Spring 1-1-2018

The Metaphysical Onnagata Performs: Deleuze, Performance, Performativity, and Gender on the Kabuki Stage

Lani Miranda Alden
University of Colorado at Boulder, lani.alden@gmail.com

Recommended Citation

The Metaphysical *Onnagata* Performs:
Deleuze, Performance, Performativity, and Gender on the *Kabuki* Stage

By

Lani Miranda Alden

B.A., University of Maryland College Park, 2013

M.A., Yale, 2015

A thesis submitted to the

Faculty of the Graduate School of the

University of Colorado in partial fulfillment

of the requirement for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Asian Languages and Civilizations

2018

This thesis entitled:
The Metaphysical *Onnagata* Performs:
Deleuze, Performance, Performativity, and Gender on the *Kabuki* Stage
written by Lani Miranda Alden
has been approved for the Department of Asian Languages and Civilizations

_____
Janice Brown

_____
Faye Kleeman

_____
Robert Buffington

Date_____

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we
find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards
of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

The Metaphysical *Onnagata* Performs: Deleuze, Performance, Performativity, and Gender on the *Kabuki* Stage

Alden, Lani Miranda (M.A., Japanese, Department of Asian Languages and Civilizations)

Thesis directed by Professor Janice Brown

Abstract

This thesis examines the ways that the stage and the *onnagata* manifest themselves in early modern and modern Japan. In texts like Ihara Saikaku's *Nanshoku ōkagami* and Yoshizawa Ayame's *Ayamegusa*, it is possible to see a wide range of potentiality in the metaphysical "being" of the *onnagata* and the stage on which they performed during the early modern period. During the modern period, it is possible to see shifts in this "being" through the analysis of texts such as Osanai Kaoru's *Onnagata ni tsuite*. The early modern *onnagata* and *kabuki* stage were deeply tied to their audience and the social and gender norms that were produced within this context. For androgynous *onnagata,* artistic potential was created through productive hybridity at the edges of a gender binary. For Ayame's "real woman" *onnagata,* artistic potential was found in the mastery of forces that brought "real women" into being off-stage and through submitting oneself to these same forces. The idea for Ayame's *onnagata* was simply to step onto the stage and perform the embodied performatives that one mastered off it. The result of this process created a stage that was deeply porous at the edges and an *onnagata* that consciously conflated performance and performative. For modern *kabuki* theatre producers like Osanai Kaoru, the *onnagata* was necessarily male, keeping with nation-state projects of gender and sexual rigidity, and thus could not avoid the inaccessibility of "womanhood." As a result, the *onnagata* within the modern context necessarily produced artistic potential from the act of failing to be a woman.

The lines of the stage also became harder, reflecting the rigid binaries that the nation-state was promoting. Ultimately, this thesis hopes to produce new ways of understanding the metaphysics of the *onnagata* and the *kabuki* stage and contribute to a broader project of applying new theoretical approaches to early modern Japan.

CONTENTS

Chapter One

<u>Introduction</u>

In the traditional Japanese theatrical form, *kabuki,* both male roles, such as the heroic *tachiyaku,* as well as female roles, are performed by male-bodied actors. To some, this has contributed to the classification of *kabuki* as a particularly "queer" theatrical style.[1] The term *kabuki* itself derives from the verb *kabuku*, which means "to lean," "to act with a gaudy demeanor or in a strange or sexual way," or "to do something without regard to others."[2] The *kabuki* stage was, historically, a location that was placed askew from the "normative" and was a site for performers to, theoretically, act without regard to the normative system of values that were promoted by the Tokugawa government. It was a place for performers to act strange, to engage in sex with patrons, and to create a carnival-esque environment for performers and patrons alike in order to challenge dominant Neo-Confucian value systems that the Tokugawa government imposed upon its people.

However, the role of the stage and its performers should not be described so simply. Performers of female roles, or *onnagata,* had complex relationships within the discursive frameworks of whatever time they existed. *Onnagata* like Yoshizawa Ayame, for example, advocated for the recognition and mastery of dominant systems relating to the construction of women in society. The focus of this project will be on these shifts and complications within the historical relationship of the *kabuki* stage and its female-role performers with regard to society and social values. Through the reading of primary texts written by *kabuki* creators and performers, as well as texts that describe *onnagata,* this project will show that the "being" of the

---

[1] Ayako Kano, *Acting like a Woman in Modern Japan* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 59.
[2] According to *Nihon kokugo daijiten* (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1972-1976), 20 vols.

onnagata performers shifts and changes over time. Further, it will show that, alongside metaphysical shifts in the way that the *onnagata* performers manifested themselves on the stage, there were similar metaphysical shifts in the relationship of the stage to its audience and the state.

Much of the existing literature on *onnagata* tends to reproduce one of a few narratives. The first is a form of feminist reading, which portrays the male-bodied *onnagata* performing female roles on-stage as simply a project furthering patriarchal goals and allowing men to dictate the manners of women and the ways in which women lived their lives. For example, Katherine Mezur argues that *onnagata* were "the inventors of a fiction of Woman" during the Edo period that reflected patriarchal values and "came to replace [real women] completely."[3] Mezur compares the *onnagata's* portrayal of women to work done by Sue-Ellen Chance on the portrayal of women in Western classical theatre. Chance argues that these performers of female roles "[represented] the patriarchal values attached to the gender of 'Woman' while suppressing the experiences, stories, feelings, and fantasies of actual women."[4] Mezur cites the way that *kabuki* performers set fashion styles and trends for female-bodied audience members as evidence for these assertions.

The second narrative tends to investigate complex interactions between the *onnagata* and state notions of ideal gender performance. For example, Galia Gabrovska argues that Early Modern *kabuki* "played a central part in consolidating Tokugawa gender notions and hierarchies, on the one hand, and in disrupting them, on the other, by constantly playing with

---

[3] Kathleen Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 38.
[4] Sue-Ellen Case, "Classic Drag: The Greek Creation of Female Parts," *Theatre Journal* 37, no. 3 (1985): 318.

conventionalized gender constructs and destabilizing any fixed meanings."[5] Gabrovska uses evidence related to the theatre's relationship to society and the state to make her points.

The third type of argument that is typical in *onnagata* scholarship focuses on the roles of the female *onnagata* and the actress and how these performers challenged the notion of the necessity of maleness to the performance of *onnagata* femininity. As Maki Isaka argues, "it is ironic that the possibility of *onnagata* artistry is regarded as residing in male actors alone, considering that the art of *onnagata* is, in both theory and practice, made possible by the very presupposition of 'femininity [being] separable from women's anatomical sex.'"[6] My work contributes to this third kind of discourse and troubles the first kind. By complicating the vision of the performer and the stage as strictly male agents of patriarchal norms, my thesis seeks to understand these elements as constructions that are brought into being through complex processes that cannot be understood simply through the dynamic of "patriarchal values" that oppress or eliminate "actual women." I view the early modern *onnagata* as constructions that only come into "being" through organizing principles that stem primarily from the communities and environments of the audience, and the modern *onnagata* as an entity that is brought into "being" predominantly through the organizing principles of the nation-state. Finally, I contribute to the discourse by associating the "being" of the *onnagata* to that of the stage they performed upon and considering the similarities between the metaphysics of the boundaries of that stage and the metaphysics forming the *onnagata* themselves.

My project is structured into four chapters, including the introduction and conclusion. My introductory first chapter consists of three sections, each of which seeks to introduce concepts or

---

[5] Galia Gabrovska, "Gender and Body Construction in Edo Period *Kabuki*," *Core Ethics* 5 (2009): 81.
[6] Maki Isaka, *Onnagata: A Labyrinth of Gendering in Kabuki Theatre* (University of Washington Press, 2016), 7.

theories related to my project. I begin by briefly illuminating the origins and history of *kabuki* and the cultural environment that it existed within during the Early Modern and Modern periods. Subsequently, I explain Deleuze and terminology related to the project, such as that of the "assemblage" and the "plane of organization." With these issues in mind, I conclude my first chapter by discussing critiques of Deleuze, primarily from scholars of postcolonial or feminist studies, so as to paint a broader picture of the complications and benefits of the application of Deleuzian frameworks within a scholarly work. I also include a justification of the use of contemporary, continental poststructural analysis on the temporally and culturally distinct time periods and subjects that are the topic of my work.

In my second chapter, I discuss prominent shifts during the Early Modern period from androgynous performance towards performance strictly as women. I begin this analysis through the inspection of the androgynous young male beauty, the *wakashu*, and the ways in which these figures brought the androgynous, ambiguous hybrid *onnagata* into being on-stage. I contrast this "coming into being" with a different approach argued for by Yoshizawa Ayame, who successfully created a paradigm shift in the ways in which *onnagata* were brought into being on the stage, as well as how they existed off it. To pursue this, I use primary sources that describe the androgynous *wakashu onnagata,* such as Ihara Saikaku's *Nanshoku ōkagami,* and contrast the metaphysics utilized in perceiving or understanding the hybrid *wakashu onnagata* to those that come as a result of proposals made by Yoshizawa Ayame within the *onnagata* didactic text, *Ayamegusa.* I introduce the concept of the *onnagata* who is brought into being through the productive tension found in binaries and interrogate the concept of producing art and performance through the friction formed at the edges of these binaries. I also interrogate Ayame's concept of the "real woman" *onnagata* who seeks to perform, and exist within, those

same organizational structures that bring "real women" outside of the *kabuki* stage into being. I show that Ayame aims to create a conflation of the performance on-stage and the performative elements that are producing "real womanness" off-stage. From there, I demonstrate that this shift in *onnagata* performance during the early modern period was not only one of performance style, but also one that operated on the metaphysical state of the *onnagata.* Thereby, I highlight the interaction between the elements that comprise the *onnagata,* as well as the *kabuki* stage, and the forces that bring these elements together into a productive assembled state.

In my third chapter, I discuss the ways that the importation of Western values, as well as the introduction of the female actresses, shaped the metaphysical being of the *kabuki* stage and its performers yet again. By consulting primary sources written by *kabuki* creators, such as the director and actor Osanai Kaoru, I bring forward some of the new ways that the "being" of the *onnagata,* in particular, had to be reformulated and reshaped to fit new categories of identity. Further, I demonstrate that the *onnagata* functioned as a tool of the nation-state looking to create a mythological past rooted in the newly national *kabuki* theatre. In order to preserve the *onnagata*, the nation-state needed this figure to fit into new categories and reshape itself to match new national desires. As Western influences of scientific naturalism had to merge with existing Japanese models of reality, bodies that challenged dominant discourses of the "natural," such as the *onnagata,* had to be brought into "being" in a new way, so as to not conflict with the new gender and sex projects promoted by the nation-state. Alongside the change in the *onnagata,* the audience's relationship to the stage also shifted. I argue that the stage shifted from a predominantly horizontally porous entity, shaped by the social norms of its audience, to a predominantly vertically porous entity, primarily shaped by the social norms of the nation-state,

and finally that the new nation-state bifurcated the realms of performance and performativity, just as it separated the audience from the stage.

In my fourth chapter, I conclude by considering productive new ways of approaching *kabuki* theatre with the use of theoretical frameworks derived outside of strictly poststructural thought. Through synthesizing the concepts outlined in my second and third chapters, I hope to expand the ways in which we discuss the *onnagata* and the *kabuki* stage, thereby broadening the ways in which we understand the forces shaping the creation of these entities, as well as challenging simplistic notions of a static *onnagata* essence that can be easily explained discrete from historical context. I also hope to highlight that, while shifts did occur in the early modern/modern "divide," many of these shifts were simply a change in the way that the forces of organization operated on elements comprising existing assemblages, rather than a strict paradigm shift that constituted the genesis of entirely "new" or entirely "separate" assemblages.

A Brief History of *Kabuki*

Kabuki was founded in the late 1590s by a woman named Okuni, who may have been a shrine priestess of the Izumo shrine.[7] The early forms of the dance were considered "daring and not very proper" and also included *nenbutsu* dancing, which was tied to evangelical Buddhist practice dating back to the tenth century.[8] Early forms of dance were highly sexual, provocative, and included cross-gender play. The Tokugawa government, which was intensely concerned with regulating the citizenry and imposing Neo-Confucian values and hierarchies upon them, did not approve of these highly sexual dance forms and, in 1629, banned women from the stage

---

[7] Paul Varley, *Japanese Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 186-187.
[8] Varley, *Japanese Culture*, 187.

permanently. Although women would still perform *kabuki* privately, in some limited venues,[9]

they remained barred from the public stage until the Meiji period over two hundred years later.

Following the ban of women on the stage, the *wakashu* (young boy) *kabuki* theatre began

to take prominence. While it had already been on the rise before the ban on women, the

prohibition of women on the stage elevated the status of *wakashu kabuki* to dominance. This

form of theatre was also highly sexual, but not exclusively so. The *wakashu kabuki* would

include stage performances and tricks, such as "certain kinds of acrobatics and flashing

swordplay"[10] that would remain in *kabuki* for years to come. Scripts and performances would

emphasize plot and character far more than the all-women *kabuki* of Okuni did. Additionally,

both *wakashu* and adult males would be on the stage, with the *wakashu* being the preference for

onnagata roles. However, *wakashu* could just as easily play male heroic roles as well. The

wakashu kabuki theatre was banned in 1652 as a result of its highly erotic performances. That

said, the *wakashu onnagata* remained a popular style of *onnagata*, even as the *wakashu*

themselves were forced to "[shave] their forelocks to give the appearance that they were

adults."[11] The concept of the *wakashu onnagata* remained so prevalent after the ban of *wakashu*

kabuki, in fact, that many stories in Ihara Saikaku's 1687 *Nanshoku ōkagami* (*The Great Mirror*

of Male Love) are dedicated to them.

Following the ban of *wakashu kabuki* as a theatrical style and the forceful regulation of

age, or the appearance of age, on-stage, prominent *onnagata* and *kabuki* theatre masters began to

reconsider how the performance of female roles should be structured. Famously, the theoretical

writings of Yoshizawa Ayame (1673-1729), an *onnagata* born just over twenty years after the

---

[9] Isaka, *Onnagata: A Labyrinth of Gendering in Kabuki Theatre* (University of Washington Press: 2016), 115.
[10] Varley, *Japanese Culture,* 187.
[11] Varley, *Japanese Culture,* 187.

ban of *wakashu kabuki*, were compiled by the playwright Fukuoka Yagoshirō into a work entitled *Ayamegusa* (*The Words of Ayame*). This text rejected existing standards of *onnagata* performance that were inherited from the *wakashu kabuki* theatre and, instead, prescribed new ways of mastering the art of the *onnagata*. *Ayamegusa* was compiled alongside many other theatrical texts in an anthology entitled *Yakusha rongo* (*The Actors' Analects*) sometime during the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

  Kabuki theatre around this time period was a quite personal affair for the audience members attending. The theatre was, as Katherine Saltzman-Li argues, extraordinarily personal and the "folk" atmosphere of the theatre was established through "the relationships between actors and audience members, on and off-stage." [12] The theatre was, in effect, a product of its environment and functioned as a highly localized event that would often occur during festivals and during other community-based gatherings.

  Audience members also regularly engaged with *kabuki* theatre outside the realm of the stage. There was a flourishing of *kabuki* memorabilia, art, and an incredible amount of dialogue between the *kabuki* stage and the written text. A number of stories that featured illustration, for example, would include famous *kabuki* actors portrayed as the protagonists and villains of the story to which the illustrations were attached. Within the realm of art, *kabuki* actors were represented in a variety of drastically different styles. For example, the artist Tōshūsai Sharaku is well known today for his particularly unique style of capturing *kabuki* actors in exaggerated or grotesque ways. His *onnagata* portraits were typically quite masculine and his *tachiyaku* (male, adult roles that were typically heroic) portraits often featured ugly and bizarre expressions.

---

[12] Katherine Saltzman-Li, *Creating Kabuki Plays: Context for Keizairoku, "Valuable Notes on Playwriting"* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 145.

