Form, Content, Body Parts:
An Analysis of Gender Relations in Contemporary Japanese Film

by

Yuki Ohsawa
Master of Business, Kanagawa University, 2008
BA Business, Kanagawa University, 2006

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
in the Department of Pacific and Asian Studies

Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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This thesis will investigate contemporary Japanese film as a reflection of and commentary on gender relations in Japan. This thesis will discuss two contemporary Japanese films: Love and Pop (1998) and Swing Girls (2004). By employing feminist perspectives we will illustrate that form and content work together in these films to offer both positive and negative critiques of gender relations. Because this thesis examines how these films illustrate high school girls and what kinds of messages they provide, it will apply Mulvey's (1975) feminist film theory and Morohashi's (2009) research, which is about visual images of contemporary Japanese women. This thesis will pay attention to specific camera techniques, lighting, and settings, which directly connect with the films' content. We will analyze the form and content of these two Japanese films to show how the interpretation of a work of art, specifically a feminist interpretation, emerges from the relationship between form and content.

Keywords
Japanese films, Japanese feminism and patriarchy, Form, Content

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Acknowledgments

Thanks to everyone who has been supported me.

First, I would like to thank Tim-sensei, my supervisor. Without your great guidance and wonderful support, I could not have completed this research. As you always spent time with me and kept me on the right track, I was able to continue researching and writing this thesis. You are the best professor I have had in my life!! Thank you so much, Tim-sensei.

Second, I would like to thank, Noro-sensei, my committee member, for providing me with valuable books and feedback from which I found important and interesting information about the history of Japanese women's lives.

Third, I would like to thank, Dr. Lee, my external examiner, for introducing me to other feminist perspectives to widen my view. Also, I would like to thank the other professors and staff members within the Department of Pacific and Asian Studies.

To my wonderful friends, *ありがとう*. Daniel, as you were always willing to edit my awful grammar and structure, I was able to improve my academic English writing skills little by little. Stephanie, thank you for meeting with me every week for over two years to encourage my study and life in Canada. Our Sunday meetings are an essential part of my life. Jerry, I was very lucky to have you as my first English teacher in Canada. Because I enjoyed your lessons, and you have brought interesting knowledge to me, I will always be curious about Canadian life. To my classmates, thank you for helping me and encouraging me. I will never forget the time that I spent time with you guys!! Thank you tutors at the Writing Centre, Carolyn and Liam, for helping me to construct my ideas strongly.

Finally, thank you to my family for loving me a lot and financially supporting me from Japan.

I am extremely happy that I met so many fantastic people in Canada, and so blessed to be surrounded by them.

心から感謝しています。ありがとうございました。

Dedication

I dedicate this to my family, especially to my mother.

Introduction

This thesis argues two related points. Firstly, that the artistic nature of a work of art is created through the interaction of its form and content. The collaboration of form and content gives a work its potential meanings or purposes. Secondly, I will show how, in the context of Japanese cinema, form and content can work together to reinforce particular gender attitudes—as I show, these attitudes may be either 'positive' or 'negative' (terms which I will define later), but in any event, they both influence and are contained within the form and content of a film.

To show how form and content collaborate to construct the film's meaning and to illustrate the second argumentative goal of this thesis, I analyze two Japanese films from a feminist perspective. The purpose here is to show how films reflect or comment on social practice and attitudes. I chose feminist perspectives, which are a reaction to patriarchy, because in many ways social practices and attitudes in Japan still maintain a patriarchal bias even though Japanese laws ostensibly guarantee equality between men and women. As with other works of art, film is capable of reflecting, critiquing, or influencing those attitudes, and one of the ways in which it may do so is through the interactions of its form and content.

According to statistics about labour force participation rates by sex and age group (1975-2004)[1] (Tachibanaki, 14), 68.9 percent of men and 68.5 percent of women ages 20 to 24 were active in the workforce in 2004. According to Tachibanaki, even though contemporary Japanese women receive sufficient education to be in the labour

[1] Based on Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, *Labor Force Survey.*

force and typically work when they are in their early 20s, they generally quit their jobs by their mid- to late-twenties to take care of their children (13). Because this is a very common pattern for young women, and because in some ways there is a social expectation that this is the 'correct' pattern for young women, I will argue that women's lifestyles in Japan have not diversified enough. Thus, I have a question: are Japanese women able to choose how they live their lives? Or does society choose for them?

Patriarchal Japanese society displays evidence of ignorance and apathy of women's desires by largely keeping the status quo intact. Some political groups in Japan have tried to stop feminist activism. For example, Kato Shuichi, a feminist supporter, claims that an anti-feminist political group in Japan has distorted and kept out of the public imagination and public discourse the feminist conception of gender in order to maintain existing discrimination and oppression (2). Japanese feminists refer to this attempt to stop feminism as a "backlash." Interestingly, between 1995 and 2005, the anti-feminist politicians were somewhat successful in terms of some legislative changes, and they strengthened the patriarchal structure in Japan.

Why is there very little progress towards adjusting or eliminating the unequal power structure in Japanese society? The above anti-feminist example is just one aspect which has slowed the growth of feminism in Japan. Although, in truth, the answers to this difficult question are beyond the scope of this thesis, we should keep this question in mind as we examine the ways in which film makers reflect and critique gendered social relations in their works. To help us understand the nature of these critiques, we can explore how a film's form portrays Japanese women and how a film's content may or may not contain patriarchal ideas. We will not point to the films under discussion as

'proof' of actual social conditions, since, after all, these are works of art. Rather, we will first fit them into a context of gender relations, and then analyze them in terms of the comments they make on Japanese society, to illustrate ways in which they have the potential to critique or influence the attitudes of their audiences.

Concerning gender relations, Japanese films are quite diverse, especially in recent times: some display conservative views towards gender relations, while others have become quite progressive. This diversity is a reflection on Japanese society which, despite a legioslative feminist "backlash," has in some ways become more flexible and has produced different attitudes, especially in recent years. For example, through television, we can see images of wives who have more leadership than husbands within their households. Decades earlier, television and print media portrayed otherwise. Therefore, while television images of women are certainly not proof of the change in social reality, they do hint at the possibility of changing social values. Moreover, some women insist that men are worse off than women because men have to work hard to survive in a company and support their families; however, women can stay home and spend some of their time on leisure activities (Ehara, Yumiko. Personal interview. 15 Apr. 2010). These points are true.

However, many inequalities still remain within society, especially concerning labour. For example, women mostly have part-time jobs, which provide lower rates of pay, while most men have full time jobs, which provide much higher rates of pay, benefits and social insurance—benefits that are not given to most part-time workers, *ie* women. In fact, low wage labourers strongly support the Japanese economy (Kato, 112).

Another example is that 33.2% of wives have experienced domestic violence at the hands of their husbands. In contrast, 17.7% of husbands have experienced domestic violence from their wives. (内閣府男女共同参画局 Naikakufu danjyo kyoudou san kaku kyoku, Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office**,** 26). The number of female victims is twice that of male victims. Furthermore, society is flooded with media images which create and reinforce the idea of female sexual commodification—the female body becomes nothing more than a commodity which can be bought, sold and/or used. For instance, prostitution and pornography are common examples of sexual commodification. These are things which have existed in Japan—as elsewhere—for a very long time, but in contemporary times they remain primarily outside of public discourse. In fact, concerning the issue of prostitution, as we will see later, since the early 1990s, a disturbing trend has emerged of younger and younger women becoming involved in this activity. Therefore, in this research, I provide specific evidence that media culture in Japan uses the image of women's bodies in such a way ast to encourage sexual commodification.

Many women are displeased with this unfavourable situation, but they silently accept it (Morohashi, 189-190). Nevertheless, many Japanese women have an aversion to feminists or, at least, they think feminism is outworn (Ehara, 2-3). Thus, a key interest in this paper is to examine why women accept or are unaware of social inequality. In this aspect, I draw on the work of Morohashi Taiki, a media studies professor in Yokohama. He suggests that the Japanese media produces the image of an ideal woman for most men, and Japanese women are strongly influenced by this image (36-48). Thus, I will read Japanese films in comparison with Morohashi's analysis of Japanese society. Morohashi supports his argument by analyzing Japanese magazines and TV programs; however, he

has not analyzed Japanese films. Analyzing film is a worthwhile expansion of media studies because, as I have said, films often reflect and comment on society. The discovery of how film content and form collaborate to represent unequal gender relations is a significant point of this research. Because this thesis will show how images of Japanese women in film can demonstrate autonomy and power, the Japanese audience may receive inspiration that female autonomy and power are possible. Similarly, when we criticize the negative images of Japanese women, who are oppressed by patriarchy, the audience will have a greater potential to realize that they still live in patriarchal society. As a result, their potential to try to reform the patriarchal society into a more equal society will increase. Changing Japanese society into a more equal society is very important for me as Japanese woman. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to demonstrate female autonomy through analysis of film to facilitate the inspiration of Japanese people, especially Japanese women.

In order to clearly reveal gender relations in Japanese film, I examine two films. One of them, *Love and Pop*, contains what I define as negative gender relations. On the other hand, *Swing Girls* shows what I consider to be positive gender relations. *Negative* implies that the specific film shows unequal gender relations, reinforces the heavy aspects of patriarchy, and accepts or even celebrates rigid conservatism. While these terms, "positive" and "negative" may be misunderstood as implying a type of morality, at root here I use these to indicate different presentations of agency, equally applicable to men and women. My primary focus is on whether or not a film will permit female characters to have agency or autonomy. In a "negative" film, they do not. That is, female characters are not allowed to have autonomy and to have choices for their lives. For

example, in *Love and Pop*, we can see that even the unsavoury buyer has authority to give a lecture to the girls. Also, the girls do not have any power to stand up to the male buyers. Further, the girls cannot choose other ways to earn money, instead of selling themselves. In other words, the girls do not have various choices and/or do not have enough information about the dangers of participating in *enjyokosai*. As result, the male buyers can take advantage of the girls by controlling girls' time and bodies. Thus, women's lack of choices diminishes their autonomy.

In contrast, *Positive* means the film shows that gender relations are fundamentally equal, respectful, or progressive. Moreover, we can see young women exercising their own agency, and creating diverse choices to permit them to realize their ambitions through their own ingenuity. For example, *Swing Girls* shows us a group of young women who are ambitious about forming a band, but who lack resources to acquire instruments. The film unfolds their stories as they pursue different ways of earning money to achieve their dreams. Some girls work at a superstore as part-time workers to earn money. Some girls go to a mountain to collect expensive mushrooms. A girl sells her computer and her sister's PlayStation in order to buy a used instrument. Further, when the girl' used instrument is broken, her friends fix it. Therefore, these girls have diverse choices to earn money, and they have agency to succeed to form a band. Even if we can see some forms of patriarchy in the film *Swing Girls*, I treat it as a positive film. Films which do not express the idea of patriarchy at all do not reflect on society: that is, the films are unrealistic. Thus, I have chosen films which include ideas of patriarchy.

Employing contrasting films shows us different attitudes toward equality between men and women. The filmmakers' contrasting uses of form and content produce different representations of gender relations. For instance, camera positions are an element of form, and they show us different portrayals of women. On the other hand, if we analyze a story line, an element of content, we can see how the treatment of women by male characters in a story can produce an either acceptance or a rejection of traditional patriarchal attitudes. This is directly connected with how collaboration of form and content create a meaning or theme of a film.

The relationship between form and content has received much critical attention over many generations. For example, R.G. Collingwood (1929) demonstrates how form and content are necessary parts of art by analyzing novels, paintings and classical music in "Form and Content in Art." In addition, Duncan Robertson (1967) insists that form and content collaborate effectively to make a valuable poem in "The Dichotomy of Form and Content." Generally, scholars agree that film is also composed by a union of these two aspects. In fact, Noel Carroll (1998) discusses film form and content, especially examining film form to explore a film's purpose in "Film form: An argument for a functional theory of style in the individual film." Furthermore, I specifically argue that the collaboration of form—camera works—and content—the story—create a film's meaning. Thus, defining a meaning of form and content is necessary for starting this research. For this research, *form* is composed of visual and auditory compositions, such as camera movement, camera angles, lighting, settings and sounds as well. *Content* is the story that is created by characters' actions, attitudes and thoughts. These two key components are essential to determine a film's purpose.

Theory

This project uses two feminist theories and the associated ideology of patriarchy; specifically, it uses Laura Mulvey's feminist theory, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema (1975). Mulvey has made significant contributions to feminist film study, and her research focuses on the male gaze (6), which is created by camera angles, camera movement and the focus on female characters in the film. Thus, her theory is useful in the analysis of films that use visual distortion and thus offer negative critiques of gender relations. Because Mulvey provides us with a method of discovering and criticizing the male gaze, which illustrates women as sexual objects, her research is suitable to apply, especially to *Love and Pop,* to reveal power structure and unequal gender relations.

Furthermore, we employ Morohashi Taiki's (2009) research, which describes how Japanese media creates the image of Japanese women (Morohashi, 36-56). His expertise is in Media Studies, Women Studies and Sociology; he especially focuses on researching contemporary Japanese visual media, such as Japanese women's magazines and TV programs by using a feminist perspective. Because his research (2009) is very contemporary and focuses carefully on visual media, it is very important for my research when identifying and examining images of Japanese women in *Love and Pop* and *Swing Girls*. Morohashi's perspective helps us to investigate the different portrayals, which offer great insight into the use of female images in the media.

In addition to feminist theory, this thesis illustrates the idea of Japanese patriarchy because the background of Japan's patriarchal system differs greatly from Western patriarchy. In a provocative argument, Ehara Yumiko, one of top Japanese

feminist leaders, states that we cannot see the power system that is called patriarchy because power does not belong to a definite person. That is, 'power' is something which society itself accepts and perpetuates. In this way, we may argue that the power system is usually supported by not only men but also women; they have unconsciously participated in the power system (31-32). Thus, it is necessary to define Japan's notion of patriarchy due to the need to understand feminists' contentions clearly, and to suggest ways in which society may change its fundamental gender attitudes.

All these theories support my analysis to prove that collaboration of form and content create the meaning of a film, and that in the Japanese context this meaning is often closely connected with patriarchal ideology. Particularly, I pay attention to Mulvey's perspective for investigating form and Morohashi's perspectives for examining content.

Approach

Because my purpose is to prove the effect of collaboration of form and content, an essential method is a close reading of films. However, before commencing a close visual analysis, I provide a literature review as one of the methods to define representative conceptions of women in Japanese patriarchal society and also to define the feminist perspective. Our knowledge of Japanese society helps us to understand why Japanese films look the way they do. We can create a context of Japanese social gender relations to help us understand Japanese film. This allows us to analyze stereotypical images of women in Japanese films. Furthermore, this literature review

creates the context for the issue of form and content in the artistic nature of a work of art in chapter 1.

After the literature review, a close visual analysis of the films helps us to comprehend characters' emotions through their gestures, actions and use of concrete symbols (Barry, 27). Because the projected images can demonstrate gender relations and also a stereotypical representation of Japanese women, I concentrate on closely reading Japanese films. However, in order to provide as broad an interpretive perspective as possible, I use analyses of the film by other scholars (wherever possible) to compare and contrast alternative points of view with my own. Unfortunately, there are not many scholarly works on this topic, as film analysis is a relatively rare discipline in Japan (Yoshimoto, 710). Additionally, Western scholars tend to analyze only famous films produced by prominent Japanese directors who are almost exclusively men; in fact, the two directors at the center of this study are also male. Because it has proven difficult to find specific analyses of some of my selected films, I use, wherever possible, already-existing interviews and other writings by directors, producers, scriptwriters, and so on, as alternative means to discover the nature of comments and critiques which filmmakers have about Japanese society.

As for the process of analyzing films, I examine each film in the same manner. Firstly, I try to understand the story and then highlight thematic elements. In this first stage, I focus on setting, which can show the mood of a film and characters' states of mind and can explain background, such as time period, country, location, and economic situation (Caldwell, 198). Furthermore, I pay attention to the changing of setting as a

"changing of setting can hint at new starts, challenges, disaster, success, loss and so on, thus alerting us to important themes" (Caldwell, 15).

Secondly, I examine visual and audio composition. The camera works, lighting and sounds are key points for creating film form. The primary points are camera works, camera angle, camera movement, distance between camera and characters, pacing, over-lapping images, distortion, especially because the main point of my film analysis is how film portrays women. For example, one part of a fragmented body, such as a close-up of a young woman's legs, describes them as an erotic object (Mulvey, 10.) Thus, paying close attention to camera angles and movements that capture Japanese women and their atmosphere is very important to my analysis of Japanese film. In addition, lighting can play an important role, as it can highlight specific elements and create atmosphere and meaning. Also, lighting can depict the state of a character's mind or develop the theme and, of course, indicate the time of day or night, and season (Caldwell, 20). By examining lighting, we see a filmmaker's implied messages. The last significant point of form is sound. Sound can be categorized by spoken language, which includes dialogue and narration, music, and ambient sounds (Harrington, 37). Dialogue and narration describe the story more directly; on the other hand, music and ambient sounds are sensory and embodiments of ideas and can also create visual images (Harrington, 40). When I pay attention to sounds, I will consider the relation between visuality and sound, for sounds often support visuality, sometimes strongly and usually incidentally emphasize a character's mind or the messages of filmmakers.

Thirdly, I examine characters' dialogue, actions, attitude, and costume, which make up film content, as characters' dialogue directly forms the story line. However,

their actions and costumes also express the story non-verbally. For instance, acting style, which includes facial expressions, posture, and voice, creates the main story. These actions illustrate characters' feelings, thoughts, and personalities (Caldwell, 36-39). Moreover, costume, which includes clothes, make-up and the way of wearing clothes, provides much character information. According to Caldwell, the way of wearing clothes describes characters' emotions, attitudes, features, and background (32). Thus, in analyzing characters' dialogue, of course, action and costume help us to understand the story as film content.

Finally, I compare and contrast the relation between visual and audio composition as form, and plot elements as content for exploring the meaning of film. Consequently, I use a literature review and a close reading of films as methods to prove my argument.

Materials

Materials as substance of the argument are *Love and Pop* (Anno, 1998) and *Swing Girl*s (Yaguchi, 2004). I have chosen these two specific films for a variety of reasons—in many ways they work well as companion pieces, because, even though their basic collections of characters are similar, there are numerous contrasts between the films' attitudes and goals. Both of these films uniquely describe a group of high school girls as they discover important aspects of themselves, their friendships, their societies, and their lives. The two portrayals of the high school girls differ greatly. They fit my research because they demonstrate positive and negative gender relations in Japanese film.

On the one hand, *Love and Pop* illustrates negative gender relations. This film is highly critical of a group of high school girls who engage in teenage prostitution. Anno Hideaki, the director, highlights sexual commodification in a couple of ways. I show two examples of this technique. The first way is through a strong male gaze. This is created by different kinds of camera angles and positions, such as low camera positions and close-up shots. Generally, using close-up shots illustrates characters as objects (Harrington, 11) because it emphasizes the characters' bodies rather than the characters' emotions or minds. Furthermore, films shot from low angles depict female characters' sexualized body parts from the bottom to make them into erotic objects.

Another way Anno highlights sexual commodification is by showing the process of becoming a prostitute. A high school girl, Hiromi, tries to sell her body to earn money for a ring. This implies that her body has the same value as the ring, which is an object; that is, a man, as her customer, can buy and control her body as an object. The idea signifies a power structure which ranks men above women. Therefore, the analysis of this film focuses on film form to illustrate sexual commodification .

In comparison, *Swing Girls* illustrates positive gender relations. The film is quite inspirational, as it shows a group of girls who try to make a jazz band. In a light, comical, though moving way, Yaguchi Shinobu highlights powerful girls. In fact, the girls' powers, including passion and autonomy, emphasize the theme of the film. As well, these girls' actions, and the visual techniques with which the film shows them, construct comical characters of great appeal—the audience easily feels sympathy for them, and a sense of connection. The girls' power and comical visual techniques interact very well to highlight the meaning of the film. For instance, Yaguchi illustrates the girls influencing those

around them to join their cause: the jazz band. They seem to use unlimited means to do so. In addition, the female protagonist, rather than a boy as we might expect in a more 'traditional' or conservative film, has knowledge of music, and takes on the leadership of her band. In contrast, Yaguchi describes the male characters as powerless. For example, a male teacher has less leadership, and several embarrassing secrets. Thus, the girls are shown as more powerful.

