

PEPPO AS ONNAGATA, PEPPO AS MAID: DEFIANCE AND DEVIATION IN GANKUTSUOU

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Abstract

Disrupting demeaning cultural evaluations of adaptations as derivatives and therefore secondary to the “original,” this essay proposes an alternative reading of adaptation in the form of tropes from a popular anime adaptation as *derivations*—distinct from *derivatives*—and playful permutations of earlier Japanese cultural forms. The interest of this essay, Peppo from Mahiro Maeda’s *Gankutsuou: The Count of Monte Cristo*, embodies the tropes of the trap character and the maid, which are respectively comparable to the onnagata of Tokugawa kabuki and to the maid of maid cafés which are offshoots of dress reforms during the Meiji Restoration. I first unpack the histories of these cultural forms, particularly emphasizing how the bodies of kabuki performers and of maids construct gendered identities and how certain practices and patterns of these cultural forms demonstrate or digress from defiance by way of resisting and reinforcing structures of masculine ideologies. I read Peppo alongside these histories and examine her derivations from, intersections with, and deviances from the practices of the onnagata and the maid to reinforce the productive and playful processes of adaptation, to demonstrate the continuity and co-optation of earlier Japanese cultural forms in contemporary anime, to read and animate contemporary tropes in light of earlier cultural forms, and to ultimately re-read and re-animate earlier cultural forms in light of contemporary tropes.

More often than not, one easily falls into the trap of condemning adaptation, both the process and the product, as derivatives of the original—secondary and inferior and therefore “never as good as the ‘original’”.¹ These contemptuous responses, according to Linda Hutcheon and Siobhan O’Flynn in their theories on practices of adaptation, are rooted in the assumption that the process of adaptation is a “lowering” of a narrative embedded in a malignly constructed hierarchy of genre.²

This essay disrupts these demeaning cultural evaluations by proposing an alternative reading of adaptation exemplified by tropes from the popular anime adaptation, *Gankutsuou*, as *derivations*—distinct from the contemptuous *derivatives* elucidated by Hutcheon and O’Flynn—and as playful permutations of earlier Japanese cultural forms. Tropes, as Andrew Goldstone eloquently explains, are “ingenious assemblies of conventions, patterns and repeatable practices within historical and generic traditions”.³ The tropes embodied by Peppo from Mahiro Maeda’s *Gankutsuou*, a loose adaptation of Alexander Dumas’ *The Count of Monte Cristo*, are that of the trap character and the maid. The anime trope of the trap character is a character who convincingly appears female until one discovers, as the narrative unfolds, that the character is, in fact, male. Another trope in anime, manga, and videogames which Peppo evokes is that of a maid as a waitress in maid cafés or as a housekeeper.

I reframe the trap character and the maid embodied by Peppo as *derivations* of earlier Japanese cultural forms, that of the onnagata of Tokugawa kabuki and of the maid of maid cafés incited by dress reforms during the Meiji Restoration, respectively. *Derivation* here stems from *derive*—as in *selective extraction* from its source texts. *Derivation* is distinct from *derivative*, the latter loaded with demeaning denotations. Hutcheon and O’Flynn similarly distinguish derivation from derivative: “adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative—a work that is second without

1 Linda Hutcheon and Siobhan O’Flynn, *Theory of Adaptation: Second Edition*, xvi, 2

2 Hutcheon and O’Flynn, *Theory of Adaptation*, 3.

3 Goldstone, “tvtropes.org, the Future of the Humanities.”

being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing⁴. Although Peppo is derived from previous existing cultural forms, she is not necessarily determined by or dependent on these sources. I demonstrate instead that she is derived critically and creatively, which results in playful permutations of their sources.