Meanwhile, other *ukiyoe* (pictures of the floating world) artists, such as Tori'i Kiyomasu, portrayed *onnagata* as much more effeminate and beautiful. *Kabuki* performers were also the subject of stories, gossip, and fiction. Ihara Saikaku, for example, wrote many stories about *onnagata* performers, but he was far from alone. Moreover, *kabuki* fashion and styles, particularly those derived from the lavish costumes of the *onnagata,* set the trends for women across the city of Edo. Thus, through consuming almost any form of media, the presence of *kabuki* entered the daily lives of the audience members who attended it. Even those who were unable to access the theatre because of money or location could not avoid its presence. *Kabuki* culture was an unavoidable part of the daily lives of the people of Japan during the Edo period.

Sexual intercourse and romantic relationships remained a key element of the *kabuki* experience during this time, despite the intentions of the authorities. *Kabuki* during the Edo period consistently resisted the prescriptions of the Tokugawa government to some degree.[13] This reflected the citizenry that helped comprise the theatrical environment, who themselves were never able to perfectly reproduce the Neo-Confucian values promoted by the state. Although a number of restrictions and regulations would be imposed upon the stage throughout the Edo period, very few of these legal distinctions would have so radical a shift as the ban of women-led *kabuki* or the ban of *wakashu kabuki* as theatrical styles.

In 1868, following the successful revolution of the armies representing the Imperial Court against the Tokugawa government, Japan began to undergo rapid structural changes via interaction with the West. Nonetheless, it should be said that the Tokugawa government had made deals with the West previous to the Meiji Restoration, and also that there was an

---

[13] Varley, *Japanese Culture,* 187.

importation of Western thought to some degree during the Edo period through *rangaku* (Dutch

learning) scholarship. Alongside the interaction with Western ideas came massive reforms to

almost every element of society. One of these elements was, of course, the theatre. There were a

number of theatre reform movements, each of which attempted to reconcile existing Japanese

theatrical styles with newly imported values regarding gender and sex.

These reform movements operated alongside a project to create a more legitimate,

national version of the *kabuki* stage. *Kabuki* performance was considered to many foreign

diplomats to be more exciting and entertaining than existing high-art theatrical styles like *noh*.[14]

However, due to *kabuki's* low status within moralistic frameworks, substantial work had to be

done to renovate the image of the theatre in the eyes of the Japanese people before it could

become properly national. Famously, the Emperor attended the *kabuki* stage for the first time in

1887, marking the stage as legitimate "in the eyes of the state" and "[confirming] the status of

actors as cultural representatives of the nation, rather than social outcastes."[15]

However, during these reforms and rehabilitation projects, the *onnagata* was a consistent

problem in the creation of a legitimate, national *kabuki* stage. Maki Isaka identifies "roughly

speaking… three options" that were used "for legitimizing *kabuki*." [16] These were "modernizing,

Westernizing, or traditionalizing"[17] and notes that the first two options were ultimately failures.

However, during these attempts to reform and legitimize the *kabuki* stage, there was a brief

window when female-bodied *onnagata* existed alongside male-bodied *onnagata.* The most

famous of these female *onnagata* was arguably Ichikawa Kumehachi (1846?-1913), who studied

---

[14] Kano, *Acting like a Woman in Modern Japan* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 6.
[15] Kano, *Acting like a Woman in Modern Japan*, 7.
[16] Isaka, *Onnagata: A Labyrinth of Gendering in Kabuki Theatre*, 133.
[17] Isaka, *Onnagata: A Labyrinth of Gendering in Kabuki Theatre,* 133.

under the famous performer Ichikawa Danjūrō IX (1838-1912). Although these female *onnagata* received substantial critique themselves, some were successful in their own right and even authored didactic texts, just as Ayame had done over a hundred years ago. Although literature on these female *onnagata* is scarce, it is a topic that is receiving considerable attention today.

However, these female *onnagata* would not last. The male-bodied *onnagata* would, over time, succeed in being the dominant, and indeed only, form of legitimate *onnagata* on the stage. Debates at the time reflected the idea that the male *onnagata* was the only proper iteration of the *onnagata* both because of their male body, but also because of their tie to a tradition of *kabuki* performance that dated back hundreds of years. This was useful for establishing a history of the *kabuki* stage and, as this stage was newly national, a history for the nation-state as well. These male bodied *onnagata* remain today as the only *onnagata* performing on the national *kabuki* stage, the Kabuki-za in Tokyo.

An Overview of Deleuzian Concepts Used in this Project

Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) was a French poststructural philosopher, who once identified himself as a "pure metaphysician"[18] in a conversation with the poet-philosopher Arnaud Villani. To Villani, this statement was representative of the difficulty involved in "doing justice to complexity, to multiplicity," and "to singularity."[19] According to Joshua Ramey and Daniel Whistler, this "purity" of metaphysics that Deleuze stated was his concern as a philosopher, requires an "affective metaphysics" wherein "affects are liberated from regulation."[20] Accordingly, regulatory agents like reason must "no longer" be "pure," but rather must be

---

[18] Gilles Deleuze, "Responses to a Series of Questions," *Collapse* 3 (2007): 42.
[19] Arnaud Villani, "'I Feel I am a Pure Metaphysician': The Consequences of Deleuze's Affirmation," *Collapse 3* (2007): 52.
[20] Joshua Ramey and Daniel Whistler, "The Physics of Sense: Bruno, Schelling, Deleuze," in *Gilles Deleuze and Metaphysics,* ed. Alain Beaulieu, Edward Kazarian, and Julia Sushytska (London: Lexington Books, 2014), 94.

willing to "[mutate] and [contaminate themselves] in adventure."[21] As a result of this impurity of regulatory stability, there is an essential "emancipatory feeling of constructive power" that is generated once reason ceases to dictate that something must be "essentially X or essentially Y."[22]

This pure metaphysics is one that runs through Deleuze's work. He is not concerned with the identification of objects in a simplistic, stable sense, but rather as "assemblages" that are defined through the act of "becoming," which itself is a new form of "being" within a "plane of consistency" The "assemblage" is a combination of elements that is "combined" or "gathered" into a single, contextual form. One such assemblage could be a book, which is comprised of any number of constituent elements. These elements themselves are not static, but rather can be understood as constituting "lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories… also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification."[23] Each of these elements flow and change dynamically, thereby producing "phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture."[24] Put more simply, an assemblage is a dynamic entity, made of small parts, which themselves could be assemblages, that are constantly shifting in relation to affect and desire, and each of which creates senses and feelings in their environment, but which are grouped together, perhaps temporarily, to constitute a substantive collection of these parts. However, because the elements of the assemblage are unstable and, therefore, non-static, the assemblage itself inherits these traits. It is, as Deleuze says, "a multiplicity" with an ambiguous sense of "what the multiple entails" once the assemblage comes into being, or "becomes" substantive.[25] The assemblage is an organ, in that it is organized, but

---

[21] Ramey and Whistler, "The Physics of Sense: Bruno, Schelling, Deleuze," 94.
[22] Ramey and Whistler, "The Physics of Sense: Bruno, Schelling, Deleuze," 94.
[23] Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 2.
[24] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 3.
[25] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 4.

also is not a stable organ and "has a side facing a body without organs, which is continually dismantling the organism, causing asignifying particles or pure intensities."[26] The book, or the assemblage more broadly, constantly shifts its constituent parts and never settles on a stable unity. It therefore has no static or well-defined individuated identity, but rather only exists in relation to "other assemblages" and other "bodies without organs."[27]

This ontological state, which is defined through a lack of fixity or stability, is called "becoming" in Deleuzian metaphysics. An assemblage is constantly "becoming" and that constant process is the only state of "being" that can occur. In this context, the verb "being" is not referring to an object in stasis, nor necessarily an object in motion, but rather an object that is repeating a process of re-production and re-realization through the elemental shifts within the assemblage. In one example of this, Deleuze discusses a young boy named Hans who observes a horse.[28] Hans himself, it should be said, is "taken up in an assemblage" that is comprised of "his mother's bed, the paternal element, the house, the café across the street, the nearby warehouse, the street"[29] and other elements. The ways in which Hans experiences the horse are not representational, but rather regard the horse's "affect" on him.

Affect is an important concept to Deleuze and it represents a prepersonal received intensity that is produced in the body[30] when experiencing some stimulus and does not rely on previous experience or knowledge. If previous experience or knowledge is required as a referent to the production of a response, this is the realm of feeling or emotion.[31] Affect, however, comes

---

[26] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 4.
[27] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 4.
[28] The story of Hans and the horse comes out of Freud's 1909 paper "Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-year-old Boy."
[29] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 257.
[30] The body being quite abstracted here and not necessarily strictly the skin, bones, and muscles of an individual.
[31] Emotion being the expression of feeling

into being before such feeling occurs. As Eric Shouse argues, affect to Deleuze is "a moment of unformed and unstructured potential" that "cannot be fully realized in language and… is always prior to and/or outside of consciousness."[32] Thus, the affect of the horse that Hans experiences is much more primal than simply being moved or feeling fear at seeing the horse bound or gallop.

The affect of the horse is the primary consideration for Hans. Hans might intentionally aim to "endow his own elements with the relations of movement and rest, the affects, that would make it become horse, form and subjects aside."[33] If Hans were to successfully do this, rather than simply "imitating a horse, 'playing' horse, identifying with one, or even experiencing feelings of pity or sympathy"[34] for one, he would effectively "become horse." This new horse-assemblage of Hans would, while not seeking to duplicate or reproduce the horse assemblage, become a hybrid entity of Hans's elements imbued with the intensity and affect of the horse. This hybrid assemblage is one Deleuze terms the "becoming-horse of Hans."[35] Thus, becoming is a process by which the affect of one assemblage blends and blurs with the elements of another assemblage.[36] This "becoming" is also the default state of "being" within Deleuzian metaphysics. Although Hans could certainly intentionally seek to reproduce the intensities of the horse, the realization of the horse's affect within Hans's feelings and emotional displays is sufficient for a form of "becoming horse" to occur within Hans. However, there are forces that shape the ways in which flows operate within and between assemblages, thus shaping what type of becomings are likely to occur, and to what degree they occur.

---

[32] Eric Shouse, "Feeling, Emotion, Affect," *Journal of Media and Culture 8,* no. 6, accessed March 29, 2018, http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0512/03-shouse.php.
[33] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 258.
[34] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 258.
[35] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 258.
[36] Or even the affective intensities of one element of one assemblage blending and blurring into another element of the same assemblage.

The "plane of organization" is a system that operates to redirect, shape, and stop the flows and intensities of affect within, and between, assemblages. It is a system that operates on the assemblages, rather than a system that the assemblages necessarily exist within. It is also where state and public power flows through to assert particular ways of viewing reality and bringing things into "being." This plane acts via "images" of reality and "[designs] in the mind of man [sic]."[37] These "images," according to Claire Panet, represent "a whole organization which effectively trains thought to operate according to the norms of an established order." [38] This plane operates primarily to bring about "the development of forms and the formation of subjects"[39] and stands opposed to the "plane of consistency which is comprised only of movement, rest, and relationships. The plane of organization, therefore, is what prevents a system of entirely free, unbounded "becomings." Instead, the plane of organization encourages grouping and "organ-izing" of elements into assemblages that fit within the power structures operating on it. "Becomings" never cease, for they can never cease, but they can be encouraged or discouraged in particular directions and this is what the plane of organization does. This can be tyrannical, as in the case of a "becoming" that acts strongly against desires and lines of flight of particular constituent elements, but it is also necessary, to some degree or another, to prevent a complete lack of assembling that is brought as a result of undirected, chaotic "becomings."

Critiques of Deleuze and Justifying the Use of Deleuzian Models in Early Modern/Modern Japan

It would be inappropriate to consider applying this framework uncritically to a Japan thoroughly divorced from the late 20th century French context within which Deleuze wrote his

---

[37] Gilles Deleuze and Claire Panet, *Dialogues* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 91.
[38] Deleuze and Panet, *Dialogues*, 23.
[39] Deleuze and Panet, *Dialogues*, 91.

theories. As Gayatri Spivak famously criticized, poststructural theorists like Deleuze or Foucault, "[hide] an essentialist agenda" within their "postrepresentationalist vocabulary." [40] Indeed, although the aim of theorists like Deleuze is to enable a dynamic molecular, or ulterior, reading of molar assemblages, critics like Spivak often point out the flaws in their own universalizing models of philosophy as well as challenge terms that are conflated or not fully understood. For example, Spivak argues that Deleuze fails "to consider the relations between desire, power, and subjectivity" and this causes him to be "incapable of articulating a theory of interests," and this problem, alongside his "indifference to ideology," are issues that she perceives to be "striking, but consistent" in his work. [41] Spivak attacks French poststructural theorists for universalizing Other subjects and of doing epistemic damage to them in the process. She argues that Deleuze, in trying to avoid being seen as a philosopher who "represents" his topics of consideration, conflates "two senses of representation… representation as 'speaking for…' and representation as 're-presentation.'"[42]

Similar critiques of Deleuze's uniform treatment of complex subject positions are echoed by Rosi Braidotti, who writes that Deleuze has a "tendency to dilute metaphysical difference into a multiple and undifferentiated becoming."[43] Although Deleuze argues that the "becoming" subject is multifaceted and always sexually unique, writing that "there are as many sexes as there are terms in symbiosis,"[44] he also argues that, regardless of sexual configuration, the process of becoming is, in a sense, uniform. Becoming itself, to Deleuze, is a process within which one cannot avoid but "become woman" before any other steps occur. This is not due to an

---

[40] Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory,* ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia Press, 1994), 80.
[41] Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak," 68.
[42] Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak," 70.
[43] Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Malden: Polity Press, 2002), 77.
[44] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 242.

ontological state of "woman" that is necessarily static or recognizable, nor is it due to a process wherein the subject seeks to imitate "or even [transform] oneself" into a "woman."[45] Rather, because the process of "becoming" rejects "the norm, the law," and "the logos"[46] that is associated with the assemblage of the man, the necessary opposition to that construction is affiliated with the "woman." The rejection of logocentric models, necessarily, and perhaps provocatively, means to Deleuze that in order to "become" at all, and particularly to "become minor," one must necessarily "become woman" through the act of rejecting static, logocentric metaphysical constructions. This "becoming woman" is uniform and, to Braidotti, problematic, "because it suggests a symmetry between the sexes, which results in attributing the same psychic, conceptual, and deconstructive itineraries to both."[47] This uniformity of becoming, regardless of sexual status and irrespective of power dynamics, is one that "fails to take into account the historical and epistemological specificity of the female feminist standpoint."[48]

What both Spivak and Braidotti conclude is that, while "becoming" may be a productive metaphysics for "being," it is important to consider that "becoming" does not, and cannot, operate in a uniform way. The intensities of affect and the ways in which the lines of flight of desire manifest themselves cannot ever be identical between two subjects, which is also to say that they cannot ever be identical between two time periods or two cultures. There could be a theoretical culture or time period in which logocentric models were associated with femininity and, in such a culture, there would be no need to "become woman" in any iteration of "becoming minor." Likewise, if such a culture manifested a rejection of oppositional binaries, or emphasized multiple gender configurations outside of oppositional binaries, the connection of "becoming" to

---

[45] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 275.
[46] Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming,* 78.
[47] Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming,* 81.
[48] Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming,* 82.

the "woman" would become even more troubled than it already is. This is not to suggest that the problem of Deleuze's uniform sense of "becoming" is strictly that of vocabulary, but rather that it is impossible to paint a simple picture, or a legible guidebook, to the process of manifestation and coming into being that occurs through "becoming" anything at all.

