

DECENT HOUSEWIVES AND SENSUAL WHITE WOMEN — REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN IN POSTWAR JAPANESE MAGAZINES

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This paper examines how Japanese women have been portrayed in photographs and pictures in Japanese women's magazines during the 52 years following the Second World War. I use iconographic material because it is the most suitable method to study gender roles which subtly combine a variety of elements, and because the cultural integration of postwar popular society would have been impossible without visual media. I chose *Shufu no Tomo*, *Josei Jishin*, and *non-no* as representative magazines of the periods 1945-60, 1960-75 and 1975-present, respectively. I discovered two keys to understanding the development of visual images of women in postwar Japan. The first one is the formation and transformation of the "postwar system of gender roles," where the standardization of the role as housewife was an important factor. The second one is the dichotomy between sensual white women versus healthy Japanese women. The representation of women was not solely determined by the actual gender relationship but also by various social factors including national identity and economic power balance.

Key words: WOMAN, GENDER, VISUAL IMAGE, REPRESENTATION, MAGAZINE, POPULAR CULTURE, POSTWAR SYSTEM, NATIONAL IDENTITY.

Introduction

"Women are not born as women, but become women by acting out the role of woman" — Beauvoir's famous passage can be thus reworded from the position of sociology that society is a drama woven by individuals performing roles. Gender roles are based neither on biological differences nor abstract concepts. Gender roles, as with other roles, consist of the repeated acting out of customary behavior. Femininity is a complex combination of a variety of elements such as motherliness, wifeliness, daughterliness, modesty, sensuality, shyness, and lively activeness, and yet this subtle combination achieves concrete form through slight gestures, word usage, facial expressions, clothing and make-up.

In this paper I examine how women's roles have been portrayed in photographs and pictures from women's magazines during the 52 years following the Second World War. I use iconographic material because it is the most suitable method for studying gestures, facial expressions, clothing and make-up. To begin with, the cultural integration of postwar popular society would have been impossible without the iconography within the media of photographs and television.

Of course the iconography of the media is not a record of the actual daily behavior for a particular period. The image of women in women's magazines is a standardized model and an expression of how people want femininity to be or how they believe it to be. However, this image of femininity is not different from "reality". The women in magazines appear naturally feminine

to us so that real women in everyday life sometimes seem strange. Our “sense of reality” depends on this standardization.

Gender Advertisement by ethnomethodological sociologist Erving Goffman has set an important precedent for analyzing the standard or rule of gender within the media (Goffman, 1979). Goffman discovered that the treatment of women and men in the commercial photography found in newspapers and magazines can be divided into certain patterns.

So, how about Japan? Ueno Chizuko’s *Investigation of Sexy Gals*, a direct application of Goffman’s method, found almost the same rules in Japanese advertisement (Ueno, 1982). Inoue Teruko et. al’s *Deciphering Women’s Magazines*, which undertakes a cross-sectional comparison of women’s magazines in Mexico, America and Japan, noted a contrast in the idealisation of “cute girls” in Japan versus “sexy women” in America, as well as the standardization of white women’s beauty and a cultural imperialism shared by all three countries (Inoue, 1989). How do these standards change historically? Is the contrast found in the cross-sectional comparison fixed or changing? This paper begins with these questions.

The criteria for choosing the samples were, number one, magazines representative of the period possessing the standardization of rules accepted by the public. Number two, magazines that sold many copies and remained in circulation for a long period. In other words, magazines that were widely accepted by the public. According to these criteria, I chose *Shufu no Tomo* (Housewife’s Friend) from the period directly after the Second World War to 1960, *Josei Jishin* (Ladies’ Own) from 1960 to mid-1970, and *non-no*¹ from the 1970s to 1990 as my main sources. However, I also used supplementary material when necessary. My sampling method was to examine the May issues in every fifth year, avoiding the summer and winter issues when there were too many events. I did not stick to this rule for critical periods.

