender representation in its performing arts. Erica Stevens Abbitt, in her journal article titled "Androgyny and Otherness: Exploring the West Through the Japanese Performative Body"; poses an important question: "how is it possible to apply critical theory without imposing Western perceptions or using master narratives that reduce and conquer the 'foreign'?" (249). For such Orientalized perceptions of gender within Japanese culture not to be viewed as simplistic exoticness of an 'other,' an analysis of a current figure in Japanese's culture that forms current gender views is required. The androgynous figure has a recurrent existence in Japanese popular culture especially in the many forms it takes in the performing arts. One of the established forms of art in Japan is *Kabuki*; Abbitt gives a brief overview of the origin and the formation of theatrical form of *Kabuki*:

In the 17th century, the new theatrical form called *kabuki* was initiated by priestess

Okuni, who performed a mixture of Buddhist rites and erotic comedy wearing

Portuguese pants and a Christian cross. When women performers are banned from

this performance art, the *onnagata-- ---* men who took over the female roles-- ---

won an extraordinary degree of popularity due in no small part to the slippage

between their biological gender and the roles they enacted. (250)

The *Kabuki* theater is known for its unique attributes, becoming an amalgam of cultural

traits utilized for entertainment, especially the representation of a gender ambiguous character.

This later became the norm for *Kabuki*, when women were banned from entertainment roles due

to prostitution, men were then cast as *onnagata*, women's role within the theater, which created a

whole new sensation for the gender slippage and androgyny which the Japanese theater of

Kabuki is presently known for (Abbitt 250). With this new contribution of androgynous figures

being accepted and propagated through Japan's classical dance-drama, the androgynous figure

has become a staple within present popular culture texts of entertainment. In this thesis, Nozaki,

Mikoshiba, Kashima, Minami, and Hideyoshi are all anime characters that contest heterosexual

gender and reflect the performativity of gender in through their characterization.

Maana Sasaki in her essay, "Gender Ambiguity and Liberation of Female Sexual Desire

in Fantasy Spaces of *Shojo* Manga and the *Shojo* Subculture," mentions that during the Japanese

Tokugawa (Edo) Period from 1603-1868, new notions of gender and sex were brought into the

culture, "that remain deeply rooted in Japanese culture today" (11). These new notions of gender

and sex were reflected in the *Kabuki* theater. One of the most famous *onnagata*, of the *Kabuki*

theater was Yoshizawa Ayame. Ayame was the first to develop a theory and method interpreting

and understanding the *Kabuki onnagata*. Jennifer Robertson in "The Politics of Androgyny in

Japan: Sexuality and Subversion in the Theater and Beyond," points out that before Ayame there was no 'formal' or regularly practiced form of androgyny. Ayame invented a method for the *onnagata* or "female gender specialist," which Ayame based on the Buddhist concept of henshin, meaning bodily transformation (423). Robertson explains the notion of henshin in two parts, *hen* as the term for change, in a transitive and intransitive manner, and *shin* is the term used for body, for example the physical, mental and spiritual body (423).

Ayame depicted the *onnagata* not as "a male acting in a role in which he becomes a 'woman'…but rather as a male who is a 'woman' acting a role," in other words the transformation into a 'woman' is not part of the performance, the becoming a woman proceeds the role, 'woman' becomes part of the *onnagata's* life (Robertson 423). This is one of the ways gender performativity is seen through the androgynous figure, where gender slippage, as Abbitt defines it as the "oscillation between received ideas of male and female within an individual body" (249) is performed by the *onnagata*. This slippage of gender is continual throughout the *Kabuki* theaters existence in the Edo period. The fluidity of gender is also mentioned by Sasaki, who quotes Timon Screech (1999), Screech discusses a fundamental difference in the manner gender and sex is constructed between Western and Japan. Screech claims, "the Edo sense, and that of its antecedents, was that concerted comportment in a given gender role will shift the person across into that gender; since sex is barely encoded on the outside of the body, this new gender will to all intents and purposes become the person's new sex" (11). The expression of gender is seen as an ability present in the Japanese historical past, which saw the fluidity between sex, gender, and sexuality as part of the process. Throughout the anime, *Baka to Test to Shoukanjuu*, fabrication of gender is seen throughout various of its characters. Hideyoshi is a character whose

sex is barely encoded in his physical appearance, he is continually seen acting other gendered

roles and because of his feminized looks, he is always treated as a female (Figure 1).

Figure 1
A screenshot of Hideyoshi's appearance after putting on his swimsuit. Here Hideyoshi seems
overtly feminized, big round eyes, blushing cheeks, a feminine wave and a sparkly background
all contribute towards his *bishounen* appearance.

Figure 2
Screenshot of when the Hideyoshi bath appears miraculously between the women and male baths.

In figure 2 Hideyoshi faces one of the various comedic situations, in which he is forced to choose a sexed room. Throughout the series, this occurs when choosing a changing room, clothes, bathroom and even an open bath. The protagonist Akihisa states, "so it's acknowledged by society…" ("Me, Pools, and Swimsuit Paradises… And…"), Akihisa is commenting on how Hideyoshi's androgynous gender has been accepted by society. This is proclaimed when Hideyoshi is forced to select which open bath he is to enter, on the left women's bath, where his classmates believe he belongs, or on the right the male's bath, where Hideyoshi knows he belongs (Figure 2), thus the anime creates a third option the Hideyoshi gender. This comically resolved gendered situation echoes Akihisa's words that society has accepted that Hideyoshi is a gender in itself. This is one of the many gendered situations in which the character Hideyoshi is put throughout the anime's plot and depicts his continual gender slippage. Hideyoshi's gender slippage and androgynous appearances reaches the point where everyone believes he is a girl,

even to his continual claims that he is indeed a guy. This strengthens Butler's gender

performativity theory, specially when it concerns how gender is a fabrication of its own culture,

and the manner gender is constructed and defined through its societal norms, continually changes

from one aspect to another.

The androgynous figure is a representative of cultural fabrication of gender. Abbitt

describes the androgynous figure (cited Ridgeway 1991, 1) as "a veiled performance", that has

been featured in Japanese media such as, theatrical performance, television, films. Most of the

time, Abbitt mentions the androgynous figure as "a charismatic central character who crosses

boundaries of gender…to embody a sexual…other" (250). This differentiating factor that

distinguishes the androgynous figure within popular culture, is one of the aspects that has been

continually seen through Japanese culture. A character that is known for her androgyny is Yuu

Kashima. Kashima is the main androgynous figure in the anime *Gekkan Shoujo Nozaki-kun*, as

seen in figure 3 Kashima is tall, slender and has short hair, she is dressed as a prince in the anime

since she is nicknamed 'the prince of the school' for her charming personality and flirty lines.

Figure 3
A screenshot of Kashima when she appears in the opening song of the anime *Gekkan Shoujo Nozaki-kun*, her prince charming appearance, slender figure and charming aura all depict her as part of the male gender.

In figure 4 the audience gets a glimpse towards Kashima's prince aura, first with the

flower background, which is used regularly in *shoujo* manga as to demonstrate a charming aura,

secondly when she is flirting with her female fans and acting as a prince by treating her fans as

princesses and lastly by exclaiming such obviously flirty lines with such credibility. Kashima is

an ideal model for the androgynous figure and ambiguous gender. For Kashima seems to act as a

charming prince but at the same time is of the female sex. It is the manner the androgynous and

ambiguous gender is performed in Japanimation that has become one of Japan's cultural

trademarks. More so, when it concerns the blurring of gender norms, Robertson mentions in full details the fluidity of gender through the androgynous figure, "androgyny involves the scrambling of gender markers- clothes, gestures, speech patterns, and so on- in a way that both undermines the stability of a sex-gender system premised on a male-female dichotomy and retains that dichotomy by either juxtaposing or blending its elements" (419).

Figure 4
A screenshot of Kashima acting all princelike towards her admirers. Her prince aura exudes charm as is depicted through the background.

This intertextuality and gender slippage of markers that are meant to define heteronormative genders are interconnected and redefined by the androgynous figure. One could even say that the androgynous figure is an example of how unnatural gender is and how quickly genders can be performed and interweaved with one another. Androgyny in this study will be

analyzed through anime characters that are seen physically to represent gender slippage. It is through gender performativity, where one notices the manner the androgynous figure not only reestablishes their own gender norms but also exaggerates and contests the way a culture fabricates its gendered performances as natural.

"Good Wife, Wise Mother"

After the Tokugawa period passed, the Meiji period arrived in Japan, with a whole new focus to industrialize the country and westernize its state of mind. Japan's new ideological concepts are from the Occident. Specifically those concerning gender and sexuality were brought in and adapted by Japanese culture. Sasaki makes it clear just how gender has a cultural impact on Japan; it has "historical relevance of gender ambiguity and sexual diversity deeply rooted in Japanese culture." (3) In contrast, with the past period in Japan, the new nationalization of Japan to endeavor into an industrial age has adapted notions that differs entirely from its past, one of them being the distribution by the law of gender markers and cultural application of gender roles.

The new era of modernization began with the waning of the samurai, the birth of the Meiji Era (1868-1912) and importation of European theories on sex and gender (Abbitt 250). Ofra Goldstein in her journal essay, "Kimono and the Construction of Gendered and Cultural Identities," presents to its reader an elaborate metaphor utilizing the kimono, a traditional Japanese form of dress, as an example and extension of the manner in which traditional cultural identities are created by the ruling party. Goldstein refers more so to the contrast created by western and Asian clothing. For the Asian subjects dressing in a western or Asian fashion depict gender roles, western assigned towards male gender and Asian to the female gender.

Gender and sexual roles began to be assigned, more so, as labels relating to one's gender and sexuality were becoming widespread through Japan, for example: heterosexual, lesbian and homosexual. Setsu Shigematsu calls the society established as a "heterosexist system," a culture where "a woman could validate her existence only by becoming a man's wife and giving birth to his children" ("Tanaka Mitsu on Ribu, Child Killing, and Abortion"). Shigematsu refers to a society where a woman can only be validated by taking part in a heterosexual relationship, but more so as the partner of the male counterpart. This heterosexist society came into existence when models for traditional Japanese identities began to be formed. Shigematsu points out the continual promotion of the good wife ideology, which is that of "'good wife, and wise mother' (ryosai kenbo)… [where] the state and corporations worked together to reform and promote a new version of this model…[and] sediment a gendered division of labor that promoted and rationalized women's place as managers of the home"("The Contradictions of Postwar Equality, Peace, and Democracy"). These culturally constructed positions of women depict the general process by which culture creates gender identity. As Goldstein so aptly remarks, "the construction of modern Japanese identity … [occurs] just as the process of new nation and identity building has been closely related to distinctions between the Japanese and the Western" (352-353).

This new Meiji code affected the roles of the Japanese citizens in both their private and social roles within their culture. The promulgation of the "good wife, wise mother" was the beginning of a patriarchal Civil Code. This highly gendered process came to exist through the civil codes which enforce a patriarchal household by law, with the postwar revisions which were based on gender equality between sexes. Shigematsu points out this egalitarian process focused more on marital property, divorce and child custody; the new establishment of a renewed civil

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code chipped away at the cultural tradition of "nation as family" (23). Yayoi Aoki in her book *Broken Silence: Voices of Japanese Feminism*, points out that the first civil code was centered around making the family a national policy. Family as a central structure within Japanese culture and society is a unique social trait seen in Japan. This civil code made the citizens private and public life were all by law centered around a patriarchal household. This is due to Japan's historical background with Confucianism. Shunyao Yu in her thesis titled *Japanese Anime and Woman's Gender-Role Changing* mentions that in Confucianism a common image of women's traits was culturally passed down. Yayori Matsui describes how "during the feudal period, Japan was ruled by the warrior [*samurai*]…[it was] considered unethical for a married couple to enjoy sexual pleasure. Women were supposed to follow the Confucian rule of three obedience's: as a daughter, obey the father; as a wife, the husband; and as a mother, the son. The essential role of a woman was to give birth to a son, a successor to the head of the feudal family…[women were] expected to be only breeding machines" (Buckley 148).

