The Primary Ambivalences of Contemporary Japanese Society

This paper explores the most significant sources of ambivalence in present day Japan as emphasised in sociological, ethnographic, political and biographical studies from 1980 to 2003. For the purposes of this work, I use Merton and Barber's definition of "ambivalence" to refer to a situation whereby there arise "conflicting normative expectations socially defined for a particular social role associated with a single social status"[1]. Whilst it will not always be possible to demonstrate that such conflicts of social expectations are occurring at the individual level, I hope that by elaborating what appear to be the central ideologies of a rapidly changing society, I might describe the competing currents of thought which have a normative status in Japanese society at large. Following a consideration of a ample of the writing in this field, I have structured this analysis around the four themes of women, work, the city and consumption. A concluding section draws these strands together.

The Ambivalent Female Identity

Japan is a society in which women increasingly work, but cannot reach the upper echelons of corporate life. Whilst a growing number of young women are working as

[1] Robert K. Merton and E. Barber, 'Sociological Ambivalence', *Sociological Theory, Values and Sociological Change*, ed. E.A. Tiryakian, (New York: Free Press, 1963), pp.91 – 120, quoted here from Andrew J. Weigert, *Mixed Emotions: Certain Steps Toward Understanding Ambivalence*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991)

secretaries, the prevalent archetype of the OL – "Office Lady", replete with a recognised aesthetic of dress and make-up is not one which is accompanied with assumptions of upward mobility. David Mura remarked on the situation in 1988:

> No qualms here about secretaries as hostesses or maids. We later learned that most young women enter the work force only for a few years, long enough to find a husband. Few have any chance of moving up the corporate ladder, no matter whether they've graduated from Tokyo University, the Harvard of Japan, or a small women's school. In the Japanese work world, women are props, gofers.[2]

However, this representation of the Japanese female's limited social empowerment through work, must be counterbalanced by a historical understanding of the traditionally strong position occupied by Japanese housewives. It is still customary for the housewife to manage and administer the finances of the household, deciding on matters of the children's education, household purchases and long-term savings. Thus while the bread-winning may be predominantly male, control of the married income usually falls to the wife, who can exercise considerable influence through her purchasing power.

Within such a patriarchal system, what are the consequences for female sexuality and the female sexual identity which are prompted by the effects of westernisation? On the one hand, a rhetoric of empowerment which has been synonymous with feminist thought includes a proselytising awareness of sexual empowerment. On the other, the influx of the visual modes of late capitalism commodifies the female body in a deluge of images and products, in such a way as to position commercial interest in opposition to such moral sensibilities as modesty, restraint and decency.

Japanese folk literature contains models for an assertive female sexuality. The Shinto myth of Ame no Uzume portrays a female protagonist who lures the imperial matriarch from her cave with and erotically suggestive dance and overcomes Saruto-

[2] David Mura, *Turning Japanese*, (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1991), p.18

hiko's obstructions by exposing her sexual organs to him[3]. It would be unwise to claim that the conservatism of Japanese culture regarding the sexually assertive female, and its repression of overt sexuality is a historical fact. Writing on this subject seems to affirm two contradictory social consequences of Japan's defeat in the second world war. As Kamiko Takeji points out, "the defeat in World War II caused many people to question established norms"[4] thus extending the bounds of permissible discussion to include a dispute of social gender roles. Yet at the same time, post-war censorship under the aegis of *Eirin* (the Motion Pictures Code of Ethics Committee, comprised of six representatives from Japan's six major film studios) operated in cooperation with the police and public prosecutors after the end of the Occupation, intervening for instance in 1976, to prevent Oshima's hard-core and yet emancipatory *Ai no Corrida* (In the Realm of the Senses) from bring released.[5]

Yet the degree of sexual liberation of women cannot be regarded as merely the expression of empowerment in quotidian personal life. Women's self-presentation in society is arguably deeply connected with the social rites for mate selection and the institution of marriage. In this context, arranged marriage is the antithesis of the sexually self-aware, predatory, assertive female identity propounded by certain variants of third-wave feminism. Instead, "miai kekkon"[6] – arranged marriage in which both sets of parents decide upon their offspring's conjugation, would arguably tend to connote value upon the projection of a demure, chaste and virginal identity.

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[3] Stanford M. Lyman, *Roads to Dystopia: Sociological Essays on the Postmodern Condition*, (Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2001), p.230
[4] *Lives in Motion: Composing Circles of Self and Community in Japan,* ed. Susan Orpett Long, (New York: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1999), p.38
[5] Stanford M. Lyman, *Roads to Dystopia: Sociological Essays on the Postmodern Condition*, (Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2001), p.229
[6] *Lives in Motion: Composing Circles of Self and Community in Japan,* ed. Susan Orpett Long, (New York: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1999), p.29

Thus miai could be said to have a continuing structural influence on constructions of female sexual identity, yet only in so far as the practice is still prevalent in contemporary society. In his study of mate selection in Japan, conducted in Higashinada-ku (a ward of Kobe city), the small city of Ono, and two mountain villages – Onsen-cho and Muraoka-cho during 1988-89 Kamiko Takeji reports findings which include the continuation of the tradition of arranged marriage even in urban areas. For Takeji, "miai kekkon"[7] is defined as a marriage which has resulted from an initially arranged formal meeting organised by the candidates' parents or go-betweens. In Higashinada-ku (part of the Kobe metropolis of 1.4 million where 70% of employment derives from tertiary industry, and 29% from secondary) 19.4% of married respondents between the ages of 20 to 34 had had what Takeji classifies as "miai kekkon"[8]. In rural areas, as might be expected, this figure was higher, standing at 43.1%[9].

Takeji suggests the following reasons for the continuation of this tradition: "single-sex workplaces or colleges … some people are too timid or awkward to approach a member of the opposite sex. Some are more interested in career achievement … A social environment that discourages intimate cross-sex association"[10]. Whilst shyness may provide an explanation, it must simultaneously be induced that arranged marriage could serve to perpetuate the acceptability – and even the desirability – of shyness as a feminine trait.