In the two sections below, I unpack the histories, first, of kabuki theatre from Okuni kabuki to Yarō kabuki, and, second, of maids from maid cafés which were offshoots of modernizing projects of dress reforms during the Meiji Restoration, particularly focusing on how bodies of kabuki performers and of maids construct gendered identities. Alongside these histories, I examine Peppo's derivations from, intersections with, and deviances from the practices of the onnagata and the maid. In the last section, I focus on comparing the practices and patterns of the onnagata, the maid, and of Peppo which demonstrate or digress from defiance by way of resisting and reinforcing structures of masculine ideologies. All of these historical excursions and cross-examinations with Peppo ultimately reinforce the productive and playful process of adaptation, demonstrate the persistence and permutations of earlier Japanese cultural forms in contemporary anime, views and animates contemporary tropes in light of earlier cultural forms, and re-views and re-animates earlier cultural forms in light of contemporary tropes.

PEPPO AS ONNAGATA OF KABUKI

In 1603, between the riverbanks dividing Kyoto in half—far-flung from the surveillance of the feudal military government, the Tokugawa bakufu—the priestess Okuni and her troupe of cross-dressing women and men perform before the masses dances and simple dramas to garner contributions for religious intentions.⁵ Okuni begins their performance with *nembutsu odori*, a prayer dance, and an incantation: “Man is mortal. Money is nothing. Believe in Buddha.”⁶ What follows after departs from the established religious intentions and introduction: erotic scenes

4 Hutcheon and O'Flynn, *Theory of Adaptation*, 9.

5 Toshio Kawatake, *Kabuki*, 127.

6 Faubion Bowers, *Japanese Theater*, 39-40.

between women donning men's clothes, men donning women's clothes, and stimulating and seductive sights of exposed legs and arms of women. Because of the "deviant" nature of these sensual performances, they came to be called "kabuki."⁷

"Kabuki" stems from "kabuki-mono", a term already popular at that time, according to Toshio Kawatake, which refers to "people who swaggered around in strange and conspicuous attire, behaving in eccentric and impertinent ways."⁸ The word "kabuki", Kawatake says further, in contemporary annals and illustrated books such as *Tōdaiki* (Annals of the Present Age), *Tōkaidō Meishoki* (Annals of Famous Places along the Tōkaidō Highway), *Kabuki no Sōshi* (Illustrated Books of Kabuki), and *Kunijo Kabuki Ekotoba* (Okuni Kabuki in Words and Pictures), is deployed to describe deviant "novel and abnormal" elements of a performance.⁹ This description perfectly captures Okuni's defiant kabuki.

One of these deviant elements, according to Kawatake, is the "appearance on public stages of female performers, women, moreover, in the flesh."¹⁰ Other traditional cultural forms such as Nō and Kyōgen deploy masks and binan kasura (head covering) to suggest and signify women.¹¹ Male actors, moreover, primarily produced, reproduced, and transformed Japanese performing arts since ancient times.¹² With the inclusion of women on stage, however, these performers were able to play masculine and lewd roles, defying teijidō, "the way of the virtuous women."¹³ The audience of Okuni kabuki, moreover, discovered the "charms of real women" performing on stage.¹⁴

After the death of Okuni, an imitation of Okuni kabuki emerged—the Yo-jo kabuki (Pleasure Woman's kabuki). Their version of kabuki, however, according to Faubion Bowers, became a vehicle

7 Kawatake, *Kabuki*, 129.

8 Kawatake, *Kabuki*, 129.

9 Kawatake, *Kabuki*, 128.

10 Kawatake, *Kabuki*, 128.

11 Kawatake, *Kabuki*, 163.

12 Kawatake, *Kabuki*, 132.

13 Samuel L. Leiter, "From Gay to Gei," 214.

14 Toshio Kawatake, *History of Japanese Theater*, 63.

for prostitution.¹⁵ According to Kawatake, the bafuku in 1962 banned the cultural form for it corrupted the morals not only of the masses but of the backbone of the bafuku as well—the samurais. What further propelled the ban on Yo-jo kabuki, though not often acknowledged, Kawatake explicates, is the cultural form's potential to destabilize the authority of the bafuku and ultimately overturn the feudal system.¹⁶ Dignitaries dawdled in the pleasure quarters of kabuki, neglecting state affairs. Feudal lords, moreover, owned private performers to entertain foreign guests. Even the grandson of the founder of the Tokugawa bafuku was recorded to have purchased a kabuki performer for a grand sum.¹⁷