Matsui expresses her reproach for any perspective where a female's worth within society is when giving birth to a male child. Another aspect she also criticizes is the hypocrisy of Japans' double standard; where wives are expected to be faithful towards their husband, but men can seek pleasure outside their marriage. Matsui continues by explaining how for men there existed "another type of woman…men were provided with facilities, the *kuruwa*, where they could enjoy sexual pleasure outside the home". Men could go out and find pleasure through "prostitutes called *yujo*", but wives are not allowed to crave or seek sexual pleasure. For in Japan all "women were divided into those with wombs and those with sexual organs" (Buckley 148). Women were divided by men's and society's need for them, this propagated a double standard that Matsui comments is still seen in present day Japanese culture and in many countries.

Feminism

This concept of national family for Aoki is a process of "modernization of the society while containing existing structures of control…designate a power to both the emperor and the household head beyond the scope of the law…they disseminated this new family morality thoroughly under the appellate of 'the beautiful and pure customs' of ancient Japan" (Buckley 23). This contradiction of democracy and gender roles within Japan weaves into the past and existing women's movements that have transpired throughout Japan's history. There is this misplaced assumption within the occidental mindset that feminism and women's movement originated from the west, this type of mentality and assumptions is orientalism at its best. One party, the west, assumes total dominance over a concept and has greater influence over other countries that partake in it. But this misconception of feminism and women's movement within Japan is quickly addressed by Shigematsu who verifies that the "implications of the constructed global divisions of West and East, first and third worlds, north and south, and their racialized and gendered significance. This framework is further complicated by Japan's complex rivalry with Western 'civilization'" ("Introduction").

Henceforth, to claim that Japan's feminist movement as a copy-paste of the feminist moment in the United States is an erroneous train of thought. There have been Women's movements before the USA occupation of Japan, women's liberation movements, feminism, are not exclusive concepts that originated in America. Sandra Buckley in her book *Broken Silence Voices of Japanese Feminism*, interviews ten Japanese feminists of many fields of profession, who "were selected to emphasize the multiplicity of Japanese feminism" (xvi). All the women interviewed display various point of views on differing issues but Buckley points out the main themes that appear, "politics of language; the construction of the gendered body in medicine, the

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law, the family, and other dominant institutions; the relationship of Japanese feminists to 'Western' feminisms" (xvii). One of the feminist Buckley interviews, Yoshiko Miya, is a freelance writer, who "explores questions of female sexuality and institutional responses to the female body in crisis" (Buckley156). Miya points toward a distinct difference between western feminism and oriental feminism in Japan; how there is a lack of distinction between the concepts of sex, sexuality and gender for the Japanese, "this blurring of terms must stop if Japanese feminists were ever to be in a position to develop theories of the construction of gendered identity" (Buckley 156). Miya continues explaining feminism within Japan as still not having a clear definition for what gender within the feminist movements are perceived as. Though she notes that with Aoki and Ueno there is still no agreement on what gender approach Japan has, but for Miya, she believes "that it is not fundamental biological and bodily differences but culturally enforced differences that create the gender gap. Sexuality is the individual's sense of a self-identity that extends to one's body and links that body to one's sexual drives" (Buckley 162). Miya asserts that there is a need for a clear theoretical distinction between gender and sexuality, it is an important component in the ongoing 'nature-nurture' debate within Japanese Feminism (Buckley 156), for the movements to have progress its theoretical framework must continue to develop.

Unlike Japanese feminism for Western feminism there have been clear theories made surrounding sex, gender, sexuality, and the manner these concepts influence the individual's identity. Judith Butler is one of the western feminists explored in this study, in her book *Gender Trouble Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, introduces a new perception towards analyzing sex, gender and sexuality as components to form one's identity. First, all bodies are gendered from the moment of their social emergence, second all subjects are part of the social structures,

finally this all means there is no body that can exist before its cultural influence. Hence, this all confers towards Butler's theory that denotes the so called natural gender that cultures so often refer to as their model. Since the body cannot be formed without influence from its culture, it is safe to say that just as the individual's body is influenced by its surrounding society this also applies towards gender expressions. Hence gender is unnatural since all gender is socially constructed. Butler's theory for sex, gender and sexuality will be contrasted with various Japanese feminists throughout this chapter.

Chiyo Saito is one of the many feminist interviewed by Buckley. Saito gives her opinion towards the occident claiming to be the origin of feminist movements, Saito begins by explaining that what she finds "most interesting…is the way these women consider feminism to be an exportable commodity" (257), how for Saito there was no external factor that determined women's movement with in Japan. Saito makes it clear how there are, "various origins and currents of feminism…the fact that feminism is no longer singular…such a diversification is inevitable" (Buckley 257, 261-262); each consequent wave of feminism has approached women's liberation through differing strategies and approaches, and each has developed further to fit the contemporary needs of Japanese culture. The alteration of strategies and its continual growth depicts how each generation has defined their own approach towards gender and how it cannot be given a uniformed definition across varying feminist approaches. Saito resumes by saying that feminism "will reflect the social conditions of the country, region, and historical period that forms the backdrops of the movement…a constant process of change" (Buckley 265).

Feminist Waves

Another feminist interviewed is Aoki, "the first Japanese feminist to theorize the relationship between the imperial system and contemporary conditions of women's lives"

(Buckley 1). The First wave feminism in the Meiji Japan is explained by Aoki, how it began with the problem of child prostitution (Buckley 11).

During the nineteenth century parents were selling their daughters between the age of twelve and thirteen into prostitution in order to pay for the family's debts. Christian women noticed this practice that went against human rights. But as Aoki points out, in that time period the father had complete control over his household and that included his daughters. Women had no protection and a father could sell them. Though Christian women protested, they had no value for the government. Since women were considered second class citizens with no political influence. This act against human rights was what brought into emergence the women's suffrage movement, which fought to gain the vote for all women (Buckley 11). Aoki makes it quite clear that though Japanese feminists have learned a lot from American feminists, they have not simply imitated their actions (Buckley 11). The first wave of American feminism started during the 1830's and began with a lot of the same concerns as the first wave of Japanese feminism, which was the realization that as women they held no political power and needed to become relevant to change the way society treated them.

This then proceeds to the secondary feminist movement, during the late 1960's and 1970's had its own distinct origin in Japan and one of the early leaders of this wave was Tanaka Mitsu (Buckley 11). Tanaka will be later explained in detail and her involvement with the Uman Ribu movement. What caused the sudden second women's movement to occur was first Japan's involvement in the Vietnam war. Another factor that Aoki mentions is the reform of the Eugenics Protection Law, she makes a comment on how "the women who fought against the reform bill were not radicals or necessarily feminists…their major concern…[is] basic human rights issue" (Buckley 12). This combination which started against the Vietnam war and the

reform bill "sparked… Japan's second wave of feminism…without any direct contact with… American feminism" (Buckley 12). The second wave of American feminism occurred during the 1960's post war World War II, this wave of feminism focuses more on women's rights within the workforce, sexuality and reproductive rights. This was a time when the United States began to restructure itself, just as, Japan after the US Occupation began to restructure itself from an empire to a democracy and its introduction to equal treatment for women in the work place.

This is of great importance, in order to be able to fully understand the beginning of Japan's feminist movements. Since the establishment of the civil code women became second class citizens with no rights within the household other than to bear a male child. Aoki makes it clear that the aim for her feminism is "its dual aim of equality in human relations" not the overpowering of male over female or vice versa, or a role where women adapt male accepted attitudes but an equal existence for humans over all, where the "dismantling of patriarchal society" is necessary to overturn the double standard imposed through the imperial household (Buckley 30).

Sexuality and Sex

Another aspect that deviates from American feminism is Japanese women's view on sexuality. Though American feminism focuses also on the sexual liberation of the female sex, Japanese women have a different focus when it concerns towards their sexuality. This is where a unique approach towards feminism for America begins, where western feminism focuses on sexuality as being one of the main concerns of restriction and liberation for the female sex. Whilst Japanese women aren't as aware of the importance sexuality is for the female sex, their

major concern is that as mother, sex and sexuality for western feminist has always been a central theme when it comes to western women's rights.

Aoki introduces the feminist Tanaka Mitsu as part of the second wave of Japanese feminism. Tanaka "defended [what] was every woman's right to self-determination in all matters relating to her sexuality and her body" (16). Tanaka was one of the founding member of the women's liberation movement called Uman Ribu. Shigematsu describes Uman Ribu as being "born in Japan amid conditions of violence, radicalism, and imperialist aggression", whose "activist…sought to examine how Japanese women were constituted by the conditions of a violent society, a society that largely disavowed its complicity in the violence being done to others" ("Introduction"). Tanaka was a writer whom developed her own theory concerning women's gender and sexuality and their association to its environment, more so, society and its control over a woman's body.

Tanaka as a member of Uman Ribu developed her own philosophy on female sexuality and gender. Sex or sei is pointed out by Shigematsu, as not having the same designation as the English definition of sex which is the difference between male and female sex, sexuality, or sexual acts ("Ribu and Tanaka Mitsu"); Shigematsu mentions how Tanaka references to sex as being "multivalent…not only as a socially constructed category that functioned as a class…also at the core of a repressed ontology …[as] a contradictory and potentially liberating force" ("Tanaka's Theory of the Liberation of Sex"). Tanaka marks a clear line towards her perception of sex, by defining sex as being multifaceted, having more than one application and institution that defines it, not only is it defined by the society it resides in, but it is used to class individuals. Tanaka resumes this by saying that sex is the nature of a being, and conversely, it is at the same time a restricting force as a liberating force. For Tanaka sex is a liberating force one that can

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used to further enhance women's role in society. Though for Butler sex is just as culturally constructed as gender, since there is this inherently accepted concept that sex, gender and sexuality are thought to all be related to one another. To further explain one's biological sex, male, one would naturally display masculine traits on their body, therefore in a heterosexual relationship a male subject should desire a female. Butler designates "sex [one's biological nature] as part of a strategy to conceal and, hence, to perpetuate power-relations" (Butler 95), power relations that just as the civil code of the Meiji era, tried to culturally dictate how one's sex, male or female, should act within their society. Butler continues this tangent by citing Foucault's sexual theories, "to be sexed…is to be subjected to a set of social regulations" (96); sex is being used as the basis to create gendered social beings, whose sexuality and desires are controlled, such as, the good wife, through continually regulated norms on one's sex and sexuality. Tanaka perceives sex as a culturally made force but has a more hands on approach, this goes in accordance with Uman Ribu's radical feminist discourse which "sought a total revolution of cultural values that would enable a different kind of relationality, which it saw as the goal of human liberation", Uman Ribu perceived women's sex as a being in constant attack and oppression within society, but also as the key factor towards woman's liberation, their train of thought was to utilize sex not as the marginalizing force in which society saw it as but as a 'violent force…a revolutionary force'" (Shigematsu, "Tanaka's Theory of the Liberation of Sex"). As mentioned previously, activist's feminists in Japan are more ahead than their academic and theoretical peers, the movement Uman Ribu is such an example, where Japanese feminism has not yet to develop a concise outlook on sex, hence in this study the use of western theory when analyzing gender performativity in Japanimation. But it is still necessary to know the basis

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of women's, feminist outlook on gender, sex and sexuality to perceive the cultures depiction within the popular culture products.

The Body

Kanazumi then continues delegating how this mind set affects a female's perception of themselves with in Japanese society. As stated previously there is no sexual awareness when it concerns to woman's sexual needs, not as a mother or a wife but sexuality as an individual with needs, that as a human must be first addressed in order to come about any social change. "Unlike America, we already have clearly defined laws in place; we need a shift in public attitudes…to bring the laws into practice" (Buckley 79); in contrast, American feminist movement which focuses mainly on women's sexuality, Japanese women first need to understand how sexuality is being used to oppress them not only in the household but as individuals.

