

2021

Kawaii Revolution: Understanding the Japanese Aesthetics of “Cuteness” through Lolita and Madoka Magica

Skye Jones

University of South Carolina Upstate

Lex Lancaster

University of South Carolina Upstate

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/uscusrj>



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Jones, Skye and Lancaster, Lex (2021) "Kawaii Revolution: Understanding the Japanese Aesthetics of “Cuteness” through Lolita and Madoka Magica," *University of South Carolina Upstate Student Research Journal*: Vol. 14, Article 7.

Available at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/uscusrj/vol14/iss1/7>

This Article is brought to you by the USC Upstate at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of South Carolina Upstate Student Research Journal by an authorized editor of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact digres@mailbox.sc.edu.

Kawaii Revolution: Understanding the Japanese Aesthetics of “Cuteness” through Lolita and Madoka Magica

ABSTRACT. Kawaii (可愛い) is a Japanese term that loosely translates to “cute,” but more significantly refers to a culture of cuteness in postwar Japan. Kawaii calls to mind big-eyed baby animals and pastel colors, but these visual qualities also embody a radical worldview cultivated by Japanese girls. In this paper, I investigate the visual culture of kawaii through two of its manifestations in fashion and animation, using the scholarship on kawaii in Japan and critical theory to argue that kawaii is a revolutionary aesthetics of vulnerability. The excessive femininity, emotional expression, and idealism of kawaii culture defy the Japanese culture of conformity and gendered expectations. I demonstrate that kawaii is not merely a culture of girls to be dismissed, but a transformative emotional engagement with the world, and an imaginative world-making that demands more love.

SKYE JONES

Dr. Lex initially reached out to me during one of our advisement sessions. I immediately knew I wanted to do the project on kawaii because it's one of the few things I care about. I am very lucky to have grown up around perspectives outside



of the typical western ones we are all exposed to within the United States and was introduced to the concept of kawaii as a child. Since then I have been obsessed with cuteness, the visuals, the ideas, the behaviors, etc. I think the truly unique perspective comes in through Dr. Lex's guidance; their knowledge and passion is truly special and allowed me to develop my scattered ideas into coherent arguments. This allowed me to truly convey how kawaii is an important part of Japanese visual culture and not something to be dismissed as purely childish nonsense.

I loved this independent study because it gave me the time and space to investigate something so often dismissed. I have no concrete goals or plans for the

future. I have only ever wanted to be better than myself and I assume that in the future I will continue this approach. This research project and the guidance of Dr. Lex has pushed me further than any other class I have taken and has reminded me of how far I have to go. Dr. Lex is truly inspiring!

The advice I would give other students is to not get too attached to your own work. It is normal to not want to change what you have worked so hard on, but this attachment will only hold your work back. Like scraping an infection out of a bone, it might hurt to do it, but will save your work in the long run.



LEX LANCASTER is Assistant Professor of Art History and Gallery Director at USC Upstate, where they have taught since 2018. Dr. Lancaster earned a BA from Case Western Reserve University, and a PhD from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2017. They are originally from Chattanooga, TN. Dr. Lancaster specializes in contemporary art, visual culture, and gender and sexuality studies, focusing on queer, trans, and anti-racist approaches to contemporary art. Their publications and forthcoming book from Duke University press, *Dragging Away: Queer Abstraction in Contemporary Art* (fall 2022)

investigate the phenomenon of queer abstraction, forging a queer formalist approach to social

and political deployments of abstraction in contemporary art. They have published articles on this topic in *Discourse: Journal for Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture* and *ASAP/Journal*. Dr. Lancaster recognized Skye Jones's interest in critical theory and in Japanese visual culture in one of their classes, and suggested the independent study as an opportunity to delve much deeper into a compelling topic and to allow Skye to hone those deeper analytical skills. Skye is a rare intellectually curious student, interested in reading Foucault and Žižek, and able to wrestle with the kinds of complex and nuanced theoretical issues that one would only expect from a graduate student. Dr. Lancaster looks forward to the bright future of Skye's critical and creative intellectual endeavors.

