

# MASQUERADE OF FEMININITY AND MASCULINITY IN JAPANESE COMIC *MIDORI IS A TOMBOY* AND *W-JULIET*

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## ABSTRACT

Masquerade is the use of mask and disguise by a person to hide a certain identity and make a new identity. The concept of masquerade that is the use of mask has been used in Japanese theatre such as *Kabuki* and *Takarazuka*; however those theatres also use the concept of gender bender. Nowadays, the two concepts are applied in Japanese comic that is popular in teenager. In this study, I would like to analyze the use of mask and gender bender by Makoto and Midori in Japanese comic *W-Juliet* and *Midori is a Tomboy*. I would like to reveal the strategy that is used by Makoto and Midori in wearing their mask and the meaning of the masks that they use. By this study, I will prove that femininity and masculinity are not related by sex and can be used as mask to create a new identity.

**Keywords:** Masquerade, Mask, Gender-role, Gender-bender, Femininity, Masculinity

Japanese comic is a literary work that is read by readers of all ages in this era. Japanese comic is called *manga* (read: man-ga) which means comic and cartooning, and the author of *manga* is called *mangaka*. Japanese comic is usually printed in white and black even though there are some comics that are printed in colorful style ("*Manga*", n.d.). Japanese comic nowadays has many sub-genres that makes readers of all ages can read Japanese comic according to their age. There are action, school-life, mystery, drama, sports, romance, fantasy, comedy, gender-bender, *shoujo*, *josei*, *shounen*, *seinen*, smut, *hentai*, *ecchi*, and etcetera. Among all the genres of Japanese comic, romance is the most popular genre and romance sub-genre is collaborated with a new sub-genre which is gender bender nowadays. Gender bender sub-genre is a sub-genre which is talking about a switched gender role. As one of the *manga* site, Baka-Updates *Manga*, said about the definition of gender bender sub-genre, "Girls dressing up as guys, guys dressing up as girls.. Guys turning into girls, girls turning into guys", it is talking about whether a girl is dressing or turning up as a boy, or a boy is dressing or turning up as a girl. Emura and Ikeyamada Go are both famous romance authors, and they have a work with gender bender sub-genre. While Emura has *W-Juliet* as her work with gender bender sub-genre, Ikeyamada Go has *Midori is a Tomboy*.

From the story of both works, there is one connection between *Midori is a Tomboy* and *W-Juliet*. While Makoto, as a boy, entered the school with girl appearance, Midori, who is a girl, entered her high school with a boy's appearance. They are both dressing as the opposite gender in order to achieve their goal. In this case, they wear masks in order to close their identity and make a new identity. This masking is called masquerade. While Midori is masking her femininity, Makoto is masking her masculinity. It is interested to be discussed since the usual mask that is usually used by people is the real thing of mask that is worn for party, cultural rituals, festival, or theatre. However, Makoto and Midori do not wear the real thing mask as the divider between their true identity and new identity. Therefore, I am interested to analyze the masks that are worn by Makoto and Midori and decide to choose masquerade as the topic of my thesis.

In this research, I want to reveal the strategy and the meaning of Makoto's femininity mask and reveal the strategy and the meaning of Midori's masculinity mask.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I am going to use three concepts to discuss the strategy and meaning of Makoto and Midori's masks. The first one is gender stereotyping in anime or *manga*. Gender stereotypes are

