

Shakespeare Mangafied: Gender and Japanese Visual Language

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Abstract

This paper discusses a graphic adaptation of William Shakespeare's comedy, *Twelfth Night* (2011), produced by the British publishing company SelfMadeHero and explores how the metaphors in this manga negotiate gender constructions. With reference to Schmitt's investigation of metaphor and gender (2009), Cohn's analyses of Japanese Visual Language (2010, 2016) and a brief historical overview of *shojo* manga – a genre mainly aimed at girls and female adolescents – I argue that Shakespeare's complex metaphors used in the manga version should be (re)interpreted along the lines of both Japan's cultural history and the development of the *shojo* genre. The analyses of selected scenes demonstrate that allegedly stereotypical visualizations are not always as clichéd as they might appear and have to be perceived outside Western concepts of gender. Moreover, this paper emphasizes the necessity to consider the space, time and genre transfer between Europe and Asia, between the English Renaissance and the twenty-first century and between the Shakespearean drama and the medium of the comic.¹ The current investigation particularly addresses the question of how the visual metaphors of the Shakespeare manga negotiate gender constructions of the Elizabethan drama. This paper concludes that not only *metaphor* and *gender* but also *genre* need to be understood as highly conventionalized schemata in order to avoid 'doing gender' by focusing on oppositional metaphors only.

Dieser Beitrag befasst sich mit einer graphischen Adaptation von William Shakespeares Komödie, *Twelfth Night* (2011), und fragt nach der Verhandlung von Genderkonstruktionen vor dem Hintergrund der Metaphernforschung. Mit Rekurs auf Schmitts Überlegungen zu „Metaphernanalyse und die Konstruktion von Geschlecht“ (2009), Cohns Studien zur japanischen visuellen Sprache (JVL) (2010, 2016) sowie einem kurzen historischen Überblick des *shojo* Manga – ein Genre, das hauptsächlich auf Mädchen und weibliche Jugendliche abzielt – argumentiert dieser Beitrag, dass Shakespeares komplexe Metaphern in der Manga-Version sowohl vor der Folie der Kultur(-geschichte) Japans als auch unter der Berücksichtigung (der Entwicklung) des *shojo* Genres gelesen werden sollten. Die Analyse ausgewählter Szenen verdeutlicht die Notwendigkeit, vermeintlich stereotype Visualisierungen außerhalb eines westlichen Kontextes zu denken, da nicht alle Beispiele mit Geschlechter-Klischees spielen. Zudem ist der Raum-, Zeit- und Genretransfer zwischen Europa und Asien, zwischen der englischen Renaissance und dem 21. Jahrhundert sowie zwischen dem Dramentext Shakespeares und dem Medium Comic zu berücksichtigen. Der vorliegende Beitrag fragt vor allem danach, wie die visuellen Metaphern des hybriden Shakespeare-Mangas Gender-Konstruktionen des Elisabethanischen Dramas verhandeln. Schlussfolgernd

¹ Technically speaking, SelfMadeHero's graphic adaptations belong to the genre of the 'graphic novel' which is a book-length and self-contained narrative as opposed to the rather shorter and serialized medium of the comic book. For reasons of simplicity, I will use the label 'comic' as an umbrella term for all sequential art mentioned in this paper since the distinction between the two is not relevant for the current question.

kann gesagt werden, dass nicht nur *Geschlecht* und *Metapher*, sondern ebenso *Genre* als hochgradig stilisierte Schemata verstanden werden müssen, um ein 'doing gender' zu vermeiden, das allein auf oppositionelle Metaphern fokussiert und somit Gender-Stereotypen fortschreibt.

1. Shakespeare, Gender and *Twelfth Night*

New interpretations of Shakespeare's plays are hard to come by, or so one might think. However, "[m]uch has happened on planet Shakespeare since 1990", as Dennis Kennedy and Yong Li Lan observe (Kennedy/Lan 2010: 1). They refer to the so called cinematic Shakespeare renaissance heralded primarily by Kenneth Branagh in 1989² that set the tone for a multitude of following Shakespeare adaptations. The main objective of these visual productions was to adjust Shakespeare's texts in order to make them accessible to a broader and often younger audience.³ The successful endeavor thus uplifted the Shakespeare film and turned it into "an art form in its own right" (Helbig 2004: 172). This article, however, investigates a phenomenon that Douglas Lanier regards as the "extension of the project nineties film pursued", namely the appearance of graphic Shakespeare⁴ (Lanier 2010: 112).⁵ The UK in particular has witnessed the rise of a specific graphic medium that has been appropriating the Bard's texts since the 2000s: the manga. As a subgenre of graphic literature, these Japanese style comics are produced by English-language series such as *Shakespeare: The Manga Edition* (UK, Wiley 2008), *Puffin*

² Branagh made his Shakespeare film debut with *Henry V* (1989).

³ In line with John Storey, who praises the "cultural traffic" generated by popularizations of Shakespeare (Storey 2006: 5), Douglas Lanier promotes these and other forms of "Shakespop" and pleads to take popular Shakespeare seriously since it helps the audience to understand what Shakespeare might mean (Lanier 2006: 3, 5, 16).

