

Abstracts

Geisha, Pop Star, Princess: Japan Miscast?

Jan Bardsley, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Who can represent Japan? Controversy arose in China and Japan when Chinese actress Zhang Ziyi took the lead role in *Memoirs of a Geisha* in 2005. In the same year, heated debate raged over the internet when American pop star Gwen Stefani dipped into Japanese youth fashion to create her own version of “Harajuku Girls.” Even Crown Princess Masako, a bona fide Japanese royal, has ruffled feathers over her representation of Japan. Each case—the geisha, pop star, and princess—point to questions of authenticity and appropriation, revealing an uneasy politics of race and gender. Ultimately, these debates push us to ask about the boundaries of difference and whether or not they may be crossed in the imaginative worlds of film, music video, and royal pageantry.

No Womanly Women?: Blurring Gender Boundaries in Contemporary Japan

Yoichi Shimemura, Musashino University, Tokyo

Born and raised under the ideology of gender equality, today’s younger generation in Japan appear to be paying little attention to gender stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. With the expansion of the job market for women and influenced by the women’s liberation movement in the United States, young women have become more and more career-oriented and less and less family-oriented. The first age at marriage for women has risen from 24.4 in 1960 to 28.3 in 2007, and the percentage of unmarried women has drastically increased, from 24.0 in 1980 to 54.0 in 2000 among the 25-29 age group, and from 9.1 to 26.6 among the 30-34 year old group

As far as the younger generations are concerned, traditional boundaries which used to be clearly demarcated based on sex are now in the process of blurring or disappearing. Young women increasingly tend to penetrate into traditional men’s domains and young men increasingly into women’s domains, thus women’s and men’s spheres are now merging and overlapping, with various social or cultural consequences.

Japanese language, for example, is generally a gender differentiated language but it is now becoming more and more gender-neutral among the young. Masculinity and femininity of speech have been diminishing and there is clear movement toward gender-free speech.

Marriage of Cultures: An Online, Role-Playing Simulation for Japanese Anthropology

Laura Spielvogel, Department of Anthropology, Western Michigan University

In this presentation, I will discuss and demonstrate a web-based role-playing simulation created around the narrative framework of a cross-cultural wedding between an American man and a Japanese woman. This simulation helps students experience learning as a goal-oriented process involving experimentation, practice, play, and problem solving. Marriage of Cultures requires that each student play a character in a 3-4 week, open-ended narrative that requires collaboration to achieve a particular goal or resolve a cross-cultural dilemma. The learning process is accelerated and enhanced in web-based role-play simulations when students are required both to successfully role-play characters whose profiles reflect the knowledge and expertise taught in the course, and when students collaboratively apply theories and concepts learned in the classroom to real-life problems and processes. It is my hope that through using this simulation, students of anthropology, women's studies, Asian studies, sociology, and other disciplines can better experience how culture shapes everyday human behavior by playing a character in a dynamic, intellectually rich learning environment that unfolds through synchronous and asynchronous chat and discussion.

Japanese Women's Language and Politeness: A Hidden Hegemony

Mayumi Usami, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

In this talk, I will first analyze and explain several Japanese linguistic forms used differently by men and women from linguistic point of view. And then, I will discuss how gender ideology has been realized in women's language in Japanese. Based on these observations and analyses, I will discuss that the true identity of the so-called "women's language" in Japanese is actually not a women's language but is no more than "the aggregate of Japanese language from which the use of assertive and low-level politeness expressions were prohibited." In other words, there had been no women's language which had an independent rule as has been believed. The reason why women's language has been claimed to exist, and be maintained is that it is one of the most effective and convenient devices to maintain a hidden hegemony. The phenomenon of the use of so-called men's language by young women, however, can be considered as unconscious movement of women's gaining of the right to speak unrestricted "basic Japanese". It is necessary to understand, therefore, that the use of language by modern young women is tearing down "restrictions of women's language" as they want to "express themselves, express their emotions in a straightforward manner." The verbal behavior of these women whose post-war education taught the "equality of men and women" shows that there is no "validity" and "inevitability" in the pragmatic rules that only women have to use linguistic forms that are "more polite" and "avoid assertiveness."