The women of Yo-jo kabuki were eventually replaced by *wakashū* or beautiful boy performers, distinguished by long forelocks which signified their “youth, beauty and grace”.¹⁸ The primary intention of *Wakashū kabuki* (Boy's kabuki) is to parade the beauty of these boy performers in pleasure quarters, presenting them as objects of lust.¹⁹ The audience of *Wakashū kabuki*, having witnessed eroticism from real women in the past strains of *Onna kabuki* (Women's kabuki), demanded even more sensuality from the *wakashū*.²⁰ The effect of *Wakashū kabuki* to the masses, the priests, and the samurais, is similar to that of *Onna kabuki*—the morals of the masses declined, according to Bowers, and battles between patron samurais for boy performers transpired.²¹ *Wakashū kabuki* was banned eventually in 1652.

Kabuki, after a swarm of petitions and appeals were forwarded, attesting to the popularity of the cultural form, re-opened in 1653. The bafuku authorities, however, demand firstly, that the forelocks of the boys, symbolic of their youthful beauty and sensuality, were to be cut, and, secondly, that the performances were to be composed of “imitation-based” or dramatic plays.²² These two

15 Bowers, *Japanese Theater*, 44.

16 Kawatake, *Kabuki*, 132.

17 Kawatake, *Kabuki*, 130-131.

18 Bowers, *Japanese Theater*, 45.

19 Bowers, *Japanese Theater*, 48.

20 Kawatake, *Kabuki*, 123.

21 Bowers, *Japanese Theater*, 49.

22 Kawatake, *Kabuki*, 134.

impositions consequently contributed to the growth of kabuki, tightening the focus of the cultural form to narrative dramas and generating stylized role types²³ such as tachiyaki (male roles), katakiyaku (villians), and onnagata (female roles).²⁴

Of particular interest to this study whose practices intersect with Peppo is the onnagata—male performers who take the role of female characters.²⁵ The art of the onnagata, according to Kawatake, is a difficult and demanding art wherein a male performer must “express female beauty without negating his own male body... to evoke a beauty that surpass[es] the appeal of women.”²⁶ Moreover, the onnagata through his art, according to Galia Todorava Gabrovska, must be able to “skillfully manipulate both female and male spectators’ gaze and sentiments” towards them, convincing and captivating them of the femininity of the onnagata.²⁷ How then is this art achieved? The beauty of the onnagata’s art principally stems from the stylized blend of masculine and feminine outer and inner elements. The definition of stylization deployed in this essay is lifted from Katherine Mezur: “Stylization is a process whereby something is separated from the representation of the real through various techniques such as exaggeration, diminution, repetition, refinement, abstraction or fragmentation”²⁸ The onnagata, in particular, stylizes femininity by selecting and conventionalizing movements and characteristics to construct and project an ideal femininity. Outer elements, moreover, refer to the costumes, wigs, and props the onnagata employs, while inner elements refer to the characteristics and character-type the onnagata embodies.

The onnagata evokes stylized femininity firstly through outer elements. The performer wears a 25-pound wig²⁹ laden with extravagant decorations and dons lavishing multi-layered kimonos bathed in vibrant and rich colors and printed with intricate

23 Kawatake, *Kabuki*, 134.

24 Galia Todorava Gabrovska, “Gender and Body,” 74.

25 Shūtarō Miyake, *Kabuki Drama*, 16.

26 Kawatake, *Kabuki*, 163.

27 Gabrovska, “Gender and Body Construction,” 75.

28 Katherine Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies*, 139.

29 Miyake, *Kabuki Drama*, 30.

designs.³⁰ Performing gracefully while loaded with the weight of the wig and the costume, as Gabrovská emphasizes, is supposedly made possible by the “hidden” inner masculine strength and boldness of the performer.³¹ In a similar vein, Earle Ernst says: “although the surface of the woman portrayed should be soft, tender and beautiful, beneath the surface there should be a strong line which can be created only by a man.”³² The inner masculine strength underscored by Gabrovská and Ernst is visible in how the onnagata constructs and performs the ideal feminine stance wherein hand gestures and arm movements are small and tightly controlled by the constricting sleeves of the kimono.³³ The stride of the onnagata, in addition, is well-calculated—the performer’s shoulders must be drooped, his knees must be bent in order to appear shorter, and he must keep his knees together and point his toes inward to produce an ideal feminine gait.³⁴