⁴ This catchphrase includes both the (shorter) comic book, a serialized form of graphic literature with interconnected stories, and the graphic novel, which is, as already mentioned, a novel-length product narrating a complete and independent story (Arnold 2010: 5–6).

⁵ The merge of Shakespeare with the graphical is not new: As early as the 1940s, Albert Kanter issued the comic book series *Classic Illustrated* and produced adaptations such as *Julius Caesar* (1950), *Hamlet* (1952) and *Romeo and Juliet* (1956) among others. The effect of this mingling was an upgrade of the comic book: "Shakespeare lends the comic book reader a certain ethical maturity [...] which in turn imparts legitimacy to the comic books itself, making it into an art form in its own right" (Heuman/Burt 2002: 155).

Graphics (UK, 2005) and *Manga Shakespeare* (UK, SelfMadeHero, 2007–2011).⁶ Lanier coins this phenomenon the “mangafication” of Shakespeare (Lanier 2010: 104).⁷ Emma Hayley, the director of SelfMadeHero, ascribes the popularity of these productions to the influence of the *anime* market on the one hand, and to the overall “intensification of our visual culture” on the other (Hayley 2010: 268). Hayley’s objective is to introduce Shakespeare in a (visual) way that would be understood by first-time readers (Hayley 2010: 269). SelfMadeHero has published 14 *Manga Shakespeare* editions so far, ranging from *Romeo & Juliet* (2007) as their first volume to *The Merchant of Venice* (2009) and *Twelfth Night* (2011)⁸ as their most recent ones.

This paper focuses less on investigating the popularization of Shakespeare’s plays via the comic medium, but rather concentrates on specific visual metaphors used in manga since its language significantly differs from western comics. This also begs the question of how gender is constructed in these visual texts, especially since the current case study belongs to the category of the so called *shojo* manga (Jap. ‘virgin’), a subgenre targeted at girls and female adolescents. This essay not only seeks to explore the role visual metaphors play in the construction of (stereotypical) gender roles, but it shall also shed light on the significance of their cultural context. In line with Rudolf Schmitt (2009), I argue that metaphors are by no means linguistic universals, but rather in constant need of contextualization, especially against the backdrop of gender.

I have chosen SelfMadeHero’s Shakespeare manga *Twelfth Night* (2011) as a case study for the following reasons: first, the eponymous pre-text already plays with configurations of sex, gender and its subversions through the inherent cross-dressing and gender-bending. Second, the *shojo* genre as such has a lot in common with both the Shakespearean as well as the Japanese (Kabuki) theatre; both traditions exhibit strong notions of gender fluidity since their all-male casts blur heteronormative gender-boundaries (Sasaki 2013: 12–

⁶ Shakespeare manga series in Japan include Yoko Shimamura’s *Something like Shakespeare* (2000) or Hiromi Morishatas *Osaka Hamlet* (2005) among many others (Lanier 2010: 109).

⁷ In this context, Linda Hutcheon understands adaptations as “ongoing dialogical process[es]” (Hutcheon 2012: 21), which is why this paper seeks to avoid the outdated practice of fidelity criticism.

⁸ *Twelfth Night* was first released 2009 and then republished in 2011.

13; Furuya 2013: 162). Third, the *shojo* manga's visual language uses a certain sign system that only generates full meaning in its thematic and cultural context. As a result, gendered (and non-gendered) metaphors in Japanese visual language are far from universal. Along these lines, the central questions this gender-oriented paper intends to investigate are: How are gender roles represented visually in manga comics? What role does the manga's subgenre and its distinct characteristics play in this context? How do the visual metaphors of the Shakespeare manga negotiate gender constructions of the Elizabethan drama? Do they challenge or affirm conventional notions of sex and gender? Is the visual language of manga universal or can it only be understood in its (Japanese) context? What happens to Shakespeare's (western) women if they are "mangafied" (Grande 2010: 19) by (Asian) visual metaphors?

2. Gendered Metaphors: Restrictions and Extensions

In his paper from 2009, the psychologist and sociologist Rudolf Schmitt ascertains that studies on the metaphorical construction of gender have increased since the early 2000s. However, he criticizes the absence of the still most sophisticated theory of conceptual metaphor developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (cf. *Metaphors We Live By*, 1980) in these studies. According to Schmitt, their cognitive theory hardly plays any role here at all, and if it does, it is heavily shortened, rendering it insufficient for an adequate analysis of gendered metaphors. Hence, Schmitt's goal is to revisit central notions of this theory while aiming at a revision in order to contribute to an advancement of a metaphor analysis against the backdrop of gender. The current paper therefore seeks to further extend Schmitt's theoretical reflections by transferring them to a specific case study – the manga comic. Before I turn to the manga genre and its visual language, it is necessary to extract the major points of criticism formulated by Schmitt.⁹ Mainly, Schmitt criticizes previous studies on gendered metaphors for actually 'doing gender', i.e. for merely reaffirming gender binaries by focusing on oppositional or dichotomous metaphors instead of deconstructing these heteronormative binaries and

⁹ In the scope of this paper, this can only be done by discussing selected aspects that are relevant for the following analysis despite the awareness that this approach might pose a similar risk of shortening Schmitt's considerations.

putting them into cultural and thematic context (ibid.: 1, 4). Schmitt strongly emphasizes the importance of context:

Metaphorische Projektionen dürfen also nicht einfach binär und nicht frei von thematischen oder kulturellen Prägungen sein; eine Zuweisung bestimmter Geschlechterqualitäten durch Metaphern ist immer nur partiell möglich (Schmitt 2009: 4).