simplistic generalizations about gender attributes, differences, and roles of individuals and/or groups or gender. Behaviors that are considered appropriate for men are called masculinity, while behaviors that are considered appropriate for women are called femininity. Proper men are they who like sports, enjoy fighting, and have short hair. Men are usually associated with strong, aggressive, messy, athletic, and loud characteristics (“Gender Roles”, n.d.). The stereotypes of women are the one who wears make-up, wants to get married, and dependant on men. Girls like pink color and doll for toy. They will have long hair, wear skirts and dresses. Women are usually associated with emotional, quiet, weak, neat, and clumsy characteristics (ibid.). Eri Izawa (Izawa, 1997) said in her essay that girl in *manga* tends to be weak, shy, and meek, while boy in *manga* is usually strong, gruff, and cool. Boy is also pictured to be more stable, stronger, more capable, and more reliable, and that makes girl looks to be more depending on boy. In *manga*, usually *shoujo*, girl’s mind is told to be filled with their adored boy. The story will be about the fear of approaching the adored boy, wondering what the boy think of her, what she can do for the adoration boy, and even comparing herself to another girl that is close to the adored boy. Using this concept, I would like to use it to discuss on the strategy that Makoto and Midori use to wear their masks.

The second concept is gender bender. Gender bender is a term to a person who rebels against the expected gender roles. The term gender-bending actually had been used in the traditional Japanese theatre that was in Japanese *Kabuki* and *Takarazuka Revue*. *Kabuki* is a famous Japanese theatre with the all male actors. *Onnagata* is a term used to describe a male actor who plays a female role on stage in *Kabuki* drama (Wood, 2010). It is said that rather than imitating women, an *onnagata* tends to express the essence of feminine. *Onnagata* does not only use costumes and make-up in order to express femininity, they also emphasize on the feminine and elegant gestures and movements (ibid.). *Onnagata* is very famous towards the audience because of their excellence of expressing femininity. While *Kabuki* is a theatre with all male actors, *Takarazuka* is a theatre with all female actresses (Buckton, n.d.). *Otokoyaku* is a term used for the male-role actress in *Takarazuka* and becomes the distinctive feature of *Takarazuka* especially in how they represent the ideal form of masculinity. *Otokoyaku* emphasizes on what makes a perfect man that women want in representing the ideal form of masculinity (ibid.). I will use the traditions of *Kabuki* and *Takarazuka* to analyze the strategy of Makoto and Midori’s masking.

The last concept is masquerade. Efrat Tseëlon, a social psychologist who is interested in cultural studies, said that masquerade refers to the use of mask and disguise (as cited in Barnard, 2002, p. 166). Mask is something that is worn in front of the face in order to help to hide the identity of a person. Sometimes, a person who is wearing a mask will also wear a costume to help completing the disguise of that person or completing the new identity. Tseëlon also said that masquerade has a critical function that masquerading can draws attention to construct nature of identity which means the body covering can conceal and reveal one’s identity and make a point where one can perform his/her desire and fear. Tseëlon also stated about masquerade, “Masquerade, however, is a statement about the wearer. It is pleasurable, excessive, sometime[s] subversive (Tseëlon, 2001, p. 2)”. In this definition, masquerade emphasizes on the performer itself instead of the clothing or mask. The masquerade is not the clothing, but the performer. I will use masquerade concept to analyze the meaning of the masks that are used by Makoto and Midori.

## **THE STRATEGY AND MEANING OF MAKOTO’S MASK**

### **Makoto’s Strategy**

In order to succeed the challenge that is given by his father, Makoto has to find a strategy to cover or hide his true identity as a boy as he lives as a girl in his school life. Makoto uses mask as his strategy to cover or hide his true identity and show the new identity through his mask. As stated before that “The wearer of the mask also wear a costume to complete the new identity” (Subiah, 2013, p.22), Makoto also wear a costume to complete his disguise or his new identity. In this case, Makoto imitates on how an *onnagata* wears his costumes to complete their performance. Like an *onnagata* who express their femininity depending on costumes and movements, Makoto also shapes his new identity as a girl through his physical appearance and behavior.