1. From Postwar Daughters to Decent Housewives: *Shufu no Tomo*, 1945-1965

After the Defeat in the War

The woman’s magazine that best represents the pre-economic growth period in Japan is *Shufu no Tomo* (published by Shufu no Tomo-sha). According to a 1952 Asahi Newspaper survey, 490 out of 6,656 households responded that they purchased *Shufu no Tomo*, making it the third most popular magazine following *Bungei Shunju* and *Heibon*. In addition, *Fujin Kurabu* (Ladies’ Club) ranked fifth, *Shufu to Seikatsu* (Housewife and Life), sixth, and *Fujin Seikatsu* (Ladies’ Life), seventh, making this the golden age of women’s magazines.² Although the word *shufu* (housewife) was used in the title of the magazine, this use does not mean that readers were limited to housewives. Rather, the norm was for one magazine to be read per home or to be passed around the neighborhood, so the actual readership included a large number of young, unmarried women as well as men.

The 1945 Sept/Oct issue of *Shufu no Tomo*, published directly after Japan lost the war, was a booklet of thin, poor-quality paper, with a two-tone picture of flowers on its cover. Interest focused upon the anxiety over receiving the US occupation forces. A cartoon depicted an old woman running away, crying “American soldiers have come to carry us Japanese women off!”. Japanese hadn’t been able to completely distance themselves from the war. This year was still far too early for the luxuries of fashion and the use of cosmetics. There was only one section on “how to make *monpe*³ trousers.” There were only two advertisements in this issue.

Postwar Daughters and Adoration of Western Standards of Beauty

Five years later, the cover of the May 1950 issue shows an image of a woman with round face, very much like an ordinary Japanese, with permed hair, and she is glancing obliquely upward, laughing with her teeth exposed (Figure 1, *Shufu no Tomo*, May 1950). One can perceive how much the mood of the time had changed. The overflowing feeling of release suggested by the magazine cover also appears in articles such as “The Beauty of Postwar Daughters.” The free and unrestrained poses, which won’t be seen again until 1973, of young women in skirts with their legs stretched out or crossed, sitting on the slope of a mountain, can be found in the picture accompanied by the lyrics to the song “*Aoi Sanmyaku*” (Blue Mountain Range), the title song for a famous film. Interest in cosmetics and fashion has also revived. Cosmetic advertisements centering on foundation make-up products included more than fifteen different varieties.



Figure 1

Another contrast from the previous five years can be seen in the explicit worship of the Western standard of beauty. Even the magazine cover says: “Announcing the Latest Fashions from France and America”. In cosmetic advertisements, too, phrases such as “In America using foundation cream and pancake powder is common cosmetic sense” (Picasso Pancake), or “Western women use astringent before applying make-up” (Meishoku Astringent) are conspicuous. However, except for the column introducing foreign films, there were very few pictures or illustrations of white women. Only 4 of the pictures and illustrations taking up a half a page or more (in which the race of the model can be determined) are Caucasian women, whereas 24 are of Japanese women.

In 1950 Ito Kinuko, representing Japan, placed third in the Miss Universe Contest making well-proportioned women fashionable. Prior to that event, female beauty in Japan was centered more on the face than on the proportions of the entire body. Out of 30 pictures in the 1950 May issue, 8 are full-length, 20 are half-length, and 2 are head shots.

Birth of the Housewife in Visual Imagery

Let’s look five years later at the 1955 May issue. While the woman’s face on the cover is boyish, her hair is impeccably permed, both her lipstick and eyebrow pencil are precisely drawn, and she is looking directly at the camera, smiling faintly (Figure 2, *Shufu no Tomo*, May 1955). Value seems to be attached to a restrained expression and an artificial pose with the hand at the chin. The uninhibited freedom of five years earlier is no longer apparent. The postwar daughters have settled down, giving us the feeling that they are now decent, young wives.

Fashion in this period took on a distinctly fixed form, exemplified by the following: (Figure 3, *Shufu no Tomo*, May 1955)⁴: choker and earrings, red lipstick, thinly plucked eyebrows, and set hair. Body language such as



Figure 2



Figure 3

gestures and restrained smiling creates an image of grace and self-control. This pattern, also modelled on Hollywood fashions, took root in Japan as the basic way for women to look when they went out. Thereafter, young women's fashion continues to change, but wives continue to follow this same pattern for twenty years. 1955 was the year of the "birth of the housewife" in visual imagery, occurring precisely on the eve of both the popularization of the housewife and a high rate of economic growth.

