

40 Years of "Femboy" or A Historical Explanation of Why Making Bridget a Trans Woman is Reactionary

The MadmanNOTE

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The news that popular femboy character Brigitte is being treated as transgender overseas has caused a stir among otaku around the world.

[LGBT] Brigitte's latest work is a femboy -> transgender setting, and it's causing controversy [Guilty Gear].

That being said, congratulations on the implementation!

<https://togetter.com/li/192840>

Brigitte is a character from 2002's "Guilty Gear XX" and is widely known as the character that sparked the "femboy" craze in the Zero's. For many years in Japan, she was treated as a "femboy" and never as a "trans woman".

Bridget is a "man who was raised as a woman for certain reasons," and she does not feel uncomfortable with her gender identity. In other words, she does not seem to meet the requirements of a "transgender" character, this may be due to the influence of the trans rights movement overseas, but it seems that the official version of the film has adopted the "trans woman" setting.

To be clear, however, **it is a reaction against the Japanese "femboy" culture and the Western world to label Bridget as a "trans woman"**. Japanese "femboy" culture and Western "transgender" culture are fundamentally different cultures, with virtually no historical or cultural influences. I feel that to label Bridget, a keystone in Japanese "femboy" culture, as a "trans woman" is tantamount to **cultural plagiarism**.

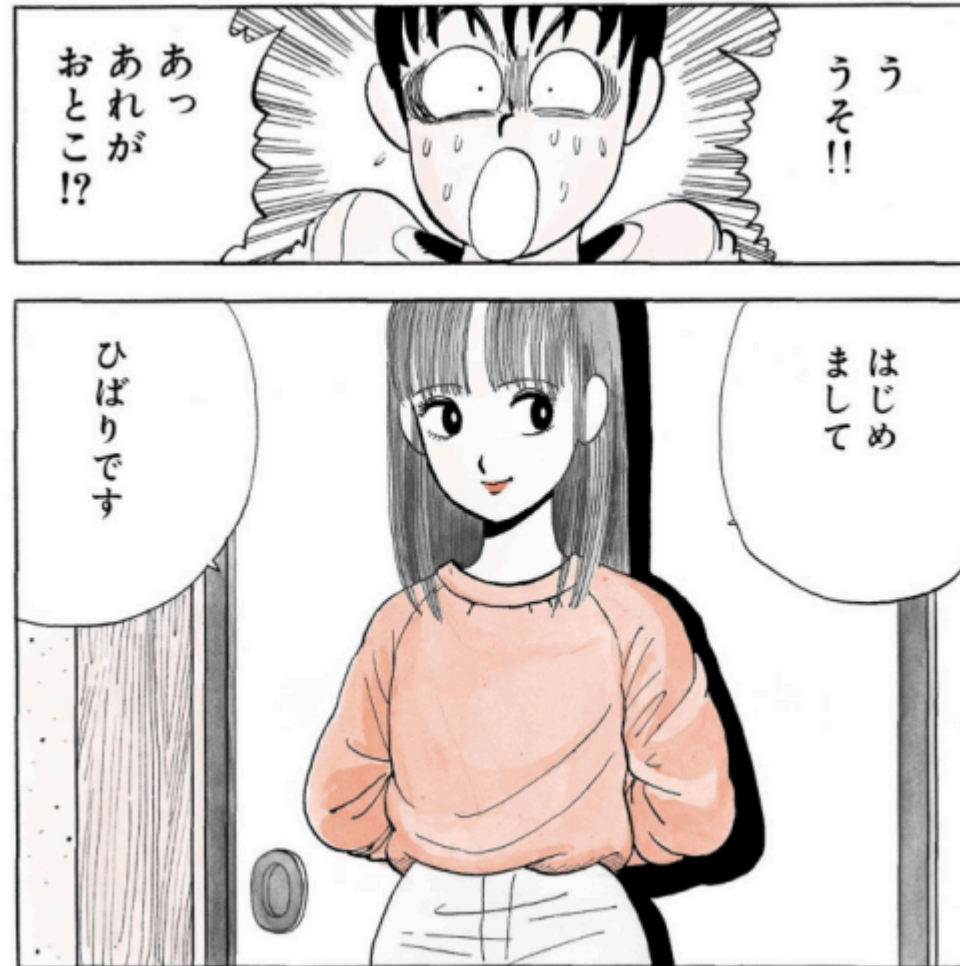
In this article, titled "40 Years of femboy Culture," it is explained that how the Japanese "femboy" culture was established and **how the designation of Brigitte as "transgender" is reactionary in the context of the Japanese "femboy" culture**.