### **Makoto's Physical Appearance as a Girl**

In physical appearance, Makoto has to change his appearance from his usual masculine appearance to feminine appearance. Therefore, Makoto changes his hairstyle, his way of dressing, and his eye shape. Makoto, as a boy, has the physical stereotypes of boy. He has blond-rather-long hair because of his half-foreign-blood. He has tall body and always wears pants. As he has foreign blood, many girls admire him and see him as a handsome boy. Makoto is also pictured as a boy who has narrow eyes whenever he is being himself as a boy, which makes him look like showing his sharp gaze. From the explanation about Makoto's physical appearance, it can be said that Makoto as a boy has those stereotypes of boy in his physical appearance as stated in gender stereotypes in anime or *manga*. However, Makoto has to change that boy's appearance to girl's appearance to show his new identity. As Makoto wears his mask, he begins to wear skirt and long hair wig. He also wears make-up that he learns from his sister. Moreover, as he wears his mask, he uses make-up to make his eyes look larger than before. Makoto, who has narrow eyes, uses make-up to make his eyes look larger than before to fit the stereotype of a girl's eyes—shape that is larger than boy's.

### **Makoto's Behavior**

Then, besides his physical appearance, Makoto changes his behavior from masculine behavior to feminine behavior. In *W-Juliet*, when he is being himself, Makoto is often pictured as a strong boy who is good in karate. He is also shown to be capable and reliable that show that Makoto as a boy has the stereotype of boy's behavior. However, masquerading to be a girl makes Makoto has to hide those behaviors in front of his school community. Since Makoto is wearing his femininity mask, he has to change that masculine behavior to feminine behavior. Therefore, Makoto, who was used to be a strong and reliable guy, has to act himself as a weak, shy, and emotional girl. Furthermore, Makoto also imitates girl's expression and gesture in order to convince others that he is a girl.

On the one hand, it is said that “masquerade is pleasurable, excessive, sometime[s] subversive” (Tselon, 2001, p.2). Makoto, indeed, in his masking is also excessive. Like an *onnagata* who exaggerated his way in expressing femininity, Makoto's femininity mask exceeds the femininity of the real girl since he is imitating an *onnagata*. The excessiveness of Makoto's masking can be seen from the reaction of the students of the new school when Makoto has just transferred that the heroine in *W-Juliet* is even envy of Makoto's femininity. Also, by her femininity, she becomes a popular girl in her school. Her popularity is said by Ito: “As you can see, Makoto is the most attractive person in the school and the guys love her” (Emura 2:51), which means that her femininity makes her popular as a girl. Then, the pleasurable side of Makoto's mask can be seen in how Makoto is enjoying his masquerade.

### **The Meaning of The Mask**

#### **Mask as an Act of Rebellion**

Living as the only son of a strict and powerful father makes Makoto cannot do whatever he wants freely. He also thought that his future had been decided by his father that he only had to follow what his father wanted. As he is living as a girl and wearing his mask, he begins to show his rebellion towards his father's power. When his father does not allow him to become an actor, Makoto asks his father to give a new school that has theatre club in it in order to study as a girl. Moreover, he can object his father decision about Makoto's future wife. Before he is wearing his mask, he cannot refuse and say ‘no’ to his father and his fiancée about the decision of engagement. He can only refrain and take no action from his fiancée's approach. He neither can accept his fiancée's approach because he does not like her, nor refuse the engagement because of his father power. However, since Makoto is wearing the femininity mask, he begins take an act to object the marriage. As he wears the mask, he takes action in canceling the engagement.

From the rebellion actions that are done by Makoto, it shows on how Makoto's mask is subversive. At first, Makoto's father challenges Makoto to wear the mask in order to fail Makoto in

achieving his dream. On the contrary, Makoto gets a power to rebel on his father as he is wearing the mask. In other words, instead of blocking Makoto's way in getting his dream, the mask is helping Makoto to get power to rebel on his father and achieve his dream.

### **Mask as a Tool to Get What He Wants**

As stated before, because of his strict father, Makoto cannot do whatever he wants freely that Makoto's future has been decided by his father. Because Makoto is the only son in his family, it has been decided that Makoto will be the successor of his father's dojo. Then, when his father challenges him to study as a girl, he has one condition that the new school that he is transferred must have a drama club. Now that he studies in the new school and wears his mask, he can join the drama club of the school and gets what he wants. Before that, when he is without his mask, he cannot join any single drama club because of his father's political power that his father asks the school to not let Makoto join any club especially drama club. Without the influence of the mask, he would not be able to join any drama club as he wants.