As Kanazumi mentions until there is a public attention brought and women start to recognize their own sexuality there can be no social reformation.   This lack of individual awareness or lack of self-importance given to women causes a whole spectrum of problems within the house and workforce. The imperialistic outlook on one's life has become a deterring factor for women's liberation in Japan, Kanazumi asserts that one of these problems is divorce, where marriage is not seen as a partnership for life between a man and a woman but only "as the structure within which children are born and raised" (Buckley 80); women's nature of existence is all centered around the *ryosai kenbo*. Motherhood is a double-edged sword with in Japanese society for it denotes women's sexuality as one only seen fit to be used to procreate and bear children, Kanazumi remarks that what "is missing in modern Japanese family is any real sense of intimacy, any sense of emotion free of obligation or manipulation" (Buckley 77), when the *ryosai kenbo* is an established structure within the culture, it is not a motherhood that is sought

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out of one's love towards having children but an obligation that is imposed not only upon female sexuality but their body is not their own.

There is this propagated mentality that bases a woman's worth upon her body, not as physical attraction but as being able to procreate, this "value judgment that a healthy woman is one who gets pregnant and gives birth" (Buckley 85); this assumption goes back to the good wife wise mother ideology, this ideology not only applies toward women but also men, since, "the same value system underlies the notion that a male body that cannot 'get a woman pregnant' is not a healthy body" this value system is all based on the premise that being unable to provide an heir or child within a marriage, which is the basis of a marriage, is equated toward being ill. Not having children is counter-normative in Japanese society and has a lot of cultural and inherent pressure upon a marriage to have offspring. This continual mentality of the human body not being part of the individual but as a mechanism that is obliged to self-sacrifice for its imperialistic nation also defines the manner the body is perceived.

Western feminism acknowledges that there are cultural discourses that depict the manner the body is perceived in one's society, in Japan it is seen for women as a tool for the good of the family. The body as described by Salih is "an imagined structure which is the result or the product of desire, the body is constructed, countered, made to seem stable by discourse and the law" (57), the law being power structures within society that determine what is normative and what is considered counter normative, this all induces one to understand that the body is just as unstable as gender and sexuality. On this note the body is usually perceived as a passive structure that simply reflects the current gender discourse of the individual's society. These discourses such as "sex [unify] bodily functions and meanings that have no necessary relationship with one another" (Butler 96); what Butler means by this is one's sex, biology as male or female, is used

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to construct a uniformed and stable existence that is reflected upon the subject's physical body. As gender is culturally constructed and sex is attributed characteristics that are also socially embedded upon the individual, the body which is the surface where it is all depicted upon, can also be said to be determined by these external factors. Kanazumi is also aware of external factors that have a hold on a woman's body, for women "cannot be the agent of her own body within a legal system…that does not allow her to experience" her own body naturally; If a woman cannot naturally be the agent of her own body then Kanazumi resumes that "she cannot be the agent of her [own] life" (Buckley 85).

Materialist Feminism

By following Japanese feminists train of thought, the focus of Japanese feminism greatly differs from western feminism. As mentioned by Ueno, Miya, Kanazumi, and Aoki, Japanese feminism has constantly focused on the everyday life of its citizens (Buckley 12,157-158 and 281-283). How Japanese woman are treated within their own culture and society, in various aspects of their day to day occurrences.

Materialist feminism is a type of feminism based upon Marxism theory of historical materialism. Which delves into the historical compounds that build society and culture, more so, how all these infrastructures that affect an individuals' daily life interact (Delphy 86, Ingraham 205). Example of such structures are those that form society and culture itself, such as, language, institutions such like, schools and universities, and lastly beliefs (Whittemore).

The second foundation Delphy cites for materialist feminism is the assumption "that the way in which life is materially produced and reproduced is the base of the organization of all societies, hence is fundamental both at the individual and the collective level" (Delphy 87).

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Meaning materialism is a theory that understands the basis of society as a whole. Where that which dominates, its oppression is felt throughout all of society. Delphy calls materialist feminism the ideal tool that can be used, and should be used to peel away at the multiple layers society and culture are built upon and "reach an explanation of the oppression; to do this it must start with it (and) . . . it will tend inevitably towards a materialist theory of history" (cited Delphy, 1 976b, 87). This theory can be used to help one understand Japanese feminism's perspective, which varies from western feminism.

Japanese feminism mainly focuses on matters such as, the work place, how women's labor has come a long way but though there are laws established in their society, Kanazumi denotes that "unlike America, [Japan] already… [has] clearly defined laws in place" all that is needed is "a shift in public attitudes…to bring the laws into practice" (Buckley 79). This entails that in Japan, culturally women are still seen as managers of the household and are therefore treated as temporary work force and given stationary jobs. Socially women are expected to work until a marriage proposal is accepted; women in Japan are ultimately meant to enter marriage and leave the workforce. These aspects of Japan are seen separately when analyzed through varying lens, but through materialist feminism it is all seen as part of the infrastructures that shape and dominate an individual's day to day existence.

One of the key institutions which delegates a Japanese citizen's reality is the imperial system. The feminist Aoki bases her theory of feminism around the emperor system and how such an imperial and patrilineal society has implications for woman's contemporary lives (Buckley 1). Aoki continues explaining how there is a double standard established within Japanese society that affects both women and men. To the point where the emperor mentality has created a mass consciousness in Japan as denying the individuals' needs in favor for the countries progress.

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Sacrifices made by the individual are to be viewed as honorable if it is beneficial for the culture as a whole, even if certain groups with in Japanese society must be exploited. An example of such groups are women, the elderly and the disabled. Aoki makes a great point in depicting that the second wave of feminism was not started by radicals, but by ordinary women who sought an improvement in their lives and fought for basic human rights they believed were being denied to the oppressed groups (Buckley 12).

This aspect of Japanese culture is a double-edged sword, the emperor system permeates through all level of its society hence it also influences the cultures of acceptable behavior. Jackson explains that most theorist separate theories based on natural and culturally learned norms, but "culture is woven into the social fabric of our daily lives and cannot be understood as separable from the social practices and relations in which it is embedded" (287). This intertextual relationship can be taken to analyze also various aspects of society. One of them being the *ryosai kenbo*, which not only dictates women's lives and body but also men and marital institution in Japan.

Women's nature of existence within Japanese society can be explained using materialist feminism. This theory can be applied towards how the imperial system has propagated the good wife, wise mother propaganda as a massively accepted cultural ideology based on a patrilineal system, which subjugates the female sex towards roles explicitly designated for the improvement of the nation. Motherhood for the Japanese feminist is a double-edged sword since it designates only two acceptable roles for women within society as wives and mothers.

Japanese feminism can be further analyzed with material feminism, since, culture is a set of learned behaviors and beliefs that characterize a group of people (Whittemore). More so, "relations and practices are every bit as material as capitalist ones, as are those deriving from

racism, colonialism, and imperialism… [these] interact, often in unpredictable and contradictory ways, so that the social order is not some seamless monolithic entity" (Jackson 284). By unraveling the monolithic entities that compose one's culture and society the power structures that oppress and exploit individuals, in this study gender, are revealed and can be contested.

Chizuko Ueno concludes how there is an "emphasis on mothering over the individualism of American feminism is a characteristic shared by East Asian" women (Buckley 280). Japan has "modernized differently…being a mixture of the pre-modern and the hyper-modern…a unique characteristic of Japanese society…for in Japan the movement has never been guided by theory… the activists are ahead of the theoreticians in Japan. Academic feminists are trying to catch up" (Buckley 281-283).

A Feminist Anime

Throughout this chapter various perspectives on feminism, be it western or Japanese feminism, have been explored and analyzed. How both standpoints of feminism began with the women's movement and their distinct characteristics. But feminism in Japanese anime has yet to be explored.

One of the genres within Japanimation that focuses on female characters, female empowerment and can be analyzed as having feminist attributes is known as the Magical Girl genre. This is a genre of Japanese anime that was first part of the Fantasy genre as a subgenre, and since it is focused on young girls, is also part of the *shoujo* genre. The Magical Girl genre is also known as *mahou shoujo* which means magical girl or *majokko* which means witch girl. This genre is one of the oldest genres of anime and manga, dating back to around the 1950's and 60's;

which coincidentally the first manga and anime from this genre were inspired by the American television series Bewitched (Sugawa, Alex, "Magical Girl", Halog).

The manga and anime which the creators took inspiration from are *Mahoutsukai Sally* and *Himitsu no Akko-chan*. For the first show *Mahoutsukai Sally* here is a brief overview of,

> Sally was a tomboy and mischievous witch girl. One day, she was attracted by an advertising balloon, and went to the department store. There she found girls of the same age, Sumire and Yoshiko, and she wanted to become friends with them. After she became good friends with them, she made up her mind to pretend to be a human and began to live in the town with her follower, Kabu. Then she began to know more important things than magic ("Mahoutsukai Sally").

The creator of the manga and anime is Mitsuteru Yokoyama, published in Shueisha. The manga ran from 1966-1967 and as an anime from 1966-168, in total the show aired 109 episodes. This anime depicts a western image of females being able to perform magic, through sorcery or witchcraft. All the magic is performed through spells, incantation and magical potions, which are seen within *Bewitched* and *Mahoutsukai Sally*.

The second show *Himitsu no Akko-chan* is about,

> Atsuko… an energetic elementary school girl who has an affinity for mirrors. One day, her favorite mirror which was given to Akko by her mother (or in some versions, by her father, as a present from India) is broken, and she prefers to bury it in her yard rather than throw it to the trash can. In her dreams, she is contacted by a spirit (or in some cases the Queen of the Mirror Kingdom) who is moved that the little girl would treat the mirror so respectfully and not simply throw it away.

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Akko-chan is then given the gift of a magical mirror and taught an enchantment

that will allow her to transform into anything she wishes ("Himitsu no Akko-

chan").

Fujio Akatsuka drew and wrote the manga, he is also well known for his manga titled *Osomatsu-kun*. *Himitsu no Akko-chan* was also published as a manga in Shueisha from1962-1965 and as an anime had a total of 94 episodes, two remakes and a movie.

Magical girl genre is a staple of Japanese popular culture. It is one of the anime genres which has allowed Japanimation to gain an international fan base. The Magical Girl genre has three subgenres, TVTropes mentions them as: Cute Witch trope is seen in Sally the Witch, where for her magic is an everyday occurrence, Magical Idol Singer trope is about an idol whom has magical powers, Magical Girl Warrior is a trope where the magical girl is a superheroine who fights evil (which will be the focus of this section) ("Magical Girl"). The Magical Girl Warrior is the subgenre and trope, which has amassed the most following and popularity throughout the years. Usually female heroines in anime and manga are of an adult age and hypersexualized, whose focal audience are heterosexual men. But the Magical Girl Warrior subgenre focuses on young girls who are still learning about themselves as individuals, whose gender and sexuality are still experiencing life. That is one of the aspects so appealing of this fantasy/shoujo genre, the audience grows with the characters, as the characters adjust to their new roles in life as young adults.

One of the anime shows within this subgenre which has an international following is *Bishoujo Senshi Sailor Moon*, which translates to Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon, throughout this thesis will be referenced to as Sailor Moon. Naoko Takeuchi is the creator of the manga *Sailor Moon*, which aired as an anime from 1992-1997 with a total of 200 episodes. The series because

of its great popularity has two movies, live action-based series, a musical and a theatrical adaptation. Not only the mentioned adaptations, but at the series 20th anniversary the manga has gained a reprint, plus in 2014 a remake of the anime. The new series is called *Bishoujo Senshi Sailor Moon Crystal*, and has a total of three seasons, which are more closely based on the manga.

Sailor Moon is about a girl named Usagi Tsukino, she is a 14-year-old in junior high. Usagi is not the typical heroine, she is clumsy, lazy, loves to sleep and is a crybaby. Usagi meets a black cat, Luna, who tells Usagi that she is a chosen Sailor Senshi and that with her new magical powers she can transform into Sailor Moon, a fighter; who with her other Sailor Senshi (9 in total) must save the world against evil. All the senshi warriors embody some form of the elements, such as, water, fire, and earth. Though she is not the ideal role model for girls her age, but as the series progresses Usagi matures into Sailor Moon, who fights for love and justice.