The erotic enthrallment of the onnagata is produced not only by the constricted but supposedly feminine movements of the onnagata, but also through the use of various props. Hand props, for instance, such as *kiseru* (a long narrow pipe), and fans, laden with historically constituted erotic and sensual meanings, are deployed for *iroke* (erotic allure).³⁵ Feminine outer elements in a performance, all in all, are all successfully carried and carried out, as Gabrovská and Ernst claim, by inner masculine characteristics.

Peppo in *Gankutsuou* achieves a similar female impression through feminine outer elements. Though not as grand as the kimono and wig of the onnagata, Peppo, in the first few episodes, dons a slim black dress printed with a constellation of skulls—already indicative of danger and death—white gloves, high cut boots, and a black headdress. Unlike the onnagata, Peppo naturally has flowing long hair. This variation from the onnagata further masks Peppo’s sex from those who interact with her in the series as well as from the viewers, legitimizing her anime trope classification as a trap

30 Stevie Suan, *The Anime Paradox*, 181.

31 Gabrovská, “Gender and Body Construction,” 80

32 Earle Ernst, *The Kabuki Theater*, 195

33 Ronald Cavaye, *Kabuki: A Pocket Guide*, 41.

34 Cavaye, *Kabuki*, 41.

35 Mezur, *Beautiful Boys*, 152.

character. Through the feminine physical form Peppo achieves, in addition, she is able to deceive and manipulate the sentiments of Albert towards her in the first few episodes, apparent in how he arranges a rendezvous with her to perhaps further pursue her.³⁶ The Count of Monte Cristo, though, reluctantly reveals to Albert of Peppo's biological sex.³⁷ Unlike the onnagata whose audience is knowledgeable that males perform the ideal female characters on stage, Peppo does not disclose her biological sex throughout the series, which comes as an embarrassing surprise to Albert and a humorous surprise to the viewers of *Gankutsuou* unfamiliar with the adapted text. Peppo and onnagata, despite being biologically male, are both desired as a *woman* by Albert in the first few episodes and by male audiences respectively.

The objects Peppo wield, moreover, are reminiscent of the erotic stylization of hand props deployed by the onnagata. Peppo first appears in the first scene of the first episode of *Gankutsuou* among a fantastic frenzied crowd during the opening procession of a celebration carnival in Luna.³⁸ She is able to capture Albert's attention and tosses white-petalled flowers to him, which incites excitement from Albert. The flowers are similar to the hand props of the onnagata which evoke iroke—"excit[ing] sensual and sexual feelings [...] stimulat[ing] imaginary or remembered images and feelings of sensual pleasure."³⁹ A flower already conjures images inextricably associated with femininity—its delicate and ephemeral beauty is likened to the youth of women and the structure of petal unfolding the pistil resembles the female sex organ. Peppo further wields other objects with erotic associations in the same episode when she encounters Albert on the last night of the carnival. Peppo approaches the sulking Albert, holding a *mocchetto*, invoking yet again the erotic hand props of the onnagata. The *mocchetto* is not only erotic because it is phallic, but also because in the world-setting of the anime, it is part of a sensual post-carnival practice wherein couples extinguish the *mocchetto* after midnight and in the dimmed streets, indulge in sensual pleasure. Albert and

36 *Gankutsuou: The Count of Monte Cristo*, episode 2, "Until the Sun Rises on the Moon."

