

CHAPTER 2

## Box-Lunch Etiquette

### *Conduct Guides and Kabuki Onnagata*<sup>1</sup>

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Masuyama is an ardent admirer of the art of Sanogawa Mangiku. . . . Mangiku has prevented Masuyama from becoming disappointed with him even backstage where things tend to turn topsy-turvy. He always follows “The Words of Ayame” so gracefully. . . . When he has no choice but to take lunch in the presence of visitors in the green room, for example, he will elegantly excuse himself and take his lunch quickly but quietly. Just seeing him from behind, nobody could ever tell that he was actually eating.

—“*Onnagata*,” Mishima Yukio (1925–1970)

This epigraph is from Mishima Yukio’s short story “*Onnagata*,” which portrays one Sanogawa Mangiku, a fictitious contemporary kabuki actor allegedly modeled after an *onnagata* renowned in Mishima’s time.<sup>2</sup> *Onnagata* are actors, usually male, specializing in women’s roles in the all-male kabuki theater.<sup>3</sup> As the premier *onnagata* of his day, Mangiku is depicted as an actor of talent, beauty, and discipline, whose performances regularly win critical acclaim. And yet, rather than concentrating on the actor’s work onstage alone, the text emphasizes Mangiku’s way of eating lunch in his dressing room *in order to* illustrate that he is indeed a virtuoso actor. Although this twentieth-century story is mostly about Mangiku’s life offstage, that cannot explain why the text associates Mangiku’s daily behavior directly with his excellence in theatrical performance. Why is conduct *offstage* made responsible for artistry *onstage*, such as singing (*ka*), dancing (*bu*), and acting (*ki*)? Are well-behaved

pianists always maestros? Are all divas well mannered? Or, is this just a whim of the writer?

This offstage–onstage correlation might not have “natural” reasoning of any sort, but seen in the context of the history of kabuki, noting the relationship happens to be perceptive of Mishima. “The Words of Ayame” (*Ayamegusa*), mentioned in the epigraph, is in fact a historical document published in the Edo era (1600–1867),<sup>4</sup> and it instructs *onnagata* to eat a box lunch in a specific way, not to eat a nighttime snack, and so on.<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, the text declares that *onnagata* should act like women all the time, totally erasing the offstage–onstage boundary. The justification for this given in “The Words of Ayame” is that actors cannot switch their identities so quickly. This sounds simple, but there is much more than that to Ayame’s advice.

The importance of Ayame’s advice here is multifold. To begin with, the performance theory articulated in “The Words of Ayame” in and of itself presupposes the holistic nature of what has sometimes been differentiated in modern times: “natural reality in daily life” versus “performed theatricality onstage,” “one’s identity” versus “physical appearance,” and “mind” versus “body.” The Edo-era fusion of offstage–onstage that “The Words of Ayame” demonstrates, however, encourages us to revisit the modern demarcation between “interiority” and “exteriority” of human beings. Another reason the advice is important derives from the societal milieu in which such holistic perception was located. The above-mentioned understanding of people and their lives, which presupposes those kinds of unison (mind and body, for example), was not confined to theater but was rather a basic understanding, common sense taken for granted in Edo-era Japan. For instance, the imperative to keep performing one’s designated role “around the clock” applied to people in society at large, not only to theater practitioners.

The two above observations together open the enticing potential for reading treatises about kabuki acting designed for *onnagata* as manuals of conduct for a wide-ranging readership. As we will see, kabuki-related publications boasted a substantial readership well beyond actual theatergoers, not to mention kabuki actors, as they not only provided information for the playgoers but also functioned as a virtual “theatergoing” experience for the broader audience of kabuki lovers who could not afford to go to playhouses. To put it another way, treatises about acting were also pastime reading for those who enjoyed the theater, and it would tell them that *onnagata* should adhere to specific rules of decorum for women, which they say is natural to women’s sentiment, and

therefore, for example, take lunch quietly. Here we can observe a process by which particular actions (bodily conduct) are not only conjoined with appropriate femininity but are also received as being so conjoined by wide audiences, hence creating the aforementioned potential for *onnagata* treatises to be used as conduct manuals. It is with this in mind that this chapter studies a few *onnagata* treatises, such as “The Words of Ayame.”

#### ACTING AROUND THE CLOCK: ORDINARY LIFE “VERSUS” EXTRAORDINARY PERFORMANCE?

“The Words of Ayame” is a treatise of *onnagata* artistry, its words and ideas attributed to a renowned *onnagata*, Yoshizawa Ayame I (1673–1729). Extant theater reviews of his day demonstrate that Ayame won critical acclaim for his spectacular performances. As we will see shortly, what was most praised was his ability to pass as a woman. Commendation accorded this skill shows us the flip side of the same coin—the understanding that it is actually everyday life that constitutes stage performance. Simplifying to the extreme, there is no essential difference between so-called real life and stage performance. Even such a seemingly trivial action as eating lunch in private becomes subject to scrutiny, for it determines artistry onstage. “The Words of Ayame” makes this point clear in passages such as these:

It is hardly possible for an *onnagata* to be considered proficient unless he spends his everyday life as a woman.<sup>6</sup>

An *onnagata* remains an *onnagata* even inside his dressing room. He should take this to heart. When he takes a box lunch, for example, he should do so out of sight of the people in the room.<sup>7</sup>

In other words, *onnagata*’s performance of women should not be limited to acting onstage.