Because of its success during the first time the series aired, Sailor Moon has gained a following, has been dubbed in various languages and gained a lot of international recognition as an anime made for girls. It is because of Sailor Moon that the Magical Girl Warrior genre became popular around the world, it is so well known now, that there are many animated cartoon shows who follow the same premise. The two shows that I want to highlight are *W.I.T.C.H.* and the *Winx Club*. *W.I.T.C.H.* is an Italian comic book series created by Elisabetta Gnone, Alessandro Barbucci, and Barbara Canepa in 2001. The comic book series was then adapted to a French-Italian animated series based on the comics. Disney is one of the companies which also collaborated in this series adaptation. The show is about five teenage girls who are chosen to be the new guardians of the magical land of Candracar. Each girl transforms into a magical guardian gaining a power from one of the five elements, heart, water, earth, air and fire.

The second series the *Winx Club* combines both type of Magical Girl trope. The first being a magical girl character lives surrounded and knows about magic. The second type of magical girl trope is about a girl who lives in a world where there is no magic and suddenly gains magical powers. *Winx Club* is an Italian animated series which aired in 2004. The story is about a girl named Bloom, a 16-year-old girl from Earth, who finds out she has magical powers, as a fairy. She then transfers to Alfea, a school in the Magical Dimension which trains fairies from all over the realms. It is at this school where Bloom and her four roommates, all fight evil and go on magical adventures. One can see the semblance between Sailor Moon and the two shows *W.I.T.C.H.* and *Winx Club*; how they all center around Magical Girls who transform into warriors and fight to protect the world. Not only has Sailor Moon inspired great female centered series, but also within its plot deconstructs a lot of tropes and stereotypes related towards females who fight.

One of the first feminist themes reflected with in Sailor Moon is the concept of a Magical Girl Warrior, which in western television equates to a superhero. Sailor Moon deconstructs the accepted norms, where being feminine, emotional and having flaws are viewed as weakness in a superhero. Akiko Sugawa in her article, "Children of Sailor Moon: The Evolution of Magical Girls in Japanese Anime", notes how in Sailor Moon there is a power shift, where "represented power using standard attributes of youthful feminine beauty and sexuality, negating the traditional dichotomy between cuteness and strength." Sugawa is commenting on Sailor Moon and how the series debunks the connection between femininity and weakness. Because as a team of five magical warriors the Sailor Senshi are a group of superheroines who fight against evil. This group of girls negate the assumption that to be a hero, one must be strong in a traditional masculine way.

Figure 5
 The five main Sailor Senshi, all transformed. From left to right, Sailor Mercury, Sailor Mars, Sailor Moon, Sailor Jupiter, and Sailor Venus.

Figure 5 depicts the five main Sailor Senshi, they are all in their battle poses and have transformed into their uniforms. Notice that each member is color coordinated to reflect which planet and power they represent. For example, Sailor Mars is in red and her magical power is based on fire. Each Sailor Senshi wears a sailor styled uniform but to transform each sailor senshi must raise their hand into the air and scream "Make Up" (figure 6). The transformation is sparkled filled, each sailor transformation is accompanied with music, which finalizes in their sailor uniforms (figure 7-8).

Figure 6

In this screenshot, Sailor Moon screams her transformation activating phrase. Notice that her nails get painted in the process, adding to her femininity.
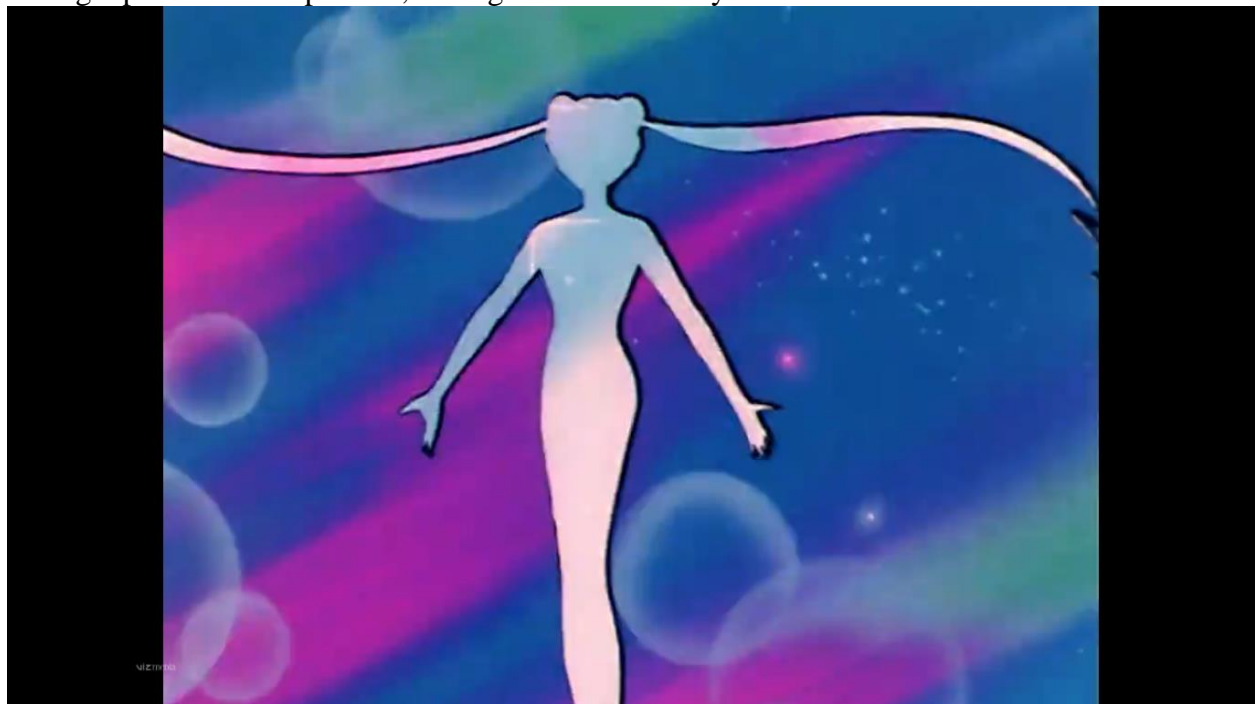
Figure 7

Screenshot of Sailor Moon mid-transformation.

Figure 8
Screenshot of when Sailor Moon's transformation culminates.

Though the senshi are heroines, it does not detract from their femininity. A generic
stereotype of female heroines is that in order to obtain power, the female must be defeminized in
some manner. For instance, a strong female character in western shows can only gain strength,
power or approval of her peers, until she has some masculine traits attributed towards her power.
Because between the sex of male and female, generally the one which holds the dominion over
power is the male sex. The magical girl warrior does have traditional feminine traits, such as the
uniform, wearing heels, but the genre has a diverse pool of characters that are considered
powerful and feminine. The series Sailor Moon is an example of how a female character does not
need to compromise their gendered characteristics to be a hero. Sailor Moon proves that to be
feminine does not equate to weakness, but a different type of strength, one that can be perceived
as "weaponized femininity" (Alex).

Whereas, the traditional gender role within a superhero trope, the male is powerful because of their masculine traits which equal to strength. While the female characters are given token roles. Meaning, the female character is given the nurturing role, the one that through her femininity incites kindness and reminds the heroes of what they are fighting for. One could say the female role is there as moral support for the male hero. But also, the female is the character who is constantly being saved by the male hero, for the female character cannot save herself. In western television, "if there is a physically powerful female character around, more often than not she will act for all intentions and purposes like a man" (Alex). But this is one of the points of female self-empowerment which Sailor Moon deconstructs and changes what a strong female character is throughout the series.

At first Usagi could be perceived as a damsel in distress, because she is constantly being rescued by Tuxedo Mask. He is the male hero in the series, who appears when Sailor Moon requires some assistance or is in a pinch. But let it be known, that as Usagi gets accustomed to the role of Magical Girl Warrior and to her new powers, she requires Tuxedo's Mask assistance less and less. There arrives a point in the series where Tuxedo Mask himself acknowledges that Sailor Moon no longer requires his protection as before. But he is still present to help and support Sailor Moon in any way possible. This dynamic duo of heroes depicts how a female character can go from needing constant attention, to maturing into her own role and surpassing the male hero in both power and strength. The following theme depicted in Sailor Moon is that of friendship.

The theme of friendship is one of the main themes in Sailor Moon. Which is especially displayed in this series, when the female heroines not only base their powers on their femininity but strive to fight back together as a team. Attributing further to Sailor Moon's feminist

characteristics are the way the sailor senshi's friendships are told throughout the series. This show focuses on the characters having realistic issues, which young girls must deal with. For example, body image, passing grades, being grounded and falling in love. But at the same time nurturing, healthy, and non-toxic female friendships are at the core of this series. One of the relationships shown between females in Sailor Moon is that of love between two people of the same sex.

Sailor Moon for being a manga and an anime released during the early 90's, the theme of gender and sexuality is explored, and has a very modern and diverse cast of female characters. Specifically, when it concerns to character's gender and sexuality. As mentioned throughout this chapter, androgynous looking individuals have acquired an admiration within Japanese culture, especially in the arts. More so, characters that are gender fluid are pervasive throughout Japanimation and Sailor Moon has such a character. Sailor Uranus, or as the character is called Haruka Tenou. To have such an open androgynous figure would be even more difficult to find within western cartoons in the 90's which portrayed such a loving same sex couple. More so, a character like Haruka who does not identify within heterosexual roles and addresses gender within the series. Sadly, when Sailor Moon was first released for the American audience, the characters Michiru (Sailor Neptune) and Haruka, instead of being a couple, were depicted as eerily close 'cousins'. All proceeding scenes where the two sailor senshi displayed too much affection for one another was not seen within the American dubbed version or edited to seem less offensive.

In figure 9 the center sailor senshi first meet the *bifauxnen* Haruka. Notice that Haruka is dressed in a men's school uniform which includes a suit jacket and pants. Whereas the sailor senshi female uniform has a top and a long flowing skirt. Haruka also has very short hair and has