I also describe Yaguchi's camera work which focuses on each character. He often uses long shots: "[a character] fills a good part of the vertical line of the frame (Harrington, 11)" and also medium long shots: "[It] reveals about three-fourths of the subject (Harrington, 11)" In addition, these shots are straight forward. Thus, the audience can focus on each character's action and mind rather than the body. These visual compositions (form) and story (content) create a portrait of positive gender relations.

These two films have many similarities, such as describing a group of high school girls, illustrating their desires and so on; however, their portrayals of characters and themes differ greatly. Thus, comparing and contrasting these films is necessary to explore what creates representations of positive and negative gender relations. Analyzing these two films which may seem similar at the surface—principally their use of high school girls in the plot—will reveal incredibly diverse forms and contents.

Outline

The background chapter provides historical information about feminism in Japan in order to understand the necessary setting to which my thesis is applied; that is, we see

various aspects of Japan's patriarchal society. In addition, I introduce the perspectives of several Japanese feminists, including Yumiko Ehara, who is one of the leading Japanese feminist scholars. She details the demeaning view that the female body is merely an object of sexual commodity.

Following Ehara's illustration, I describe the perspective of Morohashi Taiki, as mentioned earlier. I apply his ideas of female representation in print and media to my analysis of films.

Finally, I also describe Mulvey, who is a pioneer of feminist film study. I focus specifically on her key ideas—male gaze and fetishism. These two aspects reveal the negative generalization of gender relations in Japanese film.

Chapter 1 provides a history of Japanese feminist movements. In this chapter, we trace Japanese history from the Edo period (1600-1867) to present in order to understand the origin of Japanese patriarchy, the *ie* system. Further, this chapter describes a transformation from a federal system to a modern system in order to understand modernization, which brought feminism to Japan.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of images of women in Japanese media, and an analysis of these to show how they influence social attitudes and reinforce traditional, patriarchical thinking. We see what kinds of women are promoted as 'ideal' (e.g. appearance and lifestyles) in Japan. Further, this chapter gives us the most important feminists' (Morohashi and Mulvey) in this research. After understanding these feminist points of views, we are able to have the method of analyzing films by feminist perspective.

Chapter 3 provides a debate of form and content. In this chapter, I illustrate the ideas of Collingwood, Robertson, and Carroll pertaining to form and content in works of art. The ideas of these three scholars provide me with a basis to analyze the films.

Chapter 4 provides a comparative analysis of the films *Love and Pop* and *Swing Girls* by examining form and content. I show each film's uniqueness of form and content which interact very well to tell the meanings of the films. We explore how form and content affect gender relations.

Finally, the conclusion reflects on all the information provided to support and satisfy my original argument: collaboration of form and content creates the meaning of film. In addition, we see how this collaboration affects gender relations if we view take a feminist perspective.

Chapter 1

History of Japanese Feminist Movements

The central aim of this project is to explore the images of women and men in contemporary Japanese film, to discover the relationship between form, content, and the representations of gender roles. Therefore, an essential starting point is identifying the features of Japanese feminist movements. This is important both to create a context for the analyses of the films, and also because Japanese feminism has a different social background and different features from western feminism even though western feminism, especially American feminism, has affected the Japanese version.

Comparing women's status in several time periods helps us to understand how women have been treated throughout history. However, there are very few Japanese women recorded in Japanese history, as Japanese men ruled the country and attentively focused on male political leaders. So, Japanese women were absent from discussions (Tomida and Daniels, 1). However, at the end of Meiji period, a couple of Japanese feminists who had modern ideas began influencing society. Thus, I will briefly describe the transition of Japanese feminism, specifically from the Meiji period to the present. The Meiji period is crucial to the feminist argument because it was a time of intense modernization.

From a Federal Society to a Modern Society

1. Social Structure in Edo period

Here is a concise history before the Meiji. 1185 to 1868 is, in the popular imagination, generally referred to as The Samurai Era. The Samurai Era is also further divided into subsequent periods: The Kamakura Period, Muromachi Period, Azuchi/Momoyama Period, and the Edo (or Tokugawa) Period; however all these periods generally share similar social structures: power emanated from the *shogun*, the head of the military government which administered state affairs, not the emperor who had had power before the samurai era.

During the Edo period—1603 to 1868—the Tokugawa family reigned and all the power was centralized to the shogun. As a result, Japan became more unified, but it also became isolated from the rest of the world. Because of events at the beginning of the Tokugawa Era, Japan sealed its borders to outside influence, trade, and travel until the middle of the 19th Century. These two hundred sixty five years of isolation made Japan's social structures quite unique compared to the outside world because foreign influence was prohibited.

The most important ideology in the Tokugawa era was Confucianism[2] which "is a philosophy that prescribes as its moral basis a hierarchical order—such as a ruler and his

[2] "The Japanese version of Confucianism, or more correctly of Neo-Confucianism- which was developed, systematized, and institutionalized during the Tokugawa era (1603-1867), and subjected to sociopolitical change thereafter – managed in one form or another to survive the revolutionary Westernization of subsequent 'modern' period. … The primary human relation from the Confucian point of view is that of parent and child, most significantly, father and son, tied by filial piety." (Lebra, 248). *Identity, Gender, and Status in Japan* Kent:Global Oriental, 2007.

subjects, a father and his children, and a husband and his wife. It is basically an organizational prescription of male order in society" (Wakakuwa, 62). Specifically, the Tokugawa shogunates used Confucianism in order to structure both a distinction of rank and the feudal system (Bernstein, 2), so it prevailed mainly among the samurai class: other classes (merchant, artisan and farmer classes) were not so influenced by Confucianism in the Edo period (Thomas, 11-12). Thus, the gender relationships amongst the middle and the lower classes exhibited greater equality than the gender relationship among the samurai class. Firstly, farmers, both women and men, worked equally, and also "female labour played such a crucial role in household finances that women were more important than their husbands in maintaining the family over time" (Walthall, 70). Furthermore, many peasants, who worked for the rich as seasonal labourers, were women, and their incomes were essential for their families' budgets (Tsurumi, 15). In fact, differences between women and men's wages were not so great. "When men and women performed the same tasks such as threshing rice, women received three-quarters of what men were paid; when both sexes mowed, women made five-sixths of what men made; when both planted rice, the sexes tended to earn equal pay" (Tsurumi, 16). The small difference in wages between men and women seems to relate to the physical differences between the sexes; that is, their labour power was regarded fairly. In addition, "Handicrafts, preserving and processing foods, and above all textile production had always been women's work, so females played a key role in activities that brought peasants badly needed income" (Tsurumi, 14). Therefore, peasant women were respected and valued within their families (Tsurumi, 16). Secondly, the lower classes (peasant women) were less influenced by the central bureaucracy, and therefore had much more

freedom and diversity compared to those in the samurai class (Bernstein, 4); for example, "poor peasant women could even take over that bastion of male family authority, the family headship" (Tsurumi, 17), if it was necessary.

In contrast, the samurai class was ruled with discipline and strict rules. Only males could work for the bureaucracy, and their wives were forced to maintain the household. Although their living standards may have been higher than the living standard of the lower classes, their roles were defined by gender (Liddle and Nakajima, 102, 104 and 108). These gender roles were created by Confucianism. As Tsurumi mentions:

> since the official ideology of the samurai elite was a Confucian one that "respected the male, despised the female" (*danson johi*), and under samurai rule peasant society itself had been forced to become heavily male oriented, it is not surprising that "women's work"—associated with housekeeping and handicrafts—was valued less than was work done by men. Although the gap between the values placed upon "men's work" and "women's work" appears to have narrowed during the last years of the Edo era, even when women did "men's work" they were not considered as valuable as male workers (16).

This ideology of "respect the male, despise the female," strongly influenced the samurai class, and spread throughout the country. Tsurumi added:

> From the eighteenth century onward, landlords and rich famers could afford to mimic their samurai betters, accepting as brides well-bred young women upon whose labor their family did not depend; most peasant families could not do so. In a samurai or rich peasant family, a bride's primary function was production of a male heir to carry on the family line; a bride was even referred to as a "borrowed womb." (17).

We can undoubtedly see that the *ie* system, or system whereby the basic social unit was the household, the *ie,* is directly connected to this thought: women's most important job

within the household is reproduction, specifically giving birth to boys because only boys could take over the family in the *ie* system.

The samurai era, exemplified here in the Tokugawa Era, came to a close at the end of the nineteenth century, when several western ships challenged Japan's 'closed country' policy, and tried to dock in Japan. The unavoidable happened: in 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry of the United States Navy forced his way into docking at Uraga, which was located near the central government in Japan, to deliver a message: "Agree to trade in peace, or suffer the consequences in war" (Gordon, 49). Because the US needed Japan to sell coal to naval ships and allow provisioning stops to whalers, the US tried to force Japan to open the country. Perry demanded that the Shogunate answer to the American proposition in one year (Gordon, 49). Because of Perry's intimidating refusal to adhere to Japanese docking rules, and the high technology of his large black ship, Japanese bureaucrats and onlookers were shocked.

During the negotiation in 1854, Perry's aggressive tactics, such as his high-handed actions, worked to persuade the shogunate to give in to the American demands (The America-Japan Society, Inc, 2004). As a result, The Treaty of Kanagawa—"America-Japan Treaty of Amity and Friendship"—was concluded because of fears of an American invasion (Thomas, 18-20). In this contract, the Tokugawa shogunate mainly promised to open two ports, supply the US ships with coal and food, and allow the US to establish a consulate in Shimoda (The America-Japan Society, Inc., 2004). At the end of the negotiation, the US and the Shogunate exchanged gifts and entertained each other in order to illustrate their new friendship (The America-Japan Society, Inc, 2004).

Commodore Perry's arrival marks the beginning of an extremely complex period of drastic change in Japan's history, but also a process which leads directly to the birth of 'modern' Japan. Because of the extreme complexity of this period, and the limited space we have here for a contextualization of this era, my comments here by necessity are brief and simplified.

At the time of Perry's arrival, the samurai, who were amongst the upper class in the society, were divided into two groups: the Tokugawa shogunate supporters—the open borders group—and the Emperor supporters—the traditionalist group. The open borders group was led by the Tokugawa Shogunate, who insisted that Japan open its borders to trade in order to avoid invasion or other military threats. This would also lead to greater foreign influence into the country which had been isolated for 265 years.

The Traditionalist group opposed the Tokugawa shogunate because of their weak methods of diplomacy. In addition, most Japanese people did not think about opening Japan's borders at the time because of the previous 265 years of isolation. Therefore, the group persisted to close the country to keep stability and return the emperor to a position of power. Thus, returning power to the emperor was mainly a strategy to take power away from the governing shogunate. In fact, this group had already complained about the shogunate's domestic administration. In addition, the traditionalist group charged that the Tokugawa shogunate had decided to open Japan's borders without consulting with the Emperor (Matsumoto, 148-158). This shogunate's decision was especially troubling because Japan had to sign another treaty, which "opened eight ports to trade. Most notably, the Japanese surrendered tariff autonomy and legal jurisdiction over the treaty ports. Tariffs on goods entering or leaving Japan were set in the treaty" (Gordon, 50) and

had to extend to other European countries as well. Thus, the traditionalist group had many grievances with the Tokugawa shogunate.

The shogunate responded to the traditionalists accusations with oppression. The most radical clan with the tradionalist group was charged with treason and executed (Matsumoto, 154). As a result, the traditionalist group became even more angered with the shogunate and vowed to remove them from power (Matsumoto, 183-186).

In fact, the traditionalist group had changed their political stance. Initially, the Chosyu clan, members of the traditionalist group, opposed opening of the country and fought with British; however, Britain was much stronger than the Chosyu clan, and the clan changed their mind—from a national isolation policy to open borders—in order to gain access to Western military knowledge (Webvider, “はじめての薩長同盟”). Thus, many within the traditionalist group opposed isolation; however, they also opposed the weak diplomacy being conducted by the shogunate (Matsumoto, 248-252).

At this time, avoiding a conflict inside of the country was the most essential issue for the Tokugawa shogun because the Shogunate did not want to reveal any type of domestic conflict to Western Countries as it may show weakness. Therefore, the last shogun, Tokugawa Yoshinobu gave in to traditionalist demands and returned all political and military power to the emperor. It was a means to avoid civil conflict. As a result, the emperor took back the power and became the supreme ruler in Japan (Matsumoto, 256-271).

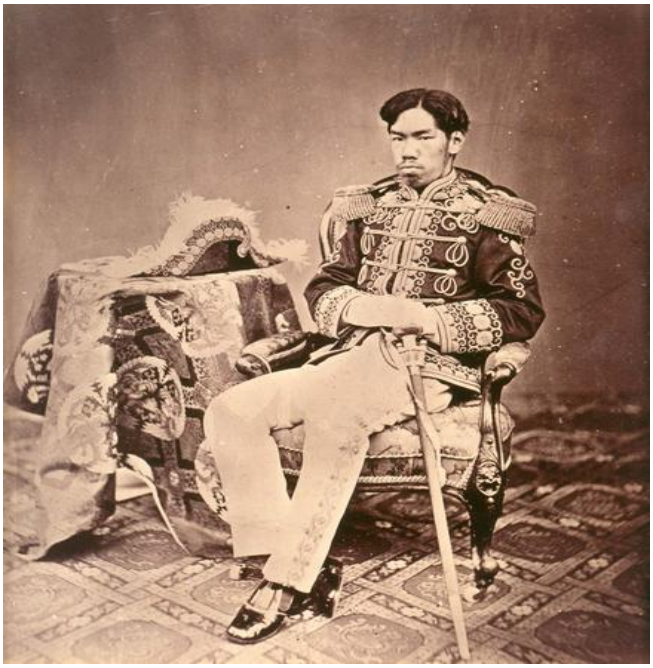
2. The Transition to Modern Japan (Meiji Period)

The traditionalists strived to make an open border policy that would strengthen Japan militarily, in order to avoid Western imperialism. They needed to use the Emperor's high position to make people obey. Although the emperor was in charge, he was an instrument of the traditionalist group to administer the changes they desired (Sakamoto, 17)

Because the emperor and his supporters had to manage the country in a modern way, this Restoration brought a lot of changes to Japan's social structure. Once the Tokugawa shougunate opened the country and made international trading relationships, the priority of the new government was the prevention of colonization from Western countries. So, Japan had to industrialize like Western countries. Thus, Japan learned and imported Western systems of military service, education and political structure (Sakamoto, 135-140). In addition, the Japanese upper class abandoned traditional clothes and hair styles, and started adopting western styles. Japan's "Westernization" was demonstrated in a picture of the Meiji emperor, who wore western clothes, after cutting off his traditional hairstyle.

Figure 1: Meiji Emperor (Traditional clothes). Photographed by Uchida Kuichi in 1872

Figure 2: Meiji Emperor (Western Clothes) Photographed by Uchida Kuichi in 1873



A consequence of industrialization was the elimination of the four-class system—samurai, peasant, artisan and merchant—(Bernstein, 2), although it supported an elitist system. In addition, rapid industrialization eliminated the barriers set in the Edo Period and forced the lower classes into government hands; for example, under taxation reforms. Japanese people had to pay in money to the new government instead of paying with rice, tea, or other staples according to the harvest (Tsurumi, 20). Women worked for public or private filatures to earn money. In fact, at the beginning of industrialization, only the daughters of ex-samurai or rich peasants worked in an industry because they could develop new skills and manage new technologies, which were very valuable, until the 1880s (Tsurumi, 4-5). However, beginning in the 1890s, the daughters of many poor peasants worked in these industries instead of upper-class women. These poor female peasants received poor food and dormitory accomodations as their payment (Tsurumi, 67-69). These female workers actually supported the new, modern Japan.

Yet, women's positions were changed by the government: "The first was the position of women in family; second was the introduction of women's education; and third was women's formal exclusion from political rights" (Liddle and Nakajima, 40). The changes were militant because of the "need" to modernize quickly. The feudal system was destroyed, and the government began influencing every aspect of Japanese society—including the roles of families (Liddle and Nakajima, 41-42). The hierarchy of Confucianism was replaced with a more militant ideology—State Shinto. I will return to this ideology and define State Shinto later. Unlike Confucianism, State Shinto was not isolated to the upper class—it spread to all parts of Japanese society, and it demanded complete loyalty to the emperor (Hardacre, 4).

Warren W. Smith, specifically, mentions the main reason for the change of ideology at the beginning of the Meiji era.

> With the advent of the Restoration, the decline of Confucianism became rapid and severe, and as a strong organized movement it almost disappeared for a number of years. Probably the most immediate cause for this was that organized Confucianism had been tainted as the "social philosophy" of the previous government of the Shogunate, and so would naturally be out of favor with the new ruling groups who tried to develop a vigorous Notional Shinto which might in some measure attract the loyalty and emotions of all (41).

The crucial difference between gender relations in the Tokugawa era and in the Meiji era was that the Meiji government forced all women to be subservient to all men because all men could be soldiers for the empire and the system. For instance, the new education system was set up to facilitate the creation of a strong military service. According to Cook,

> To be a soldier—not a samurai warrior of the leadership caste, but a common solider, an "every *man* in uniform"—was a central part of the conscript/soldier/reservist/veteran "life-course" that universal conscription and frequent warfare would make normative for male Japanese for much of a century (260).

This idea was strengthened by Shintoism. Although this ideology had been present in Japan for centuries, it had evolved into "State Shinto" from the Meiji period to the end of the Second World War (Yasumaru, 118). As a result, as we will see, women's roles were further confined under this ideology. State Shinto[3] is different from religious Shinto (Koremaru, 272-273), and was used as "the invention of tradition to unite disparate elements into a modern nation" (Hardacre, 4) State

[3] State Shinto is an ideology developed between the late Meiji and mid Showa eras which was used as political and semi-divine justification for Japanese colonialism (Skya, 9-10). State Shinto suggested that the Emperor was a living god (Skya, 56-57). Therefore, Japan as a superior nation had a divine right to rule Asia.

Shinto was spread through the education system (Holtom, 71). The government used state Shinto to urge Japanese people to obey the Emperor.

Even though Confucianism, which is basically an organizational prescription of male order, had been replaced with Shintoism, Japanese women's status had not improved in the Meiji period. Because all Japanese men were supposed to be soldiers for the emperor, the new government forced Japanese women to be "good wives, wise mothers" to support their husbands and foster their sons well (Nolte and Hastings, 152). Thus both sexes were thrust into roles that were determined by the emperor; however, men still held greater power. Here is one example that how the Meiji government made gender inequality.

> The reduction of ruling-class women to the status of social objects represented a gradual erosion of their former position in terms of their right to inherit the material basis of power, and a gradual devaluation of their position in the family… the material basis for women's deterioration position and dependence on men rested on men's increasing appropriation of women's landholding rights through changing practices of family inheritance… the legitimation of men's appropriation of women's land rested on the construction of women as mentally and morally inferior to men (Liddle and Nakajima, 75).

This idea was strongly supported by the Meiji civil code. For example, three sections of the Meiji civil code contain 'systematized' patriarchy: Article 733 prescribed that children must register to their father's household. Article 789 prescribed that wives must register to their husband's household. In addition, Article 747 allowed householders, who were all men (unless all males in the family were deceased), to control the household. Also male householders had to take care of the members of the household. In other words, only male householders could have power to control their households, and these laws forced women to marry in order to register to their husbands' household (Kano, 179-

180); women could not stay in their father's household when the father died. This idea is called the *ie* (家) *system* and comes from Confucianism, but was not put into national practice until Shintoism took hold in the Meiji era.