Introduction

Kawaii is a distinctly visual culture; it manifests through forms of anime (animation), fashion, manga (comics), and everyday objects. In the United States, we are most familiar with the forms of kawaii sold to us by Sanrio, such as Hello Kitty, and popular animated series such as *Sailor Moon*. But kawaii also describes a cultural zeitgeist; from city mascots to philosophy, kawaii remains relevant within Japanese thought and visual culture. This culture of cuteness is often associated with childhood, femininity, and characterized by portrayals of emotional vulnerability, providing a cultural vehicle to embrace our emotions and shape the world to reflect these ideals. Sociolinguists Burdelski and Mitsuhashi describe kawaii as “an important aspect of Japanese material culture and a key affect word used to describe things that are small, delicate, and immature” [1]. Affect is important to the philosophy of kawaii; understanding our emotional responses to certain aesthetics demonstrates how kawaii is revolutionary in relation to modern Japanese principles. Affect is not just emotion, but rather describes our physical response to the force of emotion; how emotions are viewed by others and can also be shared; and how emotions shape the trajectories of our actions [2]. Affects are shaped by cultural values and ideologies, and our affective responses also serve as social cues to communicate with others.

Kawaii refers to a specific affect of cuteness that is vulnerable, pathetic, and even clumsy; as such, those who embody kawaii characteristics prompt a particular affective response and emotional urgency [3]. Hiramoto and Wee suggest, “kawaii describes an attribute of the entity while also evoking a particular interactive stance towards that entity. In other words, because the kawaii entity is considered adorable and/or vulnerable, it must be cared for or treated gently” [4]. The worldview of kawaii in postwar Japanese society is most associated with a complete rejection of refinement and beauty, focusing on a childlike attitude of vulnerability, overindulgence, and fantasy. This seemingly immature attitude rejects strict social conventions of Japanese culture in favor of open expression. Anime characters are particularly important manifestations of kawaii affect because their portrayals of emotional vulnerability can provide a cultural vehicle to embrace our emotions without the discomfort of confronting them directly. That is, anime allows us to live out our emotional excesses vicariously, without fear of social rejection. One of the most prominent forms of kawaii media is a narrative genre of anime and manga called “magical girls,” where cute girls with otherworldly powers battle against evil (*Sailor Moon*, for example).

The narratives of magical girl anime are distinct from typical Japanese media due to one key element: they depict everyday girls as interesting and important people. Often in the media, women in positions of prominence are separated from their peers, and girls are only allowed nuance and narrative importance if they distance themselves from girlhood. However, magical girl anime focus on average girls and their friendships. The girls often have likable personalities, unique interests, and different ways of problem-solving, but must come together to achieve larger goals [5]. Using the popular magical girl franchise *Madoka Magica*, I will analyze the ways in which kawaii ideology influences the decision-making of the main character Madoka, and the material

effects of this within the series' world. I will also consider a more personal approach to kawaii through the popular street fashion called “Lolita,” which gained popularity through late-1990’s Japanese streetwear magazines [6]. This style is often defined by its unique silhouette and its attempt at doll-like appearances combined with kitschy objects and over-the-top presentation (Fig. 1). Because of this exaggerated cuteness and adherence to specific themes, Lolita has developed a very distinctive visual identity not seen in any other streetwear fashion—it is not merely a “style” but embodies an intentional subcultural identity and kawaii worldview, which one Lolita describes as an expression of cultural freedom [7].