What identifications of self are readily available and widely circulated within Japanese culture, for young women in the process of defining themselves? In his chapter

[7] *Lives in Motion: Composing Circles of Self and Community in Japan,* ed. Susan Orpett Long, (New York: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1999), p.29
[8] *Lives in Motion: Composing Circles of Self and Community in Japan,* ed. Susan Orpett Long, (New York: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1999), p.30, Table 1
[9] id.
[10] id., p.39 – 39.

"Consuming Bodies", Clammer describes the range of images of the female which are promoted in Japanese magazines, noting after Moeran in 1991 that in several publications, over half[11] of magazine content consisted of advertising, with the result that the majority of the cultural space was dedicated to using the female body to promote consumption – either of products such as fashion and cosmetics, or for the consumption of the images of women themselves. Within this sphere, Clammer notes certain patterns in his survey of eleven publications. In magazines targeted at women, he draws out what he interprets as a adumbration of generic "(ideal)"[12] types which cumulatively serve to effect a "suppression of selfhood"[13] : "the perfect housewife, the young mother"[14] are complimented in women's fashion magazines by a prevalent style of dress which is first and foremost, "sensible"[15]. The aesthetic is one of "marriageability" of "'wholesomeness', and even of innocence"[16].

Whilst self-images of the wholesome and innocent young woman are re-iterated within the female market, the arena of mainstream cultural productions targeted at men (and widely read by young women) similarly refrains from portrayal of aggressive female sexuality. "In men's magazines the models are usually, as we have noted, young, conveying an image of budding sexuality, attractive but non-threatening,"[17] Clammer asserts, quoting from Rosalind Coward's work on *Female Desire* to explain that these images project "a fresh, spontaneous, but essentially *responsive* sexuality"[18] which is latent but not assertive. Thus a provocative image may be domesticated with endearing

[11] John Clammer, *Contemporary Urban Japan: a Sociology of Consumption*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1997), p.110
[12] id., p.121
[13] id.
[14] id.
[15] id., p.120
[16] id.
[17] id.
[18] Rosalind Coward, *Female Desire: Women's Sexuality Today* (London: Paladin (Granada Publishing. Ltd.), 1984); quoted from John Clammer, *Contemporary Urban Japan: a Sociology of Consumption*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1997), p. 123.

personal details: "rather disarmingly, photo-spreads are accompanied by personal information – the model's name (or at least her stage name), her age, her statistics, what she likes doing, where she comes from"[19]. In all of this, one is reminded of the "kawaii" aesthetic – the cult of cuteness, which is embodied by such brands as Hello Kitty, Keroppi, Snoopy[20], Pingu and Badtzmaru[21] and worn, prized and accessorised by a wide female demographic encompassing the early teens and the late twenties. In what has been described as a social Lolita complex, this fetishisation of cute resurfaces in the repressed, in the underground but widely available imagery of pornographic cartoons and animation, as well as in soft pornography. As Clammer notes, such imagery can take the form of women dressed in "sailor girl" school uniforms with its intimations of under-age sex[22].

With regard to the cultural aesthetics of beauty, an ethnocentrism seems to cut in two directions. Whilst images of female beauty are invariably of Japanese women and health and beauty care advice frequently appear to reinforce "the right kind of diet not only to maintain that slim body and clear complexion, but also to maintain a sense of almost spiritual Japaneseness … to enhance the qualities of race"[23], Japanese women are never seen in Clammer's sample to be advertising products and services for the removal of body hair, for breast firming or for lingerie[24]. Advertisements for those products feature western models, with "a kind of ambiguous looking Eurasian type"[25] also noted. The conclusion Clammer draws from this is one of denial – Japanese women cannot be thought to have body hair or unfirm breasts – and the squeamishness of censorship laws concerning pubic hair would seem to affirm this. On the question of lingerie however, his

[19] id., p.121
[20] id., p.154
[21] Hello Kitty, Keroppi and Badtzmaru are owned by Sanrio co. ltd.
[22] John Clammer, *Contemporary Urban Japan: a Sociology of Consumption*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1997), p.123.
[23] id., p.124.
[24] id., p.117
[25] id.

case for the repression of images of female Japanese sensuality in favour of wholesomeness, would seem better augmented by a consideration of average breast sizes. For Japanese women, to buy lingerie advertised by a white (rarely black) female may be said to have an aspirational quality with respect to personal form.

To conclude, the present cultural presentations of female beauty in Japan stress latent rather than overt sexuality, and the aesthetic of "kawaii" tends towards a fetishisation of an under-developed sexuality. Meanwhile, Japanese women still lack clear social expectations and opportunities for career development. Whilst the continuing legacy of arranged marriage is one which I argue is inclined to favour the self-presentation of submissiveness – what might be viewed as wholesomeness or indeed "marriageability" – the shift to "love marriages" as the means of mate selection and the increasingly strident demands for equal opportunities in the workplace are, it seems, in conflict with presently circulating archetypes of feminine attractiveness. To be clear, the fundamental ambivalence for young Japanese women today is likely to be the dilemma of whether to imagine oneself as an endearing cute girl, or as a sexually self-aware adult.

Abandoned by Corporate Paternalism

In 1969, as part of a cross-cultural survey of the attitudes of Japanese and American businessmen, Lewis Austin drew broad conclusions from the responses of his sample of 42 Japanese executives and high ranking civil servants, which may help to contextualise more recent trends. By broadly categorising and culturally contrasting the

results of an unfinished sentence completion survey, he surmised that whereas "The American gets his identity from loving and being loved. These are his triumphs and his monuments"[26], the Japanese executive derives the larger part of their sense of self-worth "from honouring and serving"[27]. He explained, "duty for the Japanese represents not a contract but a total commitment. Just doing his job will require all he is. From it he will derive his identity"[28], and concluded that "If Americans find fulfilment alone, Japanese seem to find it often in "membership""[29].

Much has been made of the decline of corporate paternalism in Japan. From a time in the late 1920s to the early 1930s[30], the corporation emerged in Japan as the place of lifetime employment, security and generous benefits. With the bursting of the economic bubble at the end of the '80s, the increasing fraud allegations and corruption scandals which called into doubt the wisdom of the iron triangle between businesses, politicians prepared to limit tendering of public contracts, and banks prepared to accumulate bad loans; job insecurity finally hit the Japanese workplace. With it came a fundamental disjuncture between the social identifications in place and the economic realities which called for mass redundancies and a future of workforce mobility, transferable skills and retraining.