37 *Gankutsuou*, "Until the Sun Rises on the Moon."

38 *Gankutsuou*, episode 1, "At Journeys End, We Meet."

39 Mezur, *Beautiful Boys*, 153.

Peppo partake of this intimate practice, until Peppo points a gun at Albert—another phallic object, though now menacing.

Resuming my discussion of the onnagata's stylization of femininity, the onnagata secondly evokes femininity by blending stylized feminine and masculine inner elements. Female characters are idealized as "self-regulating, self-censored, fragile, soft and immobile"⁴⁰ These characteristics are embodied by the *keisei* (highest ranking courtesan), the epitome of the virtuous woman, soft and sophisticated, and the *akahime* (red princess), the epitome of loveliness, self-restrained, self-sacrifice, fragile and frail. All of these characteristics are stylized and coded as desirable and erotic.⁴¹ The onnagata, however, seemingly departs from portraying the ideal woman by being able to articulate the emotions of women. This masculine characteristic and privilege enacted by female characters, as the dramatist Chikamatsu Monzaemon says, should be "considered art."⁴² Since the audience of kabuki are knowledgeable of the fact that female characters are played by male actors, whatever diverges from the ideal femininity portrayed, such as the female character's ability to disclose sentiments, is merely an artistic technique to general interest in the performance.⁴³

Peppo in the second episode evokes some feminine characteristics of the ideal female characters enacted by the onnagata.⁴⁴ She attempts to stall the killing of Albert by using her body to barricade him from Teresa Vampa, Luigi's partner—"We can't kill him yet", Peppo says, and fumbling for words, continues, "because we won't get the money! And besides...there's still time"⁴⁵ In this instance, she embodies the self-sacrifice characteristic of the *akahime* described by Gabrovská.⁴⁶ She displays more of the *akahime*'s stylized feminine characteristics of being self-sacrificing and fragile as she attempts to protect Albert from Teresa's scorching

40 Gabrovská, "Gender and Body Construction," 78.

41 Gabrovská, "Gender and Body Construction," 78

42 Chikamatsu Monzaemon, "Chikamatsu on the Art of the Puppet Stage," 388.

43 Chikamatsu, "Chikamatsu on the Art of the Puppet Stage."

44 *Gankutsuou*, "Until the Sun Rises on the Moon."

45 *Gankutsuou*, "Until the Sun Rises on the Moon."

46 Gabrovská, "Gender and Body Construction," 78.

knife. Peppo restrains the movements of Teresa, a mark of her selflessness to protect Albert at the cost of disrespecting her boss, Luigi. Peppo, however, is pushed aside by Teresa which echoes the physical fragility of the *akahime*. The stylized blending of feminine and masculine elements, as Peppo achieves with her feminine physical form and her bold masculine inner strength, is at the heart of the beauty and art of the *onnagata* as described by Kawatake, Gabrovská, and Ernst.

Deviating from the portrayal of the ideal female, Peppo does not evoke the self-restrained characteristic of the *onnagata's* *akahime*. As she encounters Albert in episode 3, working as a maid for the Morcef family, Peppo teases Albert for his childlike inquisitiveness toward the Count's past⁴⁷—"Naïve as ever I see"—and responds to Albert's surprise by playfully sticking her tongue out. Peppo, furthermore, is also able to articulate and criticize the absurdities of the aristocrats in episode 4.⁴⁸ She pronounces their tendencies: "Infidelity. Adultery. Dalliances in the dead of the night"; and criticizes the grand customs of the aristocrats: "if you took away the gluttony, lust and avarice, there wouldn't be anything left". Her unrestrained speech closely resembles the masculine ability to speak which the male *onnagata* preserves while playing female characters to articulate female emotions. Peppo's speech, however, does not hinge on articulating a pool of internal emotions as the *onnagata's*; her speech rather hinges on turbulently lashing out about and against external structures such as the aristocracy.