Instead of simply apprehending gendered metaphors as oppositional and non-contextual binaries, Schmitt understands both metaphor and gender as a *schema*, i.e. as “a recurrent pattern, shape, and regularity in, or of these ongoing ordering activities, [...] as meaningful structures” (Schmitt 2009: 1, 7; Johnson 1987: 29). He does so by interlocking Pierre Bourdieu’s older and less explicit concept of metaphorical schemata and gender with Lakoff and Johnson’s cognitive theory. According to Schmitt, this extended notion of the metaphor will enable related scholarship to even recognize metaphors, to avoid evoking gender stereotypes and to expose them as local constructions (Schmitt 2009: 1, 19, 20). It also amends Lakoff and Johnson’s ahistorical and latent biological-universal approach to metaphors (ibid.: 24, 27). The main problem of such studies is that they overlook shared metaphorical concepts between the sexes resulting in an involuntary reproduction of social – and hierarchical – stereotypes (ibid.: 34). Ultimately, Schmitt stresses that the category of gender can hardly be systematically included in cognitive theory. However, what a systematic analysis of metaphors can do is help to understand how gender binaries might have occurred in the first place (ibid.: 4, 40).

In line with Schmitt I will equally avoid the attempt of a systematic analysis of metaphors. This contribution rather represents an individual analysis by means of a single and non-representative case study that understands gender as one of many schemata in metaphor theory. I also wish to raise an awareness for the cultural construction of gendered metaphors and stress that they are never universal but fluid, flexible, potentially transgressive and always bound to their cultural context. Since this paper deals with visual metaphors in particular, it is necessary not only to take into account the general visual language of the chosen medium but also to consider the culture-specific (sub)genre it belongs to.

3. Japanese Visual Language, Genre and Gender

Adam Sexton mentions the “infinite adaptability” of Shakespeare’s plays and considers especially the comic to be a “natural medium” (Sexton 2008: 2) for the Bard’s works due to the strong visuality of the pre-texts, i.e. the multitude of metaphors Shakespeare uses. Sexton goes one step further by claiming that the comic is even more visual than a stage performance since it is able to depict any situation, unlike the theatre with its performative restrictions (ibid.: 2). Despite this rather sweeping claim that ignores the potential of the theatre and also underestimates the imaginative powers of the audience, he correctly observes that the comic works against the density of Shakespeare’s language: meaning, generated mainly by visual images in addition to written words, has to be decoded in a multidimensional way. Interestingly, Sexton emphasizes that although manga comics are able to include only a few of Shakespeare’s verses, they are “no less verbal” than the plays with one major difference; in contrast to most stage or film performances the reader can also see the words (ibid.: 3). This is important for those audiences and readers who are unfamiliar with the Bard’s texts since “Shakespeare is never easy, reading helps” (ibid.: 3).

In order to investigate the question of how gendered metaphors are constructed in the manga version of *Twelfth Night*, it is necessary to turn to the specific aesthetics or the visual style of Japanese graphic literature. At a first glance, all comics seem to maintain a common and “almost universal intelligibility” as stated by the cognitive scientist Neil Cohn (2010: 188). Comics are not only symbolic (e.g. *a rose = love*) and indexical (e.g. *smoke = fire*), but they are also iconic which means that many of their symbols have a fixed conventional style. Attempting to understand comics, it needs to be stressed that all signs rely on cultural agreement to a greater or lesser degree. If symbols depend on cultural conventions, as Cohn states (ibid.: 188–189), then this equally applies to metaphors. Furthermore, metaphors can be understood as schemata, as recurring patterns, that only make sense in their particular cultural contexts. As Cohn adds, comics display further conventions such as sweeping or kinetic lines that show motion as well as the typical speech and thought balloons that contain the character’s words, thoughts and emotions. In addition, the multiple units or panels create whole sequences and thus have a lot in common with film as they contain establishing images, close-ups and

panel transitions. Apart from these media-specific conventions, the academic discourse has to acknowledge that the language of manga differs significantly from western texts. Although scholars have already distinguished between the language of film and that of the comic, Cohn emphasizes that Japanese manga has its own vernacular or dialect, labeled “JVL” (Japanese Visual Language) (ibid.: 187, 189). Its specific style includes non-conventional symbols like flowers, white ‘fluff’ or lighting which are used to set a particular emotional atmosphere (ibid.: 192–194). A striking example is the phenomenon of the so called “super-deformation” or *chibi* (see Fig. 1).



Fig. 1: Schematized representations of emotions in JVL (Cohn 2016: 18)

This “hypercartoony” style spontaneously ‘shrinks’ manga characters to child-like figures: according to Cohn this convention elucidates their current emotions and also evokes a form of comic relief (ibid.: 192). As a result, the visual units, graphic codes and styles of manga demonstrate that readers require a certain ‘fluency’ in JVL to fully comprehend what kind of meaning is intended (ibid.: 196–199). As a result, JVL is based on certain schemata,

patterns, styles and features; the big eyes and hair as well as the small mouths and chins can be easily recognized by the adept reader of manga (ibid.: 188).¹⁰ I argue that this certainly also holds true to metaphors and gender; both constitute schemata that are strongly contextualized and thus require a certain degree of cultural knowledge to fully understand their meaning.