Katsuyoshi Fukui names the six large "enterprise systems"[31] of Japan as "Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, Fuyo, Sanwa and Ichikan"[32]. Cumulatively these "enterprise systems" can be said to dominate a large part of Japanese economic existence, controlling

[26] Lewis Austin, *Saints and Samurai: The political culture of the American and Japanese elites*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), p.110
[27] id.
[28] id.
[29] id., p.140
[30] Craig R. Littler, *The Development of the Labour Process in Capitalist Societies: A Comparative Study of the Transformation of Work Organisation in Britain, Japan and the USA*, (Aldershot: Gower Publishing Company Limited, 1986), p.155
[31] id.
[32] *Lives in Motion: Composing Circles of Self and Community in Japan,* ed. Susan Orpett Long, (New York: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1999). p.155.

vast portions of the economy together with around 40[33] independent enterprise groups (such as Sony which is affiliated to more than 200[34] companies) which are not rooted in specific banking information networks. As Fukui puts it, this economic structure has made it possible for "enterprise systems" to "incorporate all aspects of the lives of its employees, thus providing an apparatus of common identity stretching across the entire system"[35]. Writing in 1989, Metraux noted the seriousness with which personality of interviewees was evaluated during the interview process for entrants to this corporate world – including the hiring of detective agencies[36] by the organisations themselves. The situation was one in which lifetime employment – virtually guaranteed except in cases of "very serious moral misconduct"[37] – made entry into the paternal corporation worthy of very high personal sacrifices.

What remains is what Nishiyama Shigeru terms, "a new kind of poverty"[38] – a poverty of meaning. In the context of crumbling certainties, one is, to use Mullins' words "enclosed in a competitive and bureaucratic educational system from kindergarten to university"[39]. The pressure on high school students is particularly intense as they prepare for exams to gain admission to the most prestigious universities, a vital pre-requisite for entry into the most well-known corporations, and which are thereby seen to determine the fate of one's career. Whilst university life serves as a relative respite, having graduated, the young prospective employee faces what Metraux now quotes as "long years of hard work in school and a drawn-out apprenticeship in the office with fewer opportunities for

[33] id., p.156
[34] id., p.157
[35] id., p, 158
[36] David Metraux, *The Japanese Economy and The American Businessman*, (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), p.55
[37] id., p.54
[38] Nishiyama Shigeru, "Gendai no shūkyō undō', *Gendaijin no shūkyō*, ed. Omura Eisho and Nishima Shigeru, (Tokyo: Yuhikaku Press, 1988), p.26; quoted here from *Religion and Social Crisis in Japan: Understanding Japanese Society through the Aum Affair, ed. Robert J. Kisala and Mark R. Mullins, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001)*, p.2
[39] *Religion and Social Crisis in Japan: Understanding Japanese Society through the Aum Affair, ed. Robert J. Kisala and Mark R. Mullins, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001)*, p2

promotion than their fathers enjoyed"[40]. He describes a pattern of disillusionment among middle-aged Japanese corporate employees, who experienced the malaise of a workaholic existence: "Workaholic men employed by companies that controlled virtually every aspect of their lives and much of their families' lives as well never had time at home"[41]. The social realities behind such anomie are documented by Theodore Bestor who finds that fathers of Tokyo elementary school children more often eat out than with their families[42]. Miyoshi too observes in contemporary fiction, a reflection of dissatisfaction with the "sterility of managed society"[43].

Yet whilst economic instability grows all-pervasive during what is described as a 14 year recession, and as it grows increasingly untenable to invest deep emotional attachment in one's paternal corporation, the cultural methods by which individual identity is affirmed are still traditionally rooted in the workplace. Clammer has précised Kondo's study of factory workers in Tokyo's Shitamachi district as follows: "Work – its objective conditions and subjective interpretation – becomes in this model the major vehicle through which identity is achieved"[44] and Fukui writes that beginning with an emphasis on "harmonious collectivity"[45] in the socialisation of Japanese children, "The individual is presented as essentially a group member with an identity predicated on the group – whether an enterprise or the state"[46].

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[40] Robert Kisala, 'Aum Spiritual Truth Church in Japan', *Wolves Within the Fold: Religious Leadership and Abuses of Power*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998) pp.45 – 46; quoted here from Daniel A. Metraux, *Aum Shinrikyo and Japanese Youth*, (Maryland: University Press of America, 1999), p2.
[41] Daniel A. Metraux, *Aum Shinrikyo and Japanese Youth*, (Maryland: University Press of America, 1999), p.6
[42] Reported in *The Japan Digest* [July 25, 1991]. Results of a survey conducted by the House Food Industrial Co.; quoted from *Lives in Motion: Composing Circles of Self and Community in Japan,* ed. Susan Orpett Long, (New York: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1999), p.187, footnote 35
[43] Masao Miyoshi, *Off Center: Power and Culture Relations between Japan and the United States*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), p.233
[44] John Clammer, *Contemporary Urban Japan: a Sociology of Consumption*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1997), p.153
[45] *Humanising the City? Social Contexts of Urban Life at the Turn of the Millennium*, ed. Anthony P. Cohen and Katsuyoshi Fukui, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), p.158
[46] id., 159

Miyoshi describes "*the* first principle"[47] of Japanese society as being the assumption of an ever-present vertical hierarchy. He sees the Japanese language as critically complicit in sustaining this process, arguing that one's sense of self is continually reaffirmed by the system of honorifics since it enacts "a whole involved process of minutely adjusting one's every utterance to confirm to tacitly assumed relative positions among speaker, listener, and referent"[48]. This is a socio-linguistic bind which promotes attention and respect for rigid hierarchical distinctions, yet with economic uncertainty comes an instability which threatens to dissolve the permanence and even the validity of such ascriptions of status.

Whilst the economy was growing, the education system and the corporate system with its high demands / high rewards pay-off was workable, yet the effect of over a decade of economic stagnation has been to create disaffection with the lack of personal time, the intensity of competition, the pressure of conformity, and the rigid hierarchy of such a system. The repercussions upon personal identity of an economic shift towards greater fluidity in the workforce are especially discordant with the proclivities of Japanese society since its strong work ethic, rigid socio-linguistic vertical hierarchy, and cultural emphasis on duty, meant that the half-century of corporate paternalism was bound to come to represent a deeply internalised cultural standard.