PEPPO AS MAID OF MAID CAFÉS

I shift from delineating the history of *kabuki* and the stylized beauty of the *onnagata* to the history of maid uniforms rooted in dress reforms during the Meiji Restoration. Part of their reorganizing of social structures to project an image of a masculine and modern Japan to the West during the Meiji Restoration was the adaptation of *yōfuku* (Western style clothing), particularly Western uniforms.⁴⁹ Uniforms, moreover, deployed in Japanese educational system, the

47 *Gankutsuou* episode 3, "5/22, Tempest."

48 *Gankutsuou*, episode 4, "Mother's secret."

49 Barbara Molony, "Gender, Citizenship, and Dress in Modernizing Japan," 81.

army, the navy and postal service were derived from uniforms in Germany, France, England, and America respectively.⁵⁰

After Japan's contact with the West, according to Barbara Molony, "dress came to be the nexus of gender, power, ethnicity, imperialism and modernity".⁵¹ Uniforms were particularly adapted for the use of male government officials and promoters of the Meiji Restoration project of *bunmei kaika*—"civilization and enlightenment".⁵² Dress indicated the transition of Japanese men to modernity and a turning away from traditional, "barbaric" or "improper" practices.⁵³ Western dress, moreover, was also a means to distinguish Japanese men stationed in colonies from their colonized subjects who wore native or traditional dress.⁵⁴

Japanese women, like these colonized subjects, were denied the distinction of modernity by authorities. Many wanted to keep these women as "repositories of the past" as the nation transitioned quite haphazardly into modernity.⁵⁵ It was only in 1866 when the empress proclaimed that Japanese women who were engaged in public spheres as well as working women must wear modern, Western clothes.⁵⁶ Work clothes for factory workers, teachers, and nurses, however, were worn merely for pragmatic reasons, unlike the Western clothes of men which invoked power and authority.⁵⁷

The youth culture in the 1930s, however, adapted one of the offshoots of Meiji Restoration's dress reform: the French style maid uniform.⁵⁸ The maid uniform was assimilated into popular cultural forms such as anime, manga, and computer/console games. Maids from maid cafés, the interest of this essay, particularly stemmed from a 1995 computer game *Welcome to Pia Carrot!!*, according to Patrick Galbraith in "Maid in Japan".⁵⁹ In this virtual game,

50 Nicolas Cambridge, "Cherry-Picking Sartorial," 171.

51 Molony, "Gender, Citizenship, and Dress," 84.

52 Molony, "Gender, Citizenship, and Dress," 84.

53 Molony, "Gender, Citizenship, and Dress," 85.

54 Molony, "Gender, Citizenship, and Dress," 87.

55 Molony, "Gender, Citizenship, and Dress," 89.

56 Molony, "Gender, Citizenship, and Dress," 90.

57 Molony, "Gender, Citizenship, and Dress," 92.

58 Cambridge, "Cherry-Picking," 181.

59 Patrick W. Galbraith, "Maid in Japan," paragraph 9.

players forge intimate relations with beautiful girls donning what resembles French style maid uniforms. Galbraith cites this game as an example of bishōjo games (beautiful girl games) which are usually seen from the point of view of foreigners as “dating simulator games”. The nature of these games, Galbraith further explicates, are “pornographic in nature”, but primarily leans towards resembling intimate “interactive romance novels”. The scripts and interactions of these bishōjo games were adapted for concept cafés, which resulted in maid cafes.⁶⁰

Maid cafés, according to Galbraith in another essay, are predominantly characterized by “childlike exuberance” achieved through café decorations, music, and especially through the “energetic, talkative maids”.⁶¹ The maids and this space, Galbraith says, provides “alternative intimacy”,⁶² feelings of comfort and confidence, to its dominant customers, the otaku, or devoted fans of popular cultural forms such as anime, manga and videogames.⁶³ These maids serve orders, interact with customers whom they call “master” or “mistress”, and play tabletop games. The interactions of the maids and customers, however, are constructed around fiction and fantasy, productively producing a space for play and performance. Both the maids and the customers, for instance, allude to and embody versions of themselves inspired by anime, manga, and videogames.⁶⁴