Both *Madoka Magica* and Lolita shape my understanding of kawaii as a transformative aesthetics and revolutionary ideology within the context of modern Japan. Building on sociolinguistic understandings of kawaii affect [1] [4], I offer a deeper explanation of kawaii visual culture utilizing two concepts drawn from critical theory, Sara Ahmed’s “happy object” and Slavoj Žižek’s “hysteric.” [8] [9] Through analysis of two manifestations of kawaii in Japanese visual culture—Lolita fashion and the animated series *Madoka Magica*—I argue that kawaii uses “hysterical” aesthetics to critique Japanese conformist society, while creating happy objects that brighten the world around us. My research pulls together the strings of history and revolutionary philosophical thought in order to show how this soft, sickeningly sweet, hyper-feminine aesthetic became the cute revolution of Japan.

Historical Context

Modern Japanese society values conformity, demonstrated by the popular phrase that translates to “the nail that sticks out will be hammered down” (出る釘は打たれる). Toivonen, Norasakkunkit, and Uchida explain that, due to collectivist attitudes in the East, it is considered the individual’s duty to conform to social norms in order to maintain harmony. The current work culture in Japan also encourages competition, resulting in a population under pressure to be perfect yet not stand out (in contrast to Western individualism). Emotional expression is not to be discussed, as it risks disrupting harmony [10]. While Japanese women are less invested in the work environment, they are held to similar standards of performance and academic achievement throughout their lives. The ideal modern Japanese woman is considered educated, professional, motherly, and mature [11]. She performs her particular roles in order to qualify as a “woman” – a social construct that must be performed in order to exist, according to Judith Butler’s concept of “gender performativity” [12]. Gender is an intricate web of performance, expression, and conformity: to be a woman in Japanese society, one must understand the rules of this role and be willing to perform them adequately. Thus, if one rejects the roles of gender then they are rejecting the idea of gender, resulting in further social alienation.

As children enter the Japanese schooling system, they quickly come to terms with this performance of roles. If they do not conform to gendered expectations, they face isolation and bullying from their peers. This culture of bullying introduced in elementary school follows into one’s workplace, where bullying is accepted as a necessary evil in order to maintain conformity. As sociologist Shoko Yoneyama shows, this is a western influence on Japanese gender roles, where neo-liberal power structures enforce rules by collectively punishing those who do not abide by them [13]. Kawaii originated as a rebellion against the norms enforced in Japanese schools. Japanese gender studies scholar Kumiko Sato traces kawaii culture to Japanese schoolgirls in the 1970s, who began writing in such a “cutesy” style that it was nearly illegible. Because of their overly cute handwriting, many girls were expelled from school; yet this was only the beginning of the kawaii cultural revolution [14]. This seemingly small push against conformity would start the worldwide phenomenon of kawaii that we are familiar with today.

Defining Kawaii

Kawaii is a syrupy sweetness that takes a once natural phenomenon of cuteness and refines it to the point of artificiality, utilizing fantastical motifs and the visuals of femininity pushed to extremes. Building on Mitsuhashi and Burdelski [1], the material manifestations of kawaii often accompany affective and behavioral dimensions. Objects have a special place in kawaii culture. In feminist scholar Sara Ahmed's work on the affect of objects, a "happy object" is described through its relation to ideas attached to it [8]. I argue that the happy object of kawaii differs, in that it is made with the intent to illicit a happy affect. Rather than merely an object to which happiness is attributed, the kawaii object actively produces happiness and works as a means of expressing desires.

As a material manifestation of desire, kawaii also describes something that asks to be loved; something that compels one to love it. For example, Lolitas (those who practice Lolita fashion) are not just wearing kawaii dresses, but actively embracing a kawaii identity by performing a sense of self that is vulnerable, loveable, and cute. This often elicits a very visceral response from people outside of Lolita culture. In an interview, a Lolita named Kei spoke about her family's initial reaction against the fashion, which they found embarrassing [7]. This response reflects how kawaii is generally understood within modern Japanese culture—it is considered shameful for an adult to use kawaii visual language, asking to be loved. Kawaii objects and ideology seek to create a reality that is kinder, and a space where we are encouraged to outwardly express emotions and desires no matter how childish, pitiful, or socially unacceptable they might be.