In order to contextualize both JVL and the metaphors in *Twelfth Night* (2011), it is equally important to consider the adaptation's gender-specific subgenre. SelfMadeHero's Shakespeare manga belongs to the category of *shojo*, a genre that is aimed at a younger, female audience. What distinguishes *shojo* from other genres such as *shonen*¹¹ (for boys) is their special focus on emotions and psychological conditions while their style can vary to a great degree (Cohn 2010: 189). The majority of these mangas, however, exhibit a particular "*shojo*-ness" of the heroine while also including a certain form of "cuteness (*kawaii*-*sa*)" generated by a doll-like appearance and "big, round eyes" (Saito 2014: 150). In terms of the genre's dominant themes, *shojo* mangas primarily feature romantic relationships, often in form of love triangles. More importantly, most of them display strong notions of gender-bending; the protagonists are usually female, sometimes rebellious heroines, who engage in cross-dressing. Often, the male protagonist falls in love with the heroine and is relieved when he finds out his desired love object is a girl (cf. Bryce/Davis 2010: 46-47; Cooper/Darlington 2010: 159, 161).

In the context of metaphor and gender Maana Sasaki underscores that Japanese manga in general "must be framed outside [...] Western models to deconstruct the projected ideologies of sex, gender, and sexuality" (Sasaki 2013: 2). In terms of gender-bending and cross-dressing, androgyny has a long history in Japanese culture; it is rooted in the Kabuki theatre and its gender-fluid *onnagata* actors that flourished during the Edo period (1603-1868)

¹⁰ The "God of Manga", Osamu Tezuka, one of the first manga artists in the 1940s, set the course for this visual style and was strongly influenced by Walt Disney's comics that exhibit similar styles such as the big eyes (Cohn 2010: 189).

¹¹ *Shonen* (Jap. 'first year' or 'boy') are mangas targeting boys and male adolescents. They exhibit a more 'angular' (Cohn 2010: 189) visual style and deal with themes such as adventure, crime and action among others. Manga for adult men are called *seinen* and those for adult women are coined *josei*. In order to avoid a 'doing gender' by focusing on oppositional genres, I will hereafter concentrate on *shojo* manga only.

(ibid.: 3, 11–12).¹² It was not until the Meiji Period (1886–1912), marked by the advent of modernity and the Westernization of Japanese culture, that the sexes gradually began to be separated which resulted in the institutional condemnation of gender ambiguity. The educational system inculcated the model of “good wife and mother” for girls and promoted the “dream of becoming a happy future [and virgin] wife”, a theme that is also dominant in *shojo*¹³ manga (ibid.: 7). Interestingly, this anti-androgynous and heteronormative period found temporary homosocial relationships between girls unproblematic but only as long as the girls maintained their ‘femininity’ (ibid.: 7–8). It was the women’s liberation movement of the 1970s that offered spaces of resistance for female artists. One of *shojo*’s subgenres, the so called *bishounen* or “Boy-love manga”, featured love relationships between beautiful and androgynous boys (ibid.: 8). Sasaki stresses that *bishounen* enabled their target readership to understand female desire and sexual agency by identifying with the androgynous boys and thus resisting social norms: “bishounen allows readers to escape sex and gender altogether” (ibid.: 9).

I have chosen the Shakespeare manga *Twelfth Night* (2011), a more or less straight adaptation¹⁴ of the Bard’s pre-text, because the latter already is “like a typical Shojo Manga in that it features identical gender-bending twins” as Minami Ryuta points out (2010: 111).¹⁵ Both play and adaptation feature the twins Viola and Sebastian who are separated during a shipwreck, thinking the other dead. Stranded on Illyria, Viola cross-dresses as ‘Cesario’ to serve Duke Orsino, whom she falls in love with, but who in turn desires Countess Olivia.

¹² *Shojo* as a distinct genre was popularized in the 1960s and after manga was officially recognized by the Japanese Ministry of Education in the 1990s, artists developed their own new visual style (Sasaki 2013: 4).

¹³ The literal translation of *shojo* into ‘virgin’ confirms the heteronormative ideology of this subgenre.

¹⁴ Nana Li’s (illustrator) and Richard Appignanesi’s (adaptor) manga *Twelfth Night* follows the plot and the characters of Shakespeare’s play. However, the comic is not divided into acts or scenes, but is narrated as a continuous story and includes selected events, themes and slightly modified verses of the pre-text.

¹⁵ In this context, Troni Grande refers to Gérard Genette’s metaphor of the palimpseste to describe the intertextual relation between the Bard and *shojo* manga. Yet, she emphasizes that this fusion is more than a “palimpsestuous redressing of Shakespeare” and states: “Shakespeare may be mangafied but is by no means mangled” (Grande 2010: 19).