Such an emphasis on offstage acts is not unique to “The Words of Ayame” but is found in many tracts aimed at *onnagata*. “The Secret Transmissions of an *Onnagata*” (*Onnagata hiden*),<sup>8</sup> a treatise attributed to another famous *onnagata*, Segawa Kikunojō I (1693–1749), demonstrates an extreme case of this union of offstage and onstage behavior. According to the compiler of this text, Kikunojō was in full dress on his deathbed, in accordance with the *onnagata* garb code.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, *The Pioneering Analects from Past and Present Actors* (*Kokon yakusha rongo sakigake*, 1772), which includes “The Secret Transmissions of an *Onnagata*,” contains another intriguing example to the same effect: “The

duty of *onnagata* is first and foremost to imitate women. If an *onnagata* goes to a bad neighborhood after dark, he should take sufficient care to wear a new loincloth. [This is far more important] than carrying a sword. He would look beautiful even when he was stripped.”<sup>10</sup> Theories on *onnagata* artistry in these texts are quite similar in their attention to everyday life as the base of *onnagata* artistry, whether it is nocturnal walking, eating, or even dying. These texts do not recognize a decisive boundary between onstage performance and daily conduct offstage but situate the foundation of acting in everyday life.

This leads to an important criterion for the achievement of superb acting, that is, verisimilitude. Many kabuki-related publications in the Edo period present plausibility as one of the most important criteria for acting. In the case of *onnagata*, plausibility involves whether or not he can pass as a woman. To understand this point more fully, let us look at some theater reviews from Ayame’s time. A cluster of periodicals called “actor-critique booklets” (*yakusha hyōbanki*) began to be published regularly from the mid-seventeenth century to provide theater lovers (both playgoers and those kabuki lovers who could not go to playhouses) with news concerning kabuki and its actors. A certain actor-critique booklet in 1704 has this to say about Ayame: “A genuine woman from top to bottom, no matter what he has under his loincloth. Regardless of what role he is made to play, whether a high-ranking lady-in-waiting, a warrior’s wife, or a maidservant, Ayame completely reproduces the woman as is, without any element of fabrication.”<sup>11</sup> In short, Ayame is said to have genuinely looked like a woman, and *The Pioneering Analects from Past and Present Actors*, a theater book, presented Ayame as “peerless in all the three cities” (*sangoku musō*) and “incomparable through all ages” (*kokon murui*).<sup>12</sup>

Kikunojō is also praised in an uncannily similar way. For example, he appears in an actor-critique booklet published in 1746 as “a person who doesn’t need the character [of *gata* in the compound noun] *onnagata*.”<sup>13</sup> *Onnagata* minus *gata* leaves *onna*: woman. Here, the compound word *onnagata*, derived from *onna*, returns to its “origin” *onna*; the performer of womanliness (*onnagata*) is restored to her “rightful” position, that is to say, “woman as is” (*onna*).<sup>14</sup> Likewise, the aforementioned theater book, *The Pioneering Analects from Past and Present Actors*, describes Kikunojō and his younger brother Kikujirō as follows:

[Kikunojō] lacked nothing as far as women’s technique was concerned. . . . Most *onnagata* become sexually unattractive as they age, but Kikunojō was extremely good at love scenes in *furisode* [a long-sleeved *kimono* exclusively

for youth] until he was over sixty years of age [*sic*]. He was not only beautiful but also skillful. He was none other than one of the founders of the *waka-onnagata* [young *onnagata*] tradition.

And his younger brother Segawa Kikujirō was also a master. . . . Kikujirō's acting was in accordance with "The Words of Ayame." It was maestro Ayame who left the thirty-item [*sic*] saying. Also, *for his entire life*, Kikujirō did not act like a man. The Segawa brothers truly mastered the woman's Way, from *everyday life* to mindset, and to various [artistic] techniques suitable for women.<sup>15</sup>

Notice here that Kikujirō's reputation is justified not only by his performance onstage but also by his conduct offstage, as obvious from such phrases as "for his entire life" and "everyday life" above.

Of equal significance is that Ayame and Kikunojō are merely representative of *onnagata* in those days and are by no means exceptional. Kikujirō attests to this in the above excerpt, as does another *onnagata*, called Kokan Tarōji (?–1713), who is associated with a fascinating anecdote himself. While dressed as a thirty-something matron, Tarōji lingered in front of the stage during an interlude in the performance. Nearby audience members moved to make room for him, thinking that he must be a female audience member searching for an open seat. "Sequel to 'The Dust in the Ears'" (*Zoku Nijinshū*), the text that includes this anecdote, presents it as irrefutable proof that "Tarōji was indeed such a maestro."<sup>16</sup>

We need to put this praise for the *onnagata*'s convincing offstage performance of femininity in historical perspective, however. Reputations for such performances are specific to premodern kabuki, and we should not generally apply our knowledge of contemporary *onnagata* to those of the past, and vice versa. When the new government in the Meiji era (1868–1912) adopted Westernization and modernization as state policy, it opened the way for rapid and far-reaching transformations in Japanese society, affecting everything from the status of actors to education systems, and to the epistemological grids by which people made sense of things, including how to understand gender. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss all the changes the Meiji period brought to theater, suffice it to say that kabuki was not free of transformations.<sup>17</sup> It is thus important to keep in mind that the image of *onnagata* in common currency today (especially the notion that "*onnagata*'s artistic femininity and women's femininity are mutually exclusive") does not apply to the kabuki theater in the Edo period.