The universalizing process of "becoming" found in Deleuze's writing, specifically through the medium of the "woman" has also attracted feminist critique as to the role of the woman as a tool in that process. Although the "woman" is only ever accessed through minor intensities and not through the female body, critics such as Alice Jardine wonder whether the process might reproduce patriarchal systems of oppression. She argues that, since Deleuze avers that any becoming must "'become woman' first," that it would follow that the "woman" who is used in the process is also "the first to disappear."[49] She argues that Deleuze unwittingly reproduces "a new variation of an old allegory for the process of women becoming obsolete."[50] Likewise, according to Jardine, the "woman" in question is "never a subject" in Deleuze's arguments, but rather "a limit" and "border of and for Man."[51] With the assumed default of male in any universalizing discourse of "becoming," the "becoming woman" necessarily implies that it is primarily a man who undergoes this transformation. What is more, Jardine points out that, while Deleuze does not specifically seek to speak of men and women "as sexual entities" but rather as processes of "molecular becoming" and "birth,"[52] he nonetheless adheres to "a series of unanalyzed stereotypes"[53] in his discussions of sexuality. Similar critiques are levied by Elizabeth Grosz, who argues that the use of "becoming woman" as a "stepping stone" that one

---

[49] Alice Jardine, *Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 217.
[50] Jardine, *Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity,* 217.
[51] Jardine, *Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity,* 217.
[52] Deleuze and Panet, *Dialogues,* 102.
[53] Jardine, *Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity,* 216.

must pass over when progressing through kinds of becomings "must be viewed with great suspicion" as this positionality of the "woman" as a tool used to obtain a larger, universal freedom is similar to other arguments which have "been used to tie women to struggles that in fact have very little to do with them," or which advocate for a generic form of humanity that is "in fact a projection or representation of men's specific fantasies of what it is to be human."[54]

As these varied critiques show, when applying Deleuze to a culture as distinct and a time as foreign as Japan's early modern period, it is vital to not simply affix Deleuze's theories uncritically onto the subject matter. As Spivak shows, it is important to not "re-present" the existing words and language of the subject within a new context that does them epistemic harm. Additionally, it is important to not attempt to "represent," or replace, the voices and opinions of those being discussed. Although the subject, in this context, is long dead and cannot object, subsuming them totally within a Western philosophical context will, regardless, damage them and support existing institutional structures. As Spivak argues, this can reinforce problematic structures and consolidate, albeit indirectly, "the international division of labor"[55] that currently favors the global north at the expense of the global south.

Likewise, it is vital to avoid stereotype and to avoid erasure when utilizing Deleuze's universalizing discourses. The concept of "becoming woman" as a necessary step to "becoming" at all is perhaps foundationally flawed and distinct temporal cultures can highlight the limitations of this understanding. Although some feminists, such as Hannah Stark have argued that the "becoming woman" might be "the most useful [concept] for feminist theory" because it "invites us to think about processes rather than static states" and, thereby, provides "a way out of

---

[54] Elizabeth Grosz, "A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics," in *Gilles Deleuze and the Theatre of Philosophy,* ed. Constantin Boundas and Dorothea Olkowski (New York: Routledge, 2018), 254.
[55] Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak," 69.

essentialism,"[56] there are more complex and nuanced ways to approach "becoming" that are rooted in the specificity of particular cultural instances and gender dynamics. This would allow a more nuanced approach than the simplistic "becoming woman" would permit.

It is important to, therefore, avoid a simplistic or naïve "Deleuzian *onnagata.*" Rather, Deleuze's theories ought to be inflected, localized, and made specific through adaptation. The processes of "becoming" itself ought to be made unique through simultaneous reading of both Deleuzian theories and contemporary *kabuki* theories. The product, ideally, ought to valorize no particular way of understanding, nor make either method of understanding dominant or subservient. Rather, the interplay between multiple forms of theorization should be the intended goal and, through this interplay, it should be possible to avoid simply "re-presenting" *kabuki* within Deleuze as well as to avoid "representing" the words and arguments of the subjects being considered for the sake of Deleuze. Valerie Henitiuk provides an example of this sort of representational damage when applying modern labels to Murasaki Shikibu. She argues that "any attempt to apply a term such as 'feminist' to author Murasaki Shikibu, or to assume that she had in mind a critique of specifically what is today called 'patriarchal oppression'" is "naively anachronistic."[57]

Just as one should avoid the construction of the "feminist Murasaki Shikibu," one should also avoid simplistic, uniform narratives of the "becoming-woman *onnagata.*" Narratives such as this may be tempting for gender performance on the stage. However, the application of universalized oppositional binaries such as "logos=man" and "minor=woman" to distinct times and cultures washes away or silences unique gender configurations, such as that of the *wakashu*.

---

[56] Hannah Stark, *Feminist Theory After Deleuze* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 37.
[57] Valerie Henitiuk, "Going to Bed with Waley: How Murasaki Shikibu Does and Does Not Become World Literature," *Comparative Literature Studies* 45, no. 1 (2008): 55-56.

Even terminology like "gender," "performance," and "performative" belie a particularly Western, contemporary, poststructural approach to the topics at hand.

To avoid this, and to avoid the discursive baggage of the Western, "theatrical performance" or the Western "gender performative," it is important to complicate and historicize not just the terms, but the ways the terms differ in their interrelations between one another. For example, within contemporary Western philosophy, there is a clear distinction between the "performative" and the "theatrical performance." This difference realizes both concepts as being related, as they each produce an intensity, but emphasizes that each are distinct because the performative creates and reproduces a series of effects, whereas the theatrical performance merely seeks to reproduce a role that is given. However, this difference is artificial and early modern Japan can be useful in highlighting this artificiality. Thus, Deleuzian concepts can be influenced by these distinct early modern Japanese theories, rather than replacing or simply supplementing them.

<center>**Chapter Two**</center>

<center>**<u>A Cartography of Edges: Locating the Androgynous *Wakashu Onnagata*</u>**</center>

In *Ayamegusa,* Yoshizawa Ayame theorized that, in order to take the "inner emotions" of women into their heart, and therefore their performance, an *onnagata* must never transition gender roles once they have decided to be an *onnagata.* The reason for this was because, according to Ayame, a *hon no onna* (real woman) is one that acknowledges and accepts her fate as a woman: namely her "inability to become a man" in any capacity when dissatisfied with her lot in life.[58] Likewise, for Ayame, an *onnagata* must similarly resign themselves to their own fate as an *onnagata* and never cross over to the realm of the *tachiyaku*, for to do so was a sign of the actor's ability falling into ruination. What Ayame is suggesting here is quite profound and also, for its time, a radical departure from what had preceded it. As explained in *Ayamegusa*, the world of the stage sources its artistic potential from that of the gender binary off the stage. In fact, it is impossible to make a distinction between the two because, if one were to attempt to do so, the artistry of the theatre itself would collapse. Gendered performativity, defined by the *hon no onna*, is the origin of *onnagata* performance to Ayame and the rules of society and ideas of innate universal law similarly dictate the realm of performance potential on the stage. As a result, the *onnagata* proposed in *Ayamegusa* is simultaneously distinct from the *hon no onna*, yet also defined, and restricted, by them. For Ayame, the *onnagata's* model was found within the "real woman" and it is from this that the *onnagata* gains both the origin of their *gei* (artistry) as well as their capability to innovate and inspire.

---

[58] "*Ayamegusa,*" in *Kabuki jūhachiban shū,* vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei,* ed. Gunji Masakatsu (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1968), 320.

<center>22</center>

Ayame's 1776 text was highly influential both at its time and in setting the stage for the

onnagata to come, but it was also a radical shift. It was, as Maki Isaka argues, "one of the most

important and influential *onnagata* treatises"[59] in history and the author was even called both a

genuine woman and simply *onna* (woman) rather than *onnagata* by contemporaries.[60] Not only

did it influence performers in the centuries following its authorship, it was revolutionary in

shifting the *onnagata* away from the androgynous roots that followed the ban of female bodies

on the stage. To Ayame, someone who embraced androgyny or attempted to flit, or exist,

between the binaries of man and woman, could never be a woman and, therefore, could never be

a successful *onnagata.* Grounding oneself off-stage, at least theoretically,[61] in the "woman" side

of the masculine/feminine binary and innovating from that space on-stage is the location of

productive potential for Ayame and the kind of *onnagata* that *Ayamegusa* promotes.

Still, although Ayame and *Ayamegusa* are of paramount import in studying the history of

kabuki and its shifts, there was a world of androgynous *onnagata* before *Ayamegusa* that is also

of incredible import. To the androgynous performer, and their audience, it was in the neutral

sexuality outside of this binary, or even in an alternative gender categorization defined within the

negative space left by it,[62] that allowed the *wakashu* to successfully create a particular *gei* of

women on-stage that was not only not situated in the *hon no onna,* but actively had no interest in

being located alongside of it. With this in mind, it is useful to use the framework of Deleuze's

Body Without Organs, the plane of organization, and the plane of consistency to imagine the

---

[59] Isaka, *Onnagata: A Labyrinth of Gendering in Kabuki Theatre*, 37.
[60] Maki Morinaga, "The Gender of the Onnagata as the Imitating Imitated: Its Historicity, Performativity, and Involvement in the Circulation of Femininity," *positions: east asia cultures critique* 10, no. 2 (2002): 265.
[61] Ayame married and had several children.
[62] Although, resistance to this categorization exists because the *wakashu* was, at least in theory, a temporally locked state of being. See Gregory Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire: Male-male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600-1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 36.

ways that the productive potential of the *onnagata* on-stage is rooted in the universe off-stage and how these different roots establish varied "small [plots] of land" from which to "bring forth continuous intensities" on the stage.[63] With this framework, it is possible to imagine the various performance potentials of the androgynous *onnagata* that preceded *Ayamegusa*, as well as the *hon no onna* based *onnagata* that Ayame proposed. Thereby, through a Deleuzian poststructural analysis, it is feasible to destabilize contemporary understandings of how the *onnagata* successfully performed gender and understand the blurred lines between the performed world on-stage and the performative world off it.

Before *Ayamegusa* and its particular image of the *onnagata*, there was the androgynous *onnagata*. A descendent of the *wakashu* (young boy) aesthetic, this form of *onnagata* was common in the years following the ban of women on the stage. There were a number of ways to describe this androgynous performer and there was variability in particular iterations of androgynous performance. One instance of these was the *futanarihira.* The *futanarihira* was, as Imao Tetsuya puts it, an individual who "produced a particular neutered sexual charm" on the stage and whose performance "unified the two extremities of man and woman."[64] The term itself is a pun based on Ariwara no Narihira, the beautiful poet-paragon of premodern Japan, and the term *futanari* (intersexual). Although, it should be said, that the *futanarihira* itself was a part of a larger reimagining of Ariwara no Narihira on-stage and represented a "shift from the 'charming Ariwara no Narihira' to the 'beautiful Ariwara no Narihira'" during this time period.[65] The *futanarihira* and the *wakashu* were far from the first of these kinds of feminized, beautifully androgynous males in Japan. For example, in the medieval period, there was the *chigo,* a young

---

[63] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 161.

[64] Imao Tetsuya, *Henshin no shisō: Nihon engeki ni okeru engi no ronri* (Tokyo: Hōsei Daigaku Shuppankyoku, 1970), 146.

[65] Hattori Yukio, *Kabuki seiritsu no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Kazama shobō, 1989), 430.

boy with beautiful features who would train with priests in exchange for sexual service. These young boys would frequently be "revealed to have been an avatar of a bodhisattva" and were often portrayed in literature as having a certain divinity.[66] Unlike the *chigo,* the Edo androgynous male was not made explicitly divine in origin and had no connection to Buddhist practice. Instead, they were decidedly secular in nature and existed, like Narihira himself, as a sexual "male" that had a gender that "[floated] between female and male."[67]

The male sex of the androgynous performer was always unambiguous, even as the gender performance of the androgynous male was difficult to pin down. Despite the origin of the word being rooted in intersexuality and intersexuals being demonized in religious screeds as far back as the late twelfth century,[68] the Edo androgynous performer seemed free of religious persecution or judgment and did not represent any sort of ambiguity sexually. In one seventeenth century poem by Nakarai Bokuyō, for example, the author comments that the "very form" of a *futanarihira* is one that causes doubt "whether or not they are female"[69] upon viewing their body, yet they are ultimately male sexually. That said, as this poem suggests, despite the fact that their sex was not in any way indeterminate, the body of the androgynous *onnagata* in this period was still quite important. As the Edo scholar Mitamura Engyo (1870-1952) argued in his 1928 *Shibai fūzoku*, this more androgynous *onnagata* beauty was one that "had particular sexual characteristics," and the association of these sexual characteristics was so strong that, "rather than a slim waist being something that one would anticipate seeing in a woman, one would instead expect to see it in a young boy."[70] Thus, female sexual phenotyping was important for

---

[66] Paul Atkins, "*Chigo* in the Medieval Japanese Imagination," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 67, no. 3 (2008): 947.
[67] Isaka, *Onnagata: A Labyrinth of Gendering in Kabuki Theatre,* 253.
[68] Isaka, *Onnagata: A Labyrinth of Gendering in Kabuki Theatre,* 254.
[69] *Kyōka taikan,* vol. 1, ed. *Kyōka taikan kankōkai* (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1983), 351.
[70] Mitamura Engyo, *Mitamura Engyo zenshū*, vol. 12 (Tokyo: Chūo kōronsha, 1976): 359.

establishing androgynous beauty while, paradoxically, male genitalia (and the societal privileges associated with it) was a prerequisite for access to androgyny in the first place. As Imao puts it, this androgynous aesthetic that Ayamegusa would come to reject was one that "existed as a neutral sex that appeared to not be male, while also being male."[71] This ambiguity allowed substantial freedom on-stage and androgynous actors could perform *onnagata* roles as well as *wakashugata* (young boy roles) and *tachiyaku* (male roles). Before considering how the Body without Organs or any of the planes that comprise or structure it can create a space for the androgynous *onnagata* to succeed as performers, it is first important to consider the role of gender and sex in the construction of the androgynous *onnagata* itself. Only after attempting to locate the gender of the androgynous *onnagata*, is it possible to consider how this gendered ambiguity could produce successful performances on the stage.

It is important to note that the androgynous *wakashu* was not necessarily gendered as masculine and was rather distinguished primarily as being simultaneously either outside of, or askew from, the masculine/feminine gender binary. This was a state that the androgynous performer accomplished vis-à-vis hybridization from the edges of that binary. *Wakashu onnagata* were unavoidably queer. Rather than being located at the point of hybridity between male and female sexes, or masculine and feminine genders, they were located along the edges of male sex and feminine gender, yet also defined through exclusion from strict binaries. Although Lee Edelman locates "queer" in a similar negative space as part of a larger challenge to futurity and contemporary Western temporalities, it can be helpful to nonetheless think of the *wakashu* as being a simultaneous apolitical "refusal… of every" major "substantialization of identity, which

---

[71] Imao, *Henshin no shisō: Nihon engeki ni okeru engi no ronri,* 147.

is always oppositionally defined."[72] This refusal of oppositionally defined identity could

manifest itself in a number of ways, including a hybridization of gendered clothing and behavior.

It is telling that, even contemporarily, prints exist that have been mistaken for depicting

courtesans, which were eventually revealed to be depicting *wakashu* instead. In one example, a

print from 1685 had "for years been known as the portrait of a *yūjo* (courtesan)"[73] only to later be

identified as a *wakashu* on-stage, due to the presence of a sword and other gender markers. This

refusal of oppositional identity is accomplished through its rejection of masculine gender norms

and female sex and an assimilationist embrace of those identities it hybridizes within the

unification of male sex and some feminine gender stereotypes.