Kawaii as Revolutionary Image

To understand how kawaii presents a non-conformist worldview that breaks from the strict social codes of Japanese society, I am using philosopher Slavoj Žižek's theory of the "hysteric" to explain how kawaii critiques Japanese societal roles through the intertwining of appearance and ideology. Žižek is drawing on Lacan's idea of the hysteric: a woman who acts out in an insincere display of desire. This display is merely a performance in Lacan's view. The hysteric feels as though they are lacking: seeing men's open expressions of desire, they think that expression must be the means to fulfill their own desires [15]. However, through Hegel we can understand performance as essential to genuine expression, to perform something is to be it [16]. Thus, the hysteric is most defined by acting in a way that defies society's expectations of women. This is where we see the Other and the hysteric as similarly defined by their lack of compliance with some established norm, and the result of their rejection from society.

Social norms work to "other" or cast out those who fall outside of it, and effectively alienates both those within the norm and those othered. Alienation occurs when one experiences a disconnect that isolates them in some way—Hegel describes it as the self's discrepancy with reality or truth [16]. Alienation occurs in both parties when norms are established; those within the norm of Japanese society often feel as if their struggles are their own personal problem, while those who have been othered often feel barred from normal social interactions and unable to connect to those around them [13]. But Žižek proposes that hysteria is a positive action, a performance of expression that exceeds the norm.

In Japanese society, to not only display vulnerability but to perform it and center it within your identity is hysterical by Lacan's definition. Yet, like Žižek proposes, the hysteric's performance is revolutionary [9]. When we are told to deny ourselves humanity, then expressing vulnerability, softness, hurt, and happiness are all hysterical actions. Kawaii's association with these ideas of softness and vulnerability, when combined with human-focused narratives, creates a dialogue

about how valuable emotions are to the human experience. Finding strength in our emotions and affective connections becomes a distinctly revolutionary message in a society where any public display of emotion is considered weakness.

Lolita Fashion

Lolita refers to a form of kawaii fashion, utilizing dress and accessories as vehicles for personal expression. Young women are called “Lolitas” when they dress in an excessively kawaii fashion, donning layers of ruffles, big bows, and skirts with adorable baby animals on them. Originating in Tokyo, Lolita fashion seems otherworldly when juxtaposed against the dull concrete and harsh neon lights of the world's largest city (Fig. 1). No one is more aware of this juxtaposition than the Lolitas themselves. Nguyen interviews a Lolita, Rumi, who describes her attraction to Lolita fashion as a response to repressive aspects of Japanese society, where there is a lot of pressure to conform and to excel—Rumi views herself as an anarchist [1]. This Lolita understands her role as the “other,” and through her physical transformations, performance becomes a means of affective expression. That is, her performance manifests her kawaii worldview, one filled with childlike wonder, warm sweets, and tea parties. Rumi’s outward display of her ideals utilizes kawaii objects (dresses, stuffed animals) as the material manifestations of desires and emotions. By covering themselves with their personal happy objects, Lolitas can craft a self-presentation where nothing is hidden; their desires are quite literally on their sleeves.

The hysterics of kawaii call for displays of vulnerability that contradict Japanese social expectations. Further, kawaii relies on Japanese society to understand these images and their significance. Lolita fashion uses the affect of kawaii to propose the Lolita as loveable. This recontextualization allows for a very direct and understandable critique of the Japanese view that it is wrong to show emotions, let alone have a space for your emotions, and for others to acknowledge them as valuable. Lolitas like Rumi often receive negative comments on their outfits. If it was merely cute and nothing more than a performance, then surely no one would feel the need to correct their behavior [6]. These puffy pastel princesses are not the Lacanian hysterics who only express desire with no genuine connection to it, rather, they are dedicated to their desire in ways only Žižek’s hysterics could be. They wear it on their sleeves no matter how many nasty comments they get, no matter how inconvenient the style tends to be with its exaggerated silhouettes and layers. They understand it will strike a chord with many, yet the chance to express parts of themselves that society has suppressed is the most liberating, and indeed revolutionary, aspect of this performance.