### **Mask as a Challenge for Himself**

Makoto's father gives a challenge to Makoto that his father will give Makoto freedom if Makoto succeeds to study as a girl until graduates with no one knows about his true identity. To hide his true identity as a boy, Makoto is wearing the femininity mask to play his role as a girl. In wearing the femininity mask, Makoto not only has to dress up as a girl, but he also has to act out as a girl so that the school believes that Makoto is really a girl. Here, Makoto is using that chance to challenge himself whether he can act his role well as a girl so that the school would believe that Makoto is a girl or not. From his physical appearance, he is successful in convincing others that he is a girl that the girls are excited because of the beauty of Makoto at the first day she transfers to the new school. He is also successful in his acting as a girl that he can overcome many troubles when someone is suspicious of his true identity. In the end of the story, Makoto succeeds in studying as a girl until he graduates without someone at the school knows about his true identity as a boy. The success of his father's challenge by Makoto is a prove that he also succeeds in his own challenge in proving himself of his ability.

## **THE STRATEGY AND MEANING OF MIDORI'S MASK**

### **Midori's Strategy**

Similar to Makoto, who wears costumes to complete his new identity, Midori also wears costumes to complete her new identity as a boy. While Makoto is imitating an *onnagata* of *Kabuki*, Midori is imitating an *otokoyaku* of *Takarazuka Revue* for her mask. Like Makoto, who shows his new identity through physical appearance and behavior, Midori also shows her new identity to the society through physical appearance and behavior.

### **Midori's Physical Appearance as a Boy**

In wearing her mask, Midori has to change her physical appearance from a girl's appearance to the stereotype of boy's appearance. Here, Midori changes her hair style and her way of dressing. Also, in some cases, she changes her way in using her eyes to gaze.

As a girl, Midori has long and black hair. Even though she is said to be a tomboy who likes to play soccer, she often wears cute dresses and skirts. However, when Midori is wearing her mask, she must not show her girlie appearance. She has to hide it and shows her new identity; therefore, she utilizes a boy's appearance as her mask. When she decides to study in an all boy school, she cuts her long hair to suit the short hair style of boy (Ikeyamada 1: 124). Midori also changes her clothing to t-shirt and pants instead of her usual dresses. Besides her hair and clothing, Midori also changes the way she gaze. As a girl, Midori has a meek gaze. When she is with her long hair and dress, and shows her meek and charming gaze, many boys are attracted to her. However, when she is performing as a boy, her gaze is changed. She shows her sharp gaze when she wears her mask especially when she is playing soccer, and that gaze makes her look masculine.

### **Midori's Behavior**

As she is using the stereotype of a boy for her physical appearance, Midori is also using the stereotype of a boy as her behavior. The stereotype of a girl in *manga* or anime is weak. Girl's mind in *manga* or anime is usually filled with a guy who she adored (Izawa, 1997). Before she wears the mask, Midori has this stereotype, and it makes her fall for Tsukasa's seduction. Midori is described to always think of Tsukasa ever since she was a kid and she really hopes to see Tsukasa again. Midori believes in all Tsukasa's sweet talks and becomes featherbrained in front of Tsukasa. She believes in what she imagined about Tsukasa, and it makes her think that Tsukasa really likes her. In that way, Midori falls for Tsukasa's trick (Ikeyamada 1: 6-33). As Midori is wearing her mask, she hides the weak behavior of hers and changes those behaviors to stereotype of boy's behaviors which is strong. In her masculinity mask, Midori does not fall for Tsukasa's sweet talk again. She can even talk back Tsukasa's sweet talk. Moreover, Midori is also stronger in her power that she can even lift a table.