Thus, "even after the Meiji Restoration in 1868, women's status was not significantly improved, except for the availability of expanded higher education and marginally broadened job prospects. Many pieces of new legislation, including the Meiji Constitution of 1889 and the Meiji Civil Code of 1898, were introduced, but they hardly provided women with any legal, political and social security" (Tomida and Daniels, 1-2). As a result, several Japanese feminists appeared in the end of the Meiji period.

The First Feminist Movement in Patriarchal Imperial Japan (1890-1945)

As we have seen, the Meiji government prescribed that the father-husband was the head of the household. The key element in extending patriarchy in this era was the Meiji Civil Code, which was drafted in 1889 (Miyake, 270). According to the civil code, males had the authority over family matters from marriages to property rights (Tachi, 21). This regulation was called the *ie* system: a measure designed to give males absolute power. As mentioned earlier, the *ie* system was a product of Confucianism, but it was expanded to all of society after the creation of the Meiji Civil Code.

According to Mackie, "In most areas and for most women, marriage rendered a woman the property of the household and awarded ownership of her possessions to the family, or more specifically, to the most senior male of the house" (qtd. in Dales, 14). Therefore, women did not enjoy the same type of subjectivity as men did; they were

merely commodities of the head male in the household. In addition, the government forced women to be ‘good wives, wise mothers’ to support the family (Holloway, 10). Therefore the *ie* system held consequences for young single women because they were not considered autonomous individuals; rather, they were considered commodities of the male in their household. Daughters were considered exchanged property when they married, and entered another household. This practice led many women to be used by their fathers to accumulate wealth.

The government employed the *ie* system in order to control all Japanese citizens easily. The population became easier to control because of the lack of diversity between the households. Furthermore, the government did not need to govern the entire population—they only had to govern the head males to assert control of the population at large. The head males would then control those within their households.

In short, the government defined the family as the lowest unit of political structure in the Imperial hierarchy (Aoki, 26-28). This definition, however, and its incorporated masculine privilege, was not without its opponents. Hiratsuka Raicho, one of the earliest feminists in Japan, opposed the *ie* system. A woman normally entered her husband’s house upon marriage, but Raicho refused legal marriage and cohabited with her boyfriend. Raicho’s opposition to the *ie* system was driven by a desire for self determination: “(a)t a time when it was considered an essential obligation of a married woman to produce a child, who would become a successor for a family, she expressed her intention of not having children, and attempted to stick to decisions which she made on her own” (Yoneda, 27).

In addition, several feminists demanded the right to vote. Ichikawa Fusae was a prominent woman who was involved in the women's suffrage movement before and after the Second World War (Molony, 57). These women's actions became the first wave of feminist campaigns in modern Japanese history. They were born out of the restrictions put in place during the Meiji era.

1. Feminist leaders in the First Feminist Movement in Japan

Here, I will describe only three main Japanese feminists—Hiratsuka Raicho, Ichikawa Fusae, and Beate Shirota[4]—because these three feminists to this day are still regarded as historically prominent activists. I will introduce and analyze Hiratsuka Raicho's point of view first, because she was the earliest of the three to make a profound influence in Japanese feminism. Hiratsuka, who was a writer, and other female members, including Yosano Akiko, writer and poet, established *Seito* (Bluestocking), which was the first journal written for and published by women, in 1911. According to Liddle and Nakajima,

> Seito represented the first direct attempt by women to put the critique of the family system onto practice. Ideas of free love and marriage brought into question the 'feudalistic' family system, and *seito* members went beyond theory by conducting sexual relationships and having children, yet refusing to marry, even though this meant they had no recognized place in Japanese society. (14.)

Hiratsuka and other feminists were against the *ie* system because they recognized that it tied women into the family, making it impossible for women to have an identity other

[4] Beate Shirota is not a Japanese woman, and she did not participate in the First Feminist Movement in Japan (Meiji period). However, Beate lived in the Imperial Japanese period as a girl (1928-1938). Further, she wrote Gender Equal Rights into the Japanese Constitution, which contemporary Japanese people have observed since 1946, after WWII. Thus, I would like to introduce her as one of the important feminists to Japanese people.

than that created by their family role (Liddle and Nakajima, 15). The *Seito* members and their ideology struck a chord with many women. However, they were opposed by many men in Japanese society. Some went even as far as to throw stones at Hiratsuka's house in response to her feminist views (Rodd, 177).

In the early Taisho period, these feminists were dubbed 'new women' by the media. The feminists believed "women themselves, and not male sages or the state, actively engaged in a lively discourse on the meaning of female gender" (Bernstein, 9). The "new women" usually had higher education and were usually influenced by European feminists (Rodd, 178).

In the first editorial in *Seito,* Hiratsuka declared that:

> In the beginning, woman was the sun. She was an authentic person. Today she is the moon. She lives by others, shines with the light of others; she is the moon with the pallid face of an invalid… We must restore our hidden sun. (qtd. in Dales 2009, pp15. Trans. Nolte)

From her declaration above, what she wanted was to "encourage and advertise the creative talents of women" (Rodd, 177). Hiratsuka expressed that women have the ability to be more involved in society. Because of the *ie* system, female influence was confined to the households; thus only indirectly affecting society. Hiratsuka argued women's influence could come more directly, if the patriarchal system was removed. She also practiced her own doctrine. She refused to be officially married, and instead had a common-law partner. She also registered her children under her own name—which would have been impossible if she was "officially" married. Therefore, Hiratsuka built her own household, independent of a male 'officially' in power.

Even though Yosano and Hiratsuka shared the same goal, there were disagreements among them. Yosano believed that women should be independent

financially, and women should have as many roles as they can. These roles, such as mother, wife, labourer, and so on, should be equally managed. Hiratsuka was opposed to Yosano's thought because most Japanese women were not educated enough to hold a high-salaried position. Therefore, women could not support themselves without the nation's support. Hiratsuka's opinion was that motherhood is the most important role for women, and mothers and children should be protected by the government because they are the most essential resource for the future society (Rodd, 190-193).

Yosano's belief—women's economic independence—and Hiratsuka's insistence—protecting motherhood and children by the government—are both understandable. Once women can be completely independent, they do not have to be subordinate to men. However, as Raischo insisted, realistically at that time it was too hard for women to be independent because the majority of women did not have the ability to manage all their roles by themselves without first receiving considerable educational and financial state support. However, I emphasize that these feminists were strongly opposed to the patriarchal family system, and their interest was not only women's status in the family but also in society.

During the 1920s, these feminists focused on practical activism, which encouraged women to change their lives for the better through women's education and political work (Rodd, 198). Hiratsuka also formed The New Women's Association (*Shin Fujin Kyokai)* with Ichikawa Fusae, and others in 1919. It was the first political women's group in modern Japanese history. I next describe Ichikawa Fusae, an outstanding political activist (Rodd, 198).

Ichikawa Fusae was one of the most prominent feminists in Japan from the Taisho period (1912-1926) to post-WWII. Ichikawa argued that women should participate in the political sphere to create a gender-equal society (Dales, 16-17). One historian, Morley, mentions that, "Fusae Ichikawa would later summarize the goals of the suffrage movement in the 1920s as the desire to reform the legal system, increase welfare, clean up politics, and pursue peace" (19). Ichikawa argued, that if women could vote, their roles would expand beyond the household (Miyake, 273). Thus, she tried to open Japanese politics to women in order to achieve sexual equality. As a member of The New Women's Association, she wrote many social and political articles while joining other pioneers in feminist activism.

The New Women's Association challenged the Meiji Government's fundamental beliefs. They argued that the government was forcing women to be *reproductive* instead of productive. Furthermore, the government ruled out women from political participation. As a result, the first-wave feminists focused their energies on freeing women from the *ie* system in order to have a voice in political spheres. It was believed that having a voice could expand the notion that women could have direct involvement in society, instead of being confined to the household. They did this mostly through social activism, and living lives that were contrary to Japanese social laws. However, very little was immediately accomplished by their efforts because of the rapid pace of industrialization. Both men and women were confined to the roles that the government had set; however, their efforts would be felt in the next two decades of the twentieth century—the Taisho period.

2. Middle-class women in the Taisho period

During the Taisho period, the middle class expanded dramatically due to rapid industrialization. While rural populations remained stagnant, industrial cities like Tokyo grew in size (Liddle and Nakajima, 116). "The major reasons for middle-class women going out to work in the period between the wars were employer demand, economic necessity and the desire for financial independence" (Liddle and Nakajima, 117). Thus, the number of financially independent women had improved as well. At the time, the 1920s, a group of women, who were "militantly autonomous, economically independent, sexually promiscuous, and above all apolitical" (Liddle and Nakajima, 115), were called 'modern girls' (*modan gaaru* or *moga)* by the media. The image of the 'modern girl' contrasted sharply with the 'new women' (*atarashi onna*) that came before them such as Yosano Akiko, Ichikawa Fusae and others at the end of Meiji period. The 'modern girls' was not considered feminists like their predecessors; however, the 'modern girls' rejected the "class-specific definitions of middle-class Japanese womanhood, which prescribed chastity, fidelity, modesty, dependence, home and family" (Liddle and Nakajima, 116). The modern girls had a softer image, and were considered stylish and cool. They imported dress and mannerism from Western cultures as well, rather than take on the status quo through activism. Thus they did not appear as radicals, but nonetheless they led independent lives.

There are four reasons for the success of modern girls during the Taisho period. First, industries were expanding and many people, including women, were in demand to work in factories. Second, the activism of the first wave of feminist had influenced city women in particular to have greater independence. Finally, as populations and industries

expanded, the government found the population harder to control, and thus was forced to grant all individuals greater freedoms. The Meiji Code was still used, but it was not so strictly enforced. This leniency brought a sense of liberalism to Japan, an idea that was mainly imported from Western Countries. Many referred to the Taisho Period as the 'Taisho democracy.' As a result, there was a new style of young women: modern girls. However, World War II returned Japan to strict government rule, and most civil liberties granted during the Taisho period were lost (Liddle and Nakajima, 117).

3. Wartime

During the war time of the1930s and 40s, Japanese women had two main roles: both to reproduce and to be economically productive. According to Miyake, "the Japanese government… promoted population growth not only to assure a supply of solders and colonists for imperialist expansion, but also to associate ideas of fecundity and productivity with the power of the state" (Miyake, 268). The government manipulated women to fulfill these two roles in order to, "revitalize(e) the family system, which formed the basis for the ideology of Japanese nationalism, known as *kazoku kokkakan* (family-state ideology)" (Miyake, 268). Thus, many single women worked at industries to support the Japanese economy until they were married.

After marriage, women's roles were focused on reproduction, and women had to be *ryosai kenbo*—'a good wives and wise mothers', which was the government slogan. During the wartime, women could not choose their roles. They were only permitted these two by the state to support the family-state (Miyake, 268-269). Strict roles were given to

males, as well. They were expected to fulfill their roles as producers, fathers, and most importantly soldiers. However, the government itself only contained men. This strict system meant there were no female authorities. Even though many worked outside of the house, they were tied to the patriarchal social system. Women's lives would remain extremely controlled by the state until after the war.

The post-WWII period

1. What the defeat brought to Japanese women

When the Allied forces occupied Japan, the Supreme Commander of Allied Power (SCAP) drafted the 1947 Constitution, which includes an equal-rights amendment (Pharr, 1987). Article 14 of the Constitution assures women's equality. Furthermore, Article 24, which was drafted by Beate Sirota Gordon, states:

> Marriage shall be based on mutual consent of both sexes and it shall be maintained through mutual cooperation with the equal rights of husband and wife as a basis.
>
> With regard to choice of spouse, property rights, inheritance, choice of domicile, divorce and other matters pertaining to marriage and the family, laws shall be enacted from the standpoint of individual dignity and the essential equality of the sexes (qtd. in Dales, 16).

Before she joined SCAP, Beate Sirota Gordon's life was an interesting one. Her father, Leo Sirota, was from Vienna, Austria, and was a famous pianist (Gordon, 57-69). He became a professor at the Imperial Academy of Music in Japan, and thus his family stayed in Tokyo for 17 years (Gordon, 71). Thus, Beate could speak Japanese, and understood the low status of Japanese women.

"On February 4, 1946, MacArthur ordered the Government Section, where Gordon worked to draft a new constitution for Japan in seven days" (Web, Sunshine for women)[5]. She was just 22 years-old; however, she was selected as a member of SCAP because of her superb language skill and having worked at times as a writer (Gordon, 125). In addition, she was aware of the causes of gender inequality in Japan (Gordon, 159, 164). Thus, she intensely searched for various documents which were needed to make Article 24, even though Japan had been almost completely destroyed (Gordon, 148-149). She succeeded to create the article in a limited time (Gordon, 128). Most historians agree that Gordon, a young woman of Austrian background, was the key for establishing gender equality in Japanese society. There were many within the Japanese government (the officials that were not removed during the occupation), who did not wish to inform the population of such 'drastic' changes in civil rights. All of these officials were remnants of Japan's old government, and thus male.

The 1947 Constitution is now called the Japanese Constitution. This Constitution defines women's rights in marriage as being equal to men's, and also codifies the family as a democratic unit based on fundamentals of gender equality (Mackie, 1995). The marital code of the 1947 Constitution is as follows:

> Marriage shall be based only on the mutual consent of both sexes and it shall be maintained through mutual cooperation with the equal rights of husband and wife as a basis. With regard to choice of spouse, property rights, inheritance, choice of domicile, divorce and other matters pertaining to marriage and the family, laws shall be enacted from the standpoint of individual dignity and the essential equality of the sexes (Article 24) (Hendy, 26).

[5]Sunshine for Women, 2001 http://www.pinn.net/~sunshine/whm2001/gordon.html November 1, 2010.

This is called Article 24, and it sharply contrasts with the *ie* system in order to give women equal rights. Although the idea of the *ie* system was still maintained in society, the new constitution has encouraged women to insist on equal rights.

2. The rapid economic growth of post-war Japan

From 1955 to 1973, the Japanese economy grew rapidly, and this economic growth changed the family model and ideals. One of the main reasons for the economic growth in Japan was that employees, usually men, were forced to work from morning until midnight (Ehara and Yamada, 49). They were like "corporate warriors" (Liddle and Nakajima, 265) because they contributed mostly to their companies, not to their family. This means that Japan largely became a *kigyou kokka*—or corporate state: in many ways, corporations and corporate policy, instead of the state, governed people and made a new society (Kano, 23).

These employed males were known as *sarariman* in Japanese, which came from "salary men" in English. These salary men needed a supporter, who took care of them because of high demands of their employment. Thus, their wives usually had to be full time housewives and take care of their husbands and children (Kano, 26). A fulltime housewife is called *sengyo shufu* in Japanese. These two words, *sarariman* and *sengyo-shufu* are usually paired (Kano, 32) because a husband's work is financially important, and a wife's work is important for domestic matters: a family needs both a *sarariman* and a *sengyo-shufu*. Thus, there have been clear gender roles in post war Japan. This idea spread throughout the country because Japan needed to rebuild its economy in order to

eliminate the devastating poverty caused by allied bombing and to *re*establish the country's position in the post war world. Housewives and salary men became iconic images.

In fact, the image of housewife had two positive aspects during 1960s. Firstly, *sengyo shufu* was a term considered separate from the traditional *ie* system, that is, these housewives did not have to live with their husbands' parents because their family structure changed from a big family to a small family, who usually lives in a city (Kano, 34). Secondly, the housewife was a symbol of middle class women, and working women were seen as low class (Dales, 17). In other words, the image of a "modern girl" had changed from the single, sometimes promiscuous and western dressed woman, to the image of a housewife. Housewives were now considered to have happy and respectable lifestyles, while the independent women were seen as having lower living standards.

In addition, the Japanese government and education system promoted the idea of the housewife, establishing the marital deduction in 1961, and home economics as a compulsory subject for female students starting from 1963 (Kano, 34). As a result, the idea of gender roles was spread throughout Japan.

The Second Feminist Movement in Japan

1. Women's liberation in the 1970s

What is considered to be the second feminist movement in Japan occurred in the 1970s and was triggered by the American feminist movement in the 1960s. However, Japanese feminists were different from American feminists.

While many male and female students participated in left-wing activism against the US-Japan Security Treaty and the Vietnam War in the 1960s to early 1970s, these groups sometimes retained and enforced gender inequality. According to Ehara, one of the left wing student groups, containing only men, had a slogan which contained sexual violence: "Molesting is revolution"（痴漢は革命だ）"（*ジェンダー研究のこれまでとこれから* 15). As Ehara has explained, molestation means breaking the law. In other words, breaking the law meant revolution to the male students. Ehara and other female students started making a feminist group to counter these males (Ehara, 14-15). In short, even though the male and female student activists had the same political ideology and participated in the activism, the female students recognized their inequality within the group. According to Kano, the first demonstration for women's liberation which was widely reported by the newspapers occurred on October 20th, 1970 during the international Anti-War Day demonstration (59). The demonstration was based on *Guruupu-Tatakau Onna* ("The Fighting Women's Group") which was organized by female workers and students in their early 20s. The organization had offered workshops since June of the same year (Kano, 59). After the demonstration, women's liberal

activism grew rapidly. Some groups gathered together for discussions about changing the inequality. Some women took to the streets of Tokyo to raise awareness about women's inequality in Japan (Kano, 68).

Their activism had four aims, which are also the subject of this paper. First, many feminists insisted that women should have autonomy instead of subjugation (Kano, 61). For instance, the term of "自己決定権　*jiko-ketteiken"* (autonomy, right of self-determination, subjectivity) was the principal term during the second feminist movement. Second, women should be released from the restrictions of 'proper' social behaviour and from the image of subservience. For example, feminists used fierce male language to create their slogans. That is, they tried to resist using "female language," which was supposed to be modest. Their slogan of the liberal seminar was "*Temeenokoto wa temeede yare ribu gashyuku*" (Kano, 69) which means "Do what you have to do by yourself," in English. The slogan was expressed in a masculine dialect, and it comes across as a rough and violent expression. Kano claims that the main aim of the second-wave feminist movement was for women to be released from sexual taboos and language taboos (69).

In addition, Mackie also mentions that "the liberation of the body featured significantly as an aim of the women's lib movement" (qtd. in Dales, 19). As the second aim of the movement shows, women tried to have full autonomy, including control of their bodies.

Therefore, the third aim of the movement was to fight against the Anti-abortion campaign because feminists wanted to insist that women can make their own decisions about their bodies. The reason why these feminists claimed to be pro-abortion was that in

the early 1970s, some members of the Japanese parliament and Japan Business Federation launched an anti-abortion campaign in order to counter the declining population in Japan. As a result, one of the main second-wave feminist movements was a discourse on reproductive health and sexuality. The discourse emphasized awareness and freedom for Japanese women (Dales, 19).

The final point of the second-wave feminist movements was to release women from gender roles. In other words, feminists questioned the reasons why women were encouraged to be housewives. Kano noted that women could be released from the traditional *ie* system. That is, women could be released from the role of daughter-in law in the extended family—a daughter-in law often has to live with her husband's parents to take care of them and do the housekeeping; nevertheless, women have to take on the role of wife within the nuclear family, even though they might not have to live with their husband's parents. In short, women were still chained down to the house but in a different way (82). The problems of housewives were not only taking care of their husbands and children in an isolated house, but also leaving the responsibility for their wishes and actions to their husbands (Kano, 38). They were to give up their desires when their husbands showed opposition to them. Many women questioned themselves, and the lives that they had undertaken. This awkward situation led many housewives to question gender roles. Thus, many feminists defied socially-expected, traditional gender roles, especially that of becoming housewives, because housewives were still considered inferior to *Sarariman (salarymen)* (Kano, 38).

The second feminist movement in the early 1970s exploded in popularity, and eventually paved the way for the academic development of women's studies in Japan.

However, in the late 1970s, the movement faded. According to Ehara, one of the main reasons why the movement faded is that the media did not seriously inform the population about the second feminist movement at all (17). For example, one of the most widely distributed newspapers in Japan described the movement as "some stupid women doing trifling things; that is (because) Japan is peaceful" (Ehara, 17) As a result, most Japanese women did not get the message from these feminists (Ehara, 17). Even though the women's liberation movement made a strong impression on society, the movement has failed to continue since 1977, when women's studies was introduced into the academia (Ehara, 17). Overall, and regrettably, the feminist movement could not reach many women in Japan.