Madoka Magica

Madoka Magica is a “magical girl” series, a genre of anime that typically depicts a group of young girls who gain magical powers through otherworldly means. Their narratives focus on both the girls’ day-to-day lives as students, and their struggles with their supernatural abilities. *Madoka Magica* takes these basic narrative elements and kawaii visuals associated with the genre, and then repeatedly destroys any sense of expectations related to them. In *Madoka Magica*, the girls struggle most within themselves. These average middle school girls are forced into a bad situation in which they have little control. Their actions are a result of their own naivety, despite their good intentions. There is no real “bad guy” in the show; the girls’ goals are only impeded by their own actions. *Madoka Magica* has more emotional complexity and darker themes than typical “magical girl” narratives: the magical powers are not sparking light, but guns; the villains are not opposing

threats but fellow magical girls who gave into despair; and vulnerability is not a weakness but the only way forward.

The main character, Madoka, acts as a paradigm of kawaii, with her big eyes, round face, short stature, pastel pink hair, and bubbly personality. Unlike other magical girls, however, Madoka spends nearly the entire series without magical powers. She has no divine protection or supernatural qualities to distinguish her from a normal girl. She is simply a middle school girl who witnesses the murder of her friends. She spends a good portion of her time following people around and mourning. Yet Madoka is the only girl who possesses the ability to change the world. There are critiques of this narrative, specifically by James Tate, that paint *Madoka Magica* as a show that fetishizes purity, where being naive is the preferable quality [17]. Reducing Madoka to a glorification of purity ignores the fact that she is an impure character. She has killed and seen destruction incomprehensible to most people; yet she still approaches the world with hope. She still wants to change her reality for the better.

In this show, to gain power and become a magical girl, one must create a wish to enact change. To realize their wishes, the girls must sacrifice some part of themselves. Madoka's wish was not actualized by a favoring of the universe, but by her own agency. This active role in actualizing her own desire is exemplified through her transformation, her ascension to power. Because this transformation was her choice, it becomes her ultimate act of vulnerability; this is where Madoka's heart is splayed open, and her ultimate intentions made clear. Her desire is to create a better world for those around her. The concept art for Madoka's final transformation demonstrates this visual shift (Fig. 2). Madoka gains longer hair and a flowing dress, her silhouette is a pure bright pink. She is surrounded by an intricate, lacey motif, contrasting with the stark black background. She is central to, and yet isolated within, the composition. The loose strokes of paint, the translucent colors amongst the heavy dark blacks and purples all draw attention to her. She is portrayed here at her most vulnerable; through the abstraction of the scene, nothing reads as material but her. She has embraced the role of hysteric, so driven by her desire to help those around her that she gave up everything. Her childish ways, her pure heart and vulnerability, have physically created a divide between her and the rest of society, the very people she vowed to help. This kawaii narrative is not a glorification of weakness or child-like naivety, rather, it glorifies humanity in all of its vulnerability.

Tate's critique of Madoka questions their kawaii worldview based on social conditioning, using widely held social beliefs of conformity and neo-liberal conceptions of power to propose that Madoka is a pathetic character and thus a bad representation of a strong woman. Tate's assertion suggests that we are only considered strong if we are exerting power over others; however, Madoka is revolutionary because she is weak, because she embodies a childlike love for the world. She has not yet been worn down through systematic abuses that seek to strip us of our humanity. Madoka indulges hysterically at every chance: breaking down constantly, loving without boundaries, keeping faith even when she witnesses suffering beyond comprehension. It would be insane to look at a world that abused girls for their emotiveness and still think that you can save it through love alone, but Madoka is insane. She is weak, without superhuman powers, and she cannot control her emotions and is easily overwhelmed. As we see in the key animation frames from the initial production of the series (Figs. 3 and 4), Madoka is positioned in such a way where others are constantly looking over her. She is made small, weak, with no power, and easily hurt. However, these frames also show that we are most commonly looking at other girls from Madoka's perspective (in Figure 4, we see Homura from Madoka's perspective).