handsome features. Haruka's masculine features are pronounced even more, for when she first appears Haruka has petals in the background and speaks with the masculine personal pronoun 'ore' and 'boku', instead of the feminine personal pronoun 'atashi'. For all intent and purposes, the audience and the sailor senshi are meant to perceive Haruka as part of the male sex. Throughout the series Haruka only presents herself in masculine clothes and appearance. The only moment in the 90's series where Haruka is seen wearing a skirt is when she transforms into Sailor Uranus (figure 10). It is only until the end of episode 92 titled, "A Handsome Boy? Haruka Tenou's Secret"; that the question of Haruka's gendered identity is addressed. In figure 11 Haruka's gender secret is brought to light and the girls are confused. Haruka herself points out "I don't ever recall saying I was a boy" ("A Handsome Boy? Haruka Tenou's Secret"). Haruka's handsome and charming characteristics continually attract the sailor senshi throughout the whole series. Haruka flirts with the sailor senshi and is constantly making them flush and falling for her (figure 12). This is a continual trope within the series, the same as Kashima, both these characters are attractive to both sexes. An example of such an occurrence is in episode 96 titled, "Coldhearted Uranus: Makoto in Danger." Where the plot is about how Haruka seduces Makoto in order to gain her confidence. Usagi reminds Makoto (Sailor Jupiter), not to forget that Haruka though is handsome is still a girl (figure 12). Makoto reacts in an astonished manner to Usagi's comment, as if she herself had forgotten Haruka is indeed a girl.
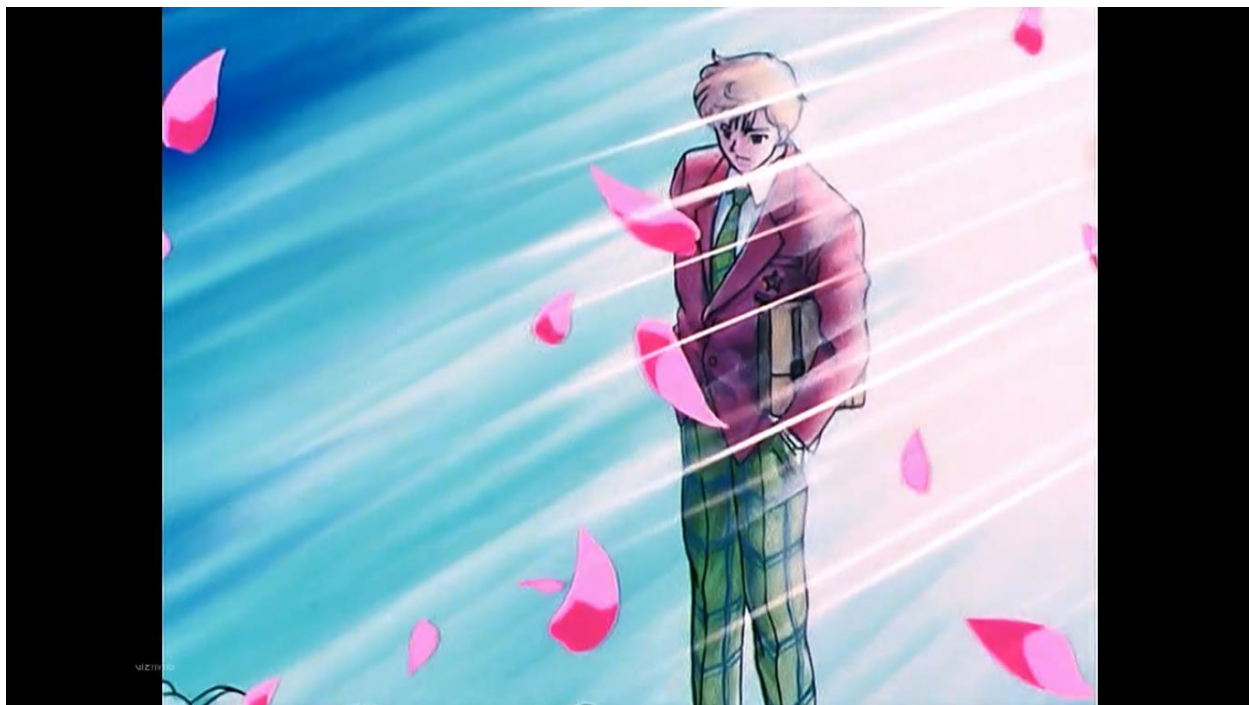
Figure 9
In this screenshot the sailor senshi are first introduced to Haruka.

Figure 10
Screenshot of Haruka after she transforms into Sailor Uranus. Notice she wears a skirt, just as the rest as the sailor senshi.

Figure 11

Screenshot of the exact moment where the sailor senshi realize Haruka is indeed a she and not a him.

Regardless of how handsome Haruka is, she's a woman!

Figure 12

In this screenshot Usagi reminds Makoto (Sailor Jupiter) that Haruka is a woman.

The character of Sailor Uranus takes gender fluidity to a whole new level. Though not mentioned in the original release of the series during the 90's, in the manga and then in *Sailor Moon Crystal*; Michiru in episode 7 states to the sailor senshi, that "Uranus is both a man and a woman, a guardian with both sex and both strength" ("Infinity 6 Three Guardians"). Now this statement made by Sailor Neptune does not mean Sailor Uranus is a hermaphrodite, to the contrary Haruka is most definitely part of the female sex. What Michiru wants the sailor senshi to take from her comment, is that Haruka chooses not to identify with just one gender, that she is not all masculine or all female, but a combination of both. Another aspect that is modern about Michiru's and Haruka's romance is that, "their sexual orientation doesn't dominate their whole personality— it is merely a facet of their characters" (Lord). It is this type of character, known for their gender fluidity, that allows for Sailor Moon to be known as feminist anime. But also portrays Japanimation as a pop culture medium that depicts culture's fabrication of gender.

The Magical Girl genre portrays feminism by giving viewers a variation to traditional female power. Sailor Moon is one of the most well know series and can be considered a feminist anime. This anime takes the witch trope of Akko's type and expands it, towards a more heroic and powerful character type. Where Usagi Tsukino is an ordinary girl, who is given the destiny to find the rest of the sailor senshi, and protect the world from the forces of evil. Usagi can protect herself, those she loves and the world, when she gains the magical powers to transform into a sailor senshi, Sailor Moon. Though filled with young girls in colored skirts and heels Sailor Moon depicts many female empowered themes. The anime has also inspired girl powered series, which not only reflect that being female is not to be seen as weak, but also gives a wide variety of female characters whose character development does not only center around a male protagonist. Though romance is part of the series, it is not the focus. Sailor Moon focuses on

feminist themes, such as, girl power, friendship, gender fluidity and lastly love, whether it be between friend, family or a lover.

Conclusion

      Buckley has introduced various feminists who are all from the same culture, but whose focus and approach differ from one another. But as stated in the beginning Japanese feminism focuses on the same themes such as, "politics of language; the construction of the gendered body in medicine, the law, the family, and other dominant institutions; the relationship of Japanese feminists to 'Western' feminisms" (Buckley xvii), that are relevant towards women's basic human rights as they are for western feminist. The theories of gender just as Butler's are based on the ideologies that form sex, sexuality and gender; though the manner each feminist approach varies, the fact that they are essential when trying to understand the formation of gender has not changed. The next chapter is where the anime characters of *Gekkan Shojou Nozaki-kun* and *Baka to Test to Shoukanjuu*, will be analyzed utilizing gender performativity theory, tropes and the androgynous figure. All this will be utilized to display gender as a cultural fabrication and the manner each character contests gender norms.

Chapter Four: Gender Performativity in Anime

Japan as a country has had a distinct cultural trait of having within its popular culture products and entertainment mediums, characters that are gender ambiguous. These characters are well known for their gender fluidity. These ambiguously gendered characters seemingly reinforce Butler's gender performativity theory. As a theoretical tool it allows one to see gender as a cultural fabrication. throughout this chapter the characters Nozaki, Kashima, Mikoshiba, Minami, and Hideyoshi, will all be analyzed utilizing Butler's perspective of gender performativity, character tropes and the manner each protagonist contests their gender. The chapter will be divided into two parts, each corresponding to the characters anime, those being *Gekkan Shojou Nozaki-kun* and *Baka to Test to Shoukanjuu*.

Gekkan Shoujo Nozaki-kun

The anime *Gekkan Shoujo Nozaki-kun*, by Tsubaki Izumi, has the main character Chiyo Sakura who has fallen in crush for the oblivious Umetarou Nozaki. The following synopsis gives an overview of the series:

> Much to Chiyo's confusion, when she confesses to her beloved Nozaki, he hands her an unfamiliar autograph. As it turns out, the stoic teenage boy is actually a respected shoujo mangaka, publishing under the pen name Sakiko Yumeno! A series of misunderstandings leads to Chiyo becoming one of Nozaki's manga assistants. Throughout the hilarious events that ensue, she befriends many of her quirky schoolmates, including her seemingly shameless fellow assistant, Mikoto Mikoshiba, and the "Prince of the School," Yuu Kashima. *Gekkan Shoujo Nozaki-*

kun follows Chiyo as she strives to help Nozaki with his manga and hopes that he will eventually notice her feelings (Rewrite).

In a heteronormative culture, male and female gender norms are perceived as natural. These gendered norms are continually contested throughout the anime *Gekkan Shoujo Nozaki-kun* created. The comic book artist or mangaka[4] Nozaki is the author of a *shoujo* manga[5] called "Lets Fall in Love." As Fusami Ogi indicates, what separates *shoujo* genre from the rest, is how "*shoujo* manga shows the world of a girl before the age of social duty" (796). Traditionally woman have had two stages in life, girlhood and motherhood. But with *shoujo*, it portrays women in an in between stage, where they are not tied to obey a father in their childhood, or their husband, during their marriage. Thus, not being tied by social duties such as marriage and motherhood. The image of the girl also mentioned by Munford is seen as a state of being, whose adult gendered identity is still not formed (106).

The genre of manga s*houjo* is a site where gender and identity can be subverted, and heteronormativity can be contested as being the norm. The characters that have been selected and will be analyzed to understand the nature of cultural fabrication of gender are Nozaki, Mikoshiba, and Kashima from *Gekkan Shoujo Nozaki-kun*. These are characters who do not conform to cultures fabrication of gender in Japan. Nozaki a male protagonist, is a type of "protagonist [who] performs [his] own gender and sexuality in ways that run counter to [and] subvert heterosexual expectations" (Hurford ii), in short, Nozaki and the characters described in this chapter are all contesting and subverting gender norms. Nozaki subverts gender norms when he bases his characters for his manga from people around him. In his manga Nozaki rewrites

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[4] Mangaka means comic book artist
[5] *Shojou* manga are comics intended primarily for young females which focuses primarily on personal and romantic relationships.

gender characteristics and has characters that are not easily gender identified. In Japanimation a character's physique does not necessarily designate and/or quickly establishes a character's sex and gender. Whereas in western television shows, the characters are easily identifiable as being part of a heterosexual dichotomy. Male characters are easily identified through masculine characteristics and female characters with feminine characteristics. ("Www").

In the first episode, the series begins with a typical *shoujo* setting; Nozaki, and Sakura[6] alone in a classroom, when Sakura confesses her love to said boy Nozaki. But Nozaki's response to Sakura's confession, "I've always been your fan" ("This Love is Being Turned Into a Shoujo Manga"), is extremely peculiar. Because instead of taking Sakura's proclamation as a confession of her love for him. Nozaki interprets her confession, as Sakura wanting his autograph. This occurs since Nozaki consumed in his conceit sees himself as an artist/celebrity thereby he assumes Sakura also knows of him for his profession as a mangaka (comic book creator). It is this unexpected response that is the first of many actions in which the anime *Gekkan Shoujo Nozaki-kun* subverts the shoujo genre. The title itself of the episode, This Love is Being Turned Into a Shoujo Manga, alludes to the irony and setting for the anime as a whole.

As a mangaka for a *shoujo* manga, Nozaki utilizes a female pen name for his manga series, Yumeno Sakiko. As Sakura reads the description of Yumeno Sakiko described in a magazine, it describes Nozaki's mangaka persona as having a "delicate psychological depictions and beautiful art have made her a popular author" (Figure 1-3) ("This Love is Being Turned Into a Shoujo Manga"). Nozaki's alter ego is quite the opposite from the way Sakura and his classmates perceive him. Nozaki is known for being blunt, honest and having no tact towards his peers. Though it is Nozaki's observational skills that are above par. This skill is seen when

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[6] Chiyo Sakura the main female protagonist of *Gekkan Shoujo Nozaki-kun*

Nozaki utilizes Mikorin and Kashima as his main couple for his manga, but it is ironic how he does not notice throughout the whole anime Sakura's affections towards him (Figure 4).

Figure 1

Screenshot of Sakura Chiyo reading the description of *Monthly Girl's Romance* articles describing Yumeno Sakiko's personality as a *mangaka*.

Figure 2
Screenshot of Nozaki as he is asked by his classmates to kill a cockroach on the desk.

Figure 3
Screenshot of Sakura's reaction towards Yumeno's description in the magazine and Nozaki's character in real life are contradicted.

Figure 4
Screenshot of the cover of *Monthly Girls Romance*, where on the cover are Yumeno Sakiko's main couple Suzuki and Mamiko, which Nozaki bases off Kashima and Mikorin.

According to Hurford the concept of "heteronormativity is the idea that the normal course of a human life is to grow up secure in one's gender identity (male or female, with few or no behaviors that blur the line between 'masculine' and 'feminine') and to embrace a heterosexual identity whenever one reaches sexual maturity" (16). Nozaki is a character that transgresses heteronormative standards. He is a stoic and serious person but as his alter ego, the mangaka Yumeno Sakiko, is known as the mangaka who truly understands females' hearts. Nozaki's

personality is so aloof and tactless, that his peers cannot believe when Nozaki tells them he is

Yumeno the famous mangaka.