The process of identification through difference and hybridity is important to

understanding the androgynous *onnagata*. Within any process of "identification as," there are

also parallel processes of "identification as not" and "identification as like." As Eve Sedgwick

argues, identifying, or being identified, as part of a structure is a process that necessitates both

"multiple processes of identifying with" that structure, but also processes of identifying "as

against" other structures.[74] As a result, the adoption of feminine gender norms cannot be

wholesale for the androgynous *onnagata* and, instead, there necessarily must be identifications

"like" the feminine. This is what is easily visible in any brief overview of the literature of the

wakashu onnagata. In *Nanshoku ōkagami,* for example, there are several descriptions of

onnagata who have typically feminine gendered traits, but are denied outright femininity and,

instead, are defined through their male sexuality. The *onnagata* Fujita Minanojō, for example, is

one such individual. Like a woman, he is described as having a face that, when framed by his

---

[72] Lee Edelman, *The Future is Kid's Stuff* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 4.
[73] James Michener, *The Floating World* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1983), 26-27.
[74] Eve Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008): 61.

wig on-stage, was "no different from the moon appearing between the rifts of the clouds."[75]

Meanwhile, his face was like that of "a lotus blossom" and his demeanor "refined and gentle."[76]

Moreover, when he was on-stage, he perfectly captured the innocent demeanor of "a palace girl,"

still naïve, "to whom men were a rarity."[77] He is not alone in holding these feminine-coded

descriptors of beauty. In another instance from *Nanshoku ōkagami*, another *onnagata* named

Matsushima Han'ya was described as being superior to his colleagues, being "sweet like the

diving girls of places such as Matsushima or Ojima, tender-hearted, skilled at sake serving, and

writing love letters."[78] He is also described as being extremely talented at the art of male-male

sexual intercourse. Feminine beauty, specifically of a fleeting nature like that of flowers, is the

most common way of describing these sorts of androgynous *onnagata*. In one seventeenth

century poem by Asai Ryōi, for example, the feminine "beauty" of the *wakashu onnagata* was so

intense that it demanded the privilege of being placed at the center of the world.[79] Bashō reflects

this ambiguity of feminine "beauty" and *wakashu* difference as well, writing a poem that ends

with "is it a *wakashu* or a woman?"[80] Yet, despite these clear feminine gender descriptions, there

was a rejection of the idea of gendered traits like these being exclusively, or even predominantly,

female or even feminine. As Jennifer Robertson argues, in Japan historically, and in *kabuki*

specifically, "neither femininity nor masculinity [have] been deemed the exclusive province of

either female or male bodies."[81] However, as the *wakashu* aesthetic shows, traits coded as

---

[75] Ihara Saikaku, "Nanshoku ōkagami" in *Ihara Saikakushū* 2, vol. 67 of *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū*, ed. Matsuda Osamu, Munemasa Isō, and Teruoka Yasutaka (Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1996): 561.

[76] Saikaku, "*Nanshoku ōkagami*" in *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 67, 562.

[77] Saikaku, "*Nanshoku ōkagami*" in *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 67, 562.

[78] Saikaku, "*Nanshoku ōkagami*" in *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 67, 530.

[79] As quoted in Robin Gill, *Furu kyōka goshōnōkudasai. Manyōshū made kubigari ni ittekimashita* (Paraverse Press: 2017), 375.

[80] *Bashō kushū,* vol. 45 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei,* ed. Ōtani Tokuzō and Nakamura Shunjō (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1962), 39.

[81] Jennifer Robertson, *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 51.

feminine were not the exclusive domain of femininity in pre-Ayame *onnagata* performance. As such, though these traits were coded with feminine language, they did not carry any hint of female or feminine identity for the individual they described. Though there were those who wished Minanojō was a woman, this sentiment is excoriated as being "beyond the pale" and being "especially regrettable for such a rare *wakashu* beauty."[82] Indeed, the idea of the *wakashu* being distinct from the sexual binary, yet also comprised from it, is not exclusive to Saikaku's work. In line with Imao's claim that the androgynous beauty had a certain "neuter sexual charm" that was attractive to "both sexes"[83] the *Wakashu-asobi kyara no makura* writes the *wakashu* as a distinct object of attraction of both men and women, who had to "compete" with one another "for [their] affections." [84]

Within the same text, the *wakashu* is given further features as well that extract it from the masculine/feminine gender binary, but seek to emphasize its neutral charm. As Joshua Mostow shows, the *wakashu* were portrayed distinctly from men and women in sexual art. Their "faces register no emotion" in the piece, but rather maintain an enigmatic, "'archaic smile'" in its place.[85] Although society was often complicit with this understanding of the *wakashu* as being distinct from, yet part of, the existing gender binary, there was also resistance to this as well. One contemporary poem wonders if the androgynous *wakashu onnagata* who "are mistaken for women" might be better "considered to be a product of their cosmetics."[86] Meanwhile, another contemporary author described their ambiguity as that which "deceived humans, like a trick from

[82] Saikaku, "Nanshoku ōkagami" in *Shinpen Nohon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 67, 561.
[83] Imao, *Henshin no shisō: Nihon engeki ni okeru engi no ronri,* 147.
[84] Joshua Mostow, "The Gender of the *Wakashu* and the Grammar of Desire," in *Gender and Power in the Japanese Visual Field,* ed. Joshua Mostow, Norman Bryson, and Maribeth Graybill (University of Hawai'i Press, 2003): 60.
[85] Joshua Mostow, "The Gender of the *Wakashu* and the Grammar of Desire," 57.
[86] As quoted in Gill, *Furu kyōka goshōnōkudasai. Manyōshū made kubigari ni ittekimashita*, 376.

some kind of *bakemono* (monster)."[87] Neoconfucian outlooks tended to be much harsher on the idea of the androgynous *onnagata,* but this is unsurprising given the general stance of Neoconfucian writing on *kabuki* more broadly.

What the androgynous *onnagata* represents, therefore, within a Deleuzian framework, is an assemblage that locates its "plot of land" in an intentionally ambiguous position, which itself is located relative to other plots of land. The ambiguity of that position lends itself expressive potential on-stage. Put another way, the androgynous *onnagata's* assemblage on the plane of consistency is one that is constantly shifting in position, precisely because this position is defined relative to other assemblages. The fact that this position is constantly shifting is, paradoxically, an unchanging feature. Moreover, to the androgynous performer and their audience (or even their critic), it is the entire point of their performance. The molar form of these other assemblages, specifically those of the masculine and the feminine, inform those structures (societal, governmental) that operate via the plane of organization to shape the dynamic assemblage of the androgynous performer. As the masculine changes and the feminine changes, the position of the androgynous also changes.

However, that is not to say that there is no structure to the androgynous. As Saikaku's writing suggests, a *wakashu onnagata* is not one who should ever be a woman, nor is such an *onnagata* one that anyone else should desire to be a woman. The *wakashu onnagata* is one who should be a *wakashu.* However, although it is not acceptable for the *wakashu* to be a woman, it is certainly acceptable, or even ideal, for a performer like this to be "like" a woman or have sex "like" a man. Therefore, the site from which on-stage "becomings" occur for the androgynous

---

[87] As quoted in Yasuda Noriko, "*Nagoya shibai no keiseiki. 'Biyōkejōjishi' no ginmi o tōshite,*" *Gifu shotoku gakuen daigaku kokugo kokubungaku* 25 (2006), 5-6.

onnagata is one that is defined through gesture and action based on ideas of approximation. It is one that recognizes that the idea of an "inner sex or essence or psychic gender core"[88] is, as Judith Butler argues, illusory in nature. Putting this concept into Deleuzian terms, Laura Cull argues that binary categories are "ideal and transcendent" and that "actual bodies are always a mixture of tendencies," including "varying degrees of sedimented gender identity and mobile transgenderings."[89] Aware of this, the androgynous *onnagata* is one that gestures towards being "like" the sex of a man and "like" the genders within the binary, but is aware of their limitations to "be" these genders. Exemplary androgynous *onnagata,* as often appear in fiction, do not simply perform gender while remaining androgynous, but rather they excel at it. Likewise, they do not simply perform male sex while remaining androgynous, but do so in such an exemplary fashion that they could "end a life with [sexual] pleasure."[90]

Androgynous *onnagata* exemplars are hyperbolic idealizations of the assemblages they are approximating, but simultaneously they never seek to reach these assemblages. They position themselves instead in the asymptotic process of "becoming" these assemblages. Although the idealistic molar assemblages of masculine and feminine, which of course are constantly shifting at the molecular level, shape the directions that the desire of the androgynous performer takes, and therefore also the lines of flight (and their asymptotes), the androgynous assemblage is still identifiable and productive on-stage precisely because these lines of flight are always towards approximations. Exemplary *onnagata* like Minanojō are performers that people, wrongfully,

---

[88] Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," in *Inside/Out. Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories,* ed. Diana Fuss (London, Routledge, 1991): 28.

[89] Laura Cull, *Theatres of Immanence: Deleuze and the Ethics of Performance* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 19.

[90] Saikaku, "Nanshoku ōkagami" in *Shinpen Nohon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 67, 530.

desire to be a woman, but whose explicit androgynous performing talent lies in creating that desire, rather than excelling at being a woman.

The asymptote gives the suggestion of a desire to reach the destination, but the line of flight itself will never reach its final destination. The becomings along the way are the origin of exemplary performance. As a result, the androgynous *onnagata* is in a constant process of "extricating itself from the plane of organization" operating via societal gender norms and is also constantly breaking down or changing "assemblages or microassemblages"[91] in order to accomplish this extraction. They are cognizant of their own "becoming male" and their "becoming feminine" and seek primarily to emphasize these becomings to attain success. Success, in this instance, is an avoidance of fixed gender identification. This is a goal that scholars have witnessed in contemporary Japanese dances like *butō*,[92] but also existed as a fundamental part of the androgynous *onnagata* performance. Desire, to these performers, is found in the need to seek processes of hybridization along the edges between the gender binary, and the lines of flight that are produced from these desires are realized through approximated, gendered gestures. It is for this reason that the line between the on-stage and off-stage performance is blurred. The stage, due to its characters and costumes, which always approximate reality and never represent it, is a healthy location for "becomings" to manifest. However, for those who can successfully create the particular "not-quite-male, not-quite-feminine" *onnagata* performance on-stage, the desires and lines of flight will also, unavoidably, manifest themselves off-stage. What is more, hybridity between gender norms is a not a null space, but rather one with considerable texture within it. An androgynous performer may be more productive at

---

[91] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 270.
[92] Cull, *Theatres of Immanence: Deleuze and the Ethics of Performance,* 113.

certain roles, like the *onnagata,* than others, depending on the trajectory of their particular lines of flight. It is for this reason that authors like Saikaku spend so much time dedicated to the off-stage lives of these androgynous performers. The shape of the lives, desires, and "becomings" of a performer off-stage necessarily inform their ability to play particular roles on-stage (and vice versa). The stage is a porous entity as a result and success is as much a consequence of one's "self" as it is of rehearsal or the contemplation of roles.

However, all of this is not to say that what the androgynous *onnagata* does on-stage is somehow a result purely of skilled, learned performance. Rather, as Cull argues, the body is one that has "different and differing amounts of biological determination and genetic creation."[93] Natural ability is made explicit in the character of Itō Kodaifu, for example, who is described as being an *onozukara no wakaonnagata* (natural *wakashu onnagata*) due to, among other things, "the peaceful demeanor he was born with" and his "graceful voice."[94] It would seem that inclination towards androgynous *onnagata* performance was, just as it would come to be in *Ayamegusa,* something that is located naturally in the being of the performer. Likewise, it is strictly within the realm of the sexually male individual, and only to those inclined through some blessing of nature, to be able to overcome that categorical maleness and escape to a realm defined through asymptotic lines of flight between, and towards, genders. That this natural ability manifests off-stage, and indeed even before the actor begins to train for the stage, breaks down and hybridizes the lines between the world on-stage and off. The assemblage of the "character on-stage" in the various roles it takes is necessarily constantly being broken down on a molecular level with elements from the actor's off-stage reality and history. This is not only

---

[93] Cull, *Theatres of Immanence: Deleuze and the Ethics of Performance,* 19.
[94] Saikaku, "Nanshoku ōkagami" in *Shinpen Nohon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 67, 492.

important for the performer on-stage to be successful, but also mandatory for the performer to be exemplary.

As the location of desire in lived off-stage experience is of equal, if not greater, import for success in on-stage performance, it is no surprise that descriptions of the androgynous *onnagata* in their off-stage lives feature so prominently in androgynous *onnagata* stories. Saikaku, for example, describes the life off-stage of Han'ya and, indeed, the bulk of the chapter of *Nanshoku ōkagami* dedicated to him focuses on these off-stage events. His role on-stage is mentioned briefly, however. He was able to accomplish innovations in the world of theatre fashion through his adoption of a light yellow, rather than the more standard violet cap that most *wakashu* wore. [95] Additionally, Saikaku makes clear that Han'ya put "deep thought into his art, even making lines like 'um, hello there' quite pleasurable."[96] However, Saikaku spends the bulk of the text instead discussing how exemplary Han'ya is as an *onnagata* and how his neutral beauty is one that drives his audience mad. In the primary example given by the text, drawing on tropes of *shinjū* (signs of love), an audience member interrupts his performance to leap upon the stage and cut his finger off, presenting it as a token of affection. Ultimately, the two meet after the show and exchange *sake* cups, but never consummate their relationship sexually. As a parting gift, Han'ya gives his would-be lover two symbols of his positionality in regards to gender and the worlds on and off the stage that he exists between. Namely, he gives him a "light yellow-lined satin kimono" and a luscious *wakizashi* "created by the famed swordsmith Kanemitsu."[97] The kimono, with its light yellow coloring, is part of his key innovation on the stage, and a not-quite-feminine sign of his performing skill. Meanwhile, the sword is a masculine symbol and

---

[95] Saikaku, "Nanshoku ōkagami" in *Shinpen Nohon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 67, 531.
[96] Saikaku, "Nanshoku ōkagami" in *Shinpen Nohon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 67, 532.
[97] Saikaku, "Nanshoku ōkagami" in *Shinpen Nohon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 67, 534.

would have limited role on-stage for an *onnagata,* but is a substantial symbol of status for a male living in the world off-stage. Ultimately, after receiving these tokens meant to represent Han'ya mimetically, the admirer is forced to return to his home in Tosa and fills a diary with his yearning for Han'ya.

It is telling that this admirer is enraptured not by Han'ya's femininity, but rather his approximation of femininity. Saikaku makes it explicit that the admirer becomes driven by love through Han'ya's skilled 'not quite' approximation. He sees the shape of Han'ya's *onnagata* hair combs in the shape of the moon, [98] seeks to hear his feminine, melodic, yet ultimately androgynous *wakashu* voice in the first warblings of the new year, [99] and is reminded, as he passes the Mushiake Inlet, of the feminine love poems of the Princess Asukai, which were similar to the style of poetry Han'ya used as patterning for his colored paper and fans. [100] Yet, despite all of these markers of femininity or feminine-androgyny, the man from Tosa ultimately has no desire for women of any kind. He lacks interest even in exceedingly sexually feminine women, as the thought of spending time with "even someone with a sultry female form… made his hair stand on end."[101] Ultimately, the man is driven mad with sorrowful lust, unable to satiate himself with any master of femininity, and kills himself with Han'ya's blade.

This story of the man from Tosa highlights a particular Deleuzian concept regarding desire. Specifically, just as Deleuze and Guattari argue that the concept of the "drug" can be made more broad and even include religion,[102] it is conceivable to imagine this admirer's erotic love for Han'ya in a similar fashion. Just as with a drug, the love for Han'ya allows "the

---

[98] Saikaku, "Nanshoku ōkagami" in *Shinpen Nohon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 67, 535.
[99] Saikaku, "Nanshoku ōkagami" in *Shinpen Nohon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 67, 536.
[100] Saikaku, "Nanshoku ōkagami" in *Shinpen Nohon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 67, 536.
[101] Saikaku, "Nanshoku ōkagami" in *Shinpen Nohon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 67, 536.
[102] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 281.

imperceptible to be perceived," through mimesis, and forces "desire" into "the perception and the perceived."[103] Also, temporality is shifted, although not in regard to "speed and modifications of speed" as Deleuze and Guattari argue all drugs do.[104] Instead, the molecularization of temporality is much more intense than a simple slowing down or speeding up of experience. Simply by remembering a poem or seeing a comb that reminds him of Han'ya, time is reconstructed into a "queer relationality" through the experience of a "present that is… squarely in the past."[105] The past "becomes" the present and this relationality causes pain through the resulting anticipation of a future that will never arrive. Likewise, the way that the man perceives is shifted as well and "made molecular," in a similar way to the assemblage of the "drug" that Deleuze and Guattari's discuss. The desire of this man for this asymptotic *wakashu onnagata* bleeds into his surroundings, with symbols of feminine androgynous beauty, like the comb, "becoming Han'ya," or poems like that of Asukai, "becoming androgynous" through association. Han'ya's androgynous gender creates "mobile transgenderings"[106] not just within his own life, but through the affect left of Han'ya within the mind of the man of Tosa's, also in this perceived world.