Madoka's positioning as a kawaii character manifests most stereotypically in her powerlessness throughout most of the story, where she takes the role of an onlooker unable to change her circumstances. This establishes her identity through the convention of kawaii, adding to her visual representation, and it also gives the viewer a character with which to identify. Her position of closeness to the viewer makes it so that, as she further gains understanding and

eventually gains power, we are able to understand it without feeling like the power is arbitrary or gifted, but instead specific to Madoka and her kawaii attitude. While she spends most of the time seemingly powerless, she has the most agency of any character.

In light of this, I consider Tate's analysis to lack nuance in the Japanese social environment. Vulnerability is not inherently a negative quality, and showing emotions is not a personal failing. In a society where the rejection of emotions in favor of conformity is expected, then the hardest choice one can make is to embrace one's emotions no matter how weak and pitiful they might seem. The antagonist characters (witches) in *Madoka* are not corrupted by outside forces, but by their inability to come to terms with grief. They are powerful magical girls, but in their inability to face their emotions, they become the very thing they swore to fight. As a direct contrast of ideology within the *Madoka Magica* film *Rebellion*, we see the same scene twice: one with Madoka in it and one with Madoka gone. (figures 5 and 6). Madoka's kawaii affect that embraces ideals of vulnerability, love, and child-like joy is something Homura clings to as she conceptualizes Madoka as a Christ-like figure (fig.5). She is pure in intention, wants what is best, and is willing to sacrifice anything to ensure the world she loves and the people in it don't have to suffer. Madoka is hysterical in that she is the only one who was able to confront her desires, to understand her emotions as valuable and to act out her will no matter the personal consequences. Even as this transformation stemmed from something as simple as loving her friends and family, her love would transform the world. Kawaii and the value of vulnerability is her truth, but her actions to materialize this truth along with her performance of hysteria are what make Madoka a true revolutionary.

Conclusion

Kawaii is a culture that encourages us to express without limit, where vulnerability is a revolutionary response to a society that demands the suppression of emotion and feelings. To embody kawaii is to embody vulnerability, understanding the transformative power of our emotions; adopting a childlike love for our world and seeking to make it better at every chance; finding immense joy in small things, and being unabashed in this joy. Through Lolita culture, we see how kawaii self-fashioning is a way for people to express personal desire, seek comfort in like-minded communities, and push the world around us beyond conformity. Kawaii culture acknowledges that we have the power to make our world kinder, embracing the capacity to love without bounds.

Through *Madoka Magica*, we are able to experience kawaii through the "other." Seeing kawaii as a vehicle for vulnerability then offers the possibility of healing and acceptance of others. After all, Madoka is not real, her story is not for her. Yet fiction is a means to critique society because it provides a layer of separation from "reality" that makes these conversations accessible. Through fiction, one is not necessarily forced to confront their emotions directly. Madoka compels the viewer to connect and love her, she is kind and reacts in ways most people would in her situation. This relatable character encourages the viewer to value our emotions more; to understand that the only way forward is to embrace humanity through the acceptance and valuing of emotion, not the further rejection of it. Through Madoka we are able to see kawaii through the other, and through Lolita we are able to see kawaii through the self, both showing how our emotions are such powerful forces that they can shape the world. However, we must be careful with this power and use it to craft a kinder, gentler world in the face of apathy and alienation.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Lex Lancaster for this opportunity. I have had many people in my life who have encouraged me and pushed me to achieve beyond what I alone am capable of. I cannot properly express how thankful I am for this. The kindness I have been shown over the past few years has changed everything. It has been a light, both illuminating the flaws in my thinking and giving me glimmers of hope that push me forward. Dr. Lex I am truly indebted. Thank you.