Then, Midori's behavior in daily activity is also changed. Midori is eating in feminine way when she is not wearing her masculinity mask that is neat and calm. However, when she wears her masculinity mask, Midori is showing her messy behavior in her eating in her male role since messy is said to be the stereotype of boy's characteristic. Also, Midori's sleeping behavior is also messy when she is wearing her masculinity mask that she sleeps everywhere even outdoor and she is not concerned about the way she sleeps.

As stated at the previous chapter said that "masquerade is pleasurable, excessive, sometime[s] subversive" (Tseelon, 2001, p.2), Midori's mask is also excessive. The excessiveness of Midori's mask can be seen from the reaction of the girl's students of other school who become her fans. This means that Midori is successful in wearing her masculinity mask that makes the girls think of her as a boy and be her fans. Then, it is also stated that masquerade is pleasurable. The pleasurable side of Midori's masking can be seen from Midori's face expression when she is playing soccer. She does not have any uncomfortable expression while playing soccer with her mask on.

### **The Meaning of Masculinity Mask**

#### **Mask as a Tool to Get The Boy That She Wants**

Before Midori decides to wear a mask, Midori is an innocent girl who is always dreaming of her nice and kind childhood who she met when she was a kid named Tsukasa. Midori is hoping so much to be able to see Tsukasa again that she even creates her own imagination about Tsukasa that Tsukasa would grow to a nice and kind teenager. However, when Midori finally meets Tsukasa and is used as betting object by Tsukasa, Midori wants to take revenge on Tsukasa in soccer field that makes Midori decides to study as a boy in all-boy school. As Midori is working on her revenge, she is not aware that she slowly gets closer to Tsukasa. The more she meets Tsukasa, the more she knows about who the teenager Tsukasa really is. Knowing the dark past of Tsukasa, Midori cheers him up and makes Tsukasa really opens his heart to Midori. That is how Midori and Tsukasa are dating in real relationship then. These all show that the masking that is worn by Midori brings her to get closer to the boy she wants which is the real Tsukasa. By wearing the mask, she becomes more active than before. She can get closer to Tsukasa instead of just hoping to meet him and creating imagination like she used to. After get to know the real Tsukasa as what he is, she gives attention to Tsukasa and that makes Tsukasa falls for her. This meaning also shows the subversive of Midori's mask that Midori is using the power of mask to make Tsukasa falls for her.

#### **Mask as a Tool to Get Maturity**

Before she is moving to Tokyo, Midori is hoping to meet Tsukasa again. She really hopes to meet Tsukasa again that she creates an imagination about how the teenager Tsukasa would be. Instead of doing something so that she can meet Tsukasa in real life, she only creates an imagination of the teenager Tsukasa. As she thinks more about her own imagination of Tsukasa, Midori falls in love with her own imagination. However, after Midori wears his mask, she is no

longer tricked by Tsukasa's sweet talk. She knows the real Tsukasa as what he is and does not easily fall for him. It shows on how Midori becomes more mature after she wears the mask.

### **Mask as an Ability to Prove Herself**

The last meaning of Midori's masculinity mask is as an ability to prove herself that she can succeed to do what she wants when she puts her heart into it. Midori studies in an all-boy school because she has a goal that she has to achieve. In order to achieve her goal in an all-boy school, she has to hide her true identity as a girl and shows herself as a boy by wearing masculinity mask. In order to convince the others that she is a boy, she truly puts her effort into it that she changes her physical appearance and her behavior from feminine to masculine. Also, she plays her role as a boy with her heart that she enjoys it in wearing her mask. At the end of the story, it tells that Midori can convince the others that she is a boy until she graduates from the school. It indicates that Midori succeeds in convincing others about herself as a boy.

### **CONCLUSION**

It can be concluded that this study proves that femininity and masculinity can be used by both sexes regardless of their sexes. The analysis shows that femininity and masculinity can be used by both sexes whether they want to choose to use femininity or masculinity and can also be used as mask to disguise and create new identity based on the needs of the person. Moreover, femininity and masculinity masks can also give power to the wearer in order to achieve his or her goal like Makoto and Midori who get power from their masks so that they could achieve their goals.

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