While this chapter mainly uses texts on the artistry of *onnagata*, the points discussed here are not necessarily unique to *onnagata*. Consider

the following remark an obscure *onnagata* made to the celebrated male-role actor Sakata Tōjūrō I (ca. 1647–1709): “Since I am an *onnagata*, I work hard to imitate women. Because you are a male-role actor, you should work hard to imitate men.”<sup>18</sup> This remark takes as truth the idea that acting *is* imitating, regardless of the gender of the character being played. It is in this broader landscape that we should understand the notion that the ability to plausibly pass as a “real woman” constitutes a significant criterion for any *onnagata* performance. And it is in this very landscape that such a seemingly unrelated act as eating one’s lunch offstage in a manner allegedly conceived as womanly is explicitly connected with artistry onstage. In this sense, the offstage–onstage fusion is not so much specific to *onnagata* artistry as applicable to all kabuki dramaturgy. What is more, the significance of such fusion does not stop here. The offstage–onstage correlation is contiguous to another “pair”: body and mind. If you cannot help but betray your ordinary life in extraordinary situations, such as in theatrical performance, then, your face cannot help but reveal what you are feeling, which is to say, can we separate the face from feeling so clearly?

#### KEEPING UP APPEARANCES: EXTERIORITY “VERSUS” INTERIORITY?

“The Words of Ayame” and “The Secret Transmissions of an *Onnagata*” make seemingly endless reference to humans’—in this case, female humans’—behavior, actions, and the like. A relatively short guide, “The Secret Transmissions of an *Onnagata*” consists of ten terse technical instructions. Their specificity, however, shows us that women look, dress, and/or behave in accordance with their specific emotional state or social class. The text includes instructions on the use of props and makeup for a womanly appearance (secs. 1, 2, 6, and 7); the relationship between women’s external appearances and their internal states and identity, such as their emotions and their social standing (secs. 3, 4, and 5); and how to use cosmetics to keep an *onnagata*’s face wrinkle-free (sec. 8).<sup>19</sup>

In comparison, “The Words of Ayame” contains much more detail. Nevertheless, the same specificity obtains, that is, the approximation of states and appearances. Ayame requires that *onnagata* keep their appearance mischievous yet their minds chaste (sec. 3), live as women in everyday life (sec. 7), hesitate to perform strong women’s roles (sec. 8), avoid purposely trying to make the audience laugh (sec. 9), give the

highest priority to chastity (sec. 13), remain *onnagata* even inside the dressing room (sec. 22), hide their wives and children (sec. 23), try not to deviate from women's sentiment (sec. 24), and remain young (sec. 29).<sup>20</sup>

Importantly, the texts greatly emphasize the body, such as its posture and movements. Yet training the body is not an end in itself, because the body carries significance due in large part to its role or its capability to represent the character's state of mind. For example, "The Secret Transmissions of an *Onnagata*" reads:

When a woman hugs a man while faking love, she will hug him over both his arms, and face sideways. If it is with true affection, she will cling to him, with her arm deeply under his left arm; [by following this principle], then, you will appear realistic.<sup>21</sup>

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When they are upset, women cry before [speaking].<sup>22</sup>

When a character in kabuki is in a specific emotional state, be it love or anger, the actor playing the character should copy the external appearance, such as moving his hands in a particular way or becoming speechless. (As for the "speechless" example, see the next section for its toxic implications.) "The Words of Ayame" underlines the mental aspect of a womanly appearance much more than does "The Secret Transmissions of an *Onnagata*," but such is also coupled with practical instruction in body movements (secs. 2, 6, 12, and 24).<sup>23</sup> Here it is presupposed that one's outer appearance speaks of his or her thoughts, attitudes, and emotions.<sup>24</sup>

"The Words of Ayame" and "The Secret Transmissions of an *Onnagata*" make connections on many levels between physical appearances and the "essence" of being.<sup>25</sup> On one level, this is a matter of people's identities. Eiko Ikegami states, "External appearance, as signified by a person's choice of costume, hairstyle, cosmetics, and other decorative accessories, can function as a critical means of expressing as well as classifying a person's categorical identity; in other words, it becomes a powerful human 'identity kit.'"<sup>25</sup> Here I add that the body itself, and how one uses it, is already his or her "identity kit." Even the act of walking illustrates this. In terms of human locomotion, the theater director and critic Takechi Tetsuji (1912–1988) proposes that, from the mid-Edo era onward, there were at least two types of limb combinations. While those engaged in physical labor such as farming and mining employed a walking style in which the right leg and the right hand moved forward at the same time, city dwellers in urbanized areas walked in a style in which the right leg and the left hand simultaneously moved for-

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ward.<sup>26</sup> “Don’t judge a person by his or her looks,” we might be told, but in Edo-era Japan you would certainly be judged by your clothing, coiffure, ornaments, gait, or what have you. This is no wonder, as the master discourse in the society of those days dictated that how you appear *is* who you are.

Appearance and existence are thus interchangeable in this context. Moreover, an *onnagata*’s training of the body as “that which equals what exists inside” goes beyond creating the socially approved identity kit. In other words, the *onnagata* is not concerned merely with surface appearance. Here it is helpful to remember the Buddhist notion of “mind and body as one entity” (*shinshin ichinyo*). This concept of a unified body–mind is of great moment, especially in the context of *shu-784d55d*  
*gyō* (cultivation). *Shugyō* refers to the physical training necessary to ebrary  
master artistic techniques perfectly so that the practitioner’s body completely internalizes the techniques as second nature. This practice of *shugyō* is prevalent among what is generally subsumed under the name of Japanese traditional culture, for example, Japanese dance, swordsmanship, and tea ceremony, to name just a few. Although *shugyō* has been adopted as a training method in these broad realms well beyond religious communities, Yuasa Yasuo reminds us of the importance of its Buddhist origin, for *shugyō* means “a pragmatic enterprise aiming at spiritual training and improvement of character *through training of one’s body*.”<sup>27</sup> Not only is the body an identity kit, but it, in effect, *is* the mind.