References

- [1] M. Burdelski and K. Mitsuhashi, "She thinks you're kawaii": Socializing affect, gender, and relationships in a Japanese preschool," *Language in Society*, vol. 39, no. 1, Feb. 2010, pp. 65–93
- [2] M. Greg and G. Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*, Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010, pp. 2-3.
- [3] H. Nittono, "The two-layer model of 'kawaii': A behavioral science framework for understanding kawaii and cuteness," *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 2, no. 1, April 2016, pp. 79-95.
- [4] M. Hiramoto and L. Wee, "Kawaii in the semiotic landscape," *Sociolinguistic Studies*, vol. 13, no.1, 2019, pp. 15-35.
- [5] K. Saito, "Magic, 'Shōjo,' and Metamorphosis: Magical Girl Anime and the Challenges of Changing Gender Identities in Japanese Society," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 73, no. 1, Feb. 2014, pp. 143-164.
- [6] A. Nguyen, "Eternal Maidens: Kawaii Aesthetics and Otome Sensibility in Lolita Fashion," *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture*, vol.2, no.1, April 2016, pp.15-31.
- [7] M. Rose, "Child's Play? Exploring the Significance of Kawaii for Decora and Fairy-Kei Fashion Practitioners in Harajuku through a Case-Focused Analysis," *New Voices in Japanese Studies*, vol. 12, Aug. 2020, pp. 80-102.
- [8] S. Ahmed, "Happy Objects," chap. 1 in *The Affect Theory Reader*, Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2017.
- [9] S. Žižek, *The Most Sublime Hysteric: Hegel with Lacan*, Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2014.
- [10] T. Toivonen, V. Norasakkunkit, and Y. Uchida, "Unable to conform, unwilling to rebel? youth, culture, and motivation in globalizing japan" [online], *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 2, Sept. 2011 [cited Jan 10, 2022], retrieved from World Wide Web: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2011.00207/full>.
- [11] A. Sasagawa, "Views of Housewives in Contemporary Japan," chap. 2 in *Understanding Japanese Society*, 5th ed., ed. Joy Henry, London and New York: Routledge, 2019, pp. 51-71.
- [12] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge, 1990, p.34
- [13] S. Yoneyama, "The Era of Bullying: Japan under Neoliberalism" [online], *The Asia Pacific Journal*, vol. 6, no. 12, Dec. 2008 [cited Jan 10, 2022], retrieved from World Wide Web: <https://apjif.org/-Shoko-YONEYAMA/3001/article.html>.
- [14] K. Sato, "From Hello Kitty to Cod Roe Kewpie: a Postwar Cultural History of Cuteness in Japan," *Education about Asia*, vol. 12, no. 2, Fall 2009, pp. 38-42.
- [15] J. Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis (Book XVII)*, trans. Russell Grigg, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1st ed, 17 Jan., 2006.

- [16] G.W.F. Hegel, "Hegel: The Phenomenology of Spirit," trans. Michael Inwood, Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1807.
- [17] J. Tate, "Magical Girl Martyrs: Puella Magi Madoka Magica and Purity, Beauty, and Passivity," Oregon Undergraduate Research Journal, vol.11, no.1, 2017, pp.37-46.

Figure 1: Digital reproduction, "Sweet Lolitas in Harajuku w/ Angelic Pretty Pink & 6%DOKIDOKI," 18 Feb, 2012. Tokyofashion.com, <https://tokyofashion.com/sweet-lolita-harajuku-angelic-pretty-pink/>



Figure 2: Digital reproduction, Puella Madoka Magica the Movie REBELLION: Production Note. Shaft, vol 2., 2015, pp. 210.



Kawaii Revolution

Figure 3-4: Digital reproduction of illustrations by Takahiro Kishida, Puella Magi Madoka Magica Production Note: Key Animation Note Vol. 1 - Opening Key Animation. Shaft, 2011, pp. 81; 212.



FIGURE 5-6: Stills from Shinbo, *Madoka Magica the Movie: Rebellion* (1:22:00 & 1:55:33).