2. Back to being housewives

In the 1980s, many young women desired to become full-time housewives during the Japanese bubble economy (Dales, 21), and there was a negative perception of the workplace and career path for women. Actually, a law called the Gender Equal Opportunity Act—which promotes and protects equal recruitment, hiring, training and retirement—was enacted in 1985. However, despite greater equality within the context of labour laws, the workplace environment remained very male-dominated, and thus was potentially intimidating for many young women.

Moreover, social commentators, educators and women criticized working-mother (Dales, 21). Fujita Mariko, scholar of Japanese studies, mentions that "Japanese culture seemingly idealizes mothers as the best and most suited caretakers of children"

(Fujita, 91). This implies that women should take care of their children rather than earning money. Also, widely-held social attitudes suggest that working mothers, who have full-time jobs, are not good mothers for their children because they cannot devote their time exclusively to their care. All of these accusations were made in the media, despite the fact that working mothers have good supporters, such as relatives, child-care workers, and even husbands. However, these negative images resulted in society encouraging mothers to be full time housewives in the 1980s.

The model of *sengyo shufu/Sarariman* became what was often considered the 'best' model for the family because these gender roles clearly divided women's and men's participation in the society. In fact, 64.2 per cent of Japanese women were housewives in 1980 (Ehara, 85). In addition, "this model assumes that the housewife wants a husband to earn a suitably high salary to support the family and that the *sarariman* wants a wife to maintain the house and raise the children" (qud. in Dales, 2009). Marriage could be seen more or less as a simple contract for a husband and wife, wherein there is an exchange: financial support in exchange for a stable household. However, very little recognition was paid to individuals who did not honour his/her side of the contract. For instance, adultery, gambling, abuse and other factors that can negatively affect marriage, had little discussion in main stream media.

The problems of the working mother were not only dealing with social criticisms but also lacking a network to help them. "First, the woman must eschew the socialized demands of total caregiving, nurturing and self-sacrifice on which the ideal of Japanese motherhood is based. Second, a full-time worker must have or create a network of people who are willing and able to support her in her efforts" (qtd. in Dales, 26).

During the 1980s Japan lacked a significant amount of aid and support networks for women and children. Men had their peers to confide in, but a housewife lacked social networking principally because of her position within the home. Usually, housewives could only look towards family members or neighbours for support.

Consequently, working women had to balance family and career, but to keep balancing both was very difficult. So, many women chose to become housewives, even though many had jobs in an office. They quit their jobs to become housewives when they married and had children. However, once these housewives did not have to take care of their children, they started working part-time. As a result, the rate for Japanese women's employment is said to be an "M-shaped" curve[6] (Dales, 26). Here, I would like to add discussion about women's labour. In Japan, when a woman quits her job to have children, if she later starts working at a new job, her starting salary will be lower (Kato, 104, 112) because she must work at a new company and work part time (Kato, 108). So, this employee system is not appropriate for female workers who take a leave of absence to give birth and care for their children. In addition, paternity leave was nearly non-existent.

[6] "The 'M shaped' age distribution indicates that upon marriage or first pregnancy women prefer, and are expected, to quit their jobs and stay home as fulltime housewives until all their children are grown" (Lebra, 147). After that, these women return to work, so the number of female employees increases.

Establishing a Gender Equal Society

1. Government initiative in the 21st century

Since the late 1990s, the central government has tried to promote a gender-equal society, while Japanese women have not experienced a feminist movement since the 1970s. After participating in the*World Conference on Women*, which was held in Beijing in 1995, the Japanese government has been encouraged to promote a gender-equal society (Ehara, 25-27). I will describe three of the government's main approaches. First, the Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society was enacted in 1999 to raise the birth rate, and then the Cabinet approved the Basic Plan for Gender Equality, as well (Dales, 27). The government recognized that women were being forced to choose either their career or motherhood. It was very difficult in particular for women in cities to do both. Thus the measures that were passed made it easier for women to do both, and to make work environments more comfortable for working mothers.

Second, the cabinet office headed the Council for Gender Equality including the Council for Gender Equality and the Gender Equality Bureau in 2001 (Dales, 29). The Bureau has published a white paper every year informing of various statistics for Japanese gender issues. Furthermore, local governments have also encouraged a gender-equal society. For example, they have tried to help women who are victims of domestic violence, who very often face challenges in seeking aid or recourse to the law.

Consequently, the central and local governments have promoted a gender-equal society. Of course, some feminist scholars have supported and cooperated with these

governments. For example, Ehara Yumiko, one of the major Japanese feminist scholars, has supported the Gender Equality Bureau of the Yokohama City government.

2. Backlash at the beginning of the 2000s

According to Ehara, however, a backlash against feminists occurred in the late 1990s to the beginning of the twenty-first century (28-31). Some conservative politicians have attempted to create what can amount to misinformation campaigns in order to make people misunderstand feminism. For instance, the politicians informed the public that what feminists call for is excessive sexual education, which breaks social morals. Of course, some feminists countered these politicians. I will further elaborate on this type of backlash later on in this paper.

3. Recent Citizen Movements

Finally, I will introduce some Japanese citizen groups which uphold society for environment, education, child care, elder care, consumer rights and so on. These groups are usually Non Profit Organizations (NPO). Actually, there are various kinds of NPOs including one for a gender-equal society in Japan. These organizations are usually managed by women who work as staff or volunteers. However, these organizations usually have financial difficulty because their aim is not to make a profit but to produce a better society. Because of limited funds, these groups are usually quite small, as to employ only a handful of people. They rely heavily on volunteers. Many female volunteers, especially housewives, support such organizations in Japan. Thus, many housewives, who are supported by their husbands financially, are using their time and

money to support movements promoting greater equality. Despite current limited full-time employment opportunities, many women are choosing to become active in society through these NPOs. Working at an NPO is an important aspect of the women's movement because, recently, many women have left their isolated house to work together in society.

Having seen how feminist issues have evolved in contemporary Japanese history, we will now turn our attention to how the media portrays women. We will bring images of women together with feminist theories, before moving on to our analyses of recent Japanese film.

Chapter 2

Images of Japanese Women and Feminist Theories

In this chapter, I will describe the images of women in Japanese media, reading these in conjunction with recent work done by Morohashi Taiki (2009). In addition, I will incorporate aspects of research by Laura Mulvey (1975), to demonstrate how the work of these two scholars can be useful in understanding what I identify as the negative portrayal of women.

One of the most important theories in this project is Morohashi's perspective. For many reasons his perspective is crucial to understand images of Japanese women in the media. Firstly, Morohashi's research is very contemporary, incorporating very recent investigations into present-day Japanese media images. Secondly, his work focuses carefully on visual media, an area which other scholars either overlook or touch on only superficially. Morohashi's research (2009), specifically analyzing Japanese women's magazines and TV programs, therefore provides us highly analytical, contemporary investigations into images of Japanese women. Because my materials are contemporary Japanese films, Morohashi's research is very helpful for establishing a critical context in order to examine the images through a feminist lens. Finally, his research details how the media creates the images and what these images include. In other words, because he illustrates how Japanese visual media promotes patriarchal ideas, we are able to find patriarchal ideas that are hidden in films, by employing his research.

Another important aspect in this project is Mulvey's research (1975). I have chosen "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" by Mulvey over some of her other, later essays for several reasons. First, this is Mulvey's most well-known contribution to film studies, and one that, even though it is over 30 years old, it still has much to offer to scholars of Japanese film. Second, this is an essay that seems almost to have been written specifically for the first film I will explore in detail in the next chapter, *Love and Pop.* Mulvey speaks directly to the issue of the gaze, which, as we will see, is a central feature of *Love and Pop* in particular, and *Swing Girls*, as well. Therefore, even though Mulvey has made other contributions to film studies that could be appropriate for these works, this essay, "Visual Pleasure," is especially well-suited to my present purpose: to reveal the motives and styles of media to promote patriarchal ideals.

The media has created divers images of Japanese women, including images which suggest what types of women are 'appropriate' and 'desirable'. Many women have been influenced by these images which have been produced by the media. Thus, Japanese women, in their real, daily lives, may try to emulate these images. However, as researchers have argued, images of Japanese woman have been produced by men because the Japanese media consists primarily of men in positions of authority, as editors, publishers, or owners of media outlets[7] (Morohashi, 10, 41). Thus, as Inoue suggests, images of the stereotypical Japanese woman have been created to maintain not only

[7] This point is a summary of one of the Morohahsi's studies. Here is the original text in Japanese. "現実を切り取り、映像や文章で再構成し、意思決定をしてゴーサインを出す作り手たちの組織は、大多数が男性たちによって独占されているのが実情です。"(10)

"…女性のディレクターや放送記者は、テレビ局にはほとんどいないと言っていいくらいです。新聞社の女性の記者は一割程度です。営業や広告担当も入れれば、新聞社全体で女性はもっと少ない。出版社の女性の比率は二五%ぐらいですが、こんなに女性雑誌が出ていても女の編集者はそんなにいない。女性雑誌も何故か男がつくっているわけです。"(41)

men's desires and demands but also women's own self-image, even though this stereotypical image of Japanese women is different from real Japanese women (Inoue, 2). Inoue's point is significant because the media have produced the images of Japanese women and men without the audiences' consideration. However, even though the media also create stereotypical images of Japanese men, because representations of women are the key point in my exploration of unequal gender relations in this project, I focus only on images of women.

I. Images of Japanese Women in Media

In this chapter, I describe the images of Japanese women, including a concise description of the transformation of these images. For example, Ochiai Emiko (1990) examined visual images of women in magazines in the post World War II era, in *ビジュアル・イメージとしての女：戦後女性雑誌が見せる性役割 (Woman as Visual image: gender roles from women's magazine after WWII).* Also, Suzuki Midori (1992) explored drink commercials to find the image of Japanese women. She pointed out that certain parts of the female bodies were emphasized in media advertisements, such as the legs, chest and lips, in *現実をつくりだす装置・イメージCM [Commercial Messages are a Machine for The Creation of Reality]*. Fujie Reiko (1983) examined images of girls and boys in children's books in *絵本にみる女（の子）像・男（の子）像 [The Figures of Girls and Boys in Children's books]*. She pointed out that if the main character is a boy, he is active and can travel and discover. So, his range is very wide; in other words, he has many choices and options, but more fundamentally, he can

simply *go* to more places than the female characters can. In contrast, if the main character is a girl, she is very quiet and scared about going outside. Normally, she depends on someone.

Japanese women and men have been surrounded by these images which were created by the media. I focus on these scholars' criticisms in order to explore how their points support my analysis of the films. Before discussing contemporary ideal images of Japanese woman in the media, I will demonstrate two roles of women's sexuality—reproduction and to serve as a sexual object—which were created by the male-dominated government and men. Japanese people can see these images in the media more than any other image, so I will discuss these images instead of, for instance, that of career women. Once we can see how the images of 'ideal' women relate to women's sexuality, we can recognize the extent to which Japanese society in general is based on traditional conceptions of patriarchy.

As we have seen, historically, one of the ideal images of women was the 'good wife and wise mother' which the Meiji government created and diffused. This female image was informed by the ideals of Neo-Confucianism—women should be obedient, pure, good, frugal, modest, and diligent (Robertson, 94) because the purposes of the 'good wife and wise mother' are to support their husbands and give birth to boys, who will become men. The ideal image of women was sacrificing themselves for their husbands and their sons, especially during war time. In fact, this basic image of ideal women has continued in a different way. The contemporary image of middle-age women portrays a fulltime-housewife in visual media such as TV dramas. In addition, many parents, especially mothers, take care of their children's education. Some mothers, who

are obsessed with their children's education, are called *Kyoiku-mama* (an education-minded mother) in Japan. The idea of the 'wise mother' from modernizing Japan exists in the guise of the *kyoiku-mama* in contemporary Japan. Thus, the ideal image of women—women who support men and children—has continued because many members of Japanese society still believe two of the most important roles for women are reproducing and supporting men. The remarkable point is that patriarchal society has created these roles by producing the image of 'ideal' women.

Another role of women's sexuality is to serve as a sexual object. We can easily find pornography in Japan: "the photography sections of Japanese bookstores have been dominated by large glossy albums of nude young women" (Mostow, 5). These ideal images of women are sexy and glamorous. The women in these images are presented as sexual objects because their body parts are emphasized through close-up shots, and the poses of women are quite unusual and odd in order to attract male readers. These images are created for men and consumed by men. In contrast, it is very hard to find pornography for women. I have not devoted much time to search for it, of course, but I have never found it in public in Japan. In short, men and men's sexuality are rarely presented in the role of sexual objects in the visual media. In other words, patriarchal society leads men to control women's sexuality but does not lead women to do the same thing.

Therefore, we can recognize that, in patriarchal society, men have created roles of women's sexuality—reproduction and sexual objects. Japanese patriarchy has produced these different images of women, which are for men. Especially because "pornography is rarely debated in Japan" (Mostow, 5) with an aim to restrict it, sexualized images of women are spread in Japan.

In addition, there are ideal images of women produced specifically for women in the media, such as occur in women's magazines. Interestingly, the images of women in women's magazines have similar features with the images of women in pornography: a slim body and a smaller face with bigger eyes. In some ways, the only real difference between the images of women in women's magazines and in pornography is that in one, the women wear clothes! The key point is that these images of women focus on women's bodies/ appearances, which provide strong influence for real women to become like the ideal image of essentialized 'women'.

II. Morohashi's perspective

Similarly, Morohashi Taiki's research shows that the image of Japanese women in the media objectifies women. I especially employ his recent research—on Japanese women' magazines and TV programs—as the films that I have selected were produced over the past twelve years and so therefore share a historical context with the material he examines. Fundamentally, Morohashi shows a pattern of representation of women in the media. I have summarized his ideas on the representation of women through six points.

Firstly, "the appearance of women in the media is less frequent than men" (Morohashi, 8). According to Morohashi, even though it is said that there is a "female announcers boom" in Japan, still only forty per cent of announcers are female (41). One of the reasons why the appearance of women is less frequent than men is that the media is predominantly produced by men. For example, female directors and female broadcast writers are seldom in television broadcasting stations in Japan. In news paper companies,

only one per cent of writers are female (Morohashi, 41). The media producers are mostly men. Therefore, when information is provided, a male's perspective is often attached to the information.

Secondly, men are portrayed as representatives of humanity in general in posters. In addition, some Japanese words refer only to men. For instance, the term 'representative' itself in Japanese, *giin* (議員), implies a male representative; that is, female representatives must especially be called "Female representatives" in order to emphasize their "femaleness". Furthermore, *Sarariman*[8] (Salary men) is a term widely used as a representation of working people. And yet, this word does not include female workers (Morohahis, 8). Terms like these illustrate the "high-status" symbolism associated with masculinity. Men are portrayed as powerful rulers, while positions held by females are merely subsidiary.

Thirdly, "visual media describe gender roles: woman as someone who wears an apron and/or is a mother. Contrarily, a man is depicted as someone who wears a suit and reads the newspaper when dining" (Morohashi, 8). Television stations produce various kinds of dramas; however, most female characters who have children in stories play housewives. At least, these women do more housekeeping than their husbands in the story. In other words, television dramas depict clearly established gender roles.

Fourthly, "the media often shows power structures. In TV programs, a man's role is that of commentator (analyst/expert), while a woman's role is that of listener (Morohahsi, 9). For instance, on an evening news program スーパーニュース(Super News) produced *by Fuji Television*, the female announcer, Ando Yuko, usually asks

[8] Sarariman comes from English— salary and man.

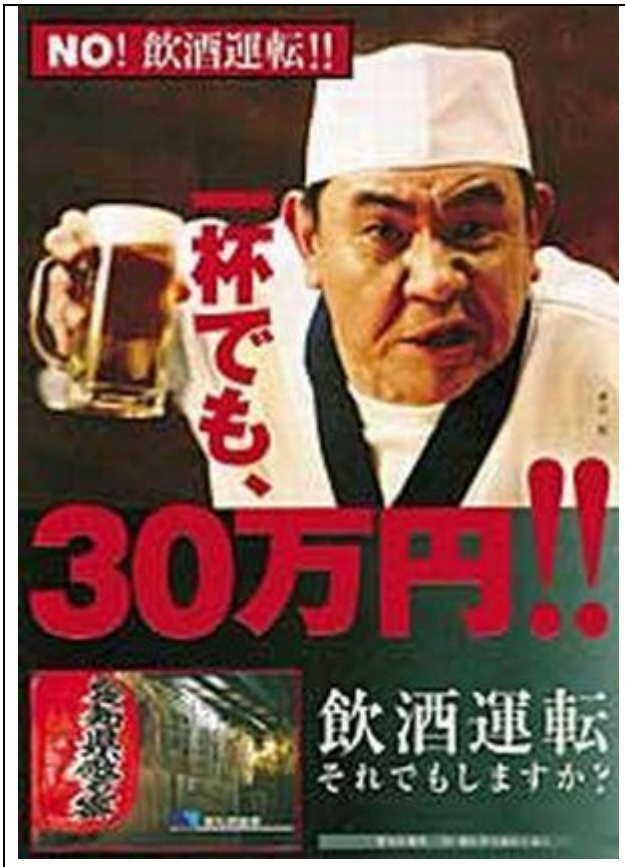
questions of the older male commentator, Kimura Taro. During the program, the male commentator explains the issue and shows his opinions to her and the audience. The situation portrays the male as a teacher, while the female announcer and the audience mimic the role of student. Female analysts are not consulted; they merely play a supporting role to the knowledgeable male host. This example shows how men are usually illustrated as bright and professional; in contrast, females are depicted as less knowledgeable.

Fifthly, "there is a noted difference in the age distribution rates of men and women in the media. Often young females appear in visual media, but men are usually middle aged or older. Furthermore, media present the notion that females only have value if they are *young"* (Morohashi, 9). Morohashi gives the following example. "A weather report is one instance where either males or females can play the solo role. However, the man is usually considered a meteorologist and is middle aged. He explains the weather scientifically. On the other hand, the woman is usually a young, rookie announcer—not a meteorologist—who talks about weather as part of daily life news" (Morohashi, 45). I have often seen his point whenever I watch morning news programs. For example, a young female announcer who describes weather as part of the morning news *めざましテレビ*(*Wake Up TV*) by Fuji Television may often say, "It will be good weather for drying laundry because there will be a lot of sunshine and less humidity."

A second example of the age difference in men and women in the media is evident in anti-drinking and driving poster campaigns. The first poster shows an older man who appears to be a chef at a Japanese restaurant while the second poster shows a younger woman who appears to be a waitress at a westernized restaurant (See Figure 1). The older

chef looks angry and makes the audience scared. On the other hand, the younger waitress is smiling. The purpose of these posters is the same, but these two posters give us different feelings. Obviously, the poster that shows the older man is much powerful than the other one. We can see that the man is portrayed as more powerful and more authoritatively frightening than the woman by comparing these two posters. In addition, I recognize that the man is a traditional Japanese chef from his uniform, while the woman seems to be a just waitress. These posters show us that the man is in a higher position than the woman. Therefore, we can see a hierarchy. Overall, Morohashi's fifth point is proven through these posters. Middle aged or older men and younger women are often used in the media.

Figure: 3 Two anti drinking and driving posters



(a) Aich Police (Web, May 3, 2010)
http://www.pref.aichi.jp/police/cm/index.html

(b) Cabinet Office (Web, May 3, 2010)
http://www8.cao.go.jp/koutu/l-poster.html

Sixthly, "female actors are often used as sexual objects in order to catch a male audiences' attention. For example, many young women appear as sexual objects in television commercials, photographs and television programs" (Morohashi, 9). For example, in a new, Light Cup-Noodle television commercial by Nissin, a woman is naked. Her body is painted with a picture of the package (See Figure 4). It seems Nissin wants to advertise to young women who want to have a slim body. The purpose of the commercial is to encourage eating the low calorie Cup-Noodle option and losing weight. However,

the background music and the model's movement are very sexual. The woman is portrayed as just a sexual object. In fact, her body is depicted as a product with sexuality because it is painted with the picture of the product. Even though the commercial's target is ostensibly women, the female character is described as a sexual object for the male audience. Alternatively, I can suggest that the model is emphasizing to 'average' women that their sexual appeal will be greatly enhanced by eating this product and losing weight, and therefore coming closer to what an 'ideal' or 'desirable' woman should look like. One way or another, the result is the same: the woman's body is a sexual object.