Sensual White Women versus Healthy Japanese Women



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

In 1960 we notice a change in the atmosphere of the photographs on the magazines' covers. There is movement in both facial expression and gestures, and the eyes and lips have become slightly coquetish. For example, the advertisement for cosmetics for the US firm Max Factor, where a lipstick held at a woman's half-parted lips can be seen as a metaphor for a woman who will accept a man's sexual organ anytime (Figure 4, advertisement for Max Factor, *Shufu no Tomo*, April 1960). Economic dominance by the US was accompanied by a cultural exportation of the Western image of a "sexy woman". This may be considered an example of cultural colonization.

Looking at film magazines from the end of the war to the beginning of the 1960s, Caucasian actresses look sensual, with half-parted lips and eyes unfocused (Figure 5, *Screen*, September 1952, published by Kindai Eiga-sha), as opposed to Japanese actresses who invariably are smiling brightly, flashing their teeth (Figure 6, *Kindai Eiga*, December 1945, published by Kindai Eiga-sha)⁵. Kashiwagi Hiroshi, a specialist in the history of design, analyzed the pictures of beautiful women from the covers of *Shukan Asahi* (Asahi Weekly) of 1939 and 1940, pointing out a dichotomy of female beauty — the "sensual beauty of white (looking) women" and the "healthy beauty of Japanese women" (Kashiwagi, 1987, pp.14-17).⁶ However, this dichotomy continues into postwar times, too, and, as can be seen subsequently, also exerted an influence on the formation of Japanese women's sexuality.

With the May issue of 1965, we now find a photograph on the cover showing Yamamoto Fujiko with a composed smile on her lips. Extremely wifely, the picture looks as though we have gone back ten years. At this point, as other types of women's magazines became established, as I will touch upon later, we can see that *Shufu no Tomo*, keeping in line with its name, has narrowed its target down to housewives. This is not to say that sexual concerns have been completely swept away. Even in this issue a separate insert special was compiled on "Contraception for Newlyweds", which is contrary to the visual image of decent wifeliness. After this, too, *Shufu no Tomo* continued to increase its articles on sex.

2. The Sexual Revolution and Japanese Women Imitating White Women: *Josei Jishin*, 1958-75

The Golden Age of the Weekly Magazine

The first issue of *Josei Jishin* (published by Kobun-sha) in 1958 became a symbol for the new era of women's magazines. It aimed at a completely new type of magazine, targeting the growing population of young and single working women, concentrated in the cities, who were known then by the term *BG* (business girl). *Shukan Josei* (Women's Weekly) (1957) and *Josei Seven* (Woman Seven) (1963) were also founded around that time, and the golden age of women's weekly magazines had arrived, falling exactly into step with Japan's high rate of economic growth. During the same period, men's weekly magazines for the urban male salaried worker were established one after another. These included such magazines as *Heibon Punch* (1964) and *Playboy* (1966) which were aimed at young readers. The sexuality of women during the high economic growth period was shaped on the stage of weekly magazines in the form of women's internalization of the male gaze of desire.

Western Values Penetrating into Everyday Life

The first issue of *Josei Jishin* came out on December 2, 1958, and a glance at its cover quickly reveals that it is quite different from *Shufu no Tomo*. The full-length figure of a brown haired white woman is used on the cover. At the time of its founding, *Josei Jishin* negotiated a special contract with the American magazine *Seventeen* and frequently used the same photographs as the American publication. This issue's photograph, too, is of Doris Day in Caribbean pants.

The racial make-up of women appearing in photographs over half a page in size, in the May 2nd, 1960 issue, included 18 Japanese and 6 white women. However, the color photographs depict mostly white women, and the front and back cover photographs (not included in the previous figure), are both of white women, so the impression left by white women is stronger than that indicated by the numerical ratio.