The trope Cassandra truth, occurs when a person, even when they tell someone the truth, "people just won't believe [them]" ("Cassandra"). Nozaki "doesn't treat his job as a secret, but nobody at school believes he is a professional mangaka" ("Monthly"). This trope is used for comical effect and goes along with Nozaki's personality. His peculiar situation is explained to Sakura in episode one, how Nozaki has tried to tell his classmates he is Yumeno ("This Love is Being Turned Into a Shoujo Manga"). This utter disbelief of Nozaki's 'secret' career as a mangaka, depicts him as a character who contests gender norms. But is also a character that exemplifies how anime a site where gender performativity is portrayed.

Gender is traditionally separated into two purely biological categories. But as depicted with Nozaki, more than one inconsistent gendered characteristic can reside within one person. Nozaki's 'secret' profession as a mangaka, has a conflicting existence with established gender norms. These contradictory characteristics are not usually found in *shoujo* manga but are present in characters such as Nozaki. This is one of the many ways in which the anime depicts culture's fabrication of gender.

The characters Mikoshiba, (nicknamed Mikorin), and Kashima are what in manga are called *bishounen* and *bifauxnen*. First, the term *bishounen* means beautiful boy and is applied to characters whose physical beauty is ambiguous, as their body does not reflect their heterosexual gender (Ricard 76). Because "in sho̅jo texts, being effeminate does not detract from the male character's appeal. Instead, it only enhances his charm and social status" (Choo 291); this enchantment and appeal applies to Mikorin and Kashima as both are highly popular among their peers and portrayed as physically beautiful characters with ambiguous gender roles. Mikorin and

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Kashima are both popular and adored, because of their androgynous appearance. The androgynous figure, discussed by Abbitt and Sasaki, is a recurrent character that appears in Japanese popular culture. Mikorin and Kashima are such figures in anime, this is made evident in their unrivaled popularity among both sexes in their high school (250, 11).

Mikoshiba, who is a *bishounen* character, is Nozaki's inspiration for Mamiko, the female protagonist for his *shoujo* manga series. Mikorin is a *tsundere*, a trope which describes a person who is hot and cold ("Tsundere"). Mikorin being a *Tsundere* implies that when first meeting him, he may come off as abrasive or harsh but is quite sensitive and vulnerable on the inside ("Tsundere"). Mikorin is described by Nozaki as being "really pure, sensitive, and delicate" ("This Love is Being Turned Into a Shoujo Manga"). This description of Mikorin displays Nozaki's observational sensibilities, since Nozaki rewrites Mikorin as his heroine Mamiko. He does not perceive Mikorin as the playboy. Therefore, Mikorin in the manga represents how "feminized masculinity is normalized through repeated performances of femininity" (Choo 291). Further study of Mikorin's character reveals the nature of gender performativity through his *tsundere* side. This is seen when Mikorin proclaims to Sakura "I'm the eternal love hunter!" (Figure 5), and then turns red from embarrassment ("Say Hello to the New Heroine"). Not only is Mikorin actively playing a role as the playboy charmer of his school, he also realizes this is not his usual self. Whenever Mikorin becomes embarrassed by his actions, the audience becomes aware of this duality (Figure 6). The compilation of Mikorin's gendered acts go against Butler's gender performativity theory, where Mikorin's gendered acts are a performance not performative. One must remember that gender is to be understood as a verb, where Mikorin's continual playboy acts are part of his gender for he continues to intentionally perform them, but his *tsundere* acts, his hot and cold personality, are part of his performative gendered character.

Nozaki sees through the performativity of Mikorin's acts. Specifically, Mikorin's charmer side, which is an example of Butler's performativity. For Mikorin's gendered acts are done repeatedly until normalized. Mikorin's charmer side can also be a parody of gender, when he acts in accordance to his male sex, he depicts the falseness of this idea of natural gender.

Figure 5
Screenshot of Mikorin greeting Sakura with a cheesy pick up line.

Figure 6
Screenshot of the aftermath of Mikorin's attempt at flirting. Mikorin becomes aware of what he just said and gets embarrassed easily.

Before Mikorin became the popular charmer, Mikorin is just a shy guy, who to overcome his awkwardness around girls, learned to talk to them by playing various Dating Sim[7] games. The result was cheesy and flirtatious lines Mikorin uses to attain female attention are all from the games. But the result is always the same, once said it causes him embarrassment. Through these situations Mikorin is actively parodying and imitating what he considers to be a masculine role. But his hypermasculinization is all continuously being rejected by Mikorin himself. Nozaki breaks heterosexual's agency over gender, when he categorizes Mikorin as Mamiko in his manga. Nozaki serves as an observer who perceives his surroundings and characters, not for their

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[7] "Dating sim is an interactive first-person computer game. In Dating Sim, a character tries to generate romantic interests in a variety of possible story lines" ("Dating").

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actual physical attributions, such as sex or body, but rewrites them in their true essence/gender.

such is the case of Mikorin who at first Sakura does not perceive as Mamiko, Nozaki's main

heroine, but as Sakura gets to know Mikorin the similarities in their *tsundere* actions and train of

thought are clearly seen (Figure 7-8).

Figure 7
Screenshot of Mamiko's reaction when she is embarrassed.

Figure 8
Screenshot of Mikorin reacting the same way as Mamiko when embarrassed. They both depict the *tsundere* characteristics of acting brashly when flustered.

"Gender as constructed through heterosexual relationships is a relation rather than a set of characteristics", meaning male is male because female is female (Ricard 82). The intrinsic relation defines the other and the lack of relation between one another is what distinguishes one sex type from its counterpart. In heteronormative society gender is a set of characteristics that make up a sex. In this anime, Nozaki re-assigns these gendered characteristics. When he re-assigns gendered characteristics to his own manga characters. Nozakis' friends subvert social gender norms, but his characters reaffirm their heteronormativity. An example of this reassigning of gendered characteristics is seen with the character of Mikorin. As mentioned previously Mikorin is a shy and sensitive *tsundere*, whom is constantly trying to act as a flirty guy. Nozaki sees Mikorins' gendered characteristics and assigns them to his heroine Mamiko. A character

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who is known for her conflicting feelings and awkward misunderstandings with her love interest Suzuki. When Nozaki reassigns characteristics, its interpreted as a critique on how sex and gender should be. Nozaki reallocates this new behavior into a *shoujo* manga world he creates. A world in which Nozaki assigns the acceptable acts of gender which are nonexistent in his actual reality.

Kashima is an example that gender is unnatural and its dichotomized sexed characteristics are nonexistent but is also the most gender fluid character in the anime. First, Kashima is "The Prince of the school!" (Figure 9) Mikorin proclaims as he presents Kashima to Sakura for the first time ("Violence vs. the Prince"). Though Kashima is female, her gender does not stop her from using her handsome features and prince aura to win all of the girls' affections.

This is the Prince of the School!

Figure 9
Screenshot of the first-time Sakura and the audience is introduced to Kashima. Notice how Kashima is first presented with a closeup of her face, also in the background the massive

following she has of girls. All this and being called the prince, all indicates towards one that Kashima should be a guy.

Just as Mikorin when he says cheesy lines and suddenly gets embarrassed, in the background one can perceive the flowery details and sparkles that appear when such prince like actions are performed by Kashima the prince (Figure 10). Male and female classmates admire Kashima for her princely demeanor. They are best friends with one another and Kashima represents Suzuki (the male protagonist) (Figure 11) and Mikorin, Mamiko, in "Lets Fall in Love" manga. The school prince loves to flirt with the girls, and her exterior outfit designates Kashima as a *bifauxnen* ("Bifauxnen"). This trope is when "a female character who resembles a pretty, androgynous boy, in a positive way, usually coupled with an appropriate 'masculine' outfit" ("Bifauxnen"). Kashima wears the assigned girls' uniform which has a skirt, but instead of a ribbon, uses a tie, which is part of the male student's uniform (Figure12).

Figure 10
Screenshot of Kashima displaying her charm as the school prince. The flowery and sparkly background is a background method used to depict in *shoujo* manga characters charms.

Figure 11
Screenshot of Nozaki's adaptation of Kashima in his manga. Suzuki is portrayed as a prince, with a background filled with sparkles and flowers.

Figure 12

Screenshot of Mikorin and the anime itself pointing out that Kashima is indeed a girl and is wearing a skirt. The arrows add a more comical flare and makes sure the reader knows they were being misled by assuming Kashima was male.

Throughout the whole series, it is Kashima's prince like demeanor that attracts both her male classmates to admire her and her female classmates to crush on her. If it weren't for Kashima's high-toned voice and the fact that she wears a female uniform, these are the only pointers that she is, in fact part of the female sex. These character pointers all fit with Kashima's androgynous appearance throughout the series (Figure 13).

Figure 13
Screenshot of Sakura reminding herself that Kashima is indeed female, this forgetfulness that Kashima is a female and assumption that she is a he, makes for continual comedic events throughout the whole anime, where many characters assume Kashima is male.

Just as culture fabricates gender, so is sex is culturally constructed. This construct to only display one gender is found in society not one's biological sex. Nozaki is contesting societal norms by reassigning his classmates' gender into the socially accepted form within his manga. And by doing so is parodying cultures gender fabrication. Nozaki's *shoujo* manga is a subplot with in the anime. For it depicts a representation of what society expects his classmates gender to be. But this subplot Nozaki bases on his classmates at the same time parodies gender norms. More so, displays to the audience just how unstable gender is and the gender performativity of Nozaki's friends, Kashima and Mikorin.

Even in this anime the subplot and the main plot portrays a contrasting image of what the characters are and how society expects these gendered acts to be enacted. This is all being established by the culture depicted in the manga. The societal norms and its parody are reflected within Nozaki's manga creation and the anime itself. This is to be expected, Bal mentions, that a narrative is deeply embedded in its culture, and just as anime is an "entertainment text" it reflects the cultural norms in which it was created (220, Hesmondhalgh 4). This intertextual narrative which Nozaki depicts in his manga is just Nozaki's adaptation of gendered norms fabricated through in his society. As Nozaki is influenced by the narrative of his culture, this duality, this relation of characteristics, and where they are enacted are being contested and criticized throughout the anime and its characters. As if one as a viewer should be aware of the idea of *shoujo* and what it represents to society. Nozaki's manga represents the characters' gender and how the characters truly do not take part in this dichotomy, especially how ridiculous it is to expect one's sex to determine one's gender. Kashima is such a character, that in figure 13 Sakura is confused as to what sex and gender Kashima belongs to. Since Kashima has such an ambiguous appearance when she first entered high school, she quickly joined the Drama club. Throughout most of the first semester, Kashima was always assumed to be a boy. Kashima played the role of a prince and was seen as such by her peers. It wasn't until the president of the drama club, Mori-senpai, pointed out to Kashima's skirt, which she had worn since day one, did she have to confirm that she was indeed a girl. This misunderstanding is a great example on how one's acts define one's gender identity.

Gender identity is a set of characteristics that culture propagates as natural, enacted or held by one's sex when born, but it is acted out by one's actions. Gender dichotomy is perceived as an Other which promotes an alternate view of what is defined as natural. Hence "one is one's

gender to the extent that one is not the other gender, a formulation that presupposes and enforces the restriction of gender within a binary pair" (Butler 22). Thus, the female must have feminine qualities and the male must have male attributes. This heterosexual dichotomy, if one of the two does not exist or does not enact the established norm then what is gender? Is it simply as Nozaki demonstrates in his manga, what society expects of us. The inclusion of this text demonstrates that it is something more that forms one identity other than one's sex and its relation to the other. Which leads us to see gender as Butler mentions as a continual act, which one as a subject enacts through actions. How one is not born into a gender, it is not a natural phenomenon. This debunks the myth that gender is a natural occurrence and is a myth that is criticized throughout the whole series, specifically in Nozaki's rewriting of his friend's genders into acceptable gender roles.