[47] Masao Miyoshi, *Accomplices of Silence: The Modern Japanese Novel*, (California: University of California Press, 1974), p.137
[48] id.

Community and the City

Just as the Modernist writers in Britain in the first half of the twentieth century responded to and described the sense of alienation which arose out of city life, Japanese society too faced a transition beginning in the 1950's, which saw a large-scale move to the cities[49]. This process of urbanisation involving an unprecedented upheaval of working class families to the city was necessarily tumultuous for Japanese society in particular, where the kinship networks of the extended family bear an especially heavy significance for one's sense of family and identity. As Kisala and Mullins explain, the destabilising rupture created by such a transition was seen by many to account for the sudden and marked increase in the popularity of cults and new religions both in the 1950's and then again in the 1970's. With each successive wave of industrialisation and rationalisation, many new urbanites sought to find though the community of a religious group, the same security and continuity left behind with the extended kinship networks of the village: "Lacking the wider network of support once provided by the extended families and rural communities, many individuals found a supportive community in one of the new religions"[50]. Yet whilst traditionally strong kinship networks diminish, yet they are sustained, in a love/hate relationship. illustrating the ambivalence inherent in the allure of urban freedom. As Haruka Wazaki points out in his assessment of six generations of 22 "ritual" families' participation in the Kyoto Daimonji festival, a few have been "inclined to withdraw from the ritual group and avoid the social obligations of the community"[51]

[49] *Religion and Social Crisis in Japan: Understanding Japanese Society through the Aum Affair, ed. Robert J. Kisala and Mark R. Mullins, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001)*, p2
[50] id.
[51] *Humanising the City? Social Contexts of Urban Life at the Turn of the Millennium*, ed. Anthony P. Cohen and Katsuyoshi Fukui, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), p.130

yet the festival is bolstered since there is a willingness for new recruits to adhere by claiming "essentially fictive"[52] kinship with the traditional local families.

Whilst the city has, in its anonymity represented newfound social freedoms – soaplands and pachinko parlours being uniquely Japanese manifestations of anonymous vice, the loss of an identity affirmed at the street level expresses for many a loss of humanity. In Fritz Lang's 1927 film *Metropolis*, the city was famously reimagined as a gigantic machine, and in the great tides of humanity which throng the Tokyo streets, unremittingly regulated by lights and firmly ushered into underground trains, a sensation can emerge of both bewilderment and insignificance. As the novelist Haruki Murakami writes of the combination of the alienating city and the endemic corporate model, it could now benefit us if we were able to say, "I'm an unimportant little person, and if I end up just a cog in society's system gradually worn down until I die, hey – that's okay"[53].

Tokyo is remarked in particular by Miyoshi for its erosion of public space. He bemoans: "It may be hard to believe for anyone who has not been to Tokyo, but that great city contains not a square foot where its citizens can stand without admission or rent. … what few public places remain … are all guarded and controlled"[54]. He adds that newly built colleges and universities deliberately omit facilities for free assembly such as a large auditorium or plaza and comments on the "virtual curfew"[55] imposed on suburbanites by the close of public transport systems before midnight, in the context of exorbitant taxi fares and long working hours. Where conversation might be expected to take place in the surrogate public spaces of restaurants, coffee shops and bars, there is instead "ear-

[52] id., p135
[53] Haruki Murakami, *Underground: The Tokyo Gas Attack and the Japanese Psyche*, trans. Alfred Birnbaum and Philip Gabriel, .(New York: Vintage International, 2001), p. 364
[54] Masao Miyoshi, *Off Center: Power and Culture Relations between Japan and the United States*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), p.227
[55] id.

splitting music played constantly to keep customer turnover commercially profitable"[56]. As Naomi Klein argued in her work *No Logo*, the cumulative effect of this crowding out of all non-commercial space could be to the detriment of the ability to express oneself as an individual, or to enact an autonomous identity beyond the parentheses of a branded and packaged "experience".

Where the sense of self might have been restored though close family ties, as we have seen, the nature of such links is in conflict with the demands of city work. As well as not eating together, the modern family may find itself divided by the vast commuting times necessary to live in the sprawling conurbations of twenty-first century Japan. Kohei Okamoto notes in his study of Tokyo suburbanites that access to the employment opportunities and services offered by the city incurs high costs in terms of the average times that workers spend commuting. The average 1990 one-way Monday morning commute for married Kawagoe City respondents working in the Tokyo Central Wards was found to be 1 hour and 47 minutes[57]. Even outside the hours of formal work, the expectation that salarymen will socialise with their work colleagues, and the importance attached to after-work drinking as a means of team-building and building relationships with one's superiors or with one's clients ("*settai*"[58]), constitutes a further structural impediment to time spent with the family for a city worker. On the Monday of Okamoto's survey, 10 of the 34 husbands went out having finished work at around seven pm, consequently returning home at around 11 pm. Okamoto comments that for commuters to the metropolitan centre during weekdays, "home was little more than a

[56] id., 228
[57] *日本の都市 The Japanese City*, ed. Pradyumna Prasad Karan and Kristin Eileen Stapleton, (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), p.96
[58] id., p.97

place to sleep"[59]. In Takeji's assessment, "increased urbanisation and an increased proportion of those in salaried or wage employment have weakened the connection between the economic and social functions of the family"[60]; and in the bleak analysis of Susumu Shimazono, the city dwellers' sources of disaffection derive infection from the city's sociological symptoms: "increased crime, poverty, and family breakdown"[61].

Freedom of sexual activity is greater in the Japanese city, and freedom of mate selection is – as we saw earlier with Takeji – greater in urban areas, with Wazaki's six generational survey suggesting a marked shift to exogamous marriages among Kyoto's Daimonji community synchronous with urbanisation: "In the past, endogamous marriages predominated. More recently, however, the cases of endogamy have decreased to a very small number"[62]. Notably, in Japan, promiscuous behaviour is limited in as much as space is limited. For instance, Japanese university students usually attend a university near their family home and live with their parents during their studies. This can be said to be both for cultural reasons which include the important status of the family, and for financial reasons involving amongst other costs, the price of accommodation. The very high cost of renting apartment space in Tokyo and Osaka has created a market both for relatively cramped accommodation and also for what are known as "love hotels" in which young couples pay by the hour for a themed room away from the eyes of parents or the ears of neighbours.