Figure 4: "Cup noodle" 2010.

Nisssin Food Products. http://www.cupnoodle.jp/cm/index.html Web. August 20, 2010.

Additionally, Morohashi argues that because the media presents female sexuality as a sexual object, the audience accepts female sexuality as only a sexual object. As a result, pornography, which describes male sexuality as violent and commanding, is spread (9-10). The media produce many kinds of pornography. The problem is that it is easy for

everyone to see and buy pornography. If you go to a book store or a video shop in Japan, you can easily buy skin magazines or erotic films. While male sexuality is not commodified, female sexuality is commodified and sold as pornography. Therefore, the audience may gradually accept female sexuality as serving only the purposes sexual commodification. This example shows that the media produce unequal gender relations, in that women are not permitted an avenue for autonomous sexuality or sexual expression—their sexuality exists only to provide gratification to men.

As we can see, through Morohashi's six points, the media promote patriarchal ideology—the representation of woman as sexual objects or obedient helpers in the household—in Japanese society. Morohashi offers eights reasons why the media has such a strong influence on the audience.

> (1) The media is created by individuals.
> (2) The media illustrates realistic images that appear real.
> (3) The audience interprets the media and makes meaning.
> (4) The media is closely related to business.
> (5) The media promotes ideology and value judgment.
> (6) The media has social and political ambitions.
> (7) The media has original style, art and rules.
> (8) Interpreting the media critically is improving creativity and expanding communication by various kinds of ways (Morohashi, 21-22).

We usually do not think about these points and tend to believe the media completely. In addition, Morohashi explains that the audience tends to believe the media because the media uses "*the spiral of silence*."

> A subject which the media portray seems to be reflective of the major opinion; that is, you feel that you are of the minor opinion if you disagree with the media's message. As such, the opponents of the media will be silent. Thus, the media's assertions become real because the opponents are being kept silent. Even though the media may create imaginary majority, the opponents do not rise against the media in order to avoid fear of being the minority. As a result, the subject, which the media bring to the audience, becomes real (Morohashi, 38-39).

Media manipulation influences people to accept their image of femininity even though the media image of women does not reflect on real and average Japanese women.

Furthermore, Morohashi provides one more important point. He insists that information is created by makers who often were pressured by various powers—private sponsors, government agencies and political representatives (49). Morohashi depicts a true story that happened recently in the TV industry. A pharmaceutical company sponsored the production of a TV drama. A character in this drama was to commit suicide by taking legally prescribed drugs (in the story, of course). This situation was counter-productive for the pharmaceutical company, so the pharmaceutical company pressured the producer into altering the story line. The new story had the character committing suicide by intentionally crashing his car; however, another sponsor was a car manufacturer, so they disagreed with the new scenario—the television producer was forced to change the scenario again (51-52). Most modern Japanese media consist of the same limitations that this producer experienced.

In addition, information or television programs are created within physical, technological, and visual limitations: television programs cannot perfectly imitate reality even though the images look real. It is true that the media are composed of many aspects in order to illustrate realistic situations, but they actually cannot mimic reality (Morohashi, 52). In short, media are fiction. However, people usually interpret the information as reality, and are thus, influenced by the information.

Furthermore, in the real world, people live with knowledge which comes from the artificially produced media. It can be said that media create the real world (Morohashi, 52-53). This is a powerful conception, which, while persuasive, is often overlooked

amongst the general public or consumers of media images. Morohashi himself argues that Japanese people are powerfully influenced by television dramas. Therefore, as Morohashi mentions, once media present gender relations, gender roles, and the power structure between men and women, these perspectives influence Japanese peoples' lives and customs. These images, artificial and created out of fantasy, can become real. Therefore, feminist scholars often criticize media portrayals of women, describe the importance of gender equality in society and warn of stereotypical gender roles.

Film is only one form of media; alone it illustrates only a fraction of the forces trying to influence Japanese society. However, film also has the power to manipulate peoples' minds, and it presents a story which often has the appearance of reality. Thus, film analysis, too, can help discover the images of contemporary Japanese women which media promote as 'ideal' or 'desirable'. Film, too, can take part in the manipulation and influencing of public perception. For this reason, feminist scholars' perspectives are vital for this current study of images of women in selected Japanese films. This exploration verifies that images of Japanese women are often created in Japanese film to negatively portray women, and thus are often complicit in the continuation of patriarchal attitudes. These images have two aims: first, they illustrate women having less power, and less authority than men; second, they expose the female body as a sexual commodity—as feminist scholars mention. However, as I will also show, Japanese film is also capable of resisting or counteracting this patriarchal reinforcement. I will show later how this is possible, again through an analysis of the relationship between form and content, but in this situation, a relationship used for 'progressive' or positive purposes.

II. Mulvey's perspective

We will now move on to a perspective which has been powerfully influential in the history of film studies, that of Laura Mulvey. Her pioneering work takes an in-depth look at the "male gaze," the collection of camera techniques which work together with a particular ideology or gender attitude to portray women as sexual objects.

Laura Mulvey is a film-feminist theory pioneer who argues, in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), that Hollywood movies describe female characters as sexual objects and/or as meaningless in a story. Her argument remains remarkably useful in analyses of contemporary Japanese film, which in many ways provides parallels with the Hollywood film from the 1930s-1960s which Laura Mulvey explored in her essay. I have selected Anno Hideaki's *Love and Pop* for analysis because it is so representative of 'typical' patriarchal attitudes in Japanese film, even while carrying those attitutes to an extreme in its visual style. This particular work contains obvious and stylistically consistent visual distortions in the use of camera angles and other techniques to alter the way a scene appears to the audience. This aspect can lead to negative portrayals of gender relations such as patriarchal power structure between male and female characters. One brief scene from *Love and Pop* will provide an example here, in which a male and female character meet each other on a side walk. Two cameras are used, and the screen is split so that both characters' front profiles appear on screen simultaneously—as if the characters are in different locations, but in fact they are face to face. The problem is, the screen is not split equally. The male character's profile takes up about 80 percent of the view, while the female is bound to only a tiny sliver of the screen. Such distortion displays

patriarchal dominance by fabricating the female character's position within that of a confined stature.

Mulvey provides a methodology of discovering the two aspects of the male gaze (women as powerless; women as sexualized, objectified) by exposing the patriarchal perspectives used in films. When she describes how a female character is portrayed as a sexual object, she uses the conception of the "male gaze" which, according to Mulvey, means looking at female characters voyeuristically. The male gaze is formed by very specific camera angles and camera movements which serve to 'recreate' the presence of an implied male audience. That is, these techniques seem to be motivated by the desire of an implicitly male audience to 'look' at a female body and so gain pleasure. The female body exists, Mulvey argues, on screen only for that purpose: to provide visual leisure to a male audience. In this we see how significant film forms can serve an ideological purpose. These techniques for the presentation of a character as nothing more than a 'body' for visual pleasure are used by many filmmakers, most of whom happen to be male—the Japanese film industry have been controlled predominantly by male directors and producers. Until the 1970s, only men who graduated from university could become filmmakers (Sato, 13-14). Recently, the number of female directors has increased; however, still the majority of filmmakers in Japan are male because of the historical sanctions against females in the industry (Ishihara, (1)). Furthermore, the executives in most of the supporting companies that donate time and money to the film industry are male, and they tend not to give substantial sums of money to long films if the director happens to be female (Ishihara, (2) a, b and c). Thus, Japanese films are usually created from male point of view. In other words, it is easy (indeed, it is something which may

even happen unconsciously, as if it were ‘natural’) for male filmmakers to incorporate the male gaze into their works even though the male gaze is a symbol of the patriarchal power structure.

Mulvey employs Freud and Lacan to describe the reasons why the male gaze exists. According to Freud, human beings have the desire to be a voyeur.

> Originally, in his three Essays on sexuality, Freud isolated scopophilia as one of the component instincts of sexuality which exist as drives quite independently of the erotogenic zone. At this point he associated scopophilia with taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze (Mulvey, 3).

In this excerpt, Mulvey incorporates Freud’s point into film theory to explain the impulse toward the voyeuristic gaze because film focuses on the human form. The camera acts as a scope which diminishes the full range human qualities of females, and focuses on fragments of their bodies. Thus, in this equation, audiences are made to watch films as if they were voyeurs. In addition, movie theaters reinforce this situation: audiences are drenched in darkness while gazing upon the fragmented images on screen. That is, the situation makes the audience to concentrate on the screen in an environment that creates a sense of isolation and anonymity. The audience members seem to become anonymous in the darkness of the theater, and their reactions seem to become ‘free’ or without consequence. As a result, the audience members actually feel alone with the subject they are viewing; other movie goers seem to disappear due to the dark atmosphere, and the “lone” audience member is left staring at the fragmented figures on screen. While we may argue that both male and female characters are equally fragmentary on screen, Mulvey contends that because of the predominantly male presence ‘behind’ the camera, the types of images or the way of presenting men and women on screen are different.

Male characters are presented as active, powerful, or as 'whole' characters, while the camera often emphasizes or focuses on the fragmentary body parts of female characters.

Furthermore, Mulvey uses Jacques Lacan's mirror image to understand how images become a reflection of ourselves: "how the moment when a child recognizes its own image in the mirror is crucial for the constitution of the ego" (Mulvey, 3). People start to become subjects by looking at objects that are reflections—both literally and figuratively—of themselves. For instance, when you look at a mirror, one's ego is greatly pronounced because the image is a "literal" reflection of yourself. The watcher becomes more "self aware." Similarly, when you look at a character on screen, you may see a "figurative" reflection: an image that you identify with in some way. Thus, screens and mirrors both develop the ego. However, Mulvey emphasizes that films are much more complex than mirrors. While you watch a movie, you also lose yourself: "…the cinema has structures of fascination to allow temporary loss of ego…" (Mulvey, 4). Mulvey acknowledges this situation is "reminiscent of that pre-subjective moment of image recognition" (Mulvey 4) that one experiences at birth: when you are born and you see your mother for the first time, there is no background information— there is no ego. In summary, the cinematic screen works in two ways. In one way, the ego is temporarily removed through fascination of the image. On the other hand, the ego is reinforced as films actually help to produce egos by demanding response and feeling from the audience (Mulvey, 4).

Films have a power to diminish and produce the ego. The ego is one of essential elements of creating the male gaze. Mulvey explains the relation between scopophilia and

the ego to show how the male gaze is created through visual and psychological aspects. She minutely demonstrates the combination as the interplay between

> … two contradictory aspects of the pleasurable structure of looking in the conventional cinematic situation. The first, scopophilic, arises from pleasure in using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight. The second, developed through narcissism and the constitution of the ego, comes from identification with the image screen. Thus, in film terms, one implies a separation of the erotic identity of the subject from the object on the screen (active scopophilia), the other demands identification of the ego with the object on the screen through the spectator's fascination with and recognition of his like. The first is a function of the sexual instincts, the second of ego libido (Mulvey, 4).

The male gaze comes from visual and psychological aspects, and then films use these features to attract the audience. However, Mulvey points out the persuasive power of the male gaze which leads a male protagonist and the audience to look at female characters as sexual objects (Mulvey, 5). Mulvey illustrates a common trend in Hollywood: they tend to display female characters as passive and erotic objects. On the other hand, male characters are active and powerful for developing and controlling a story (Mulvey, 5). This substantial point is equally applicable to many contemporary Japanese films, and especially to my analysis of the representative work, *Love and Pop*, in which high school girls in the film are displayed consistently as nothing more than erotic objects.

In fact, as I have already hinted, Mulvey's conception of and concentration on the "male gaze" are limited. Mulvey's work suggests how cinema can turn images of *both* men and women into objects for the visual pleasure of the audience. Both men and women can 'enjoy' seeing objectified characters. Even though Mulvey's assertion is limited to considerations of the *male* gaze, her work is valuable for providing us with the general idea of the objectifying gaze. This objectifying gaze can turn both men and

women into objects. Thus, Mulvey's work — the "male gaze" — suggests to us how male and female images become objects of consumption. When we pay attention to camera works such as close-ups of a fragmented body and/or naked body we can easily find objected characters as sexualized objects of consumption.

One example, relatively rare in Japanese film, of male characters being objectified is in *Water Boys* (Yaguchi, 2001). This film is by the director of the other film I have selected for analysis, *Swing Girls,* as an example of a counter-argument or resistance to patriarchal gender presentations. *Water Boys,* too, serves as a counter to many tendencies in mainstream Japanese cinema and media. In this film a group of high school boys form a synchronized swimming team. In one scene, a group of high school girls watch as the boys perform a dance routine before they enter the pool. The camera first shows the boys dancing—specifically focusing on their hips. The view then shifts focus to the girls who are in awe of the males; the girls even put on glasses as if to mimic the lens of a male gaze, except in this case it's a "female gaze." However in both situations the subjects are sexualized, and the film audience takes on a voyeuristic perspective. The same formula is applied, except masculinity is subjugated. One important difference between what we find in *Water Boys* (and *Swing Girls,* as well) and in *Love and Pop,* however, is the willingness of the film's *content* to present us with whole or 'complete' characters, capable of growth and feeling. In other words, even though in *Water Boys* we have aspects of the *form* which take part in the objectifying gaze, in terms of content, we have the creation of substantial characters.

However, even in films which display both male and female characters through an objectifying gaze, there is a major difference between the 'exploitation' of male and

female characters, or the ways in which this 'objectifying gaze' typically deals with men and women: females are illustrated in a stereotypical, more persistently sexualized fashion. For instance, the female characters usually act passively, and their (sexualized) existences are not significant to develop the stories, but are used to arouse the male characters and the audience. Thus the sexual objectifying of females extremely limits the actions and character developments of female characters. In contrast, objectified male characters are typically represented as active even though they are depicted as sexual objects. In the earlier example, *Water Boys*, the exploited males still develop into colourful personalities, all the while directing and expanding the plot. Female characters remain more static, and are more limited in their roles when objectified.

Specifically, Mulvey's assertion is useful in analyzing *Love and Pop*. Muvley illustrates scopophilia which "builds up the physical beauty of the object" (6) to show how films express female characters. She provides examples of it by using the works of early film maker, Josef Von Sternberg:

> Sternberg produces the ultimate fetish, taking it to the point where the powerful look of the male protagonist (characteristic of traditional narrative film) is broken in favour if the image in direct erotic rapport with the spectator. The beauty of the women as object and the screen space coalesce; she is no longer the bearer of guilt but a perfect product, whose body, stylized and fragmented by close-ups, is the content of the film and the direct recipient of the spectator's look (Mulvey, 7).

In fact, we can apply the term, fetishistic scopohilia, to demonstrate existence of sexual female objects in *Love and Pop*. The camera shows the high school girls through a "male gaze." For example, the camera shows close-up of fragments of the protagonist, Hiromi's, body, such as her legs, hands and lips. Furthermore, in the scene we've mentioned earlier, which operates as a compact 'summary' of how other male characters

treat the female characters, one of the male characters voyeuristically stares at Hiromi. The scene is the first meeting with the 'weird man', a character who 'buys' Hiromi's time specifically to show off his own 'popularity' or 'success' at having a date. Three-fifths of the screen is occupied by the man's face while he stares at Hiromi. On the other hand, two-fifths of the screen shows a close-up of Hiromi's body: the camera closely stares at Hiromi starting from her legs, and moving up to her eyes, mirroring the gaze of the male character. The lens manifests a perverse view of the female character, forcing the audience into the shoes of the sexualizing viewer. Furthermore, his gaze pushes her to the side of the screen. She cannot avoid his staring. Her reaction to this dehumanizing stare is very passive. Hiromi's gestures and expression show that she is very uncomfortable, but she does not confront or respond to his perverse stare. The camera technique provides not only fetishistic scopophilia, but also demonstrates power of this otherwise pathetic male character.

Therefore, some films contain the "male gaze" to display female characters as passive. As in the previous example, the female character is controlled by a male's action—looking at Hiromi—even though she is the protagonist of the story. In addition, according to Mulvey, male characters tend actively to develop the plot. In contrast, because they are displayed as less perfect, less complete and powerless, female characters merely follow the scenarios. The males drive the car so to speak, while the females remain the passenger (5). This structure even occurs in films that have a female lead such as *Love and Pop.*

This power structure is based on patriarchal ideas. Therefore, films that employ this style incessantly further patriarchal views by manipulating the audience's sight and

mind. The manipulation is done by using visual techniques and by telling a narrative which contains a powerful and active male character, and an erotic and passive female character.

Through this chapter, we investigated Morohashi and Muvley's perspectives in order to help us identify the images of Japanese women, and to have a method of finding sexualized images of women in films. Morohashi's analysis of women's magazines and TV programs reveals that Japanese visual media often illustrates women as less powerful than men, and less intelligent than men. This inequality relates to Japanese patriarchy. Further, the media shows young women more frequently than older women because young female sexuality tends to be objectified. In fact, even while participating in it, *Love and Pop* criticizes the media's objectification of young Japanese women.

Furthermore, when analyzing Japanese films, Mulvey's essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," is crucial for identifying the camera styles in these films.

By bringing *Swing Girls* together with *Love and Pop* in a later chapter, we can see: 1) how Mulvey's work is useful in interpreting 'male-centered' Japanese films; 2) how some Japanese films reinforce traditional patriarchal attitudes; 3) ways in which some Japanese films can offer alternative, positive views of Japanese women, thus resisting patriarchy; and, 4) how, by looking at positive or progressive films, we can go beyond Mulvey's work. These points are possible by comparing *Love and Pop* with *Swing Girls* in the context of form and content.

Therefore, we need to employ Morohashi and Mulvey's perspectives. When examining film's content in order to reveal power structure, Morohahsi's perspective helps us to find Japanese patriarchal ideas. Further, when analyzing film's form,

specifically the male gaze supports us to understand how and why film depicts women as sexual. Before we provide an in-depth analysis of both *Love and Pop* and *Swing Girls,* however, our next chapter will set the stage by examining the relationship between form and content in works of art.

Chapter 3

Form and Content Debates

A feminist approach to Japanese film gives a way to measure the ideology and attitude of a work of art. That work of art, though, is composed of two main components. One is its content—that is, its story, its characters, its setting, and so on. The other is its form, the 'package' in which the content comes to the audience. Before I begin my analysis of the presentation or critique of gender relations in some recent Japanese films, in this chapter, I will discuss the relationship between form and content. That relationship is important, because form influences the way we experience content, and content can influence the form. This chapter will look at some of the ideas about the relationship between form and content that scholars have presented over the past one hundred years. By doing so, this chapter will prepare us for our analysis of two recent Japanese films later in the thesis.

Form (visual composition) and content (story/topic) are interdependent and work together to create the theme of a film. Historically, there have been many debates concerning form and content in works of art. Three people—R.G. Collingwood, Duncan Robertson and Noel Carroll—put forth arguments about form and content. Their discussions are very informative. Collingwood wrote *Form and Content in Art* in 1929. Then, the *Dichotomy of Form and Content* written by Duncan Robertson was published in 1967. On the other hand, Noel Carroll's article, *Film form,* was written in 1998. These three articles span 70 years, but the comparisons between form and content have been

occurring since literary writing has been in existence. For convenience, we will focus on 20th century debates because of the emergence of film and television. These media have flourished from the last century to this date. Although the three arguments we are looking at are similar, they are written from different eras and different perspectives, which provides more insight into the debate. Although this debate is timeless, I will take a 21st century perspective. I will analyze the arguments chronologically, starting with Collingwood.