The distinct characteristic of maids, according to Galbraith, is *hijitsuryoko* (non-ability)—“the aesthetics of innocence, inexperience and imperfection”.⁶⁵ This manifests in how the maids empower customers in earnest services like letting them choose the color of the straw they want to use. It also manifests in how maids provide *iyashi* or “spiritual healing through conversation” wherein maids show genuine interest in the private and usually scorned hobbies of the otaku, giving them confidence to engage further in conversation. A regular’s favorite maid, moreover, is one

60 Galbraith, “Maid in Japan,” paragraph 9.

61 Galbraith, “Welcome Home,” 79.

62 Galbraith, “Welcome Home” 77.

63 Galbraith, “Akihabara,” 210.

64 Galbraith, “Maid Cafés,” 3.

65 Galbraith, “Welcome Home,” 80.

that “makes communication easiest and most enjoyable”.⁶⁶

Peppo's character as a housemaid at the Morcef estate in Paris at first does not fully correspond to the practices of the ideal maid of maid cafés. As a maid, she dons a conservative maid uniform consisting of long sleeves, a long skirt, an apron, and a black headband. Peppo, moreover, does not evoke “aesthetics of innocence [and] inexperience” ascribed by Galbraith.⁶⁷ In episode 4, for instance, she suggests to Albert that she has “gotten into [his] father's good graces” by seducing Fernand de Morcef, then sensually licks the corner of her lips.⁶⁸ In the same scene, she also proposes to be of service to Albert by unlocking the drawer of his mother. She says: “I specialize in getting into people's drawers”, sexually reinforcing her earlier suggestion of successfully seducing Fernand. Her seductive charm, though not in line with the ideal image of the maid, corresponds instead to the erotic appeal of the pleasure women of Yo-jo kabuki and of the beautiful boys of Wakashū kabuki.

Deviating from the maid of maid cafés, Peppo refuses to empower Albert—persistently teasing him and underscoring his innocence and naivety. The effect of their conversations does not foster intimacy or provide *iyashi* or *kokoro no kea* (soul care)⁶⁹ like what the maids accomplish with their services but instead agitates Albert. There are instances though wherein Peppo's speech evokes that of the devoted maid: when her presence at the Morcef estate is questioned by Albert, she responds, “I followed you, Albert”.⁷⁰

Peppo's characteristics gradually transforms as *Gankutsuou* progresses. She becomes more caring towards Albert, evocative of the concerned and committed maid to her masters and mistresses. To illustrate this, she mends Albert's wound in episode 11,⁷¹ and teasingly slaps it but says to him endearingly: “I wish you wouldn't worry me so”. She further shows concern over Albert's

66 Galbraith, “Welcome Home,” 83.

67 Galbraith, “Welcome Home,” 80.

68 *Gankutsuou*, “Mother's Secret.”

69 Galbraith, “Maid in Japan,” paragraph 19.

70 *Gankutsuou*, “5/22, Tempest.”

71 *Gankutsuou*, episode 11, “An Engagement Broken.”

entanglement in the kidnapping of Valentine de Villefort⁷² and his revoked engagement with Eugénie Danglers.⁷³

Throughout the series, Albert, somewhat like the customers of a maid at a maid café, is at the center of Peppo's attention and playful pestering. It is revealed though in episode 16 that Peppo's proximity to Albert is because she was assigned by the Count to spy and report on Albert.⁷⁴ In episode 20, however, Peppo expresses her love to Albert and aids him in his plot to rescue Eugénie from her marriage to Andrea Calvalcanti.⁷⁵ This romantic gesture is more aligned with the self-sacrificing characteristic of the *akahime* which manifests in Peppo's desire to "help the boy [she] loves", and her acceptance of Albert's love for Eugénie.⁷⁶

RESISTING AND REINFORCING STRUCTURES OF MASCULINE IDEOLOGIES

As already examined, the external and internal characteristics of Peppo are productively derived from the practices of the cultural forms of the *onnagata* and of the maid which are in turn playfully permuted. This section particularly explores the intersecting practices and patterns of resisting and reinforcing structures of masculine ideologies of the *onnagata*, the maid, and Peppo.

