

Gender Rituals and Ritualized Gender: Men, Women, and Identity in Contemporary Japan

Chair: Cindi L. SturtzSreetharan

That actors *do* gender is not surprising - and the performative aspects of gender have been well documented. We know that many accoutrements – ritual and otherwise - are donned when performing gender. The set of stereotypical linguistic rituals associated with Japanese women's language are, for example, well known; how women employ these various rituals for specific, discursive ends is, however, less clear. And, both women and men call upon gendered language forms for goals far beyond crafting gender. This panel investigates the use of stereotypically gendered language and gendered language rituals to create and/or subvert normative gender or to enact it in culturally ritualized contexts for specific gender effects. Each paper in this panel addresses the question of what kinds of gendered linguistic rituals result in a ritualized gendered body and to what contextualized purpose, from the work of the workplace performance to the gendered work of making and consuming food.

Elevator Girls: Ritualized Performances and Identity Disparities

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The regularity and ritualized nature of service work performed by uniform-wearing Elevator Girl make her an appealing object of the popular imagination. Her professional role provokes questions about what she is really like behind the scripted veneer. This paper will survey how popular culture plays with the contrast between the Elevator Girl's unvarying public presentation and her private life or true self. The persona of the Elevator Girl allows us to track the way women in this occupation have been viewed not only as an exemplary type of female service worker, but also as an example of the disparity between the crafted image of a trained employee and her private life. When young women from diverse backgrounds move into the Elevator Girl slot, they are trained in uniform ways of speaking and performing the role, highlighting awareness of the gap between their "authentic" selves and the new occupational expectations.

Ritualized Language in the Cinema: Gender, Class and Play in Benshi Scripts

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Silent cinema was never actually silent. At the dawn of cinema, all films were accompanied by lecturers that stood beside the screen narrated the films in various styles. These narrators were called *benshi*, some of whom were powerful enough to re-edit films and supply narratives that departed from the original filmic texts. Their narrative expositions helped segue from scene to scene and, most fascinating of all, they read the intertitles and mimic the characters—all characters, from children to women to men to senior citizens. This paper looks into the *benshi*'s command of language and performance and explores how ritualized language is used for characters of different genders, classes, and ages. Using old recordings and current performances,

this will be the first close study of actual *benshi* practice with all its linguistic and performative force.

Where are the Passionate Kisses?: Japanese Gendered Rituals of Falling in Love in Ren'ai Dorama 'Romance Dramas'

Janet S. Shibamoto-Smith

How do young Japanese women and men learn to love? Japanese media resound with explicit messages, from official governmental messages, to the new *konkatsu* 'marriage activities' schools, to lifestyle magazines. All are directed at getting young women and men together, into marriage, and on to producing children. But these are not the only agencies concerned to instruct youth on romance. Implicit messages about how women and men "should" go about getting together also circulate through televisual media. This paper reports an analysis of the messages offered in *ren'ai dorama* with respect to the physical rituals and the verbal expressions of love, from gaze, touch, and kisses to the *kokuhaku* 'love confession,' with particular focus on how these activities are gendered and, thus, send additional messages about appropriately gendered behavior in this intimate sphere. Data are drawn from a complete corpus of dramas aired in the Fall season, 2004.

Kyara-ben: Ritual Homage to Soft, Cuddly Power

Debra J. Occhi

A good woman makes her child a good *obento* (packed lunch). Ten years ago, Anne Allison described *obento* as an 'ideological state apparatus,' training mothers of preschoolers, and communicatively, through its consumption, training their children as model citizens. A good *obento* contains a variety of foods, typically reshaped to resemble natural objects (e.g., a wiener resembling an octopus). However, the permeation of popular aesthetics by cute anthropomorphized characters (*kyara*) nowadays displaces the re-creation of natural objects in *obento* in favor of character-shaped foods. Such anthropomorphism of non-human animals and objects is a religiously motivated Japanese practice of great antiquity and ongoing popularity. Contemporary mothers of small children, having been reared on Hello Kitty and her ilk, are now no longer simply the targets of character merchandising, but the perpetuators. *Kyara-ben* thus reproduce established communicative, gendered rituals of good motherhood while tying them to the contemporary rituals of soft power.

Eating Honorifics: Casual Conversations, Linguistic Rituals, and Kansai Women

Cindi L. SturtzSreetharan

Robust verbal morphology in Japanese is taken for granted; even native speakers take classes to learn how to use honorific forms appropriately. Honorific language is considered an integral part of a 'good' Japanese woman's linguistic repertoire. In *tatema* (public) settings honorific language is deployed for many reasons, including prescriptive ones like raising up the interlocutor or lowering the speaker. In *honne* (private/intimate) settings, the use of honorifics

becomes less straightforward. This paper examines the use of highly ritualized honorific language use by Kansai women in casual (peer) conversations. Specific focus is given to the use of such language when food is ordered, served, offered, and/or consumed. The data are drawn from a corpus of conversations collected in the Kansai region over the span of 14 months from 2006 – 2007.