In *Form and Content in Art*, Collingwood mentions that there are two different types of art; romantic art and classic art. He argues that emotion is the key component in romantic art: on the other hand, skill is vital in classic art. Fundamentally, these terms correspond with 'content' and 'form'—for Collingwood, emotion provides the core or content of the work which the artist expresses through skill, manifested as form. When analyzing the relationship between the subject and the artist, Collingwood states, "The subject must come to him and excite him, inspire him…" (Collingwood, 334). He believes romantic artists need strong inspiration to create art successfully. On the other hand, Collingwood argues that classic artists, using perfect material, design and structure, can create excellent art. Collingwood shows the differences between romantic and classic art by using novelist's, painter's and musician's works. Firstly, romantic and classic arts seem to form a binary opposite because the key for romantic and classic art is different; however, Collingwood insists that "The romantic and classical attitudes are quite compatible, when they are looked at as phases in the rhythm of artistic creation" (Collingwood, 341). Furthermore, he stress that emotion is the main element to start

romantic art, but skill develops art during production; therefore both elements are key to creating a piece. Collingwood uses Beethoven to illustrate his point:

> Thus Beethoven may have thought, when that four-note phrase came into his mind, "Fate knocking at the door"; and he may have said to himself, "I will write a symphony about Fate, all full of remorseless and terror." But while he was scoring the symphony for a full orchestra he did not actually experience terror, he was engaged in laying out patterns of sound for a very complicated instrument… (Collinwood, p.341)

Both emotion and skill were vital to creating Beethoven's piece. As you see Collingwood's point, artists need emotion, which urges artists to express their message, and then they need skill in order to represent the message. This excerpt supports my argument because I also believe that a film's meaning comes from a filmmaker's message—content, and their technical expression—form. Finally, Collingwood stresses the following:

> Conviction and technique, the message and the language, content and form, are not two ingredients capable of exciting separately and then being brought together into a work of art. They exist together, or not at all (Collingwood, 345).

Collingwood stresses the dual existence and interdependency of form and content. We can apply this point to film. If we consider camera technique as form and gender relations as content, we can see the parallels. For example, a filmmaker who wants to display subordinate gender relations—the content—in a film, may focus cameras on individual body parts of the female characters. The camera technique—the form—is what paints the full picture of the artist's intent. In this case, the intent is a chauvinistic view.

Duncan Robertson has a similar point of view to Collinwood, but he discusses form and content in poetry. According to Robertson, the definition of form is a matter of words: *how* it is said. For example, form is "diction, syntax, versification, and also

imagery, which is a descriptive device" (Robertson, 273). On the other hand, the definition of content is a matter of concepts represented by the words: *what* is said. For instance, content is "plot, character, setting, thought, argument, or theme" (Robertson, 273). Furthermore, Robertson describes a relation between form and content in poetry:

> Form is constituted by the internal, content by the external, relations of the poem. Elements of the poem are form in relation to each other, content in relation to the external world. The form does not exactly "contain" the content: what contains the content is the world. The content is what *goes into* the poem and what may be *taken out of* it, but in poem there is no content, only form: form is what *goes on in* the poem: the poem as form is the poem "in itself." (Robertson, 277).

His point of relation between form and content in poetry is very interesting because only form can shape the poem while content comes from the outside world into the poem; that is, form brings the world into the poem, and then the poem is completed. Therefore, he insists that when evaluating poems, critics have to examine the relationship between form and content in poems because they interact with each other and they have a purpose. Therefore, to Robertson, form and content are the same thing:

> Total feeling and the true total value of the poem then must reside in the total form and total content, which, as totalities, are inseparable. The value of content in abstraction from form is a reduction of its total value because the content in abstraction from form is a reduction of the total content. The value of form in abstraction from content is even more tenuous. In the first place the general aspects of the form cannot be evaluated at all in abstraction from content: first-person or epistolary presentation for example, has no conceivable kind of value in itself (Robertson, 275).

The interaction of form and content produces the total value of a poem. Furthermore, Robertson expands upon the origin of form and content:

> Form is constituted by the internal, content by the external, relations of the poem.… The content is what goes into the poem and what may be taken out of it, but in the poem there is no content, only form: form is

> what goes on in the poem: the poem as form is the poem "in itself." (Robertson, 277).

Robertson uses poetry to demonstrate how the interaction of form and content produces the purpose of a work

The inseparability of form and content in poetry demonstrated by Robertson is similar to Noel Carroll's analysis of film. His perspective can provide my analysis with an effective method of film analysis. According to Carroll, we tend to categorize films into genres by comparing them to other standards that have already been set: "When interrogating a period style, our purpose is to say how all or most of the relevant films are similar, and, therefore, we look for what all the filmmakers under examination have in common" (Carroll, 1). However, he goes on to say that if we categorize films into mere genres, we will miss the exceptional characteristics of each film. Thus, Carroll insists that examining the form of a film is a good way to find the point or purpose of a film. Firstly, film has many elements, which are related to each other. Carroll calls these factors "formal elements": "A formal element is an element that contributes to or serves as a means of securing the point or the purpose of the individual film" (Carroll, 6). When Carroll describes a way of analyzing film form, he introduces two different methods—descriptive accounts and functional accounts. According to Carroll, "The descriptive account says that the form of the film is the sum total of all the relations between the elements of the film. The functional account says that film form comprises only the elements and relations intended to serve as the means to the end of the film" (Carroll, 6). The functional account is far superior to finding the purpose in a film because the descriptive account is too general to present effective supporting evidene when we discuss a film's form. For instance, when analyzing *Swing Girls* by the descriptive

account, the storyline and plot become the main focus. They describe high school girls who overcome the difficulties of creating a Jazz band and entering a high school music competition. Themes of perseverance and friendship are fully displayed. However, when we employ the functional account, we can recognize other interesting elements: determined female characters are easily identified; camera movement shows female characters that are more powerful than male characters; and camera angles show the girls' confidence. Furthermore, unique camera technology effectively creates a style of comedy. Functional accounts give us the ability to 'micro-analyze' the film.

Carroll also adds the benefit of using the functional account to find a film's purpose:

> when we speak of the form of a film, this has overtones of the systematic-of there being some formula(e), or rule(s), or guiding principle(s) in operation. This connotation of systematicity is entirely lost in the descriptive account of film form, for it deals in the totality of relations of the film with no principle of selection. The functional account, by contrast, does connect film form to underlying motivations. In that sense, it preserves the intuition of systematicity, especially in cases where forms are coordinated hierarchically to secure overarching purposes (Carroll, 8).

As Carroll argues, formal elements, which structure form, express the purpose of film; that is, we cannot ignore each functional element of form. Interestingly, however, for analyzing film, Carroll recommends using the functional account rather than considering the relation between form and content:

> The functional account also differs from attempts to approach film form through the contrast between form and content. That way of speaking restricts film form solely to films with specifiable content. But by speaking of the point or purpose of the film, rather than solely in terms of content, the functional account is broader than the form/content account. Of course, where the point of a film is to advance something typically thought of as content (a theme, for example), the functional account will attend to the same formal

> features as foes the form/content account. However, the functional account can also accommodate "contentless" film, which is one of the sticking points if the form/content approach (Carroll, 7).

Whether a film has dense content or its purpose is merely to entertain, the functional account is an effective measure of form. According to Carroll, this method has greater benefit than *just* contrasting (looking at the relation between) form and content because it is valuable to examine each formal element, which is in form, for discovering the purpose of a film.

We now have some small disagreements in our approach to the form and content of a work of art. Sometimes it is difficult to separate form and content, as Robertson mentions. Moreover, some films contain little or no content to examine, as Carroll mentions. Utilizing Carroll's method of discussing each formal element for finding a point and considering relations between formal elements, we can obtain a powerful message from filmmakers. Indeed, this gives us an an uncomplicated way to micro-analyze films. However, the danger is in overlooking the interlocking relationship between *how* something is given to us, and *what* is given: form and content. Therefore, in my examination of the films under discussion, I will first use the functional account to micro-analyze the films to display their formal elements. Following this detailed analysis, I will employ an analysis of the contrast between form and content to examine the collaboration between these two aspects.

There are three significant reasons for keeping the form/content accounts in my research. Firstly, the films in this study—*Love and Pop* and *Swing Girls*—have a strong message in content as well as in form. It is the collaboration of form and content that demonstrates the strong messages in these films. Secondly, filmmakers often

display their information in the themes of their films. Themes are seldom expressed directly to the audience. Instead, they are coded; one must carefully analyze each scene to determine what themes are present. The code creates form. That is, code and form are essentially the same. The audience can take these codes gradually and interpret them to understand the filmmaker's messages. What I want to stress here is that content, which is the story line, leads the audience, and form expresses a film's purpose during its story line. The audience can then reach the message of the filmmaker. This idea emanates from the linguist, Roman Jakobson, who developed a diagram of verbal communication. Jakobson defines six functions in this diagram: ADDRESSER, ADDRESSEE, MESSAGE, CONTEXT, CODE and CONTACT in verbal communication;

> An outline of these functions demands a concise survey of the constitutive factors in any speech event, in any act of verbal communication, the ADDRESSER sends a MESSAGE to the ADDRESSEE. To be operative the message requires a CONTEXT referred to ('referent' in another, somewhat ambiguous, nomenclature), seizable by the addressee, and either verbal or capable of being verbalized; and, finally, a CONTACT, a physical and psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee, enabling both of them to enter and stay in communication (Lodge, 35).

As Lodge explains Jakobson's six functions, these six dimensions can lead to successful verbal communication. Similarly, film uses the same structure of verbal communication, as film needs these same six functions: addresser, addressee, message, code, contact, and context. A film has a filmmaker, who is the ADDRESSER; an audience, which is the ADRESSEE; content, which is related to and comments on CONTEXT; form, which offers CODE; a process of watching film, which is CONTACT; and, finally, meaning, which is the film's MESSAGE. As previously mentioned, the message is usually coded and expressed in a film's form. Therefore, an analysis of film form is an

effective way to examine a film's message. By looking at the relation between form and content, we can discover powerful messages of filmmakers.

In fact, Jacobson's theory concerns semiotics[9]. If in this thesis we were to focus more specifically on how film creates and sends the message to the audience, rather than the exact nature of that message, semiotics would be an essential theory for this research. However, because my research reveals gender relations in Japan by analyzing Japanese films, feminist theory proves itself to be a more vital stand-point. Further, discussing the nature of form and content in works of art is fundamental for us to understand the importance of each function and these relations.

These three scholars—Collingwood, Robertson, Carroll—discuss how we should analyze a work of art. In addition, Jakobson provides us with a way of conceiving the process of communication in both art and reality. Collingwood and Robertson have a similar idea of form and content. Carroll supports employing the form/content account, if the film has content; however, Carroll insists that we should focus on form rather than content for exploring the purpose of a film. The main point of Collingwood and Robertson' statement is that form and content depend on each other. Collingwood emphasizes that works of art need two things: content, which is emotion, and form, which is skill (334-335). Furthermore, Robertson stresses that works of art have a purpose, which is created by form and content. Thus, I am fundamentally in agreement with Robertson and Collingwood's assertion that we have to look at the relationship between form and content rather than looking at them separately.

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[9] "The shortest definition (of semiotics) is that it is *the study of signs.* ... Semiotics involves the study not only of what we refer to as 'sign' in everyday speech, but of anything which 'stand for' something else. In a semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects. … (Contemporary semioticians) study how meanings are made and how reality is represented" (Chandler, 2).

On the other hand, Carroll suggests that it is too difficult to explore the meaning of film; thus, we should analyze elements of form first. Both Carrol and Robertson argue the importance of form and content, but they submit alternative methods of analyzing works of art. Both methods can be effective in determining a film's purpose, and so I will adapt elements of both approaches in this research.

In my thesis, I will focus first on the formal elements and show how they shape and project the content of the work, and how our interpretations of the work's 'meaning' are exactly dependent on the relationship between the two elements. I will show how both form and content work together to create either positive or negative images of gender relations in Japanese film, as critical commentaries on Japanese society. Finally, I will demonstrate that form and content work together to create the meaning of film. As I prove my argument, these three scholars' writings effectively support my argument: Collaboration of form and content create a meaning of a film. Even though these three people employ different kinds of works of art—novel, music, poem and film—their points are not shaken because art needs content, which maintains artists' emotion, and form, which is artists' way of expression. Thus, we can apply the debate of form and content to any kinds of works of art. However, I need to define form, content and meaning because all three scholars define these words differently, which can lead to confusion. In the context of film, I define form as visual and audio compositions, such as camera movement, camera angles, colour, lighting, settings and sounds as well. On the other hand, content is a story which is created by scripts and characters' actions, attitudes, and thoughts. Meaning is the purpose of the film, but that 'purpose' has the potential to be different for each viewer. I argue that 'meaning' comes from interpretation, but

interpretation depends on the interconnected relationship between form and content, which work together necessarily to create meaning.

Chapter 4

Film Analysis

One can see that a collaboration of form and content illustrates a film's meaning; this statement can be thoroughly applied to two films: *Love and Pop* and *Swing Girls*. When we apply a feminist analysis to these films, the first, *Love and Pop,* displays negative gender relations: that is gender relations that are unequal, in which women are submissive to men who have more power (even though they may not merit this). The latter, *Swing Girls,* exhibits positive gender relations: relations that are more equal, allow individuals—especially women—more freedom, and are based on individual merit rather than gender. We can compare the film form and content of *Love and Pop* and *Swing Girls* only after independently analyzing each film.

When examining these films from a feminist perspective, Morohashi's research (2009) helps us to consider the image of Japanese women, which influences its Japanese audience. In addition, Mulvey's feminist film theory (1975)—of the male gaze, roles of female characters in stories and stereotypical images of women—presents to us three ways of criticizing *Love and Pop*, which illustrates patriarchal ideas. In contrast, applying Mulvey's perspective to *Swing Girls*, we can show how Mulvey's theory fails to account for the possibility of an alternative relationship between camera, characters, and the audience. We will suggest ways in which, through a different type of 'gaze', the camera is capable of producing a sympathetic relationship between the audience and the

characters, while working with content to produce characters who are dynamic, positive, and powerful—and female!

I. Analysis of *Love and pop*

1. Introduction of *Love and Pop*

Love and Pop is a film that chronicles the trials and ordeals of high school girls who are engaged in teenage prostitution. It is a film that is meant to critique gender relations in contemporary Japanese society. The film is written by Murakami Ryu, well-known as the author of controversial and often misogynistic fiction. It was directed by Anno Hideaki, well-known for producing animated series, but *Love and Pop* is his first live-action, feature-length film.

Formally, Anno uses unique camerawork—close-up shots, low camera angles, and camera positions from the point of view of objects—and filmed this work using small, often hand-held digital cameras. In terms of content, *Love and Pop's* deals with the issue of subsidized dates[10] together with an implied power structure which the film itself seems to accept, thus both presenting and participating in negative gender relations in Japan. The unique camerawork (form) and Murakami's story (content) are used effectively to display patriarchal ideas. The film criticizes society's distorted gender relations; however, it does not provide an alternative or advanced conception of gender relations because, as I

[10] As will be explained, the girls engage in "enjo kosai" (援助交際). This is a slang term depicting underage escorts. The term is only applied to females under the age of 18. The term does not necessarily imply prostitution, as sex is "optional" depending on the female's decision; however there is a strong allusion towards underage prostitution.

金銭的援助を伴う交際の意　主に未成年の女子が行う売春をいう俗語。大辞泉(Japanese dictionary)

will argue, it does not progress beyond the ideas of patriarchy. Before analyzing the film's form and content, it's important to first provide a brief summary of the plot, and description of the film's central characters.

Love and Pop's main character is a 17 year old high school girl named Hiromi. She decides to be an escort for money to buy a topaz ring. The film describes Hiromi's day on July 19, 1997: it illustrates the process of her increasingly explicit involvement in compensated dating.

In the morning, she goes to Tokyo's fashion and entertainment district, Shibuya, to buy a bathing suit with her friends. One of her friends, Nao, borrows a cell phone from a stranger. She is enticed by this man to recruit high school girls to go on dates with older men for money.

After buying a bathing suit, Hiromi falls in love with a beautiful topaz ring. It costs 128,000 yen. Hiromi's friends decide that they should all go on a date with a middle aged man to earn money, so Hiromi can purchase the ring. They entice a man in a department store to take them on a date. They earn enough money from their brief experience as escorts, but Hiromi refuses, out of a sense of friendship, to take all the money; they divide it between the four of them. The success of that date is enough to lure Hiromi into going on more dates by herself in order to earn the rest of the money to buy the ring.

To meet men, Hiromi borrows the cell phone that Nao received from the stranger, who is named Kobayashi. Hiromi decides to go on two dates, but is abused during both of these meetings. She is traumatized by the experience, and begins to see things in a new light. Eventually, she confronts the man who lent Nao the cell phone, and she abandons

her plan to buy the topaz ring. The film mainly consists of Hiromi, her friends, and the men who subjugate them—it rarely illustrates minor characters not directly involved with the girls.

Hiromi has three close friends: Chieko, Chisa, Nao. Chieko looks the most mature and feminine character among this group of girls because she has gone on more subsidized dates than anyone other character, and she is fashionably dressed. In contrast, Chisa looks boyish and is driven by her desire to become a street dancer—she even quits school to do so. Nao is interested in computers and is on a diet. She has no blaring unique qualities; that is, compared to Chieko and Chisa, she most resembles a main stream Japanese high school girl. Hiromi, the protagonist, also displays the same qualities as Nao because she does not have out-of-the-ordinary features like luscious Chieko, or tomboyish Chisa. The Japanese audience can easily understand them as 'normal' high school girls; that is, adolescent girls who abide by the social norms: attend school, keep a strict and busy schedule, obey their parents, and entertain themselves with shopping, karaoke, club activities and so on. Hiromi is essentially a "normal" high school girl, until she decides to enter into an activity that is forbidden amongst mainstream girls: escorting. Thus, the film appeals to the mainstream Japanese audience to see how easily "normal" girls can experiment with a grim and subjugating practice.

It is important to mention one aspect of Japanese society to understand the film. The mid-1990s saw several factors emerge to create a sense of instability amongst Japanese people, not the least of which, for example, was the Tokyo subway sarin gas attack by Aum Shinrikyou in 1995, and increasing economic pressure among middle-aged salarymen. The economy had experienced significant decline years earlier, and

terror plots were depicted in the media throughout the middle of the decade. In addition to these grim realities, *enjo kosai* was revealed to be a somewhat common practice amongst high school girls: subsidized dating—a form of prostitution.

For convenience's sake, I refer to the young girls in subsidized dates as exploited minors, while referring to older women as escorts. While it is certainly true that we may think of these women as exploiting their customers' desire, the basic problem is that the very essence of the relationship is exploitation. Human beings become nothing more than commodities or sources of revenue. There are two fundamental differences between the activities of subsidized dating and 'straightforward' prostitution: first is age; all females are minors. Second, subsidized dating does not necessarily imply sex, which may be optional. In addition, men who engage in *enjo kosai*, are in it to feel better about themselves, and do not purely desire a physical exchange Thus, high school girls are appealing not only for their looks and sexual appeal, but for their energy and vitality (Satsukawa and Anno 231). Because these men are usually lonely (Sastukawa and Anno, 230), they are afraid of having a real relationship or do not want to have a real relationship; subsidized dating is temporary and is a satisfying relief for their loneliness. Anno has suggested, in an interview, that middle-aged men began to value the sexuality of young, teen-aged women very highly in the mid-1990s (Satsukawa and Anno, 230-231). Because "(t)here are many types of *enjo-kosai* and many reasons for doing it" (Fujiwara, 3), it is hard to generalize the girls who are involved in this activity. However, the girls seemingly want to be independent financially (Fujiwara, 4) and act in whatever manner they want by "depend(ing) on their own feeling and pride but not on moral values" (Hayami, 17). The Japanese sociologists, Miyadai and Fujiwara, comment that

girls who "want to create their 'own place' in order to escape from reality tend to take part in *enjo-kosai*" (Fujiwara, 4). Thus, the middle-age men and teenage high school girls agree to achieve their satisfaction even though the motives to engage in *enjo kosai* are very different.