Throughout *Gekkan Shoujo Nozaki-kun,* the characters Nozaki, Mikorin, and Kashima, subvert their gender. More so, gender roles are being contested in Nozaki's *shoujo* world, since "shoujo manga is said to be a mirror of Japanese girls' and women's desires and expectations" (Hurford 15). In this anime, Nozaki shows how the diverse personalities of his classmates do not conform to the gender expectations that a *shoujo* anime should prescribe to. Nozaki does reassign his friend's genders into the correct sex in his manga. This ultimately not only criticizes the naturalization of heterosexual gender and sex roles but denotes the instability of gender in general. The androgynous existence of the *bishounen* and *bifauxnen* figures are one of the many tools in which Japanimation presents Androgyny. Through feminized men and masculinized women in a credible environment that Kashima and Mikorin are completely socially accepted. This acceptance of Mikorin and Kashima in real life demonstrates that it is impossible to have a gender if one is not part of society, but that does not mean that one cannot act gender into their distinctive manner. Gender is something one does, not simply what one is. The contesting of

gender through the characters which denote that there is no relationship between one's body and gender, display how unnatural gender truly is. But at the same time defined by the power structures that define heterosexuality, depict the performativity of gender.

Baka to Test to Shoukanjuu

The anime *Baka to Test to Shoukanjuu* centers around the main male protagonist Akihisa Yoshii, who is the "baka[8]" of the series. The academy that Akihisa attends has a unique school system, where students are divided into classes from A-F by grades. The class you belong to also determines the kind of facility and equipment each class is given. For example, Class A has reclining seats, a snack bar, and air conditioning. While Akihisa's F classroom is rundown, no air conditioning, and students sit on the floor and for a time had cardboard boxes as desks ("Baka"). MyAnimelist continues to describe the plot by stating that "the school happens to have developed experiments to summon fantasy creatures, and Akihisa decides to rally F class to take on the higher-tiered classes and seize their perks. The F class uses the summoned creatures in an all-out battle for school supremacy" ("Baka").

In the first episode "Idiots, Classes, and the Summoning Test War", the main characters of the series are introduced. Class F characters Minami and Hideyoshi are introduced. and the first gender clarification is made for the audience. The first clarification the show makes is to state to the audience who is the girl and who is the boy between Minami and Hideyoshi (Figure 14-15). As Emily Hurford points out protagonists in anime are seen contesting and subverting heterosexual gender and sexual roles (ii). *Baka to Test to Shoukanjuu* does an exposition with the images of the characters Minami and Hideyoshi with the kanji[9] for their respective biological

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[8] Means idiot, foolish and or stupid.
[9] A system of Japanese writing using Chinese characters.

sexes. This is one of the first of many more parodic expositions in which *Baka to Test to*

Shoukanjuu, tests and plays with heteronormative gender roles. This play on gender happens

through the characters physical traits. Since at first glance one cannot tell who is of which gender

or sex, between Minami and Hideyoshi.

Figure 14
Screenshot of the first clarification made in the series, that Minami is a girl and the kanji for
female appears on the screen.

Figure 15
Screenshot clarifying the assumption that Hideyoshi is not female. Hideyoshi makes it clear he is a guy and a kanji meaning male appears on the screen.

The first character Minami Shimada is at first a typical tomboyish girl. But Minami incorporates various tropes that indicate more than the usual characteristics. To her classmates Minami is known as a violent tomboy, but at the same time, she is a very kind and shy girl. As a *Tsundere* character, her breaking point is her crush Akihisa. Meaning, whenever the situation involves her crush Akihisa, as retaliation Minami is constantly beating up Akihisa at the slightest confrontation. Minami easily gets jealous when Akihisa is with other women, but she also does not want to accept her feelings for Akihisa. Through Minami's constant physical abuse of Akihisa, it is made obvious to the audience Minami's affections towards him. When Minami feels shy or cannot confront her emotions, she instead of acting out expectedly for her female sex, expresses her love for Akihisa by acting violent against him with various wrestling holds. Akihisa brings about his demise, when he flirts with other girls, is tactless when telling Minami,

he does not consider her girl. Minami's reactions to Akihisa are one of the many characteristics in which she subverts feminine roles.

In their friendship Minami is physically more adept than her male counterpart Akihisa. The violent acts Minami perpetuates on Akihisa, presents a double standard which goes unacknowledged. In this relationship physical strength is not attributed to the male sex but is depicted as a subversive characteristic not seen as the norm in a heterosexual relationship. Throughout the whole animated series not once does Akihisa acts violent or tries to physically get retribution to Minami for her abuse. Though Akihisa's beatings are brought about by his idiocy, Akihisa does not reciprocate or take the same abusive actions towards Minami. This double standard where a male figure does not reciprocate with violent actions towards a female is evidentiary throughout the series, specifically with these two characters. It is between Minami and Akihisa that the double standard of an abusive relationship trope between a female and male is made evident. The rest of the class accept Minami's violent actions towards him as natural, this acceptance can be seen as a consensus that Minami's violent acts are congruent with her characters gender play. The act of violence is consistent between Minami and Akihisa that it becomes part of the norm for their heterosexual relationship. According to Ricard "heterosexuality plays a part in normalizing the relation of gender and sex" (69). Hence, Minami's continual subversion of heteronormative gender roles become the expected behavior in the anime. Ultimately not only does Minami's gender performativity of her sex continue to contest but also subvert dichotomized physical behaviors of the female gender.

Another trope which Minami portrays is her *A-Cup Angst* ("Baka"), where Minami has a complex about her small breast size. Minamis' small breast size comes into conversation constantly and is held as a defective point used to diminish her femininity. Akihisa is constantly

comparing Minami towards Hideyoshi who displays more feminine charms than Minami herself.

He uses Minami's A cup size to lower her female gender status, which has Minami constantly

proving her female gender to Akihisa. In episode two Akihisa starts to bash on Minami's

feminine charms by exclaiming "While it's true that Shimada looks like a guy, acts like a guy,

and has the chest of a guy…" (Figure 16) ("Lilies, Roses, and Physical Education"); Akihisa

never gets to finish his sentence for Minami executes one of her wrestling holds on him. While

having Akihisa in a wrestling hold and dominating him physically, Minami rebukes him by

exclaiming "I am totally feminine in all areas" (Figure 17) (Lilies, Roses, and Physical

Education).

Figure 16
Screenshot of Minami's face, when she believes Akihisa is going to compliment her. But instead begins stating all the facts that do not make her a girl.

Figure 17
Screenshot of Akihisa being put into a wrestling hold by Minami when he insults her by saying she doesn't look like a girl. Minami responds to this insult through violence and exclaims she is feminine.

This continual reaffirmation which Minami must perform throughout the series, of her female gender towards her crush Akihisa, simply because Minami does not display the expected physical attributes as the other feminized characters, is one of the ways in which gender performativity is displayed. Butler describes gender as "repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts" these acts through repetition take form and display one's gender to the point where it becomes natural (33). Minami's female gender is constantly being re-enforced by her affirmative acts, the wrestling moves acted upon Akihisa and emphatic declarations of being female in all areas. Since Minami does not have the physical attributes of breast size of the expected female stereotype she is constantly belittled for it. *Baka to Test to Shoukanjuu* plays on this trope in a comical manner, in which Minami reaffirms and subverts her female gender through physical action.

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The next characters who also plays with gender is Hideyoshi. He is best described as a *bishounen*, Ricard describes this type of character trope as "not women; they are not beautiful because they are feminine. If anything, their beauty arises from their ambiguous gendering" (74). Hideyoshi is the most effeminate character in *Baka to Test to Shoukanjuu*. Though Hideyoshi himself is of the male sex, he is also an actor and therefore has the ability to act any role given to him. The show plays on this trope for Hideyoshi is constantly given female roles instead of male ones and is made to dress in feminine clothes. This becomes a problem throughout the series for Hideyoshi is considered the most popular girl for the male characters, and the romantic rival of all the female characters in the show, Mizuki, Minami and Shouko.

The *bishounen's* androgynous and feminine traits are brought about by Hideyoshi's physical attributes. Figure 15 displays Hideyoshis' physical traits, he has big eyes as are the female characters, slender arms, and frame. It is this intermixing of physical traits that makes the viewers doubt Hideyoshi's constant proclamation, that he is a guy. For in almost every episode Hideyoshi is pointing out, asking his peers and friends why he is being treated as a girl when he is in fact a boy. A "running gag" trope throughout the series is a trope called "berserk button"[10] ("Baka"). Hideyoshi's trigger is when he goes to buy clothes. Since he is always sold clothes for women, and when, he goes out and wears male clothes, is constantly being forced to change into female clothes. An example of this continual "running gag" is censoring of Hideyoshi's chest area in every scene; this is because of the trope "dude looks like a lady" ("Baka", "Dude"). Because of Hideyoshi's androgynous looks, he is continually perceived and treated as a woman in society. During the anime, it is established that if a female character is naked, there is always something perfectly placed covering the chest area, such as a towel, or someone's arm. This

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[10] "some characters almost always get enraged when given a certain trigger" ("Berserk")

stylistic trope is used for women, but the anime takes Hideyoshi's feminine treatment to an extreme for his chest is never shown throughout the whole series. This is made clear when Hideyoshi himself complains and comments at why he was sold a female swimsuit, of a top and trunks. In episode six "Me, Pools, and Swimsuit Paradises… And…", When Hideyoshi steps into the pool and is made to put on the swimsuit's top. Hideyoshi exclaims in response "Why should I? I am a guy!" (Figure18) (Me, Pools, and Swimsuit Paradises… And…). The girls then respond to Hideyoshi's nakedness by accusing him of seducing their men. They protest by saying "Kinoshita, do you have a grudge against us or what?" (Figure 19) (Me, Pools, and Swimsuit Paradises… And…).

Figure 18
Screenshot of when Hideyoshi first goes into the pool and is told to cover up, since he is considered a girl by his peers. Hideyoshi rebuffs this claim by saying he doesn't have to cover since he is a guy.

Figure 19
Screenshot of the girls rebuking Hideyoshi, saying that he dresses that way to provoke the other guys since Hideyoshi as a *bishounen* looks more feminine than the actual female characters of the anime.

The female characters confirm their insecurity towards Hideyoshi, since Hideyoshi as a

bishounen exceeds them at their own gender and is considered a threat. Choo explains that the

bishounen by "being effeminate does not detract from the male character's appeal. Instead, it

only enhances his charm and social status. The female subject is put in a lesser position because

she is not able to 'perform' femininity better than the male characters" (291). This reaction by

Mizuki, Minami, and Shouko of Hideyoshi being in a swimsuit portrays that they do consider

him as part of the female sex and a rival for their crushes love.

Another play on gender performativity that is recurrent throughout the anime is also a

"running gag" which is known as taking "a third option"[11] ("Baka"). This trope is seen when

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[11] "Between the boys' and the girls' rooms, he ended up at the "Hideyoshi Room". It applies to virtually any public facility where there are separate boys' and girls' section." ("Take")

Hideyoshi must choose a gendered room, such as a bathroom, changing room, etc. When Hideyoshi is asked to change into his swimwear, he is supposed to change with the girls. Hideyoshi response to this by exclaiming "No! I can't go into the girl's room by myself!" (Figure 20) (Me, Pools, and Swimsuit Paradises… And…). The anime plays on this trope and parodies gender performativity by creating a third option for Hideyoshi between the male and female rooms, called the "Hideyoshi Room." This trope becomes so persistently recurrent that Akihisa comments on it by saying: "so 'Hideyoshi' is a gender in and of itself…" (Figure 21) (Me, Pools, and Swimsuit Paradises… And…). Hideyoshi's continual placement by society within the anime into a third gender depicts how gender is culturally constructed and how there is no such thing as natural gender. Hideyoshi is a character who blatantly plays with gender, when he subverts and appropriates gendered attributes of both sexes. Butler also mentions that gender is a "form of parody, but that some gender performances are more parodic than others" (65); this statement depicts Hideyoshi's existence in the anime as a whole. Not only is he, in fact, a performer, an actor, who can take up any role when needed, society itself places him in a female gender role. Hideyoshi's character throughout the series parodies accepted hegemonic belief about gender. Hideyoshi's only way to escape being culturally defined by gender is by creating his own third option outside the norm, thus the Hideyoshi room.

Figure 20
Screenshot of when Hideyoshi is supposed to change into his swimwear and is invited by the girls to change with them. He refuses since he is a guy. But he is also not allowed to change with the guys since he is seen as a girl.