*Shugyō* consists of two phases: repeated somatic training (such as that of posture and movements) and internalization of the technique in question as second nature. Thomas P. Kasulis deftly summarizes Yuasa’s point about *shugyō* as follows: “Gradually . . . the posture becomes natural or second nature. It is *second* nature because the mind has entered into the dark consciousness and given it a form; it is an acquired naturalness.”<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, *shugyō* seeks the way to make something quasi-immediate out of what is mediated.

It is intriguing to compare this understanding (“quasi-immediacy can be created out of what is mediated”) with another understanding held by critical theory today. In contemporary critical theory, immediacy is considered highly dubious. For example, no matter how immediate it might sound, a shout of “ouch!” is impossible without an understanding of the meaning of this “word,” and no human being projects this seemingly immediate shout without having mastered the language in advance. On the one hand, critical theory asserts that “everything is constructed,



hence no such thing as ‘the natural’ no matter how natural it might seem.” On the other hand, *shugyō* holds that “anything can be constructed as second nature if given serious devotion.” These are simply the two sides of the same coin: the natural or the immediate. In this sense, contemporary critical theorists and *shugyō* practitioners approach the aporia of immediacy from seemingly “opposite” directions. If, for example, psychoanalysis is to discover, by scrutinizing language, that pure and perfect immediacy is formidably difficult, then *shugyō* is to create the shortcut to such illusionary immediacy by repeated training. Just as many people in English-speaking communities would automatically shout “ouch!” when feeling pain, *onnagata* as *shugyō* practitioners would naturally move their extremities appropriately in accordance with each situation. One might say that while contemporary critical theory reveals that immediacy is theoretically impossible, the notion of *shugyō* proposes its practical substitute, because “quasi-immediacy” might not be “immediacy” in theory, but in practice it functions the same as the illusionary immediacy would. Ultimately, the logic of *shugyō*, according to Yuasa, presupposes that “*the way the body exists controls the way the mind exists.*”<sup>29</sup> In this paradigm, the *onnagata*’s faithful imitation of an object (women) and the attainment of what they think is the perfect essence (what might later be called ideal femininity) are by no means mutually exclusive. They are, in fact, one.

To sum up, we cannot take it for granted that an internal identity can be differentiated from external appearances, as people sometimes assume. This might have become widespread popular common sense in modern times, but it is never a natural fact that applies to any society a historically. People in Edo-era Japan, including kabuki actors, did not hold this idea; as we have seen, they had another logic instead, one that internalizes the concept of *shugyō*. It presupposes that what appears (externally) creates what exists (internally) and that these should be identical to each other in the ideal state.<sup>30</sup> It is for this reason that such texts as “The Words of Ayame” and “The Secret Transmissions of an *Onnagata*” diligently regulate how *onnagata* physically express womanly sentiment. The former (expressions) creates the latter (mentality), and not the other way around.

Since this idea is not confined to the realm of theater, it is no wonder that it also appears in other types of Edo texts, especially those that purport to tell women how to behave. For example, “The Words of Ayame” shows a great similarity to *Greater Learning for Women* (*Onna daigaku*), a popular book of “precept literature for women” published

first in the early eighteenth century, in its approach to ideal femininity. The two texts detail attire, posture, daily conduct, and attitude so that the preachee, the one who is to be preached and thus regulated, can attain femininity as second nature.<sup>31</sup> It is of great significance not only for professional performers of femininity but also for lay women, because how you look is none other than who you are. And who were the putative preachees? According to the texts themselves, *Greater Learning for Women* and “The Words of Ayame” provide instruction for women and *onnagata*, respectively. But can we divide them so clearly?

#### MÖBIUS STRIP OF CITATIONS: WOMEN “VERSUS” *ONNAGATA*?

In the last two sections, we have seen that the *onnagata* treatises assume no clear boundaries between “mind” and “body,” “one’s identity” and “physical appearance,” and “natural reality in daily life” and “performed theatricality onstage” and that these fusions are in line with the master discourse. I also mentioned that kabuki-related publications boasted an extensive readership that included not only kabuki insiders and actual playgoers but also many other kabuki lovers. This statement itself—about the readership—requires evidence; furthermore, we would like to explore specifically how these ideas reached women in Edo-era Japan, and what they meant to them. Did they take “lessons” from actors, whose social status was made so low in those days?

The first question about the readership is related not only to the theater industry but also to the publication industry and its surrounding culture, such as the well-established business of lending libraries in the Edo period. The phenomenon of kabuki popularity in the Edo era deeply integrated theater and publication. Popular actors’ voices, accents, postures, gestures, movements, attire, and accessories were all described in detail in kabuki-related publications such as playbills, theater books, and actor-critique booklets.<sup>32</sup> The historical significance of these publications cannot be appreciated fully without taking into consideration the following phenomenon, noted in an 1829 theater book: “There are many theater lovers in this world these days, but very few theatergoers.”<sup>33</sup> So it is that these publications not only provided kabuki information for playgoers but also functioned as virtual theatergoing for those kabuki fans who could not go to playhouses for whatever reasons.