The ways in which ritual and tradition reinvent themselves in the city is telling of a newfound urgency in the search for methods of mediating identity. Writing on the

[59] id.
[60] *Lives in Motion: Composing Circles of Self and Community in Japan,* ed. Susan Orpett Long, (New York: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1999), p.35
[61] quoted here from Daniel A. Metraux, *Aum Shinrikyo and Japanese Youth*, (Maryland: University Press of America, 1999), p.vi
[62] *Humanising the City? Social Contexts of Urban Life at the Turn of the Millennium*, ed. Anthony P. Cohen and Katsuyoshi Fukui, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), p.132

Daimonji festival in Kyoto, Wazaki claims that "In the past, there was a sense of identity, but of a rather diffuse and unconscious kind"[63]. His explanation is as follows:

> When kin relationships overlapped within a community, the individual was placed in a dense social network. Under such circumstances one did not require a consciousness of being a community member, for one was *undoubtedly* part of the community. It is when such kin relations have disappeared, when the social ties have been eroded, that members need to emphasise their sense of identity.[64]

It is within such a context that Wazaki places the symbolic *bon* fire-lighting celebration as a "multi-referential"[65] ceremony for the Kyoto city dweller, which serves to provide "an orientation and dynamic for the self"[66]. Whilst this celebration takes on fresh significances for its urbanite participants and spectators, the city becomes the locus of a twofold conflict. The modernising impulse is held in check by the longings which ritual sates, whist the commercial impulses of urban life must do symbolic battle with the portable shrines of authentic tradition. In response to a government policy aimed at economic and social recovery through increased tourism, started in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the order in which the mountainside symbols were set ablaze was modified at the request of the municipal authorities in order that the spectacle might "become a more satisfactory event for tourists"[67] provide a more convenient spectacle for tourists. Since then this commercially systematised chronology has given birth to its own retroactive justification in the form of a mythologising "invented tradition", a pseudo-folk narrative which borrows from the technologies of ritual to mediate the awkward dichotomy. The order of lighting the five hillside beacons is explained according to the symbols activated by *bon* spirits as they move from the east of the city to its western part: "The spirits go first to the eastern Daimonji mountain in the shape of a body to destroy

[63] id., p.132
[64] id., p.133
[65] id., p.146
[66] id., p.143, 144.
[67] id., p.138

the evils of the flesh. Then they chant the Buddhist sutra together. Thirdly they board and [sic] the ancestors' boat …"[68].

In the Nada district of Himeji city, the Kenka Matsuri is analysed by Keiko Ikeda who notes that as this community led festival in which the bearers of each of the clashing wooden temples have traditionally belonged to distinct and patrilineal clan-like guilds, the mobility of urbanisation has threatened the continuation of this rite in its past forms. In the context of the decline in leisure time of corporate workers, the perceived lesser allegiance of commuting workers to the local community, the call for inclusivity towards women and the pressure to make the event more accessible to tourists, Ikeda warns that the insecurities of festival leaders may not be unfounded in the context of commercialisation: "If the *Kenka Matsuri* is swept up in this current and becomes a generic "Japanese tradition," it will not only lose its autonomy, but also its meaning to members of the community, or at least its roles in the community that I have discussed here"[69]. Undoubtedly, as with the Daimonji festival, the meaning of the ceremony will change as greater commercial demands are sparred or borne. As awareness mounts against the discriminations suffered by Koreans in Japan, Kuniko Fujita and Richard Child Hill tell us how the Wasso festival in Osaka – where "wasso" means literally "have come"[70] in Korean – has become a locus whereby such an identity can be publicly celebrated. It is though the archaic, through ritual that it becomes possible to articulate once more the identity which the anonymity of supposedly appealing modern city life has rendered mute and compliant.

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[68] id.
[69] *Lives in Motion: Composing Circles of Self and Community in Japan,* ed. Susan Orpett Long, (New York: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1999), p.133
[70] *日本の都市 The Japanese City*, ed. Pradyumna Prasad Karan and Kristin Eileen Stapleton, (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), p.124

What are spoken of as "invented traditions" often represent a striving retrospectively to recapture something which was not there at all to begin with. When the Japanese government moved to promote regional specialties in craft and cuisine, it perhaps inadvertently prompted a trend of somewhat forced recollection which Bestor contends renders Japan exotic even to its own citizens: "guidebooks invariably lavish great attention on local cuisine, and focus on the *meisan* or *meibutsu* ("famous local products") that practically every town and village touts as its unique contribution to Japan's culinary heritage"[71]. A particularly esoteric example of a traditional speciality cited by Bestor would be the mountain village in which the male members of one household held the responsibility of preparing a form of sushi preserved for several years in a paste of fermented soybeans[72]. The sense that one ought to have a local speciality, that one is duty-bound to re-enact a long abandoned tradition, highlights the manner by which economic motives can serve to sustain tradition, albeit with a fresh lacquer-coating of narrative. For Ikeda, this concession is a loss for it represents the "fetishisation of local tradition by both industry and state"[73] and a trend which William Kelly criticises since it "seeks out particular, authentic 'customs' of localities, but it then decontextualises them in the service of a generalized and homogenized 'folk tradition'"[74]. I am uncertain. Whilst traditional festival may well only be the accretion of contingencies, rationalised post factum though narrative, they serve a valuable ritual function when – as Levi-Strauss

[71] *Lives in Motion: Composing Circles of Self and Community in Japan,* ed. Susan Orpett Long, (New York: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1999), p.161
[72] id., p.160, p.182: footnote 12
[73] id., p.133
[74] quoted here from *Lives in Motion: Composing Circles of Self and Community in Japan,* ed. Susan Orpett Long, (New York: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1999), p.133

proposed – "the purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction"[75].

To conclude, the city represents a challenge to Japanese culture in its assault on the broad kinship networks so prominent in self-identity constructions and its subversion, in the form of a creeping commercialisation of space, of tradition and ritual. Even links between the commuting worker and the family are challenged by the demands of corporate Japan and the bourgeoning urban sprawl. In this context, ritual and the festival come to take on new valences for the identity constructions of its urban participants, and whilst these are often "invented traditions", I question how useful such a distinction can be when the practices themselves come to be narrated in such a way as to serve as surrogates for community and mediators of selfhood.