The androgynous *onnagata,* therefore, was one that existed on the plane of consistency as a near native. These were individuals who were defined through their movements and gestures towards genders and gender identities, just as much as they were by their proximity to sexual phenotypes and natural inclinations. Indeed, they were not beholden to their roles and could just as easily transition to *wakashugata* or *tachiyaku* depending on their inclinations and desires.

---

[103] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 282.
[104] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 282.
[105] José Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There for Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 1983), 6.
[106] Cull, *Theatres of Immanence: Deleuze and the Ethics of Performance,* 19.

They were queer individuals who not only existed in spaces left behind by, and in between, idealistic societal binaries, but also whose affect, and whose memory, queered the world around them. Their desires were found exclusively in movements and lines of flight produced from the spaces that came out of the friction caused between opposed organizational forces, rather than from the act of reproducing the assemblages that come into being vis-à-vis these systems of organization. Like drugs, romance with them could make their imperceptible qualities perceptible and bring new systems of temporality into being for men, women, and other *wakashu* alike. All of this would change with the transition in *Ayamegusa,* which located success on-stage in a less abstract place, focusing on situating the performer within the gender binary, rather than outside of, or between, it. Still, elements of hybridity and maleness as a natural source for performance potential would remain as key elements moving forward, even as the performative origin of performance itself shifted towards the *hon no onna.*

Yoshizawa Ayame shifted the narrative considerably when it came to the location of performative potential for the *onnagata.* Dissatisfied with the state of the androgynous *wakashu onnagata*, Ayame sought to resolve the friction between the *onnagata's* male sex (and associated masculine traits) and the performed female gender on-stage, rather than revel in the friction created between these two concepts. To do so, Ayame decided to change the point of productive potential and, thereby, relocate the "small plot of land" [107] from which to produce lines of flight on-stage. Ayame also sought to conflate the performance of "woman" on-stage with the performative gender of the "real woman" that existed off-stage. Through the use of specific models of *gei*, the explication of various forces operating in the plane of organization off-stage, as well as a recontextualization of traits found in the *wakashu onnagata* theatre, Ayame was

---

[107] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 161.

successful in relocating the site of productive potential from which to produce gender

performance on-stage and, thereby, reconstitute new systems of organization that would lead to a

reformulation of the assemblage of the *onnagata* during the Genroku period (1688-1704).

Ayame uses very specific models of *gei* in *Ayamegusa* to resettle the *onnagata's*

performance in firmly new territory. The most prominent example of this is one line wherein

Ayame argues that "an *onnagata* who is unsuccessful while they are an *onnagata* and thinks that

they may fix this lack of success by becoming a *tachiyaku* is one whose *gei* has turned to

dust."[108] To Ayame, the evidence of the failure of this *onnagata* to establish their artistic

potential is not found purely in their failure to compel audiences as an *onnagata* on-stage. To

Ayame, this is a side effect, rather than the root cause of the problem. The loss of capability to

produce *gei* was instead because these failed *onnagata* insufficiently blurred their on-stage

performance with the realm of off-stage performative gender norms. Ayame argues that just as a

"real woman" is unable to "become a man when she thinks she is unable to continue in her state

as a real woman," a proper *onnagata* must, likewise, demonstrate understanding of the "inner

emotions"[109] of the "real woman" through reproducing both similar desires to her and subjecting

these desires to a plane of organization that the "real woman" is also subject to. Put another way,

while it might be desirable for an *onnagata* to become frustrated at being an *onnagata,* like the

example Ayame provides, the failure comes not in feeling this frustration, but rather in not

placing the performance within the same confines of the performative. The *onnagata* may well

become frustrated with their performance on-stage, but if they use their male sex as an escape

route from this frustration, their *gei* will simply cease to exist. This is because the "real woman"

---

[108] "*Ayamegusa,*" in *Kabuki jūhachiban shū,* vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei,* 320.
[109] "*Ayamegusa,*" in *Kabuki jūhachiban shū,* vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei,* 320.

has no such access to a method of evacuation and contemporary Edo society disallowed those born with a female sex to transgress gender and live as men. Those who attempted to do so and were caught, were occasionally punished quite harshly.[110]

Ayame, reacting against the ambiguity of the *wakashu onnagata*, proposes an operationalization that recognizes the plane of organization that the "real woman" is made legible within. In Deleuzian terms, Ayame wants to ensure that the *onnagata's* "seen" performance as a woman is "[made] visible"[111] to the audience. This is accomplished through the inclusion of the societal systems of organization placed upon the desires of the "real woman" that ensures their legibility as such. The *wakashu onnagata* that Ayame was reacting against was one whose legibility was found strictly through its difficulty in being "seen" as either man or woman. The *wakashu onnagata* was located in the areas where the plane of organization loses efficacy, creating productive illegibility. However, to Ayame, this sort of productivity, intentionally located apart from the "inner emotions"[112] of the "real woman" of the Genroku period, was incapable of producing a *gei* that was legible to the audience. Moreover, this illegible *gei* is one that, Ayame argues, is worth as much as dust, which itself is a structure with no definite form. To remedy this, Ayame explains the many organizational structures operating on the "real woman" of this time period and proposes mastery of the parameters and performative gestures that these systems of organization impose in order to produce different kinds of legibility.

---

[110] Jennifer Robertson, "The *Shingaku* Woman: Straight from the Heart," in *Recreating Japanese Women: 1600-1945,* ed. Gail Lee Bernstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 92.

[111] Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 265.

[112] "Ayamegusa," in *Kabuki jūhachiban shū*, vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, 320.

Ayame not only ensures that the "real woman" based *onnagata* is "made seen" as a woman by the audience, but by recognizing the multifaceted systems of operation acting within the plane of organization, that these "real women" are each separately legible as being "real." Far from being singular, it is perhaps best to view the plane of organization operating at this time period as producing several, legible "real women" of varying kinds off-stage. In *Ayamegusa,* Ayame attempts to explain the performative gestures associated with producing each kind of legible woman in turn, so that these "real women" can be "seen" on-stage. In one such example, Ayame discusses the "role of the woman who appears before a lord to settle matters for her husband."[113] Within this example, Ayame proposes several requisite attributes that are mandatory for a successful performance. For example, the *onnagata* should not be "terribly firm" in their performance, lest they create a gendered cognitive dissonance like that of a "male head of household wearing an effeminate hat."[114] In dealing with her husband's problem, this sort of woman should "tremble" her body and only appear more "firm in the wake of enemies attacking them with terrible words."[115] In another example, a *samurai's* wife should not be played in an "unrefined way" [116] and should "use her *katana* with skill even greater than that of a man"[117] in serious situations. However, even while performing as strong women such as this, an *onnagata* should make clear that they "have softness in their hearts"[118] or risk the legibility of their *gei.* Meanwhile, contrasting the traditional samurai roles, Ayame argues that "bath house girls and tea house girls should be played in an overly modern fashion."[119]

---

[113] "Ayamegusa," in *Kabuki jūhachiban shū*, vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, 320.
[114] "Ayamegusa," in *Kabuki jūhachiban shū*, vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, 320.
[115] "Ayamegusa," in *Kabuki jūhachiban shū*, vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, 320.
[116] "Ayamegusa," in *Kabuki jūhachiban shū*, vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, 318.
[117] "Ayamegusa," in *Kabuki jūhachiban shū*, vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, 319.
[118] "Ayamegusa," in *Kabuki jūhachiban shū*, vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, 318.
[119] "Ayamegusa," in *Kabuki jūhachiban shū*, vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, 323.

While these examples are quite straightforward, several of Ayame's other examples are considerably more complex and highlight the fact that Ayame was considerably more interested in the forces operating to make the "real woman" legible than in portraying a "representational real woman" on-stage. In one example, Ayame argues that the *onnagata,* in their day to day lives, should "take as their core principle the virtuous woman."[120] The reason for this was that adopting this "core principle" would cause one to "assent to the same logical foundations" that operate on "the 'real woman.'"[121] Rather than being a simple archetype, this is an acquiescence to a core logic by which to make seen "real women" of all sorts, including those who do not pursue virtuous aims. In parsing reality, the "virtuous woman" is foundational to making women "real," even if they are not virtuous kinds of women. The reason that the "virtuous woman" operates in this way is because, to Ayame, the societal pressure for the "woman" to be "virtuous" is an organizing principle that operates on all women, including courtesans or prostitutes, even if this pressure is resisted. Indeed, acting in a virtuous way, or exclusively performing virtuous roles is not the goal Ayame argues for. Instead, Ayame argues that true mastery of *gei* for an *onnagata* was found in being able to play the role of the "courtesan" because, "if an *onnagata* was able to perform the courtesan roles well, other roles would all be quite easy to perform."[122] The courtesan role itself was perceived, intentionally, in unrealistic terms rooted in a mythic off-stage ideal. According to Ayame, this ideal was located in a past that was wholly separated from the reality of the present. The courtesan role was one meant to be read as an "old fashioned, refined elegance" that had not been seen since as long as "twenty years ago."[123] While this may make a play less representational, Ayame argues, it is important for the *onnagata* regardless. The

---

[120] "Ayamegusa," in *Kabuki jūhachiban shū*, vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, 321.
[121] "Ayamegusa," in *Kabuki jūhachiban shū*, vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, 321.
[122] "Ayamegusa," in *Kabuki jūhachiban shū*, vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, 317.
[123] "Ayamegusa," in *Kabuki jūhachiban shū*, vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, 323.

reason for this is that representation is not what operates on the "real woman," but instead these different kinds of images of femininity are the basis of that operation.

The courtesan role, like that of the virtuous woman, was not intended to make a performance match the observed behaviors of "real women" in society. Rather, each of these roles was intimately tied into the behaviors associated with separate paradigmatic "images" found within the plane of organization. As Claire Panet argues, images such as these act as "[kinds] of [designs], in the mind of man [sic]"[124] that parse the acted-upon desires of others, in this case those of the "real woman," and give these legible forms. Each of these images that Ayame elucidates, whether they are more "representational" or more "unrealistic," is an organizing force that is dominant in parsing the "real woman" at this time period. It is no surprise that many of these same images of the "real woman" are found reproduced in countless other texts that were contemporary to *Ayamegusa*.[125] Regardless of their ability to represent the lives of any particular woman in Edo, these archetypal "images" mediated the way in which these lives were produced and "seen." This is quite different from the *wakashu onnagata* performance, which rarely had any need to consider how to produce these particular "images" and instead was concerned with a production located within the "voids and deserts"[126] left by the friction caused between particular assemblages on the plane of consistency. Ayame shifts this location out of the desert and embraces the images that organize desire, rather than trying to find productive potential outside of, or between, them.

---

[124] Deleuze and Panet, *Dialogues*, 91.
[125] For an ideal example of this, see Ihara Saikaku's 1686 *Kōshoku ichidai onna*, which tells the story of a woman who spends each chapter becoming an exemplar of a different kind of feminine archetype, including that of the modern, working woman, the courtesan, and the *samurai's* wife.
[126] Deleuze and Panet, 90.

It would be inappropriate, however, to argue that Ayame desired a complete separation from the discourses surrounding *wakashu onnagata.* Youth, for instance, retains importance for both Ayame's *onnagata* and the *wakashu onnagata.* As an example of this, Ayame argues that, for those *onnagata* who showed true "brilliance in their hearts," the character "*waka* would be added" to the term *onnagata,* "even for those over the age of 40."[127] However, *Ayamegusa* radically reformed the way in which *onnagata* performance theory approached sex and gender. It is possible to see a legacy of the *wakashu onnagata* in *Ayamegusa* through the assertion that masculinity is important to consider when training an *onnagata*. According to *Ayamegusa,* the "*moto* (origin) of the *onnagata* is the man"[128] and this origin makes the performance of specific kinds of hyperbolic femininity, such as that of the courtesan, especially difficult. This seems contradictory, on first glance, to several statements made throughout the text. Within *Ayamegusa,* Ayame asserts that it is possible, and indeed even necessary, for an *onnagata* to know the emotions of "real women,"[129] to restructure identity around similar core principles as women,[130] and to accept the same limitations of sex as a "real woman" in society.[131] Indeed, Ayame even argues that it is of paramount importance that *onnagata* live their lives entirely as women, even off-stage, and that an "*onnagata* who does not" do this, "is difficult to call skilled"[132] at the production of a legible *gei.* Simultaneously, Ayame seems to both recognize masculinity as being, at some point, part of an *onnagata*, but also advocates for the conflation of the performative aspects of gender off-stage and the performance on-stage. Ayame specifically argues that "those *onnagata* who think it most important to be a woman on-stage," are, simply,

[127] "Ayamegusa," in *Kabuki jūhachiban shū*, vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, 326.
[128] "Ayamegusa," in *Kabuki jūhachiban shū*, vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, 317.
[129] "Ayamegusa," in *Kabuki jūhachiban shū*, vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, 320.
[130] "Ayamegusa," in *Kabuki jūhachiban shū*, vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, 321.
[131] "Ayamegusa," in *Kabuki jūhachiban shū*, vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, 320.
[132] "Ayamegusa," in *Kabuki jūhachiban shū*, vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, 319.

"men."[133] However, *Ayamegusa* takes a radical shift towards a recognition of learned gender and away from that male sex that was important for the *wakashu onnagata*. Indeed, Ayame seems to even deny the importance of male sex altogether, instead placing the *onnagata* in a starting point of masculinity that it is possible, and important, to escape through the recognition of, and masterful operation within, the various organizational images that shaped the legibility of "real women." Unlike the *wakashu onnagata,* who was eternally stuck between two poles, to Ayame the *onnagata* was "originally" a man, but could learn to be a "real woman" instead. This was strictly a monodirectional fluidity and this process of "becoming real woman"[134] was key to success.

It is valuable to consider the ways in which gendered performance was consumed and produced within the Edo period. Far from being a homogenous set of theories that emphasized simplistic models, the early Edo period was rife with constant reforms, restructurings, and revolutions on-stage. The queer theatre of *kabuki* was in constant conflict with the Neoconfucian government of Edo, which sought to categorize and control its citizenry. These conflicts created a landscape of gender on-stage that reflected the chaotic, yet heavily structured, world of gender off it. However, no structures hold up to scrutiny when inspected along the edges and this is true for both the *wakashu onnagata* and Ayame's *onnagata.* Both *onnagata* models embraced considerable movement, whether this movement was alongside two moving assemblages as in the case of the *wakashu onnagata*, or whether this movement was towards a particular goal, as in Ayame's *onnagata.* Although the model Ayame argued for in *Ayamegusa* is respected even today as being highly influential, it is normal for contemporary *kabuki* performers to exclusively

---

[133] "Ayamegusa," in *Kabuki jūhachiban shū*, vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, 319.
[134] Not to be confused with Deleuze's concept of "becoming woman."

identify as men and none live their lives exclusively as women off-stage. This shift towards a more naturalistic, or sex-essentialist, view of the *onnagata* begins to appear in the Meiji with the importation of Western philosophy and science. However, to interrogate exactly how this shifted, it is important to understand Ayame's conception first.