On the cover is a picture of three young women. Their hair, respectively blond, reddish brown and dark brown, is set and curled and they are smiling charmingly (Figure 7, *Josei Jishin*, May 11, 1960). The faint coquetry of the facial expressions is concealed behind standardized gestures and clothing. This picture well reflects the character of *Seventeen* which teaches American daughters of respectable families "how to attract boys". While the article "Foreign Cosmetics Are Bad For Your Charm" warns that the "screen fashion" of short skirts, eye shadow and liner, and dyed red hair do not flatter Japanese women's strong and weak points, conversely, it shows how prevalent the imitation of this sort of white culture has become. The pictures of women in this May 2, 1960 issue include 14 full-length, 4 upper body only, and 6 face only shots, with full-length shots becoming mainstream. The focus of female beauty was moving from the face to the whole body, following the shift from kimono to Western clothes. The kimonos seen in *Shufu no Tomo* in the fifties have disappeared, with Western clothes becoming the norm. In this issue, as well, is a plan for buying



Figure 7

a suit for commuting to work on the budget of new working women called “the Shopping Race”. For the young working women Western clothes have already ceased to be something one made, now becoming something one bought. People who wanted to choose pink or red were recommended by consultants to choose white or grey, promoting the standardization of *BG* fashion.

The Two Faces of the Sexual Revolution

The May 17, 1965 issue, which started using the term *OL* (office lady) instead of *BG*, included the article “Investigating the World’s ‘Virginity Rate’!” reporting on the Sexual Revolution in the West, and published a semi-nude photo of seventeen-year-old male idol Ohta Hiroyuki, gradually bringing interest in sex to the surface, although not to the point of changing women’s visual images.

However, in 1968 the impression of the image of women in the visual pages undergoes a complete change. At precisely that time, student uprisings, beginning with the May Revolution of the University of Paris, swept across the developed nations, and the youth culture caused great fluctuations world-wide.

The cover of the April 29/May 6 combined issue shows a young white model with long blond hair, her right hand is touching her cheek, and she is biting lightly the ringfinger, which is inserted into her half-open mouth. (Figure 8, *Josei Jishin*, April 29/May 6, 1968). Smiling, her pose is plainly an invitation to men. As far as my inquiry goes, this is the first issue in which a Japanese woman appears in a bathing suit (in a bikini, no less), and a nude scene of lesbians embracing is also included. Before this time, at the very least sex was veiled in discretion, but now it has been brought to the forefront. The fashion pages also show many of these sexy poses of half-opened mouths, and follow with angles which allow the viewer to look at well revealed cleavage or up at women wearing miniskirts, their legs spread (Figure 9, *Josei Jishin*, May 20, 1968).

In the May 20 issue we find an article entitled “Beautiful Manner Violations Forgiven Because It’s Nighttime”, which introduces sexy body language in a textbook style (Figure 10, *Josei Jishin*, May 20, 1968) with phrases like “languid expressions”, “coiled hair”, “arms in a tight self-embrace” and “languorous movements”. Gestures which became fashionable in Hollywood almost twenty years ago, and which became standard for white women when they express eroticism to the utmost, had finally



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10

reached Japanese women, too. The article's commentary teaches women how to behave like thoroughly passive sex objects, and that "reflection, asking questions, and meddling" are all taboo. However, with its warning "stop before going too far", the article encourages using to the utmost one's sex appeal to attract men, but refrains from encouraging sexual behavior beyond that.

The advertisement for a dress maker Tokyo Style skillfully exposes to the naked eye the gap between the ostensible boldness of the Sexual Revolution and actual conservativeness (Figure