Consuming Patriotically

Drawing a distinction between the commodities of need and the commodities of desire, several writers on consumption in late-capitalist Japan have observed that the majority of shopping time and of consuming leisure is intrinsically connected with expressions of self-hood in a more extensive manner than in other cultures. Bestor quotes Igor Kopytoff to emphasise that whilst "for an economist, commodities simply *are*"[76], his experience in a Tsukiji fish market and the associated supply chains which bind seafood

[75] Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'The Structural Study of Myth', *Critical Theory Since 1965*, ed. Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle, (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1986), p.821
[76] quoted here from *Lives in Motion: Composing Circles of Self and Community in Japan,* ed. Susan Orpett Long, (New York: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1999), p.153, Bestor's italics

restaurants to the fishing grounds, again illustrates the extensive "trajectories"[77] along which "objects acquire and shed meanings"[78]. Clammer concurs, remarking the development of "a culture based increasingly on desire rather than need"[79], later adducing that "you can't reduce consumption to economic factors, it's about desire"[80]. These would seem to be comments pertaining to the preoccupations of those who are able to afford expensive non-utility purchases, and gourmet foods, yet commentators elaborate that in the relative affluence of modern Japan, these are widespread and national concerns, which permeate and fetishise even utility-centred purchases. The bourgeois haven of the department store is an equivalence for the American mall in space-attenuated Japan, as the third generation Japanese-American, Mura observes of department stores in 1988:

> They attested to the Japanese fascination with newness, with forever-evolving codes of how to belong to the group. The Japanese are aesthetes, connoisseurs, do not equate beauty with frivolity. Here the consumer's desire centered on a cult of beauty and nationalism and less on the need for individuation.[81]

Here then lie some of the main tensions within Japanese consumption. In the first place where Clammer would claim that consumption is the last space in which Japanese people can express their individuality, others such as Mura and Bestor would argue that consumption is consistently a conformist expression of commitment to the dictates of the market and simultaneously carried out in such a way as to confirm nationalism – one's socially paramount "Japaneseness". However, in either interpretation, the exercise of consumption as an expression of status requires that it be overt. Clammer writes of this vertical society that "social stratification is based on status competition which is a part of consumption", yet whereas in cultures such as 1980's Britain the contemporary middle

[77] id.
[78] id.
[79] John Clammer, *Contemporary Urban Japan: a Sociology of Consumption*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1997), p.9
[80] p.164
[81] David Mura, *Turning Japanese*, (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1991), p.16

America of SUVs and Hummers, consumption and excess were and are ostentatious, in Japan, there are normative social costs associated with such behaviour. In a Japan to which affluence has come only after the bitter poverty of a post-war period whose more mature generation is still alive, frugality and a strong communal sense have at least some legacy. According to Clammer, consumption, "given the ethos of Japanese society, must be played down in order to minimize the disruptive effects of too much overt competition"[82]. Comparing the poorest and the richest urban areas of Osaka prefecture, Fujita and Hill find that the average per capita income differential between them is relatively small: the ratio of poorest to richest is 58 percent where for most American metropolis jurisdictions, the richest would exceed the poorest by a factor of ten or more. Whilst some have described this aspect of Japanese society as communistic, when allied to a public policy of punitive inheritance tax[83], it could be seen how such a society would be conducive to the maintenance of egalitarian ideology.

In the novel *Nantonaku, kuristaru* by Tanaka Yasuo, we see a culture in thrall to consumer products, a narrator whose vision of the world is only as substantial as the latest reincarnation of a brand product. When it was released in 1980 the book gained attention for its extensive lists of brand name products and minimal plot[84]. Japan is indeed a culture which places a great deal of emphasis on the surface quality of things. This can be inferred variously from the quantity of packaging surrounding even basic foodstuffs such as fruit, the attention paid to wrapping and the presentation of objects whether as gifts or for self-consumption, to its more elaborate manifestation in the "culturalised

[82] John Clammer, *Contemporary Urban Japan: a Sociology of Consumption*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1997), p.4
[83] John Clammer, *Contemporary Urban Japan: a Sociology of Consumption*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1997), p.168
[84] id., p.2

nature"[85] of the ornate sushi platter, a culinary equivalent to the culturalised nature of the Japanese rock garden. A supermarket executive explains to Clammer that "many of his customers are "uneasy" about fresh foods. To the "nervous" eyes of a shopper, this executive grumbled, even the slightest blemish, the smallest imperfection, or the most trivial deviation from the ideal"[86] can lead to a product's rejection. Thus, great attention is accorded to ensuring that the "the outward form – the *kata*"[87] of goods is perfect: "cucumbers must be straight, the cherries' stems must be uniform in length, the fish's tail must be unscarred"[88]. Even simple objects such as … a spade become personalised in Japan according to the two overarching aesthetic themes of Japaneseness or kawaii, which are modified or adapted by a fully integrated and urban-dominated[89] media and marketing corporate hegemony: "Concern with industrial pollution and waste has bred green politics which in turn has bred green consumption (health foods, recycling, non-animal-tested cosmetics, the wearing of natural fibres, etc.)"[90].

Whilst this emphasis on presentation, and self-presentation through products may seem superficial, we must question whether superficiality is necessarily analogous to a shallow identity construction for Japanese identity consumers. Is this not a false consciousness of freedom of expression, in which an enslavement to the dictates of the market is enacted as though it were an individual and creative liberation? I shall outline Clammer's thesis in as far as it serves as a counter-argument to this position. He posits a shift in the sources of affirmation for Japanese citizens, from "the primary orientation to