Viola alias Cesario is commissioned to woo Olivia in the duke's favor, but the countess falls for the messenger instead. This hopeless love triangle is resolved by the appearance of Viola's twin brother Sebastian, who falls in love with Olivia thus allowing Viola and Orsino to finally declare their true love for each other.

I argue that on the one hand, the gender-bending and cross-dressing enable sexual agency since the lines between hetero- and homosexuality are blurred. On the other hand, however, heterosexual normativity is maintained especially in the manga version since the characters do not live out their latent homosexual desires. This especially holds true to Viola who eventually sheds off her 'masculine disguise' in SelfMadeHero's *Twelfth Night*. Although Shakespeare's comedies are also generally heteronormative, despite the potentially subversive gender-bending, since every woman is eventually assigned to a man, Viola gets to wear her 'male clothes' until the very end of the play *Twelfth Night*. This begs the question what the manga version does to female characters of the play and how its particular (visual) metaphors negotiate gender roles.

The following case study therefore investigates potential meanings of selected examples and can only function as an inspiration for further extensive studies on metaphor and gender. Metaphors are henceforth considered conventionalized schemata that can only be fully understood in their Japanese context. In line with Schmitt's critique, the case study also strives to avoid a 'doing gender' and thus does not focus on gendered oppositions. It rather aims at a deconstruction of gender roles by contextualizing the metaphors found in this particular Shakespeare *shojo* manga.

4. Complex Metaphors and Cultural Conventions in *Twelfth Night* (2011)

Shakespeare's play begins with the information "*Music. Enter ORSINO, Duke of Illyria, CURIO and other lords.*" (act 1.1, lines 1-3). It continues with the well-known soliloquy by Orsino that is in the following paralleled by the words used in the speech balloons of the manga version:

ORSINO [play]

If music be the food of love, play on,
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken, and so die.

ORSINO [manga]

If music be the food of love, play on,
Give me excess of it, that
The appetite may sicken and so die.

These first three verses already employ a complex metaphor; MUSIC IS FOOD, LOVE IS THE HUMAN BODY THAT NEEDS FOOD, and if music is food, love needs music to survive, but love can also overindulge (“surfeit”) in music/food and thus lose its “appetite”. Orsino is introduced as a character suffering from a severe case of love-sickness (“sicken”) and hopes that the music he hears will play so long that his love-sickness will die from an overdose. Shakespeare’s play contains words only, so the audience has to use its imagination to make sense of the metaphor. The manga comic, however, is able to visualize these words. After nine colored pages that depict the *dramatis personae* of *Twelfth Night*, the manga continues with its media-specific black and white pages.¹⁶ While a long vertical panel on the left of page 12 depicts a castle, a broader and larger panel stretches across the upper half of both pages 12 and 13 and portrays an image of Orsino in a lateral medium shot on the left side of this unit. He is sprawled on an armchair, pressing a framed image¹⁷ against his chest while a band in the background on the right side of the panel is playing music. Below the image of Orsino on page 12 there are two smaller panels, one with a detail shot of a string instrument and white ‘fluff’ hovering next to it, and one with a close-up of Orsino’s face holding the back of his hand against his forehead while the words in his speech bubble read “Enough! No more! Tis not so sweet now as it was before” (TN 12).

¹⁶ The British manga reads from left to right and not from right to left as is the case in Japan.

¹⁷ It is an image of Olivia as the readers learn later on page 16.



Fig. 2: Visualization of the complex love-metaphor in SelfMadeHero's *Twelfth Night* (2011) (TN 12-13)

The complex metaphor of 'music is (deadly) food for love' is visualized by a drawing of a long musical notation stretching across the upper side of both pages, starting at the castle's tower on the very left of page 12, rising above Orsino's head and the heads of his band and 'falling' behind one of Orsino's speech bubbles in a smaller panel on the right side of page 13 containing the words "That strain again! It had a dying fall!". What strikes the eye here is not only the visualization of Shakespeare's metaphor for love-sickness that dominates the whole exposition by incorporating images of sheet music, musicians and musical instruments, but the fact that this metaphor is associated to an androgynous male character. Orsino is wearing trousers, a wide belt, a kind of military coat with a fur or plush collar and yet his facial features, including his high cheekbones, large eyes as well as his long black fringe, make it hard to determine his gender, especially for those Western readers not familiar with manga. One could indeed read the music/love-metaphor as gendered – in this case connoted female since emotions have been

traditionally associated with femininity – and also interpret the link between this metaphor and a ‘male’ but yet more or less androgynous character as subversive. I argue, however, that such an interpretation perpetuates stereotypical gender schemata which in turn reinforces a form of ‘doing gender’ in a way criticized by Schmitt. The question should rather be how these potentially subversive visualizations of metaphors are culturally constructed and why they might be understood differently by various readerships. The answer is quite simple; this Shakespeare comic is also a *shojo* manga – characters are meant to appear androgynous. This makes sense considering the history of manga, its roots in the Kabuki theatre, and the genre’s development through phases of resistance exemplified by the subcategory of *bishounen* which heavily draws on notions of androgyny. In other words: neither the (supposedly) gendered metaphor of love-sickness nor Orsino’s constructed gender-fluidity is progressive; their utilization and visualization simply owe to the (sub)genre of the manga. Symbols like white ‘fluff’ that contribute to the emotional and in this case love-sick atmosphere of the narrative are also justified by the tradition of JVL. This visual metaphor (‘fluff’) for strong emotions or love is a common convention in Japanese culture that requires a certain literacy and should never be read outside its cultural context. The visual metaphor of love-sickness thus neither challenges nor affirms gender roles of the Shakespeare play since Orsino is equally introduced as a melancholic character in the pre-text. His androgyny in the manga version, however, does have a certain subversive quality as it ironically refers to the cross-dressing and gender-bending of both the Elizabethan stage and the Kabuki theatre of the Edo Period. Both theatre traditions had the *potential* to serve as a critique of (heteronormative) social norms. In this case, one could indeed consider a form of convergence of two different traditions that contribute to a certain degree of gender bending.

