



Script Writing, Script Acting: Gender Performances in a Hong Kong Maid Café (In English)

Maid cafe, a type of theme restaurants that sprang up from Japanese Otaku culture, is a current cultural phenomenon in Greater China. Dressing up in Victorian-style maid costumes, providing theme-related food and service, and treating customers as their “masters” are some of the highly gendered acts the girls working in these maid cafes do at work.

The present study on maids in Hong Kong maid cafes is based on the theory of gender performativity. The research is built up on ethnographic field studies in a local maid café with data collected from both participative practices and in-depth interviews.

In quite a few of her works on gender performativity, Judith Butler challenges the long-standing ontological stance in terms of the relation between gender and sex. Arguing the performative side of gender, Butler redefines gender as sets of culturally constructed and stylized acts through endless repetition. She also goes on to explore the complicated relation of discursive restriction and individual agency of the performativity.

The current study aims to explain the performative character of specific transgressive gendered acts, namely how a girl from Hong Kong is able to work as a Japanese maid. Moreover, it also tries to discover the individual agency in this particular context: the degree of freedom they have in and the degree of pleasure they gain from their work.

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