[85] E. Ohnuki-Tierney, 'The ambivalent self of the contemporary Japanese', *Cultural Anthropology*, (1990), 5 (2), p.206; quoted here from *Lives in Motion: Composing Circles of Self and Community in Japan,* ed. Susan Orpett Long, (New York: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1999), p.156
[86] *Lives in Motion: Composing Circles of Self and Community in Japan,* ed. Susan Orpett Long, (New York: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1999), p.166
[87] id.
[88] id.
[89] id., p.158
[90] id., p.159

work as the central value to consumption in the market place"[91]. He further argues that it is chiefly through "the acquisition, display and exchange of things"[92], that "the creation of a sense of selfhood"[93] is undertaken. Going as far as to claim that "for many if not most contemporary Japanese, consumption behaviour is the major available form of self-expression"[94] and that "personal authenticity is not necessarily violated by consumption"[95], he gives the following reasons. Whilst one's social presentation must be intermittently reaffirmed through purchases[96], this is done in such a way, that despite Japanese society's hallmark of "controlled restraint"[97], the accumulation of cultural capital is a carving out of new space "that lies beyond politics"[98], in which new objects serve to "change space, time, feeling and the sense of the embodied self, yet within a framework shared by others"[99] for their consumers, thereby providing "the principle means for the imaginative to be incorporated into the practice of everyday life in a largely non-disruptive manner"[100]. In short, Clammer's interpretations represent a wider assessment of the social functions and identity functions of products within a consumer society. For the individual, the act of consumption in private is one which provides a "sense of personal empowerment that comes from the possession and contemplation of the things"[101]. At the social level, the traits of a late capitalist society in which the desire for fetishised commodities motivates production and acts as a social control rather than a puritanical work ethic (what

[91] John Clammer, *Contemporary Urban Japan: a Sociology of Consumption*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1997), p.155
[92] p.6
[93] id.
[94] id., p.153
[95] id.
[96] id., p.160
[97] id., p.92
[98] id., p.159
[99] id., p.92
[100] id.
[101] id., p.95

Clammer terms "seduction rather than repression"[102], or a capitalism based on a "system of aesthetics" rather than a "system of ethics"[103])), require that in public, ownership and consumption of cultural produce function as " a means of competition"[104], a display of self-verification and pointedly, "a form of resistance" [105] and a "device for the re-enchantment of the world"[106].

Consumption takes on the qualities of a nationalist act in as much as it sustains the "invented traditions" buying in to products on the basis of their embodiment of a quintessentially Japanese aesthetic. If we start by asking, "Why does some packaging in a Japanese department store have a shellfish printed on it?" we may observe the unfolding of a historically resonant cultural biography[107]. The stylised image of a red shell or the binding of red and white cords to the outside of a package or envelope evokes the memory of an intricately folded piece of paper which was itself used to represent the attachment of a dried abalone[108] to the outside of a gift. Why a dried abalone? The dried abalone would signify the ritual purity of the gift and that it came with the blessings of the gods, since a fresh abalone, with its auspicious red and white colouring[109], was an important Shinto offering to be presented to a deity only by those in a ritually pure state[110]. It is also associated with a folklore of the female diving communities, the sensual sea nymphs called *ama*[111]. Similarly, it is associated with unrequited love because it is a univalve shellfish whose single lonely shell is used metaphorically in the eight century

[102] id., p.156
[103] id., p.165
[104] id., p.95
[105] id.
[106] id.
[107] Igor Kopytoff, quoted here from *Lives in Motion: Composing Circles of Self and Community in Japan,* ed. Susan Orpett Long, (New York: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1999), p.153
[108] *Lives in Motion: Composing Circles of Self and Community in Japan,* ed. Susan Orpett Long, (New York: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1999), p183: footnote 16
[109] id., p.162
[110] id., p.183: footnote 16
[111] id., p.162, p.183 footnote 15

anthology of Japanese verse, the *Man'yōshū*[112]. The kabayaki grilled eel on the other hand has been socially designated as the appropriate foodstuff for "*doyō no ushi no hi*"[113] – a day which falls between July 20th and August 7th[114] during which time its fortifying properties should help to weather the heat[115]. Choosing to consume the dish on *doyō no ushi no hi* is therefore an act of electing to partake in a national tradition, albeit one which has problematic historicity: eels had always been eaten during this period, but to alloy eating eel specifically with the zodiac symbol of the ox to select a specific day, may only have come about because an Edo restaurateur reputedly had a sign[116] commissioned by a well-known calligrapher to propagate what might be called a "Hallmark Day". Thus whilst "Japaneseness" serves as a rallying call to consumption, the encroaching wave of globalised chains and brands threatens to confound the patriotic urge with its mystique, its convenience and it's lower price points. McDonalds is set against MOS Burger, a chain that markets itself partly on claims of obsessively high cleanliness and meticulous attention to preparation, as well as a pretension towards harnessing and communing with the spiritual essences of Mountain Ocean and Sun[117]. Among seafood suppliers, eating Japanese has become a point of pride and status: "foreign foods are often regarded as simply inferior, and a *kokusan* ("domestically harvested or produced") food item will be favoured over an imported one"[118]. Combined with malingering notions which stress the purity and exceptionalism of the Japanese race and foster the demand for an extreme mythology of unblemished origin in its food sources, as well as of endlessly and

[112] id., p.162
[113] id., p.161
[114] id., p.184, footnote 22
[115] id., p.164,
[116] id., p.185, footnote 22
[117] MOS Food Services Inc., MOS Burger Japanese website, updated 3.20.2003, retrieved 4.19.2003, <http://www.mos.co.jp/more/qa/qa2.html#q1>
[118] *Lives in Motion: Composing Circles of Self and Community in Japan,* ed. Susan Orpett Long, (New York: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1999), p.169

hermetically packaged consumer products and gifts, the Japanese market's foibles must tend towards a suspicion of what is foreign. In the fish market, this means that not only is sea urchin roe from Maine possibly repackaged in Hokkaido in order to command premium prices[119], but produce was easily stigmatised - for example during the late 1980s, U.S. food was widely accused of using harmful food preservatives and additives[120], and foreign harvesting methods can be branded clumsy as Bestor reported:

> One salmon dealer, for example, recounted to me with dismay his visit to an Alaskan fishing port where salmon were being unloaded by crew members wielding pitchforks. The scars and lacerations inflicted on the fish rendered them virtually unusable in a Japanese market.[121]

Curiously, where this ambivalence can be resolved, it is done through a cooptation of origin. The red, white, camel and black check of the Burberry range – which originated in the presently roundabout ridden sprawl of Basingstoke, Hampshire – has become synonymous with chic young and middle aged women in Japan, but what it means would no doubt have been unclear to Barthes who undertook a semiotic investigation of Japan in 1970[122]. Clammer argues that it is precisely because the semiotic meaning of foreign goods is obscure that they permit the Japanese consumer the freedom and mystique of an ambiguous semiology. Snoopy has become a very successful brand amongst adult Japanese as well as children, appearing on stationary, sportswear, accessories (key rings, cell phones), bedding, crockery, glassware and other household items (alarm clocks, telephones) – and all of this in a sincere homage to cute rather than an ironic postmodern referencing of kitsch. Arguing that it is far from an instance of U.S.