In act 2, scene 2 of the play, Viola alias Cesario finally learns about Olivia’s love for her. Devastated, she realizes the full dimension of this unfortunate entanglement caused by her disguise and engages in verbal self-flagellation:

VIOLA [play]

[...]

Disguise, I see, thou art a wickedness,
Wherein the pregnant enemy does much.
How easy is it for the proper false
In women's waxen hearts to set their forms!
Alas, our frailty is the cause, not we,
For such as we are made of, such we be.
How will this fadge? my master loves her
dearly;
And I, poor monster, fond as much on him,
And she, mistaken, seems to dote on me.
What will become of this? As I am man,
My state is desperate for my master's love
As I am woman (now alas the day!)
What thriftless sighs shall poor Olivia
breathe
O time, thou must untangle this, not I,
It is too hard a knot for me to untie!
(act 2.2, lines 27–41)

VIOLA [manga]

Disguise, I see, thou art a wickedness,
[...] my master loves her dearly;
And I, poor monster, fond as much on him;
And she, mistaken, seems to dote on me.
What will become of this? [...]
O time! thou must untangle this, not I;
It is too hard a knot for me to untie!

In Shakespeare's play, Viola not only feels guilty for fooling Olivia, but she blames female "frailty" – the stuff women are "made of" – for this catastrophe. The obviously gendered metaphor "waxen hearts" further highlights women's alleged weakness. In the play, Viola acknowledges that as long as she is in her disguise ("As I am man"), her love for Orsino is hopeless, so is Olivia's love for her ("As I am a woman"). Interestingly, Shakespeare's verses are heavily abbreviated in the manga version of *Twelfth Night*. All of the previously mentioned associations and gender-stereotypical metaphors are cut. What remains is a critique of disguise as something to be deemed evil ("wickedness") and the non-gendered metaphor of Viola as monstrous. In both versions Viola hopes that time will dissolve this entanglement.

The abbreviated content of Shakespeare's stanza appears in seven of Viola's thought balloons that are spread over two pages of the manga (68–69). The

metaphor of the love triangle's unfortunate entanglement is visualized by images of the three characters – Orsino, Viola and Olivia – on a black background, each of them reaching out with one arm to his/her object of love and thus forming what resembles a circle. At the same time, they seem to be both entangled in and connected by depictions of ropes as well as cogwheels that evoke the notion of time. These symbols together form a complex visual metaphor that illustrates the unhappy love triangle. What is special about these two pages is that it lacks a conventional panel structure with one exception; the lower side of page 69 displays a medium shot of a super-deformed version of Viola scratching her head and sitting on what looks like the sill of a white 'window' on the otherwise pitch-black background. Next to this miniature version is a stack of books, and the thought bubble contains the incorrect equation " $1 + 1 + 1 = 2?$ ", indicating the impossibility of solving the problem, i.e. of 'untying the knot'.



Fig. 3: Unfortunate love triangles, (non)gendered metaphors and super-deformations (TN 68–69)

At a first glance the uninitiated reader could interpret the 'shrunk' version of Viola with its large head, big eyes and sad and confused facial expression as a metaphor for the infantilization of Viola, thus evoking a gendered metaphor. As Sasaki explains, however, the large eyes in manga function as a 'window' to the soul and offer the readers access to the feelings of a character (Sasaki 2013: 5). Further, open eyes can equally indicate an active gaze, especially when turned toward a love object (ibid.: 21). Viola does not gaze at Orsino on these pages. Nevertheless, she is the only character with open eyes including both her larger and miniature version. The JVL convention of super-deformation simply serves the purpose of creating an emotional atmosphere. Here, this visual technique amplifies Viola's despair and is not to be understood as a gendered metaphor of the female protagonist's infantilization. I argue, though, that the deletion of all gender-problematic verses from Shakespeare's text in the manga adaptation undermines the potential of Viola's cross-dressing. The ironic effect of Viola lamenting about the credulity of women who fall in love with other women pretending to be men while Shakespeare's all-male actors where themselves pretending to be women pretending to be men is almost completely erased in the manga version. The major gender-bending potential of this example lies in Orsino's androgynous appearance; without a knowledge of both the plot and/or the *shojo* manga genre it would be difficult to immediately determine his gender. It is his gender fluidity that renders the manga version potentially progressive since it escapes heteronormativity. Then again his appearance owes to the tradition of the *shojo* genre and its inherent gender-bending. This repeatedly demonstrates that the kind of interpretation heavily depends on both the reader's perspective and the (cultural) context of the images, symbols and metaphors.