Chapter Three

Failing to Breach: *Onnagata* Failure and the Legible, Modern *Kabuki* Stage

On September 11th, 1913, the famed theatre critic and producer Osanai Kaoru wrote that, in creating a modern, national theatre, the process of becoming an *onnagata* had shifted from "learning to be a woman" to "learning to be an *onnagata.*"[135] What he was suggesting was not merely a shift in the way that *onnagata* learned their craft, but rather a much deeper metaphysical change in the way that the *onnagata* manifested themselves successfully both on and off-stage and within the minds of their audiences. As with Yoshizawa Ayame's radical shift away from the androgynous *wakashu onnagata* with its productive potentials caught in the hybrid spaces formed between gender binaries, the assemblage of the *onnagata* and the mechanisms by which the *onnagata* themselves created their artistry changed quite radically in the modern period. The perspective of Ayame that the *onnagata* had to learn to take the "inner emotions" of "real women" into their heart to accomplish an "*onnagata* heart"[136] was rejected, or dismissed, in favor of a system that sought to maximize the imitative power of the *onnagata* to *fail* to perform the female body, rather than to successfully perform femininity or the structures that formulate it. In the place of works like *Ayamegusa* that instructed its readership in the mental conditioning and performative gestures with which to transform oneself for the sake of accomplishing a proper performance, came works like *Onnagata ni tsuite,* which emphasized theories, gestures, and mechanisms by which to mitigate an essential, innate maleness, itself based upon the physicality of a "male body," in order to imitate the female body. However, this imitation was always destined, and intended, to fail.

---

[135] Osanai Kaoru, "*Onnagata ni tsuite,*" in *Engeki ronshū* (Tokyo: Nittōdō, 1916), 378.
[136] "*Ayamegusa,*" in *Kabuki jūhachiban shū,* vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, 323.

Alongside this shift in the way that the *onnagata* were discussed theoretically, came other large-scale changes in the status of the *kabuki* theatre and theatre more broadly. These changes were part of the cultural milieu of the modern period that was reacting to the massive importation of Western cultural norms and values. In 1872, male-male sex, a key element of *kabuki* theatre culture throughout the entire Edo period,[137] was made punishable by law and these legal strictures would last for eight years. Even outside of its legal restriction, many homosexual acts or attractions, particularly towards young boys, were mitigated as being "untrue" homosexual experiences within the field of sexology,[138] and those remaining "true" homosexual acts were pathologized and made clinical. Sexologists argued that same-sex acts committed by men would necessarily lead to making their practitioners more biologically effeminate. In one example, the sexologist Morita Yūshū, used an early 20th century actor to exemplify this physical transformation, even arguing that he "[experienced] a periodic bleeding akin to menses"[139] because of his same-sex relationships with other men.

Meanwhile, the theatre itself was changing as foreign plays and foreign ideas about sex and who should be playing female roles on the stage were imported. The modern period saw the birth of the female actress, the temporary presence of the female *onnagata,* and massive debates as to what role the *onnagata* should continue to play in the new national theatre of Japan, if they were to play any at all. In order to assess the metaphysical changes in the assemblage of the *onnagata* and how these relate to both the stage and the forces operating on the plane of organization, it is first important to consider the ways in which *kabuki* theatre changed its on and off-stage boundaries in relation to the audience and the nation-state, then to consider the effect of

[137] Kano, *Acting like a Woman in Modern Japan* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 59.
[138] Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire: Male-male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600-1950*, 281.
[139] Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire: Male-male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600-1950*, 256-257.

the shifting location, visibility, and legibility of women on the *kabuki* stage and how these changes reflected changing attitudes in naturalistic visions of sex, and finally to consider the female *onnagata* and the discourses surrounding the shift towards "failed imitation" over "being" as the source of *gei*.

Among the many changes in the Meiji era to *kabuki* and the *onnagata* were changes to the dynamic between the audience and the performers on the stage. As Katherine Saltzman-Li argues, *kabuki* of the Edo period exhibited an "extraordinary degree of… personal interrelationship between communicating partners" that came as a result of "the relationships between actors and audience members, on and off-stage."[140] The on and off-stage distinction remained so porous in the early Meiji that even Western audience members were allowed backstage to see the performers and inspect their costumes after the show.[141] The shift towards a nationalized theatre, however, necessarily mandated a recontextualization away from "folk theatre" towards, as Saltzman-Li argues, the "high art" that it would become. As Ayako Kano demonstrates, much of this recontextualization of *kabuki* was driven by the presence of Westerners. As *noh* theatre was highly esoteric and could "put the uninitiated spectator to sleep," the *kabuki* theatre with its "popular, eye-catching, and entertaining"[142] style became a popular place to entertain foreign guests. However, as one American, William Griffis, described, the audience attending *kabuki* plays was not "among the better class of Japanese people" and the general perception of *kabuki* as an art form among Japanese people at the time was that it was ultimately "detrimental to virtue."[143] As a result, in order to detach the theatre from the class of

---

[140] Saltzman-Li, *Creating Kabuki Plays: Context for Keizairoku, "Valuable Notes on Playwriting,"* 145.
[141] William Griffis, *Personal Experiences, Observations, and Studies in Japan: 1870-1875,* vol. 2 of *The Mikado's Empire* (New York: Harper, 1903), 515.
[142] Kano, *Acting like a Woman in Modern Japan,* 6.
[143] Kano, *Acting like a Woman in Modern Japan,* 6.

people immediately viewing it, and thus shift the theatre away from its "folk art" Edo period roots, there was a need to "greatly depersonalize" the "relationship between actor and audience"[144] and, thereby, construct the idea of the "stage" as being different from the world of the audience.

Although creating boundaries and new standards of audience interaction forced this new modern stage, and the performers on it, to be organizationally differentiated from the world around it during the modern period, it would be inappropriate to consider this differentiation in a simple way. Locative differentiation does not mean detachment, nor does it mean separation. What the modern *kabuki* theatre was pursuing was a differentiation of the stage from its immediate environments, specifically within the context of the theatre itself. The intended goal was to relocate the break between the stage and environment, not to create a full separation of the *kabuki* stage from society or from the world around it. During this period, the stage was more attached to institutional organizational forces operating within the world around it at this point than at any point in its previous history. These organizational forces that the stage became shaped by were quite different than during the Edo period. Rather than being porous in a horizontal way, towards the audience, with the necessary transmission of intensities, values, and the organizational forces associated with them, the porousness of the stage became redirected upwards.

The formerly horizontally porous stage of the Edo period featured on-stage transformations that primarily occurred outside of its boundaries. The *onnagata* argued for by Yoshizawa Ayame would be one who would master the organizational forces shaping the

---

[144] Saltzman-Li, *Creating Kabuki Plays: Context for Keizairoku, "Valuable Notes on Playwriting,"* 145.

performativity of women in the audience, which would be instantly recognizable by audience members. After attaining this mastery, performing on-stage would be a simple matter of walking onto it and reading lines in a natural way. The "real woman" on which Ayame was basing *onnagata* performance was, necessarily, one based on the discursive environment prevalent in the "festival-like"[145] environment that surrounded the stage. What is more, during the Edo period, there was always resistance in *kabuki* to vertically imposed organizational forces. *Kabuki* during the Edo period was, as Ayako Kano argues, "[associated] with norm-breaking behavior and anti-establishment attitudes"[146] and constantly pushed the lines the Tokugawa government imposed upon it. The Edo stage initially was a place exclusively for female performers until they were banned from the stage in 1621. Following this, the stage was primarily dominated by *wakashu* performers, who were also banned. The reason for these government impositions was to reduce the strong connection between the world of the stage and the world of sexual promiscuity, prostitution, and licentiousness. However, these government impositions were always resisted and never fully took hold. In the Meiji era, however, the transformation of this "rural stage" to a "national stage," forced with it an imposition of particular cultural values and, as Kano argues, a "straightening" of the inherently "queer theatre" of *kabuki*.[147]

The assemblage of the stage during the Edo period might well be defined through elements such as the audience, the performers, anti-authority stances, or even theatre ephemera like playbills, or even playbill collections like Shikitei Sanba's *Otoshibanashi chūkō raiyu*.[148] These elements would, necessarily, shift as the audience members themselves shifted. Thus, the

---

145 Saltzman-Li, *Creating Kabuki Plays: Context for Keizairoku, "Valuable Notes on Playwriting,"* 145.
146 Kano, *Acting like a Woman in Modern Japan,* 59.
147 Kano, *Acting like a Woman in Modern Japan,* 59.
148 For more on this collection, see Jonathan Zwicker, "Playbills, Ephemera, and the Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Japan," *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 35, no. 1 (2009): 37-59.

stage, by association, would "become the audience" and the audience would "become the stage" in turn. There are a number of examples of how this "becoming" manifested. In an example from *Kezairoku*, the plot of one play was altered to be more "realistic" and to "make the audience shocked" because in the fall season audience members were perceived to be "more alert"[149] and would require such changes to be properly entertained. Additionally, handbooks would be published to instruct audience members on elements of theatrical production so as to encourage them to blend the world of the stage with their own lives off it. These handbooks could vary from vocal training texts to texts seeking to explain theatrical tropes and historical settings to the audience. What is more, as the performers would continue to interact with the audience outside of the theatre, such as in the example of the fictional *onnagata* performer Han'ya meeting his audience lover and giving him gendered tokens of affection that had on-stage significance,[150] they would necessarily shape both how the performers, as well as themselves, brought the stage into "being" as an organized entity relative to the off-stage world.

The modern innovations in *kabuki* theatre, however, shifted this dynamic quite considerably. The porous horizontal boundary between the stage and the audience became much stronger and, in its place, the theatre lost its resistance to vertical organizing forces and, thereby, became "institutional" or "national" theatre. As a result of this process, the *onnagata* of the stage, necessarily, would have to mirror, as closely as possible, the ideas of sex and gender considered to be beneficial by the nation-state. Moreover, due to the strong influence of the West and the rising prominence of *kabuki* as a national theatre, the stage also had to reflect ideals palatable to a more Westernized Japan. Certainly, the audience would still bring the theatre into

---

[149] *Kinsei geidōron*, vol. 61 of *Nihon shisō taikei*, ed. Nishiyama Matsunosuke, Watanabe Ichirō, and Gunji Masakatsu (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1996): 512-513.
[150] Saikaku, "*Nanshoku ōkagami*" in *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 67, 534.

"being" with systems of organization that they operated within, both local and national, but the impact of the audience's own sense of the *kabuki* stage had little relevance to the desires and intentions of the performers or producers that worked on-stage.

As an example of this, the *kabuki* producer Osanai Kaoru wrote a lengthy dialogue between two fictional people discussing how exactly they might find "the best"[151] representation of the *onnagata* for the national stage and in modern theatre, which is represented within the dialogue with the synecdoche of the recently constructed "Imperial Theatre."[152] Outside of the contextual environment of two fictional characters discussing the *onnagata*, there is no reference to an audience member within Osanai's entire text. However, there are a number of references to the social norms associated with the "Imperial Theatre," natural law,[153] a number of particular performers, and the value of tracing a historical tradition for *kabuki* and *onnagata*.[154] To Osanai, the stage was not a place that the audience participated in, but was rather something that was in dialogue primarily with the nation-state and a historical tradition that supported it. The *onnagata* was something that had "been part of Japanese theatre culture since ancient times"[155] and to go against these "countless hundreds of years of *onnagata*" performance would be borderline sacrilegious.[156] Still, the nation-state was one that embraced naturalism and, as a result, the stage was simultaneously the place for performing the traditions of the past and the naturalistic roles of the present. Although one of the fictional speakers wonders if there had "ever been a popular play with female actresses among those that were occasionally performed at the Imperial Theatre," his interlocutor assures him that this may well be because women have "not performed

---

[151] Osanai, "*Onnagata ni tsuite,*" 376.
[152] The Imperial Theatre was the first Western-style theatre in Japan and completed constructed in 1911.
[153] Osanai, "*Onnagata ni tsuite,*" 377.
[154] Osanai, "*Onnagata ni tsuite,*" 377-378.
[155] Osanai, "*Onnagata ni tsuite,*" 378.
[156] Osanai, "*Onnagata ni tsuite,*" 378.

on the stage" for all that long and may simply need time to catch up.[157] Thus, there was also a suggestion of the future potential of "natural" women to perform exceptionally at some distant point.

What Osanai is proposing is a *kabuki* stage that comes into being not from the audience or their own expectations, but from two separate locations. The first is teleological in origin and purports that there is some deep, mythic, *onnagata* past that is simply reproducing itself on-stage and thrusting itself into the future via reproduction on the Western-style Imperial Theatre. Osanai was hardly alone in this project, and during the Meiji and Taishō periods, a number of theatre histories with dedicated *kabuki* sections, such as Ihara Toshio's 1904 *Nihon engekishi*,[158] also appeared to reinforce this notion. These histories would continue into the Shōwa and would specifically draw a lineage between the traditional *kabuki* of the Edo period and the Meiji theatre. It was quite common to praise particular Meiji *kabuki* actors for their supposed Edo era connections, with one example praising a performer for "not simply having skill in performance, but also in continuing the traditions of the past."[159] The second location that brings the modern *kabuki* stage into being is placed in a distant future and seems to consider that *kabuki*, and even the *onnagata* themselves may be served well in subduing themselves, through the training and promotion of female bodied *onnagata*, to the organizational forces present in the naturalistic, Western desires in vogue in Japan at the time. Although Osanai argues that males are certainly the ideal performers of *onnagata* roles, he does allow some speculation regarding a future when there is genuine competition for this.

---

[157] Osanai, "*Onnagata ni tsuite,*" 379-340.
[158] Ihara Toshio, *Nihon engekishi* (Tokyo: Waseda Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1904).
[159] Ihara Toshio, *Meiji engekishi* (Tokyo: Waseda Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1933), 578.

The assemblage of the stage, for Osanai, is therefore not ideally realized in the communal, horizontal, and immediate way that the Edo era *kabuki* stage was. Rather, the ideal assemblage for the stage was one that incorporated elements of "tradition," "history," "national character," "national values," and "progress." The majority of the elements of the modern *kabuki* assemblage were temporally dislocated from the present moment. Unlike the Edo assemblage, heavily rooted in the moment of its audience, the modern assemblages seem to be temporally staggered in constructing a stage that is constantly drawn to the past, but also hurtling towards the future in a single narrative. It is also worthy of note that the desires and lines of flight that help direct the molar assemblage of the "stage" shift as well. Rather than seeking on and off-stage dynamics that flow in directions emphasizing audience amusement or engagement, the modern *kabuki* stage instead redirected these flows and lines of flight towards the desires of the nation-state and the position of Japan vis-à-vis the West. Ultimately, the boundaries of the stage become hard towards the audience and soft towards the nation-state and this new on and off-stage dynamic reflects several other simultaneous gendered movements regarding the *onnagata* and gender in *kabuki*.