The question of whether or not women took “lessons” from kabuki actors is a little bit more complicated. Kabuki was a theater of people

and not of the social elite, and it remained subject to interference by and suspicion of government authorities. Playhouses were categorized as *akusho* (evil places), along with brothels; kabuki was even banned from time to time.<sup>34</sup> The social status of kabuki actors was so low that “no matter luxuriously they might have lived, kabuki actors were not [treated as] ‘human beings.’”<sup>35</sup> In short, kabuki was considered, by the government and the social elite, to be depraved theater until the Meiji period, when it transformed itself into classical theater. It is thus not surprising that *Greater Learning for Women* emphasizes that women “must not feed their eyes and ears with such stupid things as kabuki, *jōruri*, and the like.”<sup>36</sup> Likewise, *Women’s Treasury* (*Onna chōhōki*), a reference book for daily life published in 1692, also admonishes women not to copy the clothing fads of *onnagata*.<sup>37</sup> That women had to be cautioned this way itself reveals that there was indeed such a phenomenon as imitating *onnagata* fashion. For example, there was patterned cloth known as *Edo-kanoko*. In the city of Edo, this textile, however, was called *Kodayū-kanoko*, named after the popular *onnagata* Itō Kodayū II (?–1689).<sup>38</sup> The existence of popular namesake items attests to there being a trend to imitate *onnagata* fashion despite the prohibition found in *Greater Learning for Women* and the contempt revealed in *Women’s Treasury*.

These observations of the readership and of vogue *onnagata* present us with a complicated picture of women and *onnagata*. First, the primary preachees of the *onnagata* treatises were undoubtedly the *onnagata* themselves. Considering the broad readership of theater print media, however, some women were likely to have been readers of *onnagata* acting manuals as well. Moreover, we can assume that they were not only observers but also a certain type of preachees themselves. This is related to the Edo-era gender system. While present-day kabuki operates on the basis of the dichotomy between the artistic–artificial femininity of *onnagata* and the natural femininity of women, such a decisive dualism did not exist in the Edo period.<sup>39</sup> Women and *onnagata* shared the concept of femininity as that which is second nature, obtained through training. Accordingly, women adopted the fashion—such as wearing hairpins, sashes, and combs—created by or named after popular *onnagata*,<sup>40</sup> and *onnagata* had to be aware that they were an important part of the chain of citation among the doers of femininity:

An *onnagata* should not be adored by women. It is bad if a woman wants to be his wife. An *onnagata* must have many male admirers who harbor the wish, “If only there were a woman like this.” As for women admirers, an *on-*

*nagata* should make his fashion—such as combs, hairpins, [forehead] kerchief, clothing, and sashes—be adored by them. You should wish that your fashion be imitated by women at warriors' residences, courtesans, and young ["nonprofessional"] girls. Make them think that you are a woman just as they are. [That is the most important point] when it comes to female admirers.<sup>41</sup>

One may want to say, "*Onnagata* are to women not as copy is to original, but, rather, as copy is to copy."<sup>42</sup> Women and *onnagata* are here transferring and circulating femininity as that which is internalized in, and inseparable from, their bodies. For, we recall, the exterior and the interior cannot be clearly demarcated. It is not that one hands "femininity" to another, as an intact object. Unwittingly or otherwise, each "transaction" involves revisions to one degree or another, and may even involve an accidental mutation. Then, with countless, constant, and mutual "transactions," such an illusionary idea as "origins" vanishes in the aporia of the "chicken or the egg."<sup>43</sup>

And it is via tangible and visible markers (for example, clothing) that women and *onnagata* circulated femininity. Tangibility here echoes the master discourse of "how you look is who you are," which we saw earlier. *Onnagata* treatises thus dictated an influential, if not ultimately ideal, femininity to women as well. *Greater Learning for Women* might have indeed prohibited women from seeing kabuki, and *Women's Treasury* scorned the vogue created by *onnagata*.<sup>44</sup> As Jennifer Robertson effectively puts it, however, "During the Tokugawa period (and beyond), the paragons of female-likeness were *onnagata*."<sup>45</sup> This paragon might not be an officially designated one, but it was nonetheless a powerful, de facto one. It is precisely this labyrinth of gendering that epitomizes how they did femininity at that time. Women and *onnagata* were simultaneously citers and citees to a certain extent.

Given this, it is quite noteworthy that *onnagata* treatises propose what most probably is "ideal femininity" in the disguise of "real femininity" in a tactful and yet insidious manner.<sup>46</sup> The textual mechanism is as follows. These *onnagata* treatises justify *onnagata* instructions with the statement that "real women (*hon no onna*) do it this way." "The Secret Transmissions of an *Onnagata*" bluntly "observes": "When they are upset, women first cry before [speaking]."<sup>47</sup> Likewise, "The Words of Ayame" reads: "[Ayame once advised Jūjirō, another *onnagata*] not to attempt to make the audiences laugh. It is fine if they spontaneously laugh, seeing the action. It is not women's spirit (*onna no jō*) to purposely make [people] laugh."<sup>48</sup> The expression "real women (*hon no onna*) do it this

way” is presented as if it were purely an observation of fact. Both texts claim, in other words, that they capture the plain truth about women’s spirit.

In technical terms, such a statement is called “constative.” A constative statement is a statement in which a speaker removes all the possible variables and simply and objectively describes a fact (“women’s spirit is *A*”). Roughly speaking, the concept of constative can be posited vis-à-vis another critical concept, “performative.” A performative statement is a statement *in* or *by* which a speaker performs something, such as to promise, declare, and so on. Importantly, postmodern examinations of performativity have revealed the formidable difficulty of constative, and as a result it has been proposed the constative—at least most of them—be considered to be the performative in disguise, whether or not they are intended as such: The *A-is-B* type of statement is most likely to assign the *B* attribute to *A*. “Women’s spirit is *A*” thus means, “I pronounce that women’s spirit is *A*.” If we apply this knowledge to the two constative statements in the excerpts above, they will read: “I pronounce that women first cry before speaking when they are upset” and “I pronounce that it is not women’s spirit to purposely make people laugh.” It is a tactful and yet insidious way of defining the “nature” of others. It might be called gender stereotyping, but stereotypes are arguably a euphemism for this operation to begin with, and more importantly, “defining that you are *A*” and “ordering that you must be *A*” are, as we know, logically just a step apart. In other words, defining that women are, for example, obedient by nature is merely one step away from ordering that women should be obedient.