Another example of the questionable phenomenon of super-transformation or *chibi* related to gender can be found in the scene in which Olivia is rejected by Viola alias Cesario. In act 3.1 of Shakespeare's play Olivia wants to know how 'Cesario' feels about her. When Viola tells her "I pity you" (line 123), Olivia hopefully replies "That's a degree to love" (line 124) only to be then painfully rejected again with the words "No, not a grize: for 'tis a vulgar proof / That very oft we pity enemies" (line 125-126). The manga visualizes this hurtful rejection by 'shrinking' Olivia to a miniature version of herself with wide and empty eyes. She is depicted in front of shades of broken glass while the arrow of a tiny panel containing the word "ENEMY" pierces her chest. This visual

metaphor clearly emphasizes Olivia's shock (see Fig. 1), triggered by the words, and her consequential heartbreak. Given the manga's genre, this technique is simply to be considered a convention. I argue that the metaphor is not gendered, especially not from a Japanese perspective. One might ask, however, whether only female characters are super-deformed in *Twelfth Night* which might indicate the use of gendered metaphors. This is definitely not the case; male characters like Malvolio (e.g. p. 137), Sir Andrew Aguecheek (p. 125), Sir Toby Belch (p. 109), Fabian (p. 109) or Feste (p. 196) are equally 'shrunk' sooner or later in the narrative to illustrate their strong feelings and increase the emotional atmosphere (see Fig. 4).



Fig. 4: The conventionalized technique of *chibi* is applied to female and male characters (TN 117, 109)

After the disentanglement of the love triangle, Orsino and Viola unite. In the final scene of Shakespeare's play, the Duke tells his future wife "For so you shall be while you are a man / But when in other habits you are seen / Orsino's mistress, and his fancy's queen" (line 378–380) before they exit. Put simply: Orsino will call Viola by her male name as long as she continues her cross-dressing. Although Viola is not granted any final words, there is no indication in the play that she rids herself of these garments. This grants Shakespeare's comedy a certain subversive potential since Orsino declares his love to an androgynous character and thus demonstrates that he – at least temporarily – is able to look past her gendered body. The manga version, however, ends on a quite different note. The last two pages display an almost panel-free *mise-en-scène* including a happy couple surrounded by *shojo*-typical

flowers and white ‘fluff’ that amplify the romantic atmosphere. While Viola is illustrated still wearing her ‘masculine clothes’ on page 204, she has transformed into a female connoted character on page 205, indicated by her dress and enormous cleavage.