Through the art of the *onnagata*, masculine ideologies are reinforced for performances of the *onnagata* encourage women to emulate a stylized femininity which makes desirable aesthetics of passivity and fragility, a perfected femininity projected by male fantasies. Men, also, are wired to search for women who emulate this stylized femininity, further reproducing the passive and fragile woman as the ideal. Although the precursors of the *onnagata*—the pleasure women from *Yo-jo kabuki* and the beautiful boys from *Wakashū kabuki*—undermined the military structures of the Tokugawa through seductive means, the practices of these earlier cultural forms and the *onnagata* perpetuate an eroticized

72 *Gankutsuou*, "An Engagement Broken."

73 *Gankutsuou*, episode 12, "Encore."

74 *Gankutsuou* "Scandal."

75 *Gankutsuou*, "Farewell, Eugénie."

76 *Gankutsuou*, "Farewell, Eugénie."

femininity and an idealized femininity respectively, molded from male constructions and fantasies of femininity.

Peppo, however, co-opts one of the retained masculine characteristics of the onnagata wherein the actor enables the female characters he plays to speak and express female sentiments. Peppo similarly is empowered to speak. Her speech, however, is directed towards critiquing aristocratic society plagued with, according to Peppo in episode 4, “gluttony, lust, and avarice”,⁷⁷ endorsed by the powerful masculine nexus of Fernand de Morcef, Baron Danglers, and Count de Villefort. Though her maid uniform implicates her to aristocracy through servitude, she is able to aggressively interrupt and subvert the systemic inequities of aristocrats through her speech.

Maids, on the other hand, support masculine ideologies in the same way as the onnagata by enacting and satisfying male fantasies and, moreover, by reinforcing the subordinate position of females vis-à-vis males. By providing fantasy spaces where these men can fulfill their fantasies, however, maid cafés are able to subvert the “corporate, productive, and masculine model of Japan”.⁷⁸ In these spaces, otaku are preoccupied not with productive labor, but with unproductive pleasure consumption.⁷⁹ In addition, these spaces, animated by fiction and fantasy, are far removed from the political and social concerns of Japan.

Peppo in *Gankutsuou* is subject to servitude—like the practices of maids in maid cafés—particularly towards men: deployed by Vampa to capture Albert with her feminine charm and deployed by the Count to infiltrate the Morcef estate as a maid through seductive means. Her subjection to the rule of these men could possibly stem from financial and security constraints of her social status in society. It could also possibly stem from her own desire to pursue Albert. This is evident in how she abandons her service to Vampa after the Count and Franz D’Epinay rescue Albert and to the Count only after Albert pursues and rescues Eugénie. Read

77 *Gankutsuou*, “5/22, Tempest.”

78 Galbraith, “Welcome Home,” 77.

79 Galbraith, “Welcome Home,” 78.

in this way, it would seem as if Peppo's character in the anime entirely revolves around Albert in the same way as the customers are the primary concern of maids in maid cafés. The final episode of *Gankutsuou*, however, reveals a cheery Peppo modelling hair ornaments and continuing to deceive men with her feminine charm.⁸⁰

CONCLUSION

Reading popular conventions or contemporary tropes from anime, as demonstrated through Peppo, a trap character, and a maid trope in *Gankutsuou*, alongside specific histories of earlier cultural forms which resonate and are comparable with these tropes, reinforces the productive and playful processes of adaptation. Furthermore, tropes entrenched in earlier cultural forms facilitate and fortify connections between past and present practices and patterns of popular Japanese cultures. Historicizing tropes ultimately enables productive readings of anime illuminated by traditional Japanese cultural forms and a re-reading and re-animation of traditional Japanese cultural forms in light of contemporary recreations and reformulations in anime.

80 *Gankutsuou*: The Count of Monte Cristo, episode 24, "At the Shore."

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