Figure 21
Screenshot of the Hideyoshi room. The sign reflects how throughout the series when Hideyoshi enters a gendered public space, it is designated for his gender.

By being pushed into a third marginalized gender, but believing himself to be male, the anime creates a third sex for Hideyoshi's character. Hideyoshi is an example on how gender performativity exists. As Butler makes clear, that for gender 'there is only a taking up of the tools where they lie, where the very "taking up" is enabled by the tool lying there' (145). Hence, a subject cannot create gender from scratch, but work with what is present in their cultural context, and this is seen with Minami and Hideyoshi. Each of these characters takes these tropes and emulates them in a manner that presents their self and gender to the audience.

Conclusion

Gender's performativity is portrayed when the characters conceive their gender with the gender discourses available. But also, the manner they stylize these acts of gender as subjects in a heteronormative society. As mentioned before, one is not born into gender, it is acted upon, just as gender and its identity is a continual process of actions. Gender is not innate, but it must also be clarified that one cannot just simply make-up a new gender from scratch. Gender is established by working with available gendered acts; Butler states how "there is only a taking up of the tools where they lie, where the very "taking up" is enabled by the tool lying there" (145). All in all, this simply means working in conjunction within the already established characteristics of gender, sexuality, and sex. Gender cannot exist outside of these norms, but it is up to the individual to put their spin on the cultural fabrication process of gender, and its characteristics about sexuality, sex, and gender.

If the sole duality of gender were to be natural then characters such as, Nozaki, Kashima, Mikorin, Minami, and Hideyoshi would not exist. For "gender is the repeated stylization of the

body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (Butler 33); as Butler describes gender is a set of acts that congeal and then over time seem to become natural, but it is still performative. The characters in this chapter, Nozaki, Mikorin, Kashima, Minami, and Hideyoshi; they all act gender in ways that contest naturalized gender roles of male and female. The characters from *Gekkan Shoujo Nozaki-kun* and *Baka to Test to Shoukanjuu* demonstrate how society influences and shape's gender. Thus, illustrating the difficulty of defining gender for all humanity. A gender that can encompass all the different variables that a person and each gender can possess, yet at the same time maintain a stable existence within societal norm is non-existent. These anime characters portray, how gender is not stable and can be easily derailed by analyzing the characters' gender performativity. Characters, such as Nozaki, Mikorin, Kashima, Hideyoshi, and Minami which exist, are contesting the cultural fabrication that drives for a stable, heteronormative, society.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The analysis of cultural and societal expectations of gender in Japan are expressed in cultural products such as Japanimation. Making anime a chief medium through which western and global audiences can view Japanese popular culture. As a cultural artifact anime has gained a global foothold. One of the many appealing factors anime has is its storytelling style with its central focus on character development and the various genres that attract a broad audience. As a popular culture product, anime is a tool through which Japanese society's general norms, customs, and ideologies are seen and contested. When anime is exported outside its cultural context, western audiences are exposed to a diverse perspectives of gender portrayal and relationships. As argued throughout this thesis, the theory of gender performativity has been used to portray gender's cultural fabrication, and how the characters within Japanimation contest gender norms. This thesis has also analyzed gender's performativity within Japanese anime, and its meaning outside its own culture.

Throughout this thesis, Japanimation has been analyzed using various theories to understand the nature of cross-cultural performativity of gender depicted in its characters. Not only was anime analyzed as a transcultural product, but how it came to have such specific characters, who depict various degrees of gender fluidity and physical ambiguity.

Each segment from this work provides a distinctive viewpoint as to how gender is not stable and can be easily derailed when analyzing the characters' gender. The theories of cultural industries, popular culture, cultural intertextuality, narrative (which includes characterization, and tropes), gender, and feminism. All of these theories shed light upon the argument presented, which is the analysis of gender performativity within Japanese anime, cultural fabrication of gender, and how characters within anime contest gender.

By further studying into Japan's historical past I could understand how the ambiguous characters such as, *bishounen* and *bifauxnen*, came to be such relevant and unique characters present within Japanese popular culture. As mentioned in chapter three, it all began within Japan's traditional theatrical performance arts, the *Kabuki* theater. Where male actors began to embody female roles, not only onstage but in their daily lives as well. This led towards Japan having an ever-present character within its performing arts, and that is the androgynous figure.

The androgynous figure has become a staple of Japanese popular culture. Throughout the anime shows discussed and analyzed in chapter four, *Gekkan Shoujo Nozaki-kun* and *Baka to Test to Shoukanjuu*, characters: Nozaki, Mikoshiba, Kashima, Minami, and Hideyoshi all contest culture's fabrication of gender. Specifically, gender norms attached towards heteronormative society, through their gendered acts.

A distinct characteristic seen in anime characters is the fluidity between sex, gender and sexuality. How for these anime characters, sex, gender and sexuality are all separate, and do not necessarily hold a gender continuum. This thesis discusses these points through Japanese feminism in comparison to western feminism's rise, and its varying theories on the same aspects. Lastly, how Japanese feminists perceive their literature and theory base differently, but also its application to various areas of research.

For Japan's historical past, this trifecta of gender, sex and sexuality is viewed as part of a process that does not culminate at one's birth, but as continued acts of gender, which are described by Butler as gender performativity. This central idea of gender performativity then leads into the next topics of discussion necessary to understand, and perceive how they all influence gender. This is accomplished by being able to understand culture's fabrication of

gender, and how western audiences perceive gender; which is based on a different spectrum of gender roles using anime as the medium of investigation.

The characters analyzed in this thesis display the performativity of gender. This is seen when these characters conceive their gender with the gender discourses available to them. Plus, the way they stylize these acts of gender as subjects in a heteronormative society. Lastly, gender, sexuality, and sex, cannot exist outside of the cultural norms that create them. But it is up to the individual to put their own spin on the cultural fabrication process of gender, and its characteristics in relation to sexuality, sex, and gender. This process of gender performativity is seen through the anime characters unique twist and depiction of their own gender.

Areas of Further Research

Suggested areas of research include analyzing Japanimation not only with gender theory but also with cultural theories as a transcultural product that has been globalized. Those curious can study anime as a transcultural product whose "soft power" (Illogicalzen) has reached outside its borders. "Soft power" (Illogicalzen) meaning that anime can change its contents depending on where it is being consumed (Koichi, 2002). Japanimation is a cultural medium that has gained global influence and for those interested in how a singular cultural product has gained such a following and has been adapted for consumption in various countries and by various audiences.

More so, how anime has been dubbed into various languages and been adapted to fit the culture its dubbed in. For example, anime has been widely dubbed into the English language, but there are phrases, language and cultural references which are not readily translated. One could also research how this type of translation affects the meaning and reflects the cultural adaptation of one culture to another and what aspects are lost in translation or misunderstood.

This is relevant if one is to investigate how popular cultural products influence its consumers. Anime as a transcultural product can be studied in how culturally specific attributes are adapted and adopted by its viewers. Thus, studying how this text has gained such an influence and its translation is relevant towards current cultural studies.

Further research should be done on characters within anime that are not gender ambiguous. Another area of research can be on characters and tropes that are culturally unique to Japan, This kind of study can venture away from a feminist and gendered focused research towards a more cultural theory focused one. Instead of centering the research around various gender theories that are depicted through the characters, investigating how such an amalgam of characters tropes and stereotypes came to be and are still prevalent on Japanese culture is another venue of research. Ultimately, a study into Japan's cultural richness with critical theory would further explain such occurrences such as the *bishounen*.

In this study gender fluidity and its regular appearance in Japanese anime were analyzed but other areas, such as, anime's popularity, vast genre appeal, and its unique character development, are also areas worth exploring. This area of research would be prevalent for those interested in why most of Japanese television and entertainment mediums, such as films, are mostly generated through animation. Whereas, countries such as, the United States, live television and films are what are most appealing.

Pedagogical Implications

A significant benefit of this thesis is disavowing the assumed view that of popular culture products as merely tools or mediums to entertain the masses. Throughout this thesis, anime has been shown as a useful asset to further expand one's understanding of culturaland gender

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perspectives. Anime as a transcultural product has the attributes in its narrative and characterization that depicts its original culture's gender fabrication. Therefore, by studying the basis of anime's gender roles within Japanese history, we can see that the androgynous figure has been one of great influence. This information on Japanese culture can help students further expand their knowledge and application of gender theories into other less explored areas of research. Students should study gender theory, in order to become aware on how culture affects one's gender understanding. More so, how society and culture, as a whole affect students in perceiving what gender is.

By analyzing the characters within Japanimation and understanding the various factors within this text, such as, characterization, narrative, plot, and, tropes, students can delve into Japanimation and analyze its various layers critically. Also, as a visual media it has more appeal for a modern audience as it will take up the student's attention. Another factor is Japanimation's vast genre. Anime is compared to American live television, for it has a variety for every age and it also includes different genres in each show.

Anime is an "entertainment text" and is one of many popular culture products that can and should be used to teach students to analyze for current cultural events, trends, and topics which are seen in everyday life (Hesmondhalgh 4). Through this research it is shown that popular culture products hold significant value and relevance, more so, when it comes to educating students about current dilemmas, such as gender theory. Popular culture products can be analyzed not only as a tool for cultural studies and cultural industries, but for its contents as a text.

One of the main points I have learned from my research on popular culture products, are the relevance and influence it has on today's culture. Specifically, how within pop culture

products one's social and cultural narratives are imbedded within them. Throughout the research of gender studies and feminism, these points were analyzed and contextualized through multifaceted texts. These texts reflect the current understanding of a culture's gender play and is portrayed through its character creation. When trying to understand how such gender roles were so pervasive within Japanimation, I found out about Japan's cultural admiration for the androgynous figure and its inherent presence within its visual media of anime. This research led me to understand, that yes, a culture's current gender roles are seen within cultural text, such as anime, and that it is not a simple occurrence. But characters whose gender fluidity and physical beauty are abundant within this popular culture text and are quite popular.

This has impacted my teaching, and has expanded my view on how connections made between what occurs in one's environment and being able to analyze them are needed for further studies. But also find why there are such occurrences of gender is one of the main points I learned. How it is important as an educator to not only study texts which have created a mark, but also be able to see how cultural texts also have such an influence. As an educator being able to have students make meaningful connections with what they learn, and their individual experiences, is why I believe teachers would have an interest in the research done within this paper.

This research implies that branching into not only multifaceted texts, but knowing how cultural narratives which influence students understanding of certain subjects, such as gender, are of importance. In addition, as educators it is useful to make connections between literary texts and cultural ones. I would ask educators, why not use the popular culture products which surround their students and are perpetuated to them as texts? When popular culture is a tool that students can relate towards. For example, when introducing difficult topics or themes that require

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a more current text as an example. For this research I utilized Japanimation, for its prevalent tropes related to gender, and its connection to its culture and the character ambiguous gender play.

Educators do not need to utilize only anime or the shows discussed in this thesis as examples to display gender ambiguity as texts within their classroom. Educators can easily take from this thesis that cultural narratives are pertinent and can be adapted towards understanding varying texts . I would suggest for a more canonical focused class that wants students to explore gender constructs and its implications to its characters after an introduction of the topic with anime to utilize Shakespeare's plays. More so,that the trope of gender bender which is not only prevalent in more than one of Shakespeare's plays, but is seen throughout a lot of anime as well. Teachers can make thematic connections with various anime shows, which also have gender bending characters. For example, Shakespeare's plays *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*, are both plays where gender swaps are used to confuse and entertain the audience. Students could study gender construction within the plays, how characters parody gender. Afterwards, the teacher can bring in other texts which also use gender swap to parody gender roles. Teachers are not limited to a gender thematic use of popular culture, but have much flexibility with themes and cultural texts which can help students to understand various materials within literature.

Another aspect of this research is that educators should analyze with students the popular culture products that they see in their lives. This helps create an awareness towards what is relevant to students as individuals. Having students become aware on how their culture has an impact and that such occurrences can be studied is a good resource for their academic pursuits. By bringing in new understanding and providing tools to better comprehend cultural products, such as anime, that affect their day to day living.

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