Other examples in which “The Words of Ayame” defines women include “descriptions” of—thus prescriptions of—women as weak (sec. 8), as likely to flinch in front of many people (sec. 12), and as chaste (sec. 13).<sup>49</sup> Similarly, “The Secret Transmissions of an *Onnagata*” explains how women behave when they are feigning love, feeling true affection, and angered. Kikunojō gives instructions on body movements for *onnagata* based on such “observations.”<sup>50</sup>

The implications of such constatives are expectation, regulation, and prohibition. Notice that expectation here includes what is usually regarded as incapability; for instance, when she is upset, a woman cries before explaining her feelings. This is a classic example of “damned if you do, damned if you don’t.” On the one hand, if you are unable to verbalize your emotions, you have to admit that you are intellectually incapable of it. Should you be capable of such expression, on the other

hand, you are not considered a “real woman.” In short, women are (“must be”) weak, emotional, chaste, timid, and bad at manipulating people, such as by purposefully making them laugh.<sup>51</sup> Bearing this in mind, one can see that when a text dictates conduct, an effective way to do so is to put it in the constative mode. It might even be argued that, while these texts were explicitly binding on the primary preachees (*onnagata*), they were far more implicitly and insidiously binding on their secondary preachees (women). It is in this sense that *onnagata* treatises tactfully propose what “ideal femininity” is—for whomever it is—by claiming that the instructions are derived from observations of “real femininity.”

To summarize, these texts point to an understanding that the body is important, that the body signifies the mind, that everyday life is important, that offstage conduct creates onstage performance, and that the ultimate performance generated in such a way is plausible and hence commendable. These kinds of fusions, or, depending on the perspective, blurred and nebulous boundaries, are of great importance.<sup>52</sup> They are considered integral to the artistry of *onnagata*. In other words, the art of *onnagata* is theorized in such a way that the rigorous training of *onnagata* (*shugyō*) unites the body with the mind and the onstage performance with daily life. In addition, prolific publications about kabuki provided people with amusement, but those pastime readings shared with the master discourse the critical premise about humans’ conduct, namely, “what you do equals who you are.” In this sense, reading theatrical treatises in Edo-era Japan was a multifold experience. You would certainly be entertained with intriguing anecdotes, marvelous descriptions of stage performances, and so on and so forth. You would also absorb, unwittingly or otherwise, a certain idea about the image of a person, that is to say, whom you should be, or, rather, whom you believe you want to be.

## NOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Japanese are mine. When introduced for the first time, all Japanese names, except for those of authors publishing their works in English, are given in the Japanese order: surname first, followed by the given name. In subsequent references, a single element is used: the family name for those in modern times (1868 onward), or the given name for those who lived before that. Regardless of the general principle, well-known pen names are used for writers; the given name in their stage name is used for kabuki actors (e.g., Ayame, and not Yoshizawa).

2. Mishima Yukio, “*Onnagata*,” in *Hanazakari no mori, Yūkoku: Jisen tanpenshū* (“The forest in full bloom” and “Patriotism”: Short stories selected by the author) (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1968), 161–186. The epigraph is from pp. 162, 165–166.

3. To be sure, there were women kabuki actors, including women *onnagata*. For female *onnagata*, see my “Women *Onnagata* in the Porous Labyrinth of Femininity: On Ichikawa Kumehachi I,” *U.S.–Japan Women’s Journal* 30–31 (2006): 105–131. On the same actor, Kumehachi, see also Loren Edelson, “The Female Danjūrō: Revisiting the Acting Career of Ichikawa Kumehachi,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 34, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 69–98, although the article is not about *onnagata*. For women performers, see also Kelly Foreman’s chapter in this book.

4. “The Words of Ayame” was included in *The Actors’ Analects (Yakusha banashi)* published in 1776. See Fukuoka Yagoshirō, “*Ayamegusa*” (The words of Ayame), in Hachimonji Jishō, ed., *Yakusha banashi* (The actors’ analects), republished in Gunji Masakatsu, ed., *Kabuki jūhachibanshū* (Eighteen great kabuki plays), *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* (Collection of Japanese classical literature), vol. 98 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1965), 317–326. “The Words of Ayame” had already been published before 1776 in another anthology, but this chapter uses *The Actors’ Analects* version, as per convention. For philological information, see my “Gender of *Onnagata* as the Imitating Imitated: Its Historicity, Performativity, and Involvement in the Circulation of Femininity,” *positions: east asia cultures critique* 10, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 279. “*Ayamegusa*” is available in an English translation: Fukuoka Yagoshirō, “The Words of Ayame,” in *The Actors’ Analects*, ed. and trans., Charles J. Dunn and Bunzō Torigoe (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 49–66.

5. Fukuoka, “*Ayamegusa*,” 318, 323.

6. *Ibid.*, 319.

7. *Ibid.*, 323.

8. “The Secret Transmissions of an *Onnagata*” had long been considered lost, but the contents of it were included in an anthology, *The Pioneering Analects from Past and Present Actors (Kokon yakusha rongo sakigake)* published in 1772, and these passages are generally known as “The Secret Transmissions of an *Onnagata*.” See Kinjinsai Shin’ō, *Kokon yakusha rongo sakigake* (The pioneering analects from past and present actors), ed. Gunji Masakatsu, republished in Nishiyama Matsunosuke, Watanabe Ichirō, and Gunji Masakatsu, eds., *Kinsei geidōron* (Theory on the way of arts in the premodern period), *Nihon shisō taikei* (Collection of Japanese thought), vol. 61 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1972), 482–483. For philological information, see my *Secrecy in Japanese Arts: “Secret Transmission” as a Mode of Knowledge* (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 73–74.