Further, in the nineties, the Japanese government had not yet made laws to punish men who pay to have sex with minors. Finally, in 1999, a sexual crime bill was passed; it especially targeted sex with girls under 18 years of age. The law was renewed in 2004 because the crime rate for prostitution among minors had actually increased. The renewed law punishes people who coerce minors into having sex by sentencing them to five years in prison or a fine of 5 million yen (Kato, 153). In 2000, the number of arrests was only 104; however, in 2003 the number of arrests was 1743. Then, in 2004 in only the first half of the year, the number of arrests was 657 (Kato, 152). *Love and Pop* was made in 1998, so the problem was at the forefront of Japanese social issues at the time. Because of the lack of legislation in the mid-nineties, not only did many men who coerced minors into sex not consider the act a crime, but legally (certainly if not morally), it was not. At the time, the issue of high school girls being sexually exploited still needed to be attended to by the government and media in Japan; recognizing that these girls were actually children needed to become a priority. Hence, *Love and Pop* became a very controversial film.

2. Form of *Love & Pop*

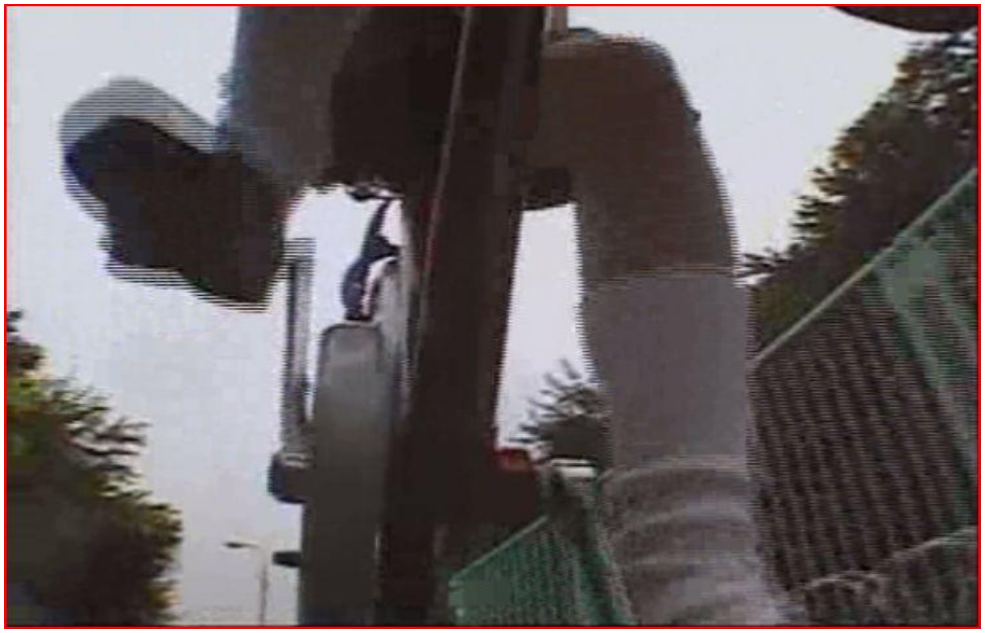
The most notable point is how *Love and Pop* represents the girls as sexual objects in patriarchal society rather than discussing teenage-prostitution, and, equally significantly, how the film ultimately assigns 'blame' for their activities to the girls themselves. Through a complex criticism of distorted gender relations in Japan, Anno highlights objectified girls in two ways—camerawork, and focusing on relationships between the girls and the men who buy them. Anno often uses close-up shots and low angle shots (camerawork) to depict the girls as sexual objects. Generally, filmmakers use close-up shots for focusing on an important thing (Caldwell, 64). However, Anno uses close-up shots in most scenes; that is, the camera seems to stick with the girls. The views are limited and make the audience also seem like they are in a confined space. Further, Anno uses many low angle shots, so the camera follows the girls and shoots their legs and hips. The key point of low angle shots is that the girls' bodies are shot without their awareness: the shots allude to peeps. These shots refer to the male gaze, specifically for men, who want to go on dates with high school girls. The gaze depicts what those men want to look at and/or often look at. As Mulvey insists, the male gaze is for male characters in film and for the audience; the female characters are objectified by both. Thus, Mulvey's perspective can be applied well to *Love and Pop* for revealing the male gaze aspect, which sexually objectifies the girls.

In an interview, Anno said that one of the main effects of these close-up and low angled shots is to provide an erotic gaze (Satsukawa and Anno, 233). Interestingly, Anno adds that the girls are the same as other objects in the film, such as trains, and telephone poles (Satsukawa and Anno, 208-209). He consciously shoots the girls as objects. Further, the camera zooms in on the girls' body parts. When we cannot see a character's whole

body, then we cannot see her actions, and her relations between the setting and other characters; thus, we perceive the character as an object because it is hard for the audience to understand her mind.

For example, Hiromi is riding a bicycle to go to the nearest station. In the scene, Hiromi was filmed using two different shots. The first three frames are shot from the very bottom of the character. It is a very unusual camera position. The camera seems to try to see the sexual parts of her body. The camera view refers to the male gaze, which Mulvey mentions (See Figure 5 and 6). Then, the last scene is shot close to her. So, we cannot see her full body or even her face clearly. (See Figure 7) These scenes imply that Hiromi's feeling is not important, but her body has a meaning as an erotic object. Moreover, Hiromi seems not to be aware of the candid camera, which is set under her, that is, she does not purposely try to show the audience her sexual body parts. As a result, these scenes lead the audience to think that Hiromi is an object. So, the audience pays attention *not* to her mind but to her body.

Figure 5: *Love& Pop* (Scene 1)



Love & Pop (1998)

Figure 6: *Love& Pop* (Scene 2)

Love & Pop (1998)

Figure 7: *Love& Pop* (Scene 3)

Love & Pop (1998)

Another unique way the girls seem to be looked at as objects is through the perspectives of inanimate objects like the topaz ring. The specific scene implies that Hiromi becomes an object like a commodity. When Hiromi finds the ring being put in a glass case, the camera views Hiromi from the ring's perspective (See Figure 8). Then, Hiromi wears it and looks at her hand as the camera switches to Hiromi's perspective (See Figure 9). In other words, the ring and Hiromi look at each other for seemingly objectifying each other.

Her body appears to have the same value as the ring. Hiromi becomes an object to men, the same way the ring is her object of desire. That is, a man as her customer can buy and control her body like she buys and wears the ring. This camerawork succeed to objectify Hiromi by equally showing Hiromi and the ring.

Figure 8: *Love & Pop* (Scene 4)

Love & Pop (1998)

Figure 9: *Love & Pop* (Scene 5)

Love & Pop (1998)

As a result, this camerawork (form)—close-up shots, low angled shots, and reflecting shots—effectively portrays teenage-girls as sexual objects. This form strongly emphasizes the story (teenager prostitution). Further, the film's content does the same.

3. Content of *Love & Pop*

Love and Pop illustrates five subsidized dates. For example, when Hiromi and Chisa are walking on the street, one salary man asks them to have lunch and talk. They accept his offer and have an expensive lunch with him for money (10,000 yen each). When the man talks to the girls, they do not pay attention to him, so he yells at them and gives them a lecture. In short, the man wants the girls to listen his lecture; that is, showing his power.

Another example occurs when Hiromi and Nao are walking in a subway station. A salary man invites them to his apartment for a home cooked meal. Because the girls will get money for visiting his apartment and eating his cooking, they agree to go to his house. The purpose of the date for him is to make the girls eat his cooking and to satisfy himself by playing host to the girls; the situation again puts the male in a position of power. In this instance the situation is drawn up to create an artificial memory for the male. It's almost a mock dinner with guests; instead of friends, he invites the girls. These subsidized dates do not include prostitution; however, Hiromi finally decides to become a prostitute in order to earn enough money to buy the ring.

Hiromi uses the cell phone to contact a man for a subsidized date. The date ends up being the most traumatizing experience in the film for Hiromi. The man strangely brings a puppet on the date, one in which he talks to. Shockingly, Hiromi is not nervous

about the situation, and agrees to go to a love hotel with the man. At the hotel, they talk: mainly Hiromi answers his questions. She finds that his puppet's tail has come off, so she sews it back on. Finally, she goes to take a shower. Suddenly, the man enters the bathroom and attacks Hiromi. He then chastises her about agreeing to prostitute herself. He reveals that his first plan was to rape her without paying any money. However, Hiromi was kind to him, so he could not rape her, but he's angered that such a nice girl would prostitute herself. Even though his critique forces her think about herself, we can see two remarkable points of patriarchal ideas. The first point is that Hiromi is very giving towards him. She sews his favourite puppet, which has been damaged. Her kindness makes him decide not to rape her. This means that Hiromi embodies a power structure: Hiromi is under this man's power. She plays her role to aid and please her man, as obedient women in a patriarchal society do. The man is pleased with his position of power.

The second point is that this man teaches Hiromi that she should not prostitute herself. In fact, he acts violently towards her, threatening and yelling in anger. He is angry because she sells her body easily in order to make money. His point is that she should know that someone loves her very much and would cry if she prostituted herself. In the film, it is only men who lecture girls: none of female characters lead the girls to consider their values. This one-way power structure from men to women clearly capitulates with the values of patriarchy.

Through the film, it is easy to imagine that Hiromi has been hurt by these subsidized dates. The film is critical of the reality of subsidized dating: it seems to teach young Japanese girls not to have subsided dates because they will be hurt while also

showing how men, who want girls, view these women through the male gaze. This suggests that they should recognize these exploitative men and think about themselves deeply. Ultimately, however, the film reserves its strongest criticism for the girls themselves, even going so far as to have a man, a customer of these young women, deliver a sharp and violent lecture to Hiromi.

The story not only illustrates subsidized dates for objectifying the girls, but also it demonstrates that society supports subsidized dates/teenage-prostitution by abiding by a patriarchal system. The patriarchal ideas are (somewhat) unconsciously supported by society, so discussing this social environment helps us understand how girls proceed to become prostitutes: they become sexual objects for men.

Firstly, I focus on Hiromi's family because a family is the smallest and the most influential community for her. The film shows her family at the beginning of the day and at the end of the day. In the morning, her father builds miniature railroads and her mother is busy going to a swimming competition. Also, her older sister has packed her belongings to move out of the house. Each family member is doing what they want. There is no depth to their interaction, even though the family seems to be a nice family. When Hiromi returns home at the end of the day, they do not care about her tiredness. They pay little attention to what she has actually done throughout the day, and do not question her about anything. In addition, Hiromi of course, hides everything related to subsidized dates. The distance between Hiromi and her parents is evident because of the lack of depth in their conversation, and the absence of a loving atmosphere. The audience may be moved because her family is a "normal" family; however, they lack things that they should have: depth, love, and understanding.

Not only a weak parental relationship but also strong consumerism leads Hiromi to become a sexual commodity. For example, when Hiromi finds the ring and is interested in it, a male clerk lets her wear it even though the price is 128,000 yen. A normal high school girl cannot buy this very expensive ring, but the clerk entices her to try it because he cares about selling as much as he can. In a very telling contrast, on the other hand, the clerk at an instrument shop in *Swing Girls* tells Tomoko about a used instrument shop because her own store has only new and expensive instruments. The clerk in *Swing Girls* is brusque, but her attitude shows that she does not think of Tomoko as just a consumer.

In fact, Japanese consumerism is strong, and consumerism is supported by the media. As Morohahsi insists, women's magazines influence Japanese women to become an idealized female: interested in fashion, make up, diet, etc. Further, Fujiwara criticizes the media in Japan because "the media in Japan have brought about materialism in our society. The more one has, the more one wants; materialism creates more greed. It seems that some teen-age girls involved in *enjo-kosai* simply want to have 'average' or 'ideal' high school lives" (Fujiwara, 3). We can see her view in *Love and Pop*. For instance, Hiromi is interested in making her hands beautiful because she is influenced by the ideal image, which the media produces. So, she goes to a nail salon, which Chieko finds from *JJ* (a teenage girls' magazine) and tells Hiromi about, to make her nails pretty. The magazine influences the girls to attain idealized beauty, which is directly connected to consumerism.

Secondly, I examine Kobayashi, who loans a cell phone to the girls, because he actually leads the girls to have subsidized dates through the use of his cell phone. At the end of the film, Hiromi meets Kobayashi in a coffee shop to return the cell phone. Even

though he has encouraged the girls to have subsidized dates, he is depicted as a helper to Hiromi in order to make Hiromi understand the words which her attacker had shouted at her: “you’re here, naked, and you’re killing someone half dead with grief over it.” Hiromi’s attacker says these words while attacking her in the bathroom of a love hotel. Kobayashi interprets the words for Hiromi: “It’s a way of saying. You have value. You mustn’t degrade yourself. Your nakedness… your very existence, has great value, to someone. That alone breaks someone’s heart.”

This lecture is the most important message for Hiromi (and the audience) in the film. Not only the script but also the background music emphasizes its importance. The music suddenly changes to beautiful, relaxing, classical music during their meeting. Kobayashi is shown to be a great person because he teaches Hiromi that she has value. However, their meeting further emphasizes the power structure which the film both presents and accepts.

The meeting follows the pattern shown earlier in the film regarding lectures. Only older men can influence Hiromi, for she seems to accept the lecture. That is, there is a power structure between the clever and sensible man and the innocent and not-so-sensible girl. The man’s position is always above the woman’s. However, I would like to stress that Kobayashi encouraged Hiromi to sell herself by loaning his cell phone to her. This harmful act is masked by his kindness in the end. Therefore, the film illustrates that even characters, who harmfully influence females, can easily be seen in a good light.

As I have shown, paying attention to the people who surround the girls can be more meaningful than paying attention to the girls even though the film seems to point

the audience toward the girls. In fact, the girls are "normal" Japanese teenagers except for having subsidized dates. The problem of teenage prostitution is made and developed by the adults who surround the girls.

In fact, the film acts as a warning for high school girls who have subsidized dates because they are treated as erotic toys by these men. The message of *Love and Pop* succeeds to criticize distorted gender relations by illustrating sexualized and objectified high school girls in collaboration of film's form and content. The film implies that girls should realize how men see and think about them, and the girls will lose their hearts if they keep having subsidized dates. It is a good suggestion for the girls. However, the film never criticizes the men who buy the girls. This ignorance of men, who take advantage of the power of money to use the girls, reflects social reality: the media in Japan do not blame these men but mainly report these girls. Therefore, the film does not provide any pathway to advanced gender relations. In other words, even *Love and Pop*, a film that acts as a harsh warning for teenage girls to avoid prostitution, still maintains patriarchal ideas.

II. Analysis of *Swing Girls*

1. Introduction

In this section, I analyze *Swing Girls,* which clearly shows what I define as a *positive* gender relation, by dissecting the form and content of the film. The film illustrates powerful women mainly in two ways. Firstly, I show how camerawork, as one of the formal elements of the film, shows energetic women by using medium shots rather than using close-ups. Secondly, when analyzing the story, we see how the girls break the stereotypical image of modest Japanese girls. Moreover, the male characters are illustrated as weak, timid, and sensitive—traits usually associated with women in patriarchal, Japanese society.

In this film the girls are given a lot of power to develop the story instead of the male characters. Mulvey's critique does not apply to *Swing Girls:* she insists that female characters are usually controlled by male characters, and female characters are looked at as sexual objects because of the existing male gaze. As *Swing Girls* is in some ways an antithesis of Mulvey's theory, or, as its presentation does not fall within the range of material which Mulvey tries to address, it demonstrates advanced gender relations; specifically, it represents an alternative image of women and therefore goes beyond the limitations of Mulvey's notion of the 'male gaze'.

A summary of the story, as well as an analysis of the camerawork are necessary to further discussion of the film's content. As Noel Carroll (1998) discusses, analyzing the form of the film is vital, and it is an effective way to start investigating the meaning of the film. In analyzing the form of the film, we can see how and why the camera shows the powerful women. All these aspects illustrate that *Swing Girls* provides an advanced

and positive gender relation by encouraging the audience to accept diverse types of women.

Swing Girls depicts a group of high school girls who try to form a jazz band. The setting is rural Yamaguchi prefecture in northern Japan. The female protagonist is Suzuki Tomoko, who is rash and spontaneous. Her ideas develop the storyline, and these ideas always involve others.

One of the key male characters is Nakamura Yuta, who is the only regular brass band member. He has knowledge of music, but he is portrayed as weak and timid; therefore, he can only teach the girls about music, but he doesn't possess the strengths to be the leader of the jazz band. Yuta lacks skills for managing the girls, who act independently. The story never describes Yuta as a strong male. His role is that of a supporting band member.

In contrast, Tomoko is illustrated as the band's ideal leader. Her charisma and social skills lead others to become interested in the band, and many join her in its formation. From a feminist perspective, the relationship between Tomoko and Yuta is one of the highlights of the film, as it demonstrates unconventional gender relations.

The film features five main characters, including Tomoko and Yuta. One of them is Yoshie. She is constantly applying cosmetics, even during class. She also reads mainstream fashion and cosmetic magazines. If we use Morohashi's argument, she displays traits of a media-influenced teenager.

Naomi, another main character, is always thinking about losing weight. For example, she wears a machine to burn calories even though she cannot stop eating snacks. Nami appears to represent stereotypical ways in which the media attempt to influence young Japanese women. As Morohashi suggests, women's magazines feature many diet

advertisements, and these advertisements force women to lose weight. Thus, these girls represent differing variations of the stereotypical teenager, but as the story develops we see individualism and strengths in the girls.

Yet, the film has a quiet and tidy girl, Sekiguchi Kaori, who persistently practices the trombone, and supports the band. Kaori never gives up her autonomy by being led astray by forces outside of the band. She is portrayed as a character who is driven and motivated by her own interests. The contrast between Kaori and the other characters displays how outside forces try to influence, and manipulate the girls.

At the beginning of the story, the girls skip their supplemental math class during summer vacation in order to form an extra band for their baseball team. However, once they get a taste of playing music, they desire to play fulltime. Consequently, they face three main problems: they cannot use the school's instruments, which regular band members use, so they have to buy their own instruments. Secondly, they have to find a practice place. Finally, they have to learn to work as a team –a problem that is remedied over the course of the film.

The girls finally overcome their difficulties and achieve their aim: playing in front of a live audience at the high school music competition. All the audience enjoys and is impressed by their performance. The film illustrates characters comically; however, the purpose of this film is not only comic but also to show the girls' ability to change the stereotypical image of women.

2. Form of *Swing Girls*

Investigating form of the film helps us to understand how the film describes women. I specifically focus on camera works, which is the most important and effective element to represent the positive image of women. There are three main features of this film's camera work: firstly, the distance between the camera and the characters is significant. The space between the characters and the camera allows the filmmaker to illustrate free roaming characters, rather than ones confined by close-ups. Their actions show their emotions by displaying their full bodies, in addition to highlighting their facial expressions. The camera often uses medium shots because "in a medium shot there is a 'natural' distance between two or more subjects and the camera" (Caldwell, 66). Medium shots, therefore, allow the filmmaker to illustrate the relationships between the characters—especially when the focus of the film is largely the relationships between the band members.

Additionally, the certain space between the camera and the characters provides freedom for the individuals on screen and enables the characters flexibly to perform their roles. The audience can take this freedom of space as the girls' freedom. In contrast, as I examined the camera work of *Love and Pop* earlier in this chapter, the camera shots are usually close ups, so the female characters appear confined. This camera technique also hinders character development because bodily gestures cannot be seen, and therefore female characters can't exhibit their full emotion.

Additionally, in *Love and Pop*, the audience can understand only the girls' world: relationships between the girls and between the girl and male who buy the girl. Even

though the girls live in a large, urban area, Tokyo, the audience is not fully exposed to Tokyo's atmosphere. As the audience can only see the girls' world, we can only view Tokyo through the lens of the confined female characters. Tokyo appears very small and enclosed.