Why So Different?: Women and Men Expressed in Japanese Discourse

Mizue Sasaki, Musashino University, Tokyo

I will present my examinations of gendered expressions which are included in Japanese novels, magazines, journals, newspapers, commercial advertisements, books, classics and other materials, as well as in everyday language by both men and women. In the past, studies of language and gender have, for the most part, only looked at the topic from the point of view of discrimination against women. In this study I intend to show the importance of analyzing forms regarding both women and men. The following are my suggested categories of gendered expressions:

- ① Expressions which differ in meaning depending on whether they refer to men or women.
- ② Women and children and their expected personality traits.
- ③ Men and their expected personality traits.
- ④ Expressions peculiar to a patriarchal society and the vestiges of the 'ie' system².
- ⑤ The division of labor by sex and its terminology.
- ⑥ The sexual division of roles and the implications of this division for the employment of women.
- ⑦ Naming and forms of address for women and men
- ⑧ Expressions used by men to evaluate women on physical attributes.
- ⑨ Terms used to imply a masculine connotation when attached to certain words, e.g. ~ kan.
- ⑩ The figurative use of male or female images when referring to animals.
- ⑪ Expressions which have arisen from cultural differences.
- ⑫ Expressions which show changes in women's status and roles.
- ⑬ Words which have become obsolete as a result of changes in the way society views men and women.

Until now, research tended to be conducted from a feminist standpoint and concentrated on the search for terms indicating discrimination against women. As seen in the classifications above, the gendered terms are still clearly in use today. Therefore gendered expressions should be examined from wider perspectives of cultural and historical studies.

Bite Your Tongue!: Language, Power, and the Negation of Female Desire.

Adrienne Redding, Department of English, Western Michigan University

The license to openly and effectively communicate desire has long been the prerogative of men. Society valorizes male expressions of desire, whether through discourse or through action, and stigmatizes female attempts to usurp this patriarchal privilege, allowing agency only in the selection of alternative forms of non-existence. Cultural reinforcement of these gendered roles, sometimes strident and sometimes subtle, appearing across the literary timeline of western civilization as early as ancient Greece and Rome, extends even to contemporary society whose supposedly liberated citizenry might not immediately recognize or openly acknowledge such a paradigm. Especially evident in the arena of romantic or sexual relations, whether investigating the ancient Greek medical theories of Galen and Plutarch, the classical Roman poetry of Virgil, Juan Luis Vives' Renaissance conduct manuals, or modern day pop-psychology best sellers such as Greg Behrendt and Liz Trucillo's *He's Just Not That Into You*, male narratives rigorously seek to predominate, strive to subjugate and objectify women, paralyze the female enactment of desire and ultimately demand the

sacrifice of that most powerful facilitator of agency, the voice.

Reversing Dictatorship: Power of Transgender/Transnational Visuality for Latin American Women

Mayra Bonet, Spanish, University of Illinois at Springfield

Literature, film, and art unfold the intricate correlation between political regimes and gender roles in Latin America. Since the end of the XIX century, these artistic expressions display the process in which notions of femininity-masculinity and patriarchy-matriarchy are deconstructed to enact multiple forms of authoritarianism. Caciques, caudillos, and dictators misconstrue their public image, redefine social spaces, and trigger transitory gender reversals. In this political context, ceremonies of violence, sacred/profane practices surrounding the leaders and his followers, and secretive performances reached the category of political rituals.

A gradual metamorphosis of this ritualistic society reveals two dimensions, on one hand, women become visible in the society and, on the other hand, the regime acquires an in crescendo visibility. By the same token, an (in)visible force creates a reign of terror, control, and power. Supernatural entities dominate this society generating a new identity for the dissident voices that do not conform to the decrees of the regime.

In this presentation, I explore how these changes create a dialectic process between the visibility and invisibility of women of certain social classes and the rulers. The works of the Argentinean filmmaker Maria Luisa Bemberg, the Mexican and Brazilian soldaderas, the literary works of Julia Alvarez and Gabriel García Márquez, and the tapestry tradition of the Chilean arpilleras, encompass distinctive examples of the power of transgender and transnational visibility of Latin American and Caribbean women.