9. “Right before his last moment, [Kikunojō] is said to have taken a bath and arranged his hair, with his forehead shaven. He then dressed himself formally and put an [*onnagata*] kerchief on his forehead. He had *hyakuman-ben nenbutsu* [the million-time Buddhist invocation] chanted around his deathbed and bid farewell to the people in the theater world. Thus [the late Segawa Kikunojō] is said to have passed away” (Kinjinsai, *Kokon yakusha rongo sakigake*,

483). This anecdote concludes the text consisting of Kikunojō's instructions for *onnagata*.

10. Kinjinsai, *Kokon yakusha rongo sakigake*, 489.

11. *Kabuki hyōbanki shūsei* (Collected kabuki actor-critique booklets), ed. Kabuki hyōbanki kenkyūkai (The kabuki actor-critique booklets study group), vol. 3 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973), 548.

12. Kinjinsai, *Kokon yakusha rongo sakigake*, 468, 469, 474, 475. The term “theater book” (*gekisho*) generically refers to books on kabuki published in the Edo era. Along with actor-critique booklets (*yakusha hyōbanki*) and playbills (*banzuke*), theater books were major kabuki-related publications. See also note 32 below.

13. *Kabuki hyōbanki shūsei, dai 2-ki* (Collected kabuki actor-critique booklets, series 2), ed. Yakusha hyōbanki kenkyūkai (The kabuki actor-critique booklets study group), vol. 3 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1988), 55.

14. Importantly, by no means is each concept (*onna* and *onnagata*) monolithic and the interaction between them lineal. Such a model of interaction would be far too simple even if bilateral. Instead it is that the interaction happens among multiple concepts of *onnagata* and equally multiple concepts of *onna*, and that such an interaction further keeps creating definitions of *onna* and *onnagata* anew. See also note 43 below.

15. Kinjinsai, *Kokon yakusha rongo sakigake*, 473–474; emphasis added. *Furisode*, literally “swinging sleeve,” is adolescent clothing; it was initially for both girls and boys before the initiation to adulthood but later became a “girls-only” item.

16. Tamiya Kōon Shirogorō, “*Zoku Nijinshū*” (Sequel to “The dust in the ears”), in *Yakusha banashi*, 349. There are many similar anecdotes of “*onnagata* who pass” recorded in kabuki discourse; see, for example, my “Women *Onnagata* in the Porous Labyrinth of Femininity,” 106–107. One should be careful, however, about the complex implications of the very presence of such anecdotes because, if *onnagata* had been totally successful in passing as women, the anecdotes would not have been preserved.

17. For these changes in the Meiji era, see my “Women *Onnagata* in the Porous Labyrinth of Femininity,” 117–121. For a broader history of *onnagata* artistry, see my “Images of *Onnagata*: Complicating the Binarisms, Unraveling the Labyrinth,” in Ayelet Zohar, ed., *PostGender: Gender, Sexuality and Performativity in Japanese Culture* (Newcastle upon Tyne, U.K.: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 22–38.

18. Kaneko Kichizaemon, “*Nijinshū*” (The dust in the ears), in *Yakusha banashi*, 345. The obscure *onnagata* in question is Sugi Kuhei.

19. Kinjinsai, *Kokon yakusha rongo sakigake*, 482–483.

20. Fukuoka, “*Ayamegusa*,” 318–321, 323–324, 326.

21. Kinjinsai, *Kokon yakusha rongo sakigake*, 482.

22. *Ibid.*

23. Fukuoka, “*Ayamegusa*,” 317–320, 324.

24. I recognize that my usage of the words “exterior” and “interior” presumes the existence of a boundary between the two. I use them only for the sake of clarity, and only for analytical purposes, with no intension to endorse



such a demarcation. We should not take it for granted that an internal identity can be differentiated from external appearances. Such a dichotomy is a historical product of modernity, and *onnagata* discourse in the Edo period is not located in this modern episteme. Such a boundary in and of itself is being questioned here.

25. Eiko Ikegami, *Bonds of Civility: Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 245.

26. Takechi Tetsuji, *Teihon Takechi kabuki: Takechi Tetsuji zenshū* (Takechi kabuki, the standard edition: The complete works of Takechi Tetsuji), ed. Arika Daisaburō, vol. 1 (Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1978), 168–172. Incidentally, the parallel gait is called *nanba*, which has attracted attention from those who are interested in martial arts.

27. Yuasa Yasuo, *Shintairon: Tōyōteki shinshinron to gendai* (Theory of the body: An Eastern mind–body theory and the present) (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1990), 101; emphasis in original.

28. Thomas P. Kasulis, “Editor’s Introduction,” Yuasa Yasuo, *The Body: Toward an Eastern Mind–Body Theory*, ed. Thomas P. Kasulis, Shigenori Nagatomo and Thomas P. Kasulis, trans. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1987), 6; emphasis in original.

29. Yuasa, *Shintairon*, 153; emphasis in original. This understanding can demonstrate both similarities to and differences from postmodern theorizations of bodies and languages. As for an incisive and productive analysis of the postmodern “assertion that discourse constitutes its object, or that there is no outside of language,” see Vicki Kirby, *Telling Flesh: The Substance of the Corporeal* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 149.

30. See, for example, my “Osanaï Kaoru’s Dilemma: ‘Amateurism by Professionals’ in Modern Japanese Theatre,” *TDR/The Drama Review* 49, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 128.