In *Swing Girls*, the camera further shows girls by using medium-long shots, which are "achieved with the camera at a distance so that the subject or subjects in the foreground are equally balanced with what is in the background" (Caldwell, 66). Because each setting is related to the girls' actions, medium-long shots are effective for depicting relationships between the characters and settings. In addition, in some scenes, long shots allow the audience to see not only characters' entire bodies but also a large area of the ground where the characters are standing (Caldwell, 67). For instance, when the girls start to understand the rhythm of Jazz, the setting and their actions directly connect. (Figure 10 and 11) In this scene, a long shot is necessary for this connection between the girls and other objects.

Figure 10: *Swing Girls* (Scene 1)

Swing Girls (2004)

Figure 11: *Swing Girls* (Scene 2)

Swing Girls (2004)

Even though there are close up shots, the shots do not illustrate the girls as sexual objects. The close-up shots imply the story behind the story. For example, a close-up shot of Tomoko's face reveals a single piece of rice (See Figure 12). The camera implies that Tomoko ate Yuta's lunch even though she denies it.

Figure 12: *Swing Girls* (Scene 3)

Swing Girls (2004)

Secondly, *Swing Girls* uses a unique style of camerawork – the camera does not show the main acting person, but the camera shows the reaction of people who look at the main acting person. For example, when Naomi stands up after eating a big container of ice cream, the fasten on the side of her skirt undoes, and her skirt falls down. The camera does not show Naomi's body, but instead focuses on a boy riding a bicycle who sees Naomi's comical situation. Consequently, he accidently rolls down a steep hill. Thus, the

audience cannot see her shameful situation. The scene is, of course, comical, but the point is that the camera never shows her as a sexualized object or an object existing only for the amusement of the audience. In this way, the camera helps present and preserve the 'subjectivity' of these characters.

Finally, I examine how the filmmaker illustrates gender equality through camerawork. In the film, as the plot develops, the extra band members, who are the film's main characters, have to give up playing because their position was only temporary. The extra band members were fill-ins for the original band members, who had fallen ill. As a result, the fill-ins left the band completely. However, Tomoko refused give up playing the saxophone and she buys her own instrument. While practicing at the riverbank, she hears the music of a piano and then finds its player: Yuta. In this scene, Tomoko and Yuta play their instruments on each side of the river. The river portrays their equal relationship rather than shows division between Tomoko and Yuta because they face each other and smile at each other. The scene does not imply romance, but a mere interaction between Tomoko and Yuta who have the same desire; playing an instrument and forming a jazz band.

Lighting is also a significant element of film form. Focusing on lighting leads us to understand how the film portrays the energetic girls. In *Swing Girls*, most scenes use a lot of natural light to depict the girls in their natural environment; many scenes are shot outside during the daytime. The settings where the girls develop their band are often outside; that is, most settings are in open space. (See Figure 13 - 15) The film succeeds in illustrating the beautiful countryside by depicting the girls in nature. Nature's beauty seems to strengthen the girls as the open and inspiring shots complement the girls'

aspirations. Because the girls play within nature — the river, the forest, open spaces covered in snow—the characters' personalities and their behavior seem genuine. As nature never objectifies the girls, they look natural and are illustrated as subjects. Thus, in *Swing Girls*, the open spaces with natural light make the girls more free to act and generously show their emotions.

Figure 13: *Swing Girls* (Scene 4)

Swing Girls (2004)

Figure 14: *Swing Girls* (Scene 5)

Swing Girls (2004)

Figure 15: scene 6

Swing Girls (2004)

In contrast, many scenes in *Love and Pop* use artificial light because the girls' subsidized dates take place inside of buildings, and usually in smaller spaces: a private room at a restaurant, a Karaoke shop, and a love hotel. These places are used to hide their meeting from the public eye. The small places (in addition to the illegal transaction) seem to constrain the girls. The common feature of these small rooms is their use of artificial light. Specifically, private rooms at the Karaoke shop and the love hotel are darker inside than usual buildings in order to make a confined but yet romantic atmosphere. The artificial light implies that the girls' thoughts are also constrained into these gloomy, small places; they are not free to day dream or venture out of their grim situation like the girls in *Swing Girls*.

As a result, the film's form, specifically its visuals—the camerawork (the distance between the camera and the characters, the method of shooting female characters, and the presentation of female and male characters, sharing the screen), the setting, and the lighting—exemplifies advanced gender relations in *Swing Girls* because the camera never illustrates the girls as sexual objects or objectifies the girls. The camera further depicts female and male characters as equals. The vital point is that *Swing Girls* portrays free and natural female girls, while the characters in *Love and Pop* are confined. This conclusion is not only reached by analyzing the film's form, but by analyzing its content as well.

3. Content of *Swing Girls*

In *Swing Girls*, analyzing the relationship between the female music teacher, Itami, and a male math teacher, Ozawa, shows gender equality; in fact, we can see a confident female teacher and less confident and shy male teacher. Ms. Itami, is not modest but

candid; that is, she is not a stereotypical Japanese woman. Thus, Ms. Itami is one of the key points demonstrating alternative woman's behavior.

In contrast, the film illustrates the male math teacher, Ozawa who makes bold and serious expressions, but who is retiring. Mr. Ozawa actually cannot play a saxophone at all, although he pretends to be good at playing it. In front of the jazz girls, he tries to be knowledgeable about jazz; in fact, he goes to a music school to practice in a small group. The group comically consists of a little boy, a woman in her twenties, and Mr. Ozawa. These two students are tired of playing with Mr. Ozawa because he cannot progress and he destroys their harmony. The boy looks down upon Mr. Ozawa, and despite the age difference, the boy constantly insults him. The situation breaks the stereotypical image of an alpha male character in Japanese society. In addition to this atypical situation, showing female characters' social status in the film gives the audience the ability to view an alternative female image.

Because the typical Japanese media commonly describes women as fulltime housewives, focusing on the roles of female characters helps us understand the presentation of more dynamic gender relations. The main characters in *Swing Girls* demonstrate a more dynamic female role; however, in this film, even minor characters of a different age bracket exhibit similar strengths. *Swing Girls* illustrates a middle-aged female as a manager of the supermarket. She looks strict but manages all of her employees well. From a feminist perspective, a female showing her high status in the work place with her confidence can encourage a female audience to aim for a managerial position. In fact, as of 2008 only 12.7 percent of managerial positions are given to women

in Japan (Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office, 2009), but the image of a working woman, who is in a higher position, can influence middle-aged women.

Similarly, one of the minor female characters in *Love and Pop* is the owner of a small nail salon. However, one can see the different atmosphere when comparing a supermarket and a nail salon: men hardly venture into the latter. Thus, the owner must be female. In this sense, it is hard to say that showing a female owner implies gender equality. Further, in *Love and Pop*, female characters have either antagonistic traits, or they are minor and dull: high school prostitutes, an unconcerned mother, an apathetic sister and a mute clerk. In marked contrast to this, all minor female characters in *Swing Girls*—mother, teacher, manager, clerk etc—pay attention to the girls and give suggestions to them. These characters are also colourful and dynamic. In this sense, when comparing *Swing Girls* and *Love and Pop*, the first can inspire its female audience to take on new roles, while the latter only presents its female viewers with characters who exhibit the status quo.

Comparing the "motherly" characters in the two films is also intriguing. *Love and Pop* exhibits a minor and almost unknown mother. Comparatively, Tomoko's mother, who appears to be a fulltime housewife, is a very powerful woman and not modest at all. She can actively manage the household and take care of her children. In contrast, Tomoko's father is quieter and less vibrant than his wife. Although we can clearly see gender roles in Tomoko's family because of their traditional lifestyle, the film hardly depicts a patriarchal home; the only time the father exhibits any power, is when he criticizes his children's lazy attitude. In *Love and Pop*, the viewer is not able to compare the roles of Hiromi's mother and father, as both are extremely minor characters. However,

it is important to note that both parents in that film appear disinterested with their daughter's life. It is as if Hiromi does not even have a family life. The family members seem artificial compared to Tomoko's.

The social environments are an important aspect to analyze in both films. The girls in *Love and Pop* are used by males in the patriarchal setting. The minor male characters entice the girls to do whatever the men desire. For instance, if these men pay a lot of money, the girls go on dates with them. The girls are consumed by their social setting. It is a startling contrast with the social setting in *Swing Girls*.

Tomoko and the other band members are actually supported and are given several opportunities to play by their community; that is, the film exhibits a polar opposite social environment to that of *Love and Pop.* Instead of consuming the band girls, the social environment dispels patriarchal and consumptive ideas. For example, the female supermarket manager allows the girls to play in front of the shop, even after the girls create a huge problem in the supermarket: while working there, Tomoko puts wine into the fryer while making dumplings. A small kitchen fire result, what we may euphemistically call a 'cooking incident,' and the sprinkler system is activated. The entire supermarket is flooded. Nonetheless, the manager still gives them the opportunity to play in front of the supermarket.

A similar situation takes place later in *Swing Girls*. The owner of a pachinko shop allows the girls to play in front of the shop, after the girls had been kicked out of a karaoke shop for practicing in one of the rooms. These opportunities essentially support the jazz band members to form the band. Interestingly, both films have Karaoke scenes; however, the two karaoke shops have drastically different implications in each film. In

Swing Girls, the karaoke room is vibrant with the girls' power: practicing and producing loud music. The girls' music emanates out of the room, comically disrupting other clients; that is, the girls show their energy. In contrast, in *Love and Pop*, a room in a Karaoke shop is used to hide the girls and one man from the public eye. The girls pretend to enjoy singing because of money. They keep their true feelings to themselves: the exact opposite of *Swing Girls.* Thus, these similar settings (karaoke rooms) provide the audience very different atmospheres. These different ways of behaving in this same environment speak worlds about the social settings of each group of characters: in one, because the girls are fundamentally secure, supported, and mutually respectful, the karaoke box is a place of joy, energy, and positivity. In the other, because the girls have been commodified, the setting becomes one of an 'exchange', a transaction: something negative.

Because of these useful opportunities for practicing, the jazz girls can be subjects and avoid being objectified by others. In contrast, the social environment to which Hiromi and her friends belong in *Love and Pop*, never suggests to the girls an alternative way of earning money. In fact, the environment rather encourages the girls to sell their time and bodies. Due to the lack of a community, they are not supported by anyone. Hiromi's low self-esteem is obvious, as she tries to find her true value in objects and moments: a ring is what she desires most. She is only influenced by other prostitutes, who also subjugate themselves in their trade. Nobody suggests to the girls an alternative way to achieve happiness. There is no mentor or idealistic figure—male or female—in *Love and Pop*. Thus, this environment encourages its characters to subjugate themselves—to men. Not only do the camerawork and lighting—form—create a restrictive setting in *Love and Pop*,

but the social setting—content—does as well. This analysis is further exposed when comparing the film to *Swing Girls*.

Finally, form and content collaborate to draw a message from *Swing Girls*. As we see in the beginning of this chapter, the form, which is composed by camerawork, settings and lighting, depicts the girls powerfully, energetically and autonomously. The content (story) illustrates all female characters with different features; however, their features are not typical and/or ideal women's features: modest, obedient, quiet, etc. In fact, the main female characters are powerful, impetuous, loud and persistent. Thus, the female characters develop the story instead of the male characters. The film provides female characters with these realistic features, and the female characters show their personalities with vigorous actions. Because of *Swing Girls*' open natural settings (form), the characters are allowed to act freely (content). As a result, the content and the form interact to provide an energetic, successful image of women. To a female Japanese audience that does not normally display such freedom and openness, the form and content interact in this film to show an alternative and desirable lifestyle. In essence, the interaction between form and content provide this female audience with glimpses of young women liberated from the Japanese patriarchal order.

Conclusion

By analyzing gender relations in two contemporary Japanese films, *Love and Pop* (1998) and *Swing Girls* (2004), we argued that the collaboration of the form and content creates the meaning of these films. In order to demonstrate this, we started by examining the relationship between form and content of the artistic nature of arts. The discussion of art's form and content has been evaluated for a long time. Collingwood (1929) illustrated that both of them are vital to create any kinds of artistic nature of arts. Further, Robertson (1967) demonstrated how much poem's form and content are involved with each other and effectively produce aesthetic poems. Specifically, this project was lead by Carroll (1998)'s method. In the first step, we analyzed form more than content because form is composed of many different elements; that is, by dissecting each element we can understand the meaning of the form as a whole. While Carroll argues that analyzing form is the most important, we believe that analyzing content is as important as analyzing form. Therefore, in the second step, we analyzed content by employing two feminist theories, Morohashi (2009) and Mulvey (1975). Finally, in the third step, we considered the interaction of film's form and content because the meanings of the films were revealed when we connected the form and content.

We applied feminist perspectives to *Love and Pop* and *Swing Girls.* When analyzing *Love and Pop*, we exposed the unequal gender relations in Japanese patriarchal society, which are depicted by certain ways of formation. In contrast, when analyzing *Swing Girls,* we showed that equal gender relations are illustrated by a different method in Japanese society. Further, the use of feminist theories revealed how

the film's form and content create and emphasize different images of women. Therefore, we discussed and employed Mulvey's perspective because her research, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) provides the means to find sexualized and objectified female characters. Consequently, we discovered that *Love and Pop* often uses the male gaze in order to depict female characters as sexual objects for male characters and/or the audience. In fact, the director's camerawork perfectly creates the male gaze by using close-up shots and low angle shots. In addition, Morohahsi's perspective helped us to find Japanese patriarchal ideas—e.g., men have power over women—in the films. Because we explored Morohashi's (2009) research that analyzes women's magazines and criticizes TV programs, we recognized that Japanese media strongly influence Japanese people and their lifestyles. His key point is that the media lead people to crave ideal images, perceiving these images as attractive and desirable appearances and lifestyles. These stereotypical images have maintained Japanese patriarchal ideas, which were based on the *ie* system. Visual media continuously provides gender roles. For example, women should be fulltime housewives and men should be salary men. Another example is that stereotypical images of women are slim bodies, small faces with big eyes, and so on. Even children are influenced by the stereotypical image of girls and boys (soft but weak girls, and active and brave boys) through children's books. Therefore, these feminist theories provided us directions to find the patriarchal ideas: the method of depicting certain images by using camerawork, and what stereotypical ideas are.

As I mention, the stereotypical gender roles are relates to Japanese patriarchal ideas, specifically *ie* system. Thus, we traced back to Edo period and observed feminist movements since the Meiji period in order to understand *ie* system.

We evidently see that during the Edo period most Japanese people, the peasants—who were over 80 percent of the population—did not have strict gender roles and male chauvinism was relatively non-existent in organized society. In fact, women's works were vital for their families' livings. Thus, women were regarded as valued in a household and communities. However, the samurai class, which was an upper class, had strict gender roles because samurai elites were restricted by Confucianism. This ideology brought the "respect the male, despise the female" ideal to the samurai class, and eventually the whole of Japanese society became heavily male oriented. This ideology in the Edo period was taken over to the Meiji period because it was much easier to modernize the whole country when individual were placed in roles.

As we saw, the Meiji government forced society to employ the *ie* system, which came from Confucianism. Even though the social structure completely changed from the feudal system to the bureaucratic system, which was powerfully connected to the Emperor system, *"*respected the male, despised the female*"* (*danson jyohi*) has been maintained in Japanese society. In fact, the *ie* system was strengthened under the Emperor system because men and boys were soldiers for protecting the nation and the Emperor.

Further, understanding *ie* system as Japanese patriarchy is vital for this research because, as Ehara mentions, modernism—industrialization and bureaucracy— brought strong male chauvinism, and feminists have been against the idea. Therefore, we

focused on tracing the transition from Edo period to Meiji period in order to understand how Japan became a modern country. As a result, we recognized that there were no outstanding women, who took part in politics for this transition in Japanese history. In short, we definitely see that only men could pursue Japanese politics. Further, women were restricted by the *ie* system in order to be controlled by a male householder and the government. Before marriage, especially girls who are from poor peasant' family, worked at industries in order to flourish the Japanese economy.

At the same time, when Japan became a modern country, highly-educated women could learn women's rights from western countries. For example, Hiratsuka Raicho was against the *ie* system because the system tied women to their families in order to make women support households. Thus, women could not have authority nor freedom. Further, Ichikawa Fusae insists that women should take part in politics: they should have the right to vote as well as men.

In reality, at the end of the Meiji and beginning of the Taisho period, young women, referred to as "modern girls," could show their westernized ideas and fashions; however, during the war time, the government strictly controlled citizens' lives and thoughts. Thus, the government did not allow existing feminists, but it forced women to adhere to male authority more than ever. Further, women's labour and reproduction were highly regarded as the nation concentrated on the war effort. As a result, women were forced to be play the "good wife and wise mother" role. Even after the war, society has continued with this maternal ideal for women.

After Japan was defeated, the idea of gender equality was brought by the U.S. Japanese citizens have had gender equality in the Japanese constitution since 1946. The

crucial point is that Japanese women have not actively pursued equal rights from patriarchal society. Therefore, the big feminist movement, which occurred in the 1960-70s, was historically an important event. Some women challenged gender discrimination during the student conflicts in the 1960s. This feminist movement was the origin of women's study in Japan. However, generally speaking, gender roles remained intact, especially when the society and the economy were stable in the 1980s. In the 1990s, Japanese government started to consider a gender equal society because of the United Nation's focus on women's right in 1995. As a result, the gender equal law has changed to equal work opportunities. However, around 2000 we saw the backlash; Japanese politicians led oppositions to feminist ideals. Even though we see that in the one hand, the society shows advanced gender relations; on the other hand, the society has made moves to stop feminist movements. By tracing Japanese history, we recognized that Japanese feminism movements have occurred recurrently because society still maintains patriarchal ideas. In fact, current Japanese gender relations have both progressed and regressed. Therefore, we see positive gender relations in *Swing Girls* and negative gender relations in *Love and Pop*, even though these films were produced in the same time period.

To conclude, when we employed Mulvey's perspective to Japanese films in order to explore how Japanese women are portrayed in the media, we clearly saw that Japanese women are illustrated as sexual objects and submissive. Further, through Morohashi's perspective, we saw *Love and Pop* obviously illustrates patriarchal ideas because only men give lectures to the girls even though these men use the girls.

However, Japanese films do not only produce unequal gender relations. *Swing Girls* demonstrates alternative and advanced gender relations by depicting powerful girls.

When analyzing Japanese films, we notice that differing form and content produce different gender relations. *Love and Pop* illustrates not only girls as sexual commodities, but also the film warns of chaotic social situations by depicting society's strong consumerism, lack of relationships and lack of hope. In contrast, *Swing Girls* illustrates not only powerful girls but also supportive community. This film gives us hope for a bright future because the girls are full of optimism, and the community always encourages the girls. This ideal community urges for a gender equal society and healthy relationships. We discover that illustrating positive or negative gender relations depends on the methods of depicting female and male characters. The formation deeply connects with the story.

As a result, when we unearth patriarchal ideas in visual media, specifically films, we should pay attention not only the story but also the formation. Further, considering interaction of the form and content make us understand the meaning of film. Because we applied this feminist perspective to only these two films, further research is necessary to apply this argument to other works of art.

As for future study, I will analyze animations by employing the same methods: investigating animations' form and content by using feminist theories. Because Japanese animations are very popular worldwide, it will be worthwhile to analyze female characters in animations by examining the form and content. We will discover what kinds of images of women are universally accepted. Further, we will understand ideal gender relations/power structures in animation.

Beyond my own work, I hope that other scholars will examine other aspects of the relationship between form, content and gender in Japanese media. The feminist perspective concerning form and content that is employed in this thesis can be useful for other scholars who further examine Japanese media. This thesis only dealt with two films, with limited viewership; however, employing these same methods toward Japanese TV dramas and commercials in particular could prove to be intriguing. Dissecting form and content in all types of Japanese media should reveal profound implications of gender relations. Analyzing the media is a method of identifying society's current state concerning matters. We should be able to see if society has moved towards more equality or less. Further research may also reveal Japan's ideal gender relations—relations that provide all individuals with civil liberties, and autonomy; thus, the elimination of patriarchal ideas. Perhaps the analysis of these films provides a glimpse into what this liberated society may look like, one in which a community supports its young girls' ambition, and one in which teenage girls aren't valued only as sexual commodities.

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