The First Wave: femboys as "Men Who Want to Become Women" (80s and 90s)

The "femboy" culture in Japan began in the form of "men who want to become women." Although gender dysphoria is almost never described, it can be said to have been a form of "transgender" in the sense that it was close to the current "transgender" in terms of wanting to change gender identity.

The direct ancestor of the "femboy" was the 1981 "Stop! Hibari-kun! Hibari Oosora in 1981. Hibari is a man who clearly desires to be a woman. She demands that her father call her "daughter," and even at school she pretends to be a girl. Her love interest is also male.

Image



However, "Stop! Hibari-kun! is a gag manga, and Hibari is treated as a "pervert" and an "abnormal person" in the manga.

The work is rooted in the gap of "What if a 'pervert,' who is often associated with a negative image, were a beautiful boy with a superbly beautiful face?" The work was rooted in the gap between the "pervert" and the super beautiful boy.

Image



Quote: "Stop! Hibari-kun! Complete Edition Volume 1

Stop! Hibari-kun! The "femboy" character, or in other words, "a femboy who wants to become a woman," was a common theme from the 1980s to the 1990s.

Maria, who appears in "Kochikame" vol. 67 (1990), is a man who wants to live as a woman, Yu (Yuichi), who appears in "Chameleon" vol. 2 (1990), is described as a typical "man who wants to be a woman," and Sakura, the heroine of Barcode Fighter (1992), is also a male who self-identifies as female.

Unlike in the 1980s, however, in the 1990s and later, the view that **"a man who identifies as a woman should be treated as a woman"** became a common theme in many works.

In "Kochikame," Ryotsu is criticized by others for rejecting Maria's proposal of marriage; in "Chameleon," the hero Yazawa rescues Yu (Yuichi), who plays the role of a "captive princess", was portrayed favorably, and the heroine Sakura, a male heroine, is accepted by her classmates for dressing as a woman in

"Barcode Fighter". In "Barcode Fighter," the femboy heroine Sakura is accepted as a transvestite by her classmates.

Image



(Citation: "Kochira Katsushika-ku Kameari Koen-mae Hashutsujo," vol. 67)

The "femboy" character in Japan began as a "man who wants to become a woman," or in other words, as a story about a trans woman in today's terms. Although the term "transsexual" or "okama" was used at the time, they could be classified as trans women in that they wanted to change their gender identity from male to female.

In the 1980s, they were treated as "perverts" and "abnormal," but from the 1990s onward, they gradually began to be treated as "women" and established a position where they could be respected.

The first wave of "femboy" culture began as a "liberation from one's natural gender".

The Second Wave: Femboys as "Men Forced to Wear Women's Clothing" (2000s)

The first wave of "femboy" culture began as a kind of trans woman, but most of them were accepted as gags or comedies, and did not gain much popularity. They were regarded as "Women's Similar" and not as good as "real women".

The transformation of Maria in "Kochikame" into a "real woman" in volume 111 (1998) is a symbolic event. The first wave of "femboy" characters were simply "men who wanted to become women," and this often cast a dark shadow over the characters' inner lives and scenarios. Their efforts were often unrewarded.

Brigitte gave a Copernican turn to this structure.

In "Guilty Gear XX" (2002), he appears at first glance as a woman, but his gender and gender identity are both male. He was raised as a woman by his parents for certain reasons, and as a result, he has acquired the appearance and gestures of a woman, **but unlike the "femboy" characters of the first wave, he has no desire to become a woman.** On the contrary, he sometimes makes it his hobby to "try to look like a man in the shadows".

Image



Bridget is free from "sexual conflicts" and "conflicts with people around her because of his cross-dressing," and he exudes a cheerful and innocent atmosphere. **Bridget's popularity exploded.** The "cheerful and innocent femboy" has been the most typical character form of "femboy" to this day, and Brigitte is unquestionably the one who laid the groundwork for this character. **The "femboy" was a character who was forced to wear women's clothing for some reason or other, which freed the "femboy" from conflicts related to his sexuality and from friction with those around him.**

After Brigitte's success, "forced cross-dressing" femboys began to appear one after another. Hayate Ayasaki of "Hayate no Gotoku" (2004-), Mizuho Miyakoji of "Virgin is in love with her sister" (2005), and Ryo Akizuki of "THE IDOLM@STER DEARY STARS" (2009) are typical examples.