31. Araki Kengo and Inoue Tadashi, eds., *Onna daigaku* (Greater learning for women), in *Kaibara Ekiken, Muro Kyūsō, Nihon shisō taikai* (Collection of Japanese thought), vol. 34 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1970), 202–205. For further similarities between the two texts, see my “Gender of *Onnagata* as the Imitating Imitated,” 269–270. For a comprehensive analysis of etiquette books in the Edo era, see Ikegami, *Bonds of Civility*, 324–359.

32. As introduced in note 12 above, these are three important groups of kabuki-related publications. The above-mentioned actor-critique booklets and playbills provided readers with an update on kabuki and its actors. Theater books contain such topics as “introduction to kabuki,” “the history of kabuki,” “introduction of kabuki plays,” “actors, now and past,” and “actors’ treatises,” among other things. For a vivid example of how a theater book describes kabuki actors, see Hachimonji Jishō, *Yakusha zensho* (The complete book on actors), in Gondō Yoshikazu, Munemasa Isoo, and Moriya Takeshi, eds., *Kabuki, Nihon shomin bunka shiryō shūsei* (Collected historical documents of Japanese popular culture), vol. 6 (Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1973), 199–241. *The Complete Book on Actors* was published in 1774.

33. Kimura Mokurō, *Gekijō ikkan mushimegane* (Theater under the microscope), ed. Munemasa Isoo, republished in *Kabuki*, 311.

34. Examples include, but are not limited to, the female performer ban in 1629, the *wakashu* (young boys) kabuki ban in 1652, and the Ejima–Ikushima incident in 1714. The actor Ikushima Shingorō is said to have had an affair with Ejima, one of the highest-ranking female officials in service of the shogun's mother. When the affair was exposed, it resulted not only in the exile of Ejima and Ikushima but also in the punishment of all parties concerned, ranging from banishment to capital punishment, and to the closure of kabuki playhouses. A number of regulations ensued.

35. Ōzasa Yoshio, *Nihon gendai engekishi: Meiji Taishō hen* (History of Japanese contemporary theater: The Meiji and Taisho eras) (Tokyo: Hakusuisha, 1985), 18.

36. Araki and Inoue, ed., *Onna daigaku*, 203.

37. Namura Jōhaku, *Onna chōhōki* (Women's treasury), in *Onna chōhōki Nan chōhōki* (Women's treasury and Men's treasury), ed. Nagatomo Chiyoji (Tokyo: Shakai Shisōsha, 1993), 20.

38. Hachimonji, *Yakusha zensho*, 229.

39. See, for example, my “Gender of *Onnagata* as the Imitating Imitated,” passim; “Women *Onnagata* in the Porous Labyrinth of Femininity,” 119. As for the birth of the concept of “natural femininity grounded in women's bodies” in the context of Japanese theater, see Ayako Kano, *Acting Like a Woman in Modern Japan: Theater, Gender, and Nationalism* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), passim.

40. See, for example, Hachimonji, *Yakusha zensho*, passim. See also Yoshikawa Yoshio, “*Kabuki-geki no onnagata*” (*Onnagata* in the kabuki theater), in *Engekishi kenkyū, dai-1 shū* (Study of the history of theater, part 1), ed. Engekishi gakkai (Tokyo: Daiichi Shobō, 1932), 80; “*Genroku-ki no onnagata*” (*Onnagata* in the Genroku era), *Engekishi kenkyū, dai-2 shū* (Tokyo: Daiichi Shobō, 1932), 183.

41. Kinjinsai, *Kokon yakusha rongo sakigake*, 483. *Bōshi* (a.k.a. *yarō bōshi*) is a certain kerchief placed at the foreheads of *onnagata*. For a discussion on its origins and epistemological significance, see my “Gender of *Onnagata* as the Imitating Imitated,” 250–251, 257.

42. Here I am borrowing Judith Butler's parlance, along with its thinking frame: “[G]ay is to straight *not* as copy is to original, but, rather, as copy is to copy” (*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* [New York: Routledge, 1990], 31; emphasis in original).

43. In other words, the unlimited process of copying creates countless copies not identical to the alleged “original.” See also note 14 above.

44. Araki and Inoue, ed., *Onna daigaku*, 203; Namura, *Onna chōhōki*, 20.

45. 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), 90. The Tokugawa period is another appellation of the Edo era, as it was the period when Japan was ruled by the Tokugawa shoguns, and the shogunate was located in the city of Edo, the site of present-day Tokyo.

46. “Ideal femininity” is bracketed because it requires many clarifications, such as who defined it as ideal and by what criteria, and “real femininity” is bracketed because women’s studies and gender studies have already discovered the nonexistence of it.

47. Kinjinsai, *Kokon yakusha rongo sakigake*, 482.

48. Fukuoka, “*Ayamegusa*,” 319–320.

49. *Ibid.*, 319–321.

50. Kinjinsai, *Kokon yakusha rongo sakigake*, 482.

51. Although he does so in a different context, Philip Auslander analyzes the non-comical feature attributed to women in terms of the act of exercising power. See “‘Brought to You by Fem-Rage’: Stand-up Comedy and the Politics of Gender,” in *Acting Out: Feminist Performances*, ed. Lynda Hart and Peggy Phelan (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 316–325.

52. These kinds of fusion are analogous to the fusion of sex and gender in Shingaku (“heart learning”) in the Edo era that Robertson analyzes: “Shingaku rhetoricians . . . sought to fuse sex and gender. . . . Sex was perceived as subordinate to gender” (“The Shingaku Woman,” 90).