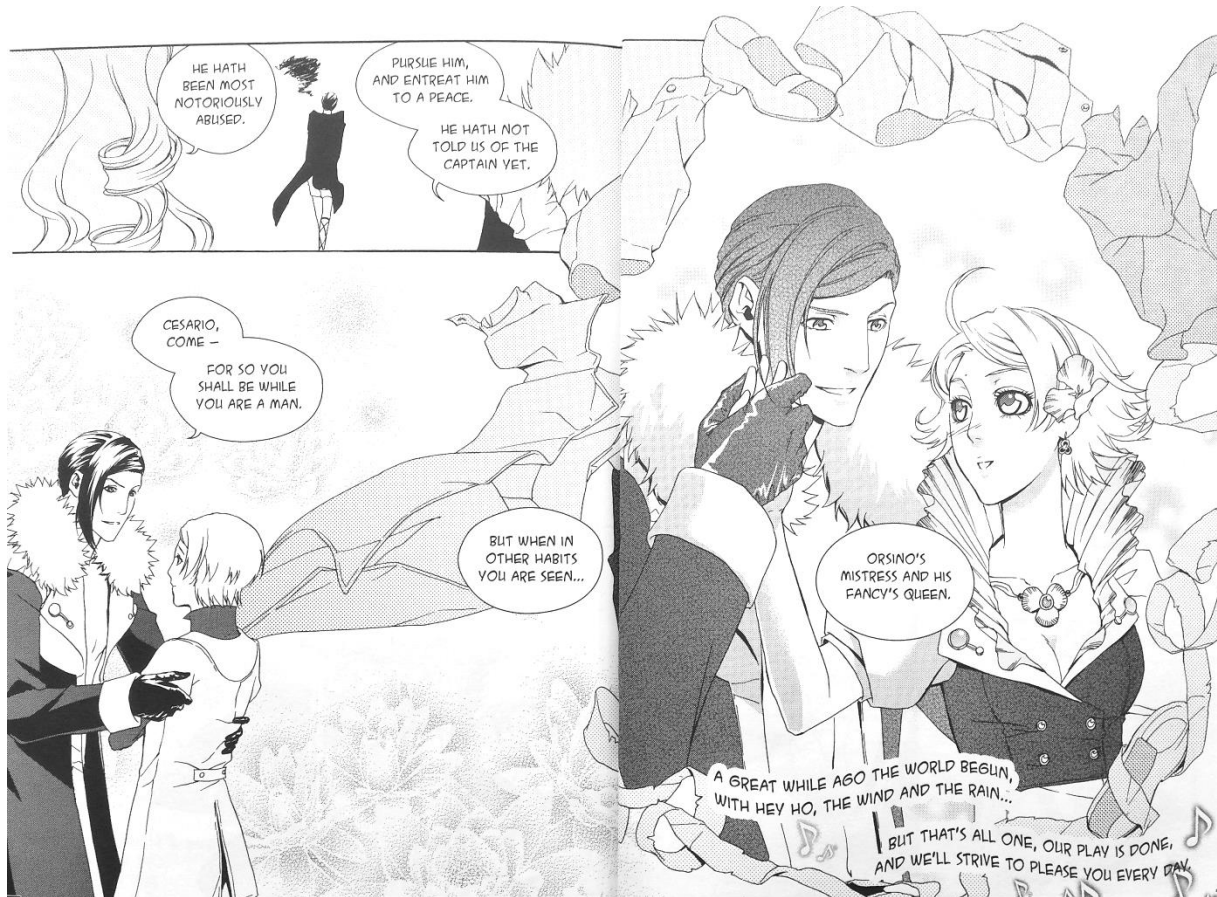


Fig. 5: The ‘clothes’-metaphor renders Viola’s gender fluidity unacceptable (TN 204–205)

Clothes play a major role on these pages since they are visualized as ‘floating’ or ‘flying’ in parts – including a coat, some shirts and shoes – from behind Viola on page 204 to the final page where they ‘hover’ and circle around the love couple.¹⁸ I argue that this visualization is indeed a gendered metaphor as it signals that Viola’s ‘inappropriate’ cross-dressing and gender-bending was the only obstacle to their (heterosexual) love. This metaphor is combined with lyrics, indicated by symbols of notes and the spatial arrangement of the verses, and read “And we’ll strive to please you every day”.¹⁹ These words evoke the

¹⁸ It also visually quotes the music chord from the first pages of the manga *Twelfth Night*.

¹⁹ These words are actually sung by the clown in Shakespeare’s play. By concealing the speaker in this image any comic effect is prevented.

impression that Viola can only succeed in love if she pleases her future husband by ridding herself of the 'false' disguise. In this respect, the manga is more conservative than the play in that it denies Viola her cross-dressing and gender-bending. This implicates that the end of this manga complies with the kind of *shojo* popularized during the anti-androgynous and heteronormative Meiji Period in which the sexes began to be further separated while the educational system inculcated the gendered ideal of the 'good wife (and future mother)'. Here, too, Viola is represented as the happy (and virgin) wife, an image promoted to control young girls' sexuality during nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Japan.

5. Conclusion: Metaphor, Gender and Genre as Schemata

Although the Japanese word "manga" translates to "whimsical pictures" (Sexton 2008: 2), this paper has shown that Japanese Visual Language is far from odd. Instead, it is a highly conventionalized language with a multi-layered sign system; its symbols and metaphors can only be properly understood when embedded in their thematic and cultural context. Shakespeare's complex metaphors used in the manga must hence be interpreted against the backdrop of Japanese cultural history as well as the (history of) the *shojo* manga genre. Although some symbols and visual metaphors associated with particular characters that signal love such as music, 'fluff' or flowers might seem gendered from a Western perspective, they are in fact constructed in accordance with the tradition of JVL and require a certain literacy. This especially holds true to the technique of super-transformation or *chibi* that – within the framework of this case study – is applied to characters of all genders and thus does not serve as a gendered metaphor. The major gender-problematic metaphor in the exemplary analysis manifests on the very last pages of the manga *Twelfth Night*. The subversive potential of Viola's androgynous appearance is undermined by ridding her of her 'masculine' clothes in order to fulfil her role as a 'happy future bride' which renders the manga more conservative than the eponymous pre-text. As a result, this exemplary analysis demonstrates that the complex space, time and genre transfers between Europa and Asia, between Shakespeare's pre-text and the comic medium as well as between British and Asian (historic) theatre

traditions must always be taken into account in order to adequately interpret a Shakespeare manga with regard to metaphor and gender.

I shall conclude this paper by reflecting on the *shojo* genre and the question whether JVL is a gender-neutral language. I argue that as such, it is; flowers, 'fluff' and *chibi* are highly conventionalized symbols and visual techniques that indicate strong emotions and are associated to all genders in *Twelfth Night*. However, these symbols occur more often in genres that are aimed at girls as can clearly be seen by the example of *shojo*. This becomes obvious when taking a closer look at other Shakespeare (*shonen*) mangas published by SelfMadeHero: Neither *Richard III* (2007), *Macbeth* (2008) nor *Othello* (2009) exhibit moments of super-transformation or *chibi* despite the fact that Shakespeare's tragedies and histories equally offer instances of romance and comic relief, albeit to a lesser degree due to the fact that they are not comedies. I argue that the construction of gender in manga is not only a question of metaphor – it is especially a question of genre and the degree to which certain mangas use these flamboyant visual cues. As a result, it is possible to understand not only metaphor and gender, but also genre as schemata, i.e. as *local* constructions that can only be deconstructed by putting them into thematic, historical and cultural context. Only then can a 'doing gender' by means of an analysis of metaphor be avoided – an endeavor that should be at the heart of every gender-oriented investigation.

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