One of the ways that it is possible to see a gendering of this on and off-stage conceptualization during the Meiji period is in the shift in visibility and legibility of female *kabuki* performers and managers. Although it is common to consider the Edo *kabuki* stage as a place that required performers with male genitalia, this vision is overly simplistic. Indeed, during the Edo period there were also underground, private, female-led *kabuki* stages. The performers on these stages would primarily play in "parlor theatres" that would "[exist] outside playhouses… as 'another *kabuki*'"[160] for the sake of theatre patrons who could not associate with

---

[160] Isaka, *Onnagata: A Labyrinth of Gendering in Kabuki Theatre*, 115.

the *kabuki* stage due to their social status. For example, a *samurai* who could not be associated with the low-class *kabuki* theatre may construct a private stage and hire small troupes in exchange for some sort of patronage. These private stages were not necessarily always female-led, but many were, with instances of performances being run exclusively by female theatre masters, including in roles related to music and costume.[161] However, as Maki Isaka argues, with the collapse of the *shogunate*, these female-led groups would "[lose] their wealthy patrons" and be forced to "[sneak] into the periphery of the male *kabuki* world," either as actresses or theatre masters, which forced "what used to be invisible… visible."[162]

This shifting of the female-led stage from periphery to center, from invisible to visible, and from illegible to legible, mirrored the shifting location of the *kabuki* stage. The female *kabuki* stage that emerged into the public sphere during the Meiji period necessitated processes of legibility and organization within explicitly imperial, colonial frameworks. It is possible to conceptualize female-led *kabuki* as existing within the closet and the grand 'coming out' of the female actress as being part of a civilizational narrative. As Riley Snorton argues, "the closet, as it appears in [progress] narratives about… subject-making serves to draw on an implicit colonialist sensibility that figures the … secrecy of the closet with the pre-modern and primitive and the subsequent open consciousness of the 'outside' of the closet with modernity and civilization."[163] Just as the reconceptualization of the borders of the stage sought to create a teleological model that simultaneously looked to the past and propelled its audience towards the future, the 'coming out' of the actress and the female-led *kabuki* stage figured itself into a discursive environment that played into similar narratives. It is no surprise that female actresses

---

[161] Isaka, *Onnagata: A Labyrinth of Gendering in Kabuki Theatre*, 116.
[162] Isaka, *Onnagata: A Labyrinth of Gendering in Kabuki Theatre*, 117.
[163] C. Riley Snorton, *Nobody is Supposed to Know: Black Sexuality on the Down Low* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 29.

like Murata Kakuko, who was strongly associated with the Imperial Theatre, were prominently featured alongside *onnagata* in theatre magazines at the time.*[164]* This placement of female actress and *onnagata* together, constructs a visual image of the 'out' female actress of the 'future' alongside the traditional *onnagata* of the 'past,' drawing the reader into a temporal staggering that mirrors that of the discourses surrounding the stage itself. It is no coincidence that Osanai is so able to deftly argue in his dialogue that women need more time on the stage to create a theatre of the future,[165] that female actresses ought to perform female roles due to their position as "natural" women,[166] as well as that *onnagata* are important due to their ties to the past and tradition.[167]

However, as Jack Halberstam argues, the process of stepping out of the closet is a complex one and the entrance of the "closeted" entity into the visible "domestic" sphere may risk putting it "in sync with the new normal."[168] Put another way, by stepping out of the private realm, female-led *kabuki* theatre needed to become legible within the discursive frameworks of Meiji era Japan. In line with Meiji era ideological frameworks like the "good wife, wise mother," for example, the roles that women were encouraged to play on-stage were quite restricted. One of the two fictional characters in Osanai's dialogue argues that, for example, "female actresses on the stage should under no circumstance be allowed to play prostitute roles" and that, when casting these roles, a theatre director should "rely on the talents of an *onnagata*"[169] instead. These prescriptions would not feel unfamiliar within the Edo period, during which time similar

---

[164] Kamiyama Akira, "*Zasshi 'shin engei' ni miru taishō engeki,*" *Bungei kenkyū: Meiji daigaku bungakubu kiyō* 121 (2013): 2.
[165] Osanai, "*Onnagata ni tsuite,*" 379-340.
[166] Osanai, "*Onnagata ni tsuite,*" 377.
[167] Osanai, "*Onnagata ni tsuite,*" 378.
[168] Jack Halberstam, "Wildness, Loss, Death," *Social Text* 121, vol.32, no. 4 (2014): 140.
[169] Osanai, "*Onnagata ni tsuite,*" 383.

roles or activities were regularly prescribed to women. These prescriptions could be quite mundane, even prescribing which board games women were meant to play, as in one example from *Onna chōhōki*.[170] What makes the Meiji actress example compelling is the discursive environment of the performance that was used to explicitly exclude women from participating in it. The reason provided for this by Osanai's fictional debater was not simply that women on the stage should embody ideal national femininity, but that female roles performed on the stage were meant to represent "ideal or symbolic representations" of females on the stage.[171] These ideal or symbolic representations include roles that are unbecoming of women to perform and thus, to this particular fictional speaker, should necessarily also preclude females from performing *kabuki* altogether and relocate them instead to the modern, Western style theatre.

Thus, the process of "stepping out of the closet" for the female *kabuki* actress was one of stepping into a world wherein the systems of organization surrounding *kabuki,* as well as Meiji societal norms surrounding women, precluded her participation in *kabuki*. Although female *onnagata* did end up existing and performing, this discursive framework was the source of the resistance to them and the cause of their eventual demise. The assemblage of *kabuki* was, to many, one that only came into being alongside the incorporation of elements such as the "idealized symbolic representation of females," "female prostitution," and a specifically male-bodied performance tradition. The world of the *kabuki* stage was, to many, one that necessarily had to be structured in ways to preclude female actresses and justify the presence, simultaneously, of a thriving future for the actress herself as well as a tradition that excluded her. For the actress to be legible, and therefore come into "being," the plane of organization proposed

---

[170] Namura Jōhaku, *Onna chōhōki, otoko chōhōki: Genroku wakamono kokoroeshū,* ed. Chiyoji Nagatomo (Tōkyō: Shakai Shisōsha, 1993), 24.
[171] Osanai, "*Onnagata ni tsuite,*" 383.

by theatre creators and the nation-state necessitated the actress exist either outside of the *kabuki* stage she previously performed upon, or to exist within certain subsections of the *kabuki* stage in roles that were befitting to a Meiji era woman.

The male *onnagata* also had to be made legible in the Meiji period. Although visibility was hardly a concern, the legibility of the Meiji era *onnagata* presented specific problems. In the Ayame tradition, *onnagata* were meant to live their lives as women, present themselves as women off-stage, and subdue themselves to the organizational forces that also operated on women. In this way, the stage itself was a very thin boundary and the *onnagata* ought to step off it as easily as they step onto it. However, with the importation of Western sexual and gender norms, as well as the widespread adoption of naturalistic views of the roles of men and women, the *onnagata* who lived as a woman became problematic and thus necessitated re-legibility within new organizational systems. The promotion of systems of heterosexuality, which implied "binary [divisions] between men and women," the creation of "codes such as those forbidding crossdressing," and the production of gender "as a fixed category through medical discourse about biological sexual difference"[172] all made the *onnagata* who lived as a woman off-stage illegible to the nation-state. While this binaristic view of gender, as well as gender performance, could be used in projects for female liberation or to advocate for the equal valuation of the supposed inherent traits of men and women,[173] the line being drawn was never porous and very little movement or flow was allowed in any direction.

As a result, the *onnagata* who lived as a woman off-stage needed to be recast and reformulated to resolve the conflict. Thus, visibility and legibility projects were pursued and

---

[172] Kano, *Acting like a Woman in Modern Japan,* 27.
[173] For one example, see Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Nihon fujinron* (Tokyo: Jiji Shinpōsha, 1930), 251.

images of *onnagata* living their lives off-stage as men were produced. This visible off-stage

maleness impacted on stage performance and production as well. For example, *ukiyo-e* artists

like Ochiai Yoshiiku (1833-1904) commented on the modern *onnagata's* application of flesh-

toned makeup and lightened lip coloring[174], which was used to make the appearance of the actor

more closely resemble their natural skin tone. This change in the use of cosmetics also sought to

detach the *onnagata* from the strict association that existed between "red rouge" and "white

makeup" that had been strongly associated with femininity "since the Edo period."[175] As the

facial cosmetics that had been used by *onnagata* became more strongly associated with "the ideal

image of Japanese womanhood during the Meiji period,"[176] the application of these gender

markers by *onnagata* off-stage became more problematic. All of this necessitated a break

between the on-stage performance of the *onnagata* as a symbolic representation of the *"female"*

and the biological male that lived off-stage. The famed *onnagata* Onoe Kikugorō VI (1885-

1949), who played both *tachiyaku* and *onnagata* roles, even argued that "one just needs to be a

woman onstage,"[177] in a very conscious break from Ayame's prescription for off-stage lived

womanhood. This stage dynamic reflected the new hard gender binary present in the modern

period. As Kikugorō VI suggests, the on-stage performance of the *onnagata* was that of a sort of

figured "female" on-stage and the off-stage performativity was that of a man. No longer were

performance and performativity conflated, as they were with Ayame. The boundaries of the stage

thus became the boundaries of the new gender binary and, just as the boundaries between the

audience and the stage became hardened and the boundaries between the stage and the

---

[174] Urushizawa Sonoko, *Meiji kabuki no seiritsu to tenkai* (Tokyo: Keiyūsha, 2003): 269.
[175] Mikiko Ashikari, "The Memory of Women's White Faces: Japaneseness and the Ideal Image of Women," *Japan Forum* 15, no. 1 (2003): 64.
[176] Ashikari, "The Memory of Women's White Faces: Japaneseness and the Ideal Image of Women," 65.
[177] As quoted in Isaka, *Onnagata: A Labyrinth of Gendering in Kabuki Theatre,* 60.

authorities became soft, the organizational forces encouraged by the nation-state to formulate

gender during the Meiji period were more influential in the *onnagata's* relationship to their on

and off-stage presence than any that might be encouraged by the audience.

Kikugorō VI's explicit rejection of Ayame's formulation of the *onnagata* was not alone

within the modern period and, as might be expected, as the assemblage of the "stage" shifted, the

mechanisms by which the *onnagata* specifically would "bring forth continuous intensities" [178] on

said stage likewise also shifted radically. Whereas in the example of the Edo period androgynous

onnagata, the productive potential of the performer to create *gei* existed in the hybrid spaces

produced between the gender binary, and the Ayame formulation of the *onnagata* located *gei*

potential within the same forces operating on the binaristic "real woman," the modern *onnagata*

embarked upon a radically different direction. As Osanai portrays it, the *onnagata* on the stage

was not meant to be a "woman" of any sort. The specific innovation of the Meiji era *onnagata*

was that they were supposed to learn "to be a *onnagata*" rather than "learning to be a woman."[179]

Thus, for the Meiji *onnagata,* the productive potential was neither in authentic reproduction nor

productive illegibility, but rather in the act of producing a failed imitation of a natural female

body.

In Osanai's dialogue, one of his two fictional debaters argues that "even if an *onnagata*

were to read ancient things like 'Instructions for *Onnagata,*'" they would still comprehend that it

"takes great effort to suppress those manly traits and hide those areas where one is masculine."[180]

The referenced text, 'Instructions for *Onnagata'* was written by a female *onnagata* named

Ichikawa Kumehachi I (1846-1913), who wrote the treatise *Onnagata no kokore* ('Instructions

---

[178] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 161.
[179] Osanai, "*Onnagata ni tsuite,*" 378.
[180] Osanai, "*Onnagata ni tsuite,*" 379.

for *Onnagata'*) six years prior to Osanai's dialogue. The treatise itself is not terribly different from any number of others. It emphasizes gestures and movements to appear in particular feminine models on-stage. Maki Isaka argues that it is functionally identical to "that of her male counterparts" with the exception of a single line that says that "[one] might think that women are better at the roles of women… but that's not the case."[181] Curiously, though this fictional debater argues against the inclusion of female *kabuki* actors, he still places Kumehachi in a temporally distant location of *mukashi* ("ancient") and also places her treatise within an *onnagata* theoretical canon of sorts. This use of *mukashi* could be an attempt to tie Kumehachi to the historical progenitor of *kabuki,* Okuni. If so, this would be placing her within a canon that is truly ancient within the timescale of *kabuki*, but also one that has been rejected in favor of male-bodied *onnagata* for most of its history.

As the speaker suggests, even someone reading the treatises of the female *onnagata* might well recognize that it is easier for a female actress to play a woman. Earlier in the conversation, this particular speaker argues that it is not simply easier, but also "natural" for this ease in portrayal to occur.[182] However, ease in representational portrayal is insufficient for the production of an effective *gei*, which is a sentiment that Kumehachi herself seems to agree with. For both Kumehachi and the speaker, the male *onnagata* seems to still maintain a valuable place upon the stage. Indeed, this place is even considered to be of superior value to that of the female *onnagata,* despite her natural appearance as a woman. The reason for this is not due to some form of simplistic, naturalistic, representational superiority, but, rather, precisely because this representational ease is not present in the male body and that unlocks the potential for failure.

---

[181] Isaka, *Onnagata: A Labyrinth of Gendering in Kabuki Theatre,* 129.
[182] Osanai, "*Onnagata ni tsuite,*" 377.

As one of Osanai's fictional speakers explains, "it is impossible to calculate the degree to which artistic splendor increases due to the external exertion of" techniques used to minimize masculinity.[183] The interlocutor agrees with this and they continue the conversation. However, this brief exchange demonstrates that the externalization of effort, therefore, is the key to artistic potential for Osanai and his speakers. It is not the "becoming" of one assemblage into another, or the frictional hybridity of assemblages that forms the site of artistic potential, but rather the lines of flight themselves and how the expressed desire on-stage is stopped by the consumption of the *onnagata* by the audience member. Put more simply, it is not a process of "[extrication]… from the plane of organization" or a breakdown of the "assemblages or microassemblages" [184] of the woman that is the reason these modern *onnagata* accomplish *gei* on-stage. Nor is it the case that the *onnagata* must accomplish performing the paradigmatic "[designs] in the minds of man"[185] that bring concepts like the "woman" into being for members of the society. Instead, the *onnagata* must paradoxically play towards a figuration of the "female," while remaining authentically male and thus failing to ever reach any sort of figuration.

If the modern *onnagata* were to forgo their maleness, they would, like the female *onnagata,* "not put any effort that was unnecessary into their performance."[186] The production of *gei* during the modern era for *onnagata* was therefore found in the performative attempts to "become" within systems of organization that prevented a realization of such "becoming" from occurring. If the *onnagata* were ever to successfully "become" or master female performance so well as to be indistinguishable from most assemblages of the "woman," the *onnagata* would lose their *gei.* The *onnagata* was meant to learn to "become an *onnagata*" after all, and not a

---

[183] Osanai, "*Onnagata ni tsuite,*" 379.
[184] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 270.
[185] Deleuze and Panet, *Dialogues*, 91.
[186] Osanai, "*Onnagata ni tsuite,*" 379.

"woman" and the *onnagata* was defined through male features that necessitated hiding and suppression.

The forces of naturalism operated within the plane of organization to dam up the flows between gender assemblages. The assemblage of the "male" had a number of traits, which Osanai calls "*otokorashii ten*" (masculine traits)[187] that were unavoidable and innate to any male *onnagata* performer. According to naturalist ideology supported by the nation-state and the intelligentsia, these traits were unavoidable, immutable, universal, and impossible to cease being reproduced. The structure of the male, as well as that of the naturalistic gender binary, operate on the plane of organization in a way that might be considered as "cancerous tissue" [188] in the Deleuzian sense. This tissue, or this organ, "proliferates" and "takes over everything," thereby forcing other assemblages, like that of the *onnagata* to "[submit] to its rule" for the sake of "its own survival."[189] For the *onnagata* to survive in a system that embraces the idea of the female actress, the *onnagata* must become male and reproduce maleness everywhere it goes. Likewise, the stage must reproduce binary boundaries and genders to survive contact with Western naturalism. It is not a coincidence that Tanizaki Jun'ichirō described being an artist in the early 20th century as like living under the "tyranny of naturalism" and complained that, to be taken seriously as a literature writer, one must produce literature "of a naturalist type." [190] This same attitude expanded to theatre in the Meiji and Taishō periods.[191]

---

[187] Osanai, "*Onnagata ni tsuite,*" 379.
[188] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 163.
[189] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 163.
[190] Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, "*Seishun monogatari,"* in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū,* Vol. 13 (Tokyo: Chūo kōronsha, 1968), 311.
[191] Akemi Horie-Webber, "Modernization of the Japanese Theatre: The *Shingeki* Movement," in *Modern Japan: Aspects of History, Literature, and Society,* ed. William Beasley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 160.

Although the stage reproduces the gender binary present in society, it is inaccurate to say that the male *onnagata* that performed on it could ever be women or female. Instead, they had to produce their cancerous infection, which was maleness. The male *onnagata's* performed femininity was also abstracted from even being human. *Onnagata* were not conceived of as producing the assemblage of the "human," but rather of performing "ideal or symbolic representations" [192] of the human female on the stage. The *onnagata* who performed femininity was not performing human femininity, because, within the modern era, the assemblage of the "human" also necessitated reproduction of the cancerous tissue that was binary gender structure. A male could not produce "human femininity" whether on-stage or off and instead needed to produce "symbolic femininity." This cancerous infection blocked the flow of "becomings" and forced audience members and producers to bring the *onnagata* into being in a way that disallowed freedom of movement between a hard sexual binary. An *onnagata* may go on to perform the role of a *tachiyaku*, but in doing so, they were reproducing the role of the *tachiyaku* as male in the same way that they would reproduce the role of an *onnagata* as male.