[119] id.
[120] id., p.167
[121] id., p.170
[122] Roland Barthes, *L'empire des signes*, (Geneva: Les Sentiers de la Création, 1970)

cultural imperialism, Clammer writes, that such occasions "in fact symbolize the expressive transformation of the commodity"[123].

Thus, while the forms of Japanese indulgence in the ephemeral seem and usually are superficial in their enactment, the cultural practice is arguably a profound means of negotiating identity within the constraints of a conformist society. As Clammer writes of a Tokyo shopping district Mure, "purchasing may be play, but it is, like other expressions of Japanese play, also taken rather seriously"[124]. Whereas we may once have been citizens first and foremost, and consumers second, the individual in late-capitalist Japan is increasingly driven by an aesthetic of desire rather than an ethic of repression. The negotiation in process here is one in which the consumer's socially constructed need to be affirmed though consumption is individually directed into a creative expression of self-hood. The social pressure as opposed to the market pressure operates by promoting conformity. As such, foreign goods represent both a semiotically ambiguous free space and – as we have seen with regard to foodstuffs – a threatening and suspicious impurity. In the latter contexts, one's need for self-expression may be resolved within the constraints of a conformist society by buying into those goods and services which fit the mould of "authentic Japaneseness".

[123] *Lives in Motion: Composing Circles of Self and Community in Japan,* ed. Susan Orpett Long, (New York: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1999), p.154
[124]

Conclusion

Of the primary loci of conflict described above, it is necessary to acknowledge that frequency of focus in the English language academic literature does not constitute an empirical measure of social significance. Furthermore space is limited. Much of the writing following the Aum Shinrikyo cult's Tokyo subway attack in 1995, has – through examination of an isolated incident – unearthed again the same underlying discourses of conformity and individuality which have underpinned each of the sections above. Nonetheless, to draw these sections together in a more specific manner, we should observe first that two of the ambivalence generating sites, the question of female empowerment and the social repercussions of city life have arisen out of a demographic shift – a relatively rapid one – following a largely western reconceptualisation of the position of women in society and the mass migration of families to urban areas in the 1950s and the 1970s. The other two instances marked by the emergence of contradictory expectations – the degree of identification with one's company and the manner in which consumption is personalised and politicised – these situations arise out of an economic shift towards an era in which what is purchased is not the result of a group of employees who retain ownership over a product, but more frequently a range of associations evoked by the marketing of a brand, where the underlying service is more economically supplied by an out-sourced bidder.

The premise that such ambivalences could arise out of a rapid shift in society is confirmed by Hobsbawm who asserts that social instability is caused when the pace of change meets "the inability of both public institutions and the collective behaviour of

human beings to come to terms with it"[125]. Where Japanese culture in its rural origins and its one hundred years of isolation, had developed certain emphases, an emotional investment in honour, in family, in patriarchy, in verticality, in exceptionalism and in purity, those same axes of identification have become – to differing degrees – less tenable with each onset of demographic and economic shifts. In this context, it has been interesting to examine both how successfully the traditional ritual form of the festival has retained a mediating function within urban communities, albeit with "invented traditions" overlain, and how patterns of consumption have aligned themselves along the existing patriotic impulse. The "inability of public institutions and the collective behaviour of human beings to come to terms with change" is an inability which presupposes a certain inflexibility. Yet if this examination generates optimism, it must be upon remarking the malleability with which cultural forms are manipulated and susceptible to the bearing of new cultural significance.

Other structural aspects of Japanese culture demonstrate a bleaker potential for "[coming] to terms with" the economic and demographic shifts of late capitalism. The structure of the Japanese language itself is not conducive to the orientation of an identity with relation to modes of mass-communication. At present, Japanese depends highly upon context for its meaning as its syntactical structure favours the omission of the first person subject, and in mediums such as the telephone and e-mail where utterances are abstracted from visual information, body language and for written communication from inflection, and divorced from a social setting, this context must be fully elaborated. As alluded to earlier, the repeated reassertion of status differentials within the honorifics

[125] Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914 – 1991*, (London: Michael Joseph, 1994), pp.14 – 15; quoted here from Rick Delbridge, *Life on the line in Contemporary Manufacturing: The Workplace Experience of Lean Production and the 'Japanese' Model*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.1

system has already generated peculiar problems of tone when addressing a diverse and unknown group through the mass-communication medium that is the novel and would tend towards inflexible designations of status in a fluid economy. Miyoshi actually contends that the nature of Japanese as a language is inimical to spoken expressions of selfhood: "the language itself … discourages the formation of tangible individual and distinctly personal experience. It does this especially by its tendency to omit the subject, especially the first-person pronominal subject, … by its writing medium whose ideograms resist being spoken aloud"[126] and, adds Miyoshi, "Japanese is iron-tight once the speaker violates the rites of community and the sanctity of silence"[127].

Regardless of the ability to speak one's identity, regardless of the availability of social forums for negotiating such matters, what seem to be the primary "conflicting normative expectations socially defined for a particular social role" at present in Japanese society? For the young woman, a challenge: to be conventionally attractive or to be professionally successful. For the high-school student, the graduate and the "salaryman", a struggle to relocate ambition and identification outside the instability of a once paternal corporation. For the urban dweller, the uneasy lack of time for an extended family which holds the strong kinship values of a previous generation, the uncomfortably modern and yet liberating reconceptualisation of the looser-knit urban family, in cities where independence takes the place of community. And for the consumer, a possibly illusory delight in the possibilities for expression of selfhood through exchange and display, checked by the social pressure to conform to an egalitarian ideal of Japaneseness and homogeneity.

[126] Masao Miyoshi, *Accomplices of Silence: The Modern Japanese Novel*, (California: University of California Press, 1974), pp.178 – 179
[127] id, p.179.

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