They all identify as male and look feminine, but for some reason they are forced to wear women's clothing, and thus are largely free from the conflicts and frictions that are characteristic of "trans women". In other words, by daring to make the gender identity of "femboy" male, "femboy" culture has made it possible to create a variety of characters.

The second wave of "forced cross-dressing" femboys gradually gave way to the third wave of "femboys who transcend gender."

The Third Wave of "Gender Transcending" femboys (2010s-)

The second wave of "femboy" were characters who were forced to dress as women due to external factors. Although they identified themselves as men, they did not show strong resistance to cross-dressing, and through this scenario, they acquired a variety of character traits that were not possible for the first wave of "femboy".

A further, but extremely important, change is added here.

This is the appearance of **a type of femboy that "transcends gender"**.

Unlike the second wave, the third wave of "femboys" voluntarily desired to dress as women. In this respect, they are no different from the first wave of "wanting to become women". The most important change, however, is that the third wave of femboys generally identify themselves as men and do not share the first wave's desire to "become a woman".

The pioneer of the third wave of "femboys" was "Hapinesu! (2005) by Jun Watarase. (2005). Although he identifies as a man, he likes to dress up as a woman as a means of expressing himself.

Hideyoshi Kinoshita in "Baka and test summon the beast" (2007-) is another typical third-wave femboy. Although he identifies as male and has sexual interest in women, he prefers to dress as a woman and is treated as a woman by those around him. His gender is ultimately assigned as "Gender: Hideyoshi" and he is treated as a **third gender**.

In other words, **after the third wave, "femboys" acquire a gender that could be called "queer"**. They are neither women nor men, and they come to define themselves as "beings that transcend gender".

With this comes a change in the inner life of the femboy character. They are no longer shadowy characters who yearn for women, as in the first wave, or passive characters who tend to be influenced by circumstances, as in the second wave, **but femboys who have transcended the gender norms prevalent in the world and have established themselves firmly**, gradually

becoming the mainstream. Aikawa Kizuna of "Planus Girl" (2009-) is a typical example.

Why did the first wave of "femboys" have to become "women" in the first place?

Like Maria in "Kochikame" who decided to become a woman because she fell in love with a male coach, or Yuu (Yuji) in "Chameleon" who tried to be feminine because her sexual orientation was male, they were bound by the gender norm that "if you fall in love with a man, you have to become a woman. They strongly sought to "become a woman".

In other words, they were driven to change their "gender identity" because they could not free themselves from the "gender norm". For them, "becoming a woman" was a means to fall in love with men; in other words, they had to become women in order to conform to the gender norm.

However, the third wave of "femboys," after the second wave, are now completely free from the existing gender norms. They dress up as women while identifying themselves as men, they do not pretend to be a man or a woman, and they do not hesitate to fall in love with women or men. The "femboys" culture from the third wave to the present has become free from the norms of "what a man should be like" and "what a woman should be like".

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Thus, the history of "femboys" culture was born.

When we look at the cultural history of "femboys" in this way, we can understand how reactionary it is to change Bridget to "transgender".

The first wave of "femboys" in Japan were strongly transgender, but only because they were bound by gender norms. As long as they fell in love with men, they had to become women. That is why these women were not free from conflicts and troubles surrounding their sexuality.

Then Brigitte appeared as a pioneer of the second wave, **laying the foundation for the cultural paradise of "cross-dressing as an expression of one's identity" instead of "cross-dressing to fall in love with a man"**. This spread not only to two-dimensional culture but also to three-dimensional culture, culminating in the "femboy" culture that distanced itself from the LGBT movement as represented by Kaoru Oshima.

Of course, what I have described in this article is the history of "femboys" culture, not the history of transgender culture. However, **linking Japan's unique "femboys" culture to "transgender" culture too easily can only be described as cultural plagiarism that disregards the historical context.**

Japan's "femboy" culture has developed its own queer culture of "gender transcendence" at the end of its long history. It is completely incompatible with Western gender ideology that tries to keep MtF transgender people in the "female" category.

The reason why Brigitte was designated as a "trans woman" may have been due to the image strategy and consideration for the political correctness that rages in other countries. However, we hope that by looking back at the significant impact that Brigitte has had on "femboy" culture, we can deepen our understanding of Japanese "femboy" culture.

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