Therefore, for productive potential to remain, it had to be recontextualized within the organizing forces present within the cancerous gender binary and male embodiment. The solution came in the now-requisite acknowledgement of the male "being" of the *onnagata* alongside the reproduction of the gender binary on the stage. It was impossible to formulate the *onnagata* as anything but male in "being" whether they were on-stage or off. However, the stage became the location wherein the *onnagata* would attempt to deceive the audience into thinking they were not male, yet ultimately fail in this presentation and be brought into being as male. This near-failure, and it specifically needed to be a near failure, was the new site of productive

---

[192] Osanai, "*Onnagata ni tsuite,*" 383.

potential for the *onnagata* on-stage. The failure to become, as well as the earnest attempt to become, rather than the becoming itself, was what became valued. The cancerous tissue dammed up the flow between assemblages and it became the case that the celebration of the damming itself, as well as the representation of the lack of flow on-stage, became the source of *gei* for the modern *onnagata.* One can imagine the new *onnagata* performative potential as like throwing oneself against a wall to try to break through it. For the Meiji *onnagata,* attempting to break through this wall and, ultimately, failing, in a glorious or splendid fashion was the whole point. The more earnest and creative the attempt, the more compelling this process became.

As a result of this, rather than being a location wherein "mobile transgenderings"[193] could manifest themselves, the modern *kabuki* stage became a prescribed place wherein local drag (rather than transgender) performance could fail to manifest in service of the nation-state's own gender binarization, nation building, and historical mythmaking projects. The stage itself became hard to the audience who came to attend it and soft to the cancerous systems of organization promoted by the nation-state that were gradually infecting almost all sections of the creative world. It is no surprise that the *kabuki* stage, which was now a national theatre that hosted diplomats and dignitaries coming from across the seas, ended up supporting the Japanese imperial projects leading up to World War II (though *kabuki's* relationship with the nation-state would worsen by the end of it).[194] *Kabuki* had become an institution in the modern world and with that status came a radical shift in how it came to "be" in that world.

---

[193] Cull, *Theatres of Immanence: Deleuze and the Ethics of Performance*, 19.
[194] For more on this see James Brandon, *Kabuki's Forgotten War: 1931-1945* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008).

Chapter Four

<u>Conclusion</u>

More than 400 years since its founding, the *kabuki* theatre remains a site of contestation and admiration among scholars and the public alike. In 2011, the most famous contemporary *onnagata,* Bandō Tamasaburō V, won the prestigious international Kyoto Prize in Arts and Philosophy. He is known not only as a prolific *onnagata* performer, but also a "versatile" and "transformative" one who has also "starred in *shingeki…* theatre and film, with key roles including Lady Macbeth and Blanche DuBois."[195] He is talented not only as an *onnagata,* nor strictly in Japanese theatre, but "can also convincingly enact males" and plays regularly in a wide variety of highly international theatre and film, such as in Andrzej Wajda's 1994 Polish film Nastazja, wherein he plays both male and female roles.[196] Tamasaburō has ideological connections that are the result of the legacy of the modern *onnagata* in that he simultaneously identifies as a male, plays as a male occasionally, but ultimately specializes in performing female roles. This is quite far from Ayame's construction of the *onnagata.* However, unlike the modern examples, Tamasaburō does not categorize himself strictly as an *onnagata* in an exclusive sense. He revels in leaving the Japanese theatre altogether from time to time, just as he seems to enjoy leaving the Japanese islands themselves to perform in international cinema. What Tamasaburō is doing is changing the assemblage of the *onnagata* yet again and dissociating the *onnagata* from a particular theatrical or cultural context. It is important to note here that, just as Osanai Kaoru and Yoshizawa Ayame proposed changes to the metaphysics of the *onnagata,* Tamasaburō

---

[195] Carol Sorgenfrei, "Alluring Ambiguity: Gender and Cultural Politics in Modern Japanese Performance," *New Theatre Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (2014): 344-345.
[196] Carol Sorgenfrei, "Alluring Ambiguity: Gender and Cultural Politics in Modern Japanese Performance," 345-346.

cannot help but do the same. Indeed, although Tamasaburō is perhaps exemplary in his unique contemporary approaches to "being" an *onnagata,* any performer of *onnagata* cannot avoid this process. This is merely an instance that exemplifies the ongoing process of "becoming" that the *onnagata* is undergoing even today. Perhaps Tamasaburō's *onnagata* might even be considered "becoming international."

In my introduction, I argued that, provided ample consideration is given to neither subsume nor bend the historical Japanese subject to the discursive frameworks employed by the contemporary researcher, it can be productive to pursue hybridized theory, which both inflects its source and is also inflected itself in the process. Within this paper, I have attempted to pursue this by using Deleuzian metaphysics in the consideration of the *onnagata* as it transformed its "being" through the early modern and modern periods. This productive hybridity, however, is obviously not the only theoretical merging one can attempt to pursue with the *onnagata,* nor is this hybridity the only such Deleuzian hybridity that one can construct when analyzing gender transgression, androgyny, or cross-gender portrayal. As in the case of Tamasaburō, it is potentially productive to think of the contemporary *onnagata* in much the same way. This sort of analysis could also be expanded into other theatrical styles, such as Takarazuka. Other new hybrid dialectics related to the *kabuki* stage and its performers might be found through the application of other, contemporary theoretical approaches. Performers like the legendary Meiji *onnagata* Sawamura Tanosuke III, who lost their feet and used prosthetics to replace them, might be productively read alongside Alison Kafer's work on queer/crip theory[197] or from works within the broader field of disability studies. Similar analysis could likely also benefit the *bunraku*

---

[197] Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

puppet theatre. Although much work continues to be done on *kabuki*, there is rich opportunity currently for alternative approaches with a wide range of theoretical underpinnings.

Through reading Deleuze alongside the theoretical texts of *onnagata* and *kabuki* theatre producers themselves, I have attempted to contribute something to this broader project of pursuing new approaches to the rich early modern and modern theatrical landscapes of Japan. In my introductory First Chapter, I sought to establish an overview of the time periods being discussed as well as to articulate the specific terms I used in my analysis. I also presented a justification of the use of these terms in a context thoroughly divorced from their original creation. In Chapter Two, I examined the phenomenon of the androgynous *wakashu onnagata* and how these androgynous beauties came into being vis-à-vis productive tensions created through hybridity between binaristic poles. To inspect the *wakashu onnagata* I predominantly used texts that described them in literature and poetry, such as Ihara Saikaku's *Nanshoku ōkagami*. I continued by discussing the theoretical treatise *Ayamegusa* and analyzed how Yoshizawa Ayame remade the *onnagata*, not simply by articulating new gestures or performance techniques, but through a drastic change in metaphysics for both the *onnagata* and the *kabuki* stage itself. I highlighted that Ayame sought an active conflation of the realm of the performance and the performative. I used concepts and innovations originating in Deleuze's work to inform my analysis of these metaphysical changes. In Chapter Three, I discussed the modern *onnagata* and how ideas of scientific naturalism, as well as the actress, forced the metaphysical state of the "being" of the *onnagata,* and the stage they performed upon, into new configurations. I showed how these two entities, the "stage" and the "*onnagata*," shifted their processes of "becoming" in tandem to rearticulate *kabuki* as part of the assemblage of the nation-state, rather than being more closely part of the "community." I also showed how this process sought to bifurcate the realms

of performance and performativity that Ayame had consciously conflated hundreds of years previous. Finally, I showed how the modern *onnagata* produced their artistic potential from a series of failures, rather than successes, in performing women.

As this analysis illustrates, the *onnagata* and the *kabuki* stage more broadly are spaces that only come into being through their relationship to other entities within their contextual moment. The androgynous *wakashu onnagata* is only androgynous, and only generates their artistic potential, through "being" in a place that is related to existing binaristic structures. The *kabuki* stage only exists, in whatever form it appears, because of the audience and the power structures of the state that are related to it. The *kabuki* stage is a place, as I have argued, that is dynamic in its relationship to the world off-stage. In some contexts, the stage was simply a location for lived performatives to be performed in front of an audience and in others, the stage was a place for productive failures to occur that reinforced existing constructions of sex and gender. The *kabuki* stage and the *onnagata* of the past provide contemporary scholars an exciting opportunity to inflect their own work considerably and, in doing so, create their own productive tensions through which to understand entirely new metaphysical possibilities.

Bibliography

Ashikari, Mikiko. "The Memory of Women's White Faces: Japaneseness and the Ideal Image of Women." *Japan Forum* 15, no. 1 (2003): 55-79.

Atkins, Paul. "*Chigo* in the Medieval Japanese Imagination." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 67, no. 3 (2008): 947-970.

Bashō kushū. Vol. 45 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei,* edited by Ōtani Tokuzō, and Nakamura Shunjō. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1962.

Braidotti, Rosi. *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming.* Malden: Polity Press, 2002.

Brandon, James. *Kabuki's Forgotten War: 1931-1945*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008.

Butler, Judith. "Imitation and Gender Insubordination." In *Inside/Out. Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories,* edited by Diana Fuss, 13-31. London, Routledge, 1991.

Case, Sue-Ellen. "Classic Drag: The Greek Creation of Female Parts." *Theatre Journal* 37, no. 3 (1985): 317-327.

Cull, Laura. *Theatres of Immanence: Deleuze and the Ethics of Performance.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Deleuze, Gilles. "Responses to a Series of Questions." *Collapse* 3 (2007): 36-43.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

Deleuze, Gilles and Claire Panet. *Dialogues*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.

Edelman, Lee. *The Future is Kid's Stuff.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

Fukuzawa Yukichi. *Nihon fujinron*. Tokyo: Jiji Shinpōsha, 1930.

Gabrovska, Galia. "Gender and Body Construction in Edo Period *Kabuki*." *Core Ethics* 5 (2009): 71-87.

Gill, Robin. *Furu kyōka goshōnōkudasai. Manyōshū made kubigari ni ittekimashita*. Paraverse Press: 2017.

Griffis, William. *Personal Experiences, Observations, and Studies in Japan: 1870-1875*. Vol 2 of *The Mikado's Empire*. New York: Harper, 1903.

Grosz, Elizabeth. "A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics." in *Gilles Deleuze and the Theatre of Philosophy*, edited by Constantin Boundas and Dorothea Olkowski, 229-257. New York: Routledge, 2018.

Halberstam, Jack. "Wildness, Loss, Death." *Social Text* 121, vol.32, no. 4 (2014).

Hattori Yukio. *Kabuki seiritsu no kenkyū.* Tokyo: Kazama shobō, 1989.

Henitiuk, Valerie. "Going to Bed with Waley: How Murasaki Shikibu Does and Does Not Become World Literature." *Comparative Literature Studies* 45, no. 1 (2008): 40-61.

Horie-Webber, Akemi. "Modernization of the Japanese Theatre: The *Shingeki* Movement." In *Modern Japan: Aspects of History, Literature, and Society*, edited by William Beasley, 147-165. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975.

Ihara Saikakushū 2. Vol 67 of *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū,* edited by Matsuda Osamu, Munemasa Isō, and Teruoka Yasutaka. Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1996.

Ihara Toshio. *Nihon engekishi*. Tokyo: Waseda Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1904.

Ihara Toshio. *Meiji engekishi*. Tokyo: Waseda Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1933.

Imao Tetsuya. *Henshin no shisō: Nihon engeki ni okeru engi no ronri.* Tokyo: Hōsei Daigaku
    Shuppankyoku, 1970.

Isaka, Maki. *Onnagata: A Labyrinth of Gendering in Kabuki Theatre*. University of Washington
    Press, 2016.

Jardine, Alice. *Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity.* Ithaca: Cornell University
    Press, 1985.

Kabuki jūhachibanshū. Vol. 98 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei.* edited by Gunji Masakatsu.
    Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1968.

Kafer, Alison. *Feminist, Queer, Crip.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013.

Kamiyama Akira. "*Zasshi 'shin engei' ni miru taishō engeki.*" *Bungei kenkyū: Meiji daigaku
    bungakubu kiyō* 121 (2013).

Kano, Ayako. *Acting like a Woman in Modern Japan*. New York: Palgrave, 2001.

Kinsei geidōron. Vol. 61 of *Nihon shisō taikei*, edited by Nishiyama Matsunosuke, Watanabe
    Ichirō, and Gunji Masakatsu. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1996.

Kyōka taikan. Vol. 1, edited by *Kyōka taikan kankōkai*. Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1983.

Mezur, Kathleen. *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Michener, James. *The Floating World.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1983.

Mitamura Engyo. *Mitamura Engyo zenshū*. Vol. 12. Tokyo: Chūo kōronsha, 1976.

Morinaga, Maki. "The Gender of the Onnagata as the Imitating Imitated: Its Historicity, Performativity, and Involvement in the Circulation of Femininity." *positions: east asia cultures critique* 10, no. 2 (2002): 245-284.

Mostow, Joshua. "The Gender of the *Wakashu* and the Grammar of Desire." In *Gender and Power in the Japanese Visual Field,* edited by Joshua Mostow, Norman Bryson, and Maribeth Graybill, 49-70. University of Hawai'i Press, 2003.

Muñoz, José. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There for Queer Futurity.* New York: New York University Press, 1983.

Namura Jōhaku. *Onna chōhōki, otoko chōhōki: Genroku wakamono kokoroeshū*, edited by Chiyoji Nagatomo. Tōkyō: Shakai Shisōsha, 1993.

Nihon kokugo daijiten. 20 vols. *Tokyo:* Shōgakukan, 1972-1976.

Osanai Kaoru. "*Onnagata ni tsuite.*" In *Engeki ronshū.* Tokyo: Nittōdō, 1916.

Pflugfelder, Gregory. *Cartographies of Desire: Male-male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600-1950.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Ramey, Joshua and Daniel Whistler. "The Physics of Sense: Bruno, Schelling, Deleuze." In *Gilles Deleuze and Metaphysics,* edited by Alain Beaulieu, Edward Kazarian, and Julia Sushytska, 87-109. London: Lexington Books, 2014.

Robertson, Jennifer. *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Robertson, Jennifer. "The *Shingaku* Woman: Straight from the Heart." In *Recreating Japanese Women: 1600-1945,* edited by Gail Lee Bernstein, 88-107. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

Saltzman-Li, Katherine. *Creating Kabuki Plays: Context for Keizairoku, "Valuable Notes on Playwriting."* Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Sedgwick, Eve. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

Shouse, Eric. "Feeling, Emotion, Affect." *Journal of Media and Culture 8,* no. 6. Accessed March 29, 2018. http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0512/03-shouse.php.

Snorton, C. Riley. *Nobody is Supposed to Know: Black Sexuality on the Down Low*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014.

Sorgenfrei, Carol. "Alluring Ambiguity: Gender and Cultural Politics in Modern Japanese Performance." *New Theatre Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (2014): 341-351.

Spivak, Gayatri. "Can the Subaltern Speak." In *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory,* edited by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, 66-111. New York: Columbia Press, 1994.

Stark, Hannah. *Feminist Theory After Deleuze.* London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.

Tanizaki Jun'ichirō. *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū*, Vol. 13. Tokyo: Chūo kōronsha, 1968.

Urushizawa Sonoko, *Meiji kabuki no seiritsu to tenkai*. Tokyo: Keiyūsha, 2003.

Varley, Paul. *Japanese Culture.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000.

Villani, Arnaud. "'I Feel I am a Pure Metaphysician': The Consequences of Deleuze's Affirmation." *Collapse 3* (2007): 45-62.

Yasuda Noriko. "*Nagoya shibai no keiseiki. 'Biyōkejōjishi' no ginmi o tōshite*." *Gifu shotoku gakuen daigaku kokugo kokubungaku* 25 (2006): 1-13.

Zwicker, Jonathan. "Playbills, Ephemera, and the Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Japan." *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 35, no. 1 (2009): 37-59.