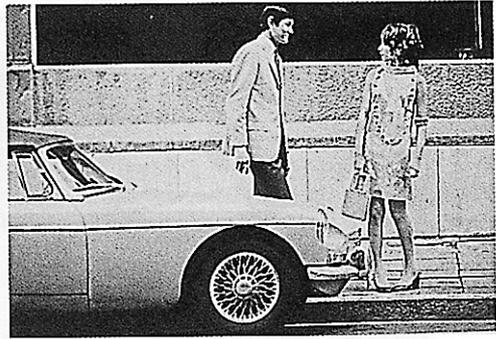


Figure 11

11, advertisement for Tokyo Style, *Josei Jishin*, April 29/May 6, 1968). Here, a young woman whose outfit, a brightly colored short dress of floral pattern and a long necklace, is the height of fashion, goes rigid, and severely pigeon-toed when a man calls out to her. Other advertisements, too, invariably combine highly revealing clothing with, conversely, reserved body expression. As sexual objects, women now choose to expose themselves to the male gaze, although in the end it is the man who is the one to take action. For unmarried women of that time, too, there was also the idea that sexual intercourse was a means of securing a marriage partner.⁷ With the slogan "From women who are loved to women who love" the core of the Japanese women's liberation movement was seemingly pressing for the establishment of female sexual autonomy, while I, in fact, think this could have been a revolt against the ambivalence of the Sexual Revolution which pushed ahead the sexual objectification of women, leaving women feeling all the more trapped.

In 1970 the same trend basically continues. In the April 25 issue, while the article "How to Expose Skin" commends miniskirts and see-through clothing with the navel exposed, the gestures of Japanese models remain rather tame.

Japanese Women Imitating White Women

The serial appearance of "Contemporary Techniques for Make Overs", starting with the September 5, 1970 issue, indicates well the make-up technique of the time which emphasizes the double eyelid using black eyeliner, making the eyes stand out with false eyelashes, two layers above, one below, and the use of white foundation before drawing in the eyebrows vividly (Figure 12, *Josei Jishin*, September 5, 1970). The contrast between "before" (left) and "after" (right) shows the dramatic effect of the make-up. It is evident that the point of this make-up technique was to imitate white women with the then popular chestnut brown dyed hair. Figure 13 shows the process of a Japanese woman changing into a gorgeous white woman with three levels of make-up (Figure 13, advertisement for Tsumura, *Josei Jishin*, April 29/May 6, 1968). Considering the dichotomy between the "sensual white woman" and the "healthy Japanese woman" which we saw before, it is probably no coincidence that the artificial caucasianization of Japanese women occurred simultaneously with the advancement of the Sexual Revolution. Japanese women had to camouflage themselves as white to become sexy.

The spread of the image of women as sexual objects cannot be discussed without considering the influence of men's weekly magazines, whose selling point is nude pictures and pin-ups of



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15

women. With these as well, nudes of white women were used first, making way for nudes of Japanese women which came much later. Thus the sexual objectification of women progressed in the wake of the dichotomy between Japanese and white women. Moreover, unrealistic images for the period showing Japanese men walking arm in arm with white women in a business district (Figure 14, *Playboy*, November 15, 1966, published by Shuei-sha) or riding together in a sports car on a date frequently appeared in magazines aimed at young people such as *Heibon Punch* or *Playboy*. In another picture, Japanese men wearing only swimming trunks are standing as if dominating white women at the same time as being exposed to their gaze (Figure 15, *Playboy*, May 21, 1968). This picture reveals Japanese men's twisted desire for power and sexuality in a funny and ugly form. Japanese men seemed to be trying to overcome their inferiority complex toward white men after the defeat in the war, not by becoming one but by possessing a white woman. They were also deeply caught up in the notion that the truly sexual woman was a white woman. In this sense, Japanese women's camouflaging themselves as white women was also a response to male fantasies.

Women's Liberation and New Trends

From around 1973 new forms of body expression are frequently seen. In the May 5 issue, there is a fashion special entitled "No Bra-ism Banzai!" (Figure 16, *Josei Jishin*, May 5, 1973). Poses

of women in low-cut dresses, or with aprons worn against the skin so that the swelling of the breasts, and at times the nipples, can be seen are, in part, the consequence of the arrival of revealing fashions which provide pleasure for men. However, because the behavior of women is portrayed as playful, like that of mischievous youths, a feeling of freedom is also conveyed. As can also be understood from the wording “no bra-ism”, this special issue seems to be based



Figure 16



Figure 17

on the model of the women’s liberation movement which just the previous year exhibited its greatest rise as a movement in Japan. Yet it could be said that this picture is the clever intertwining of the two aspects of the mood of this period, one being the liberated attitude of women acquiring autonomy which included sexual behavior, the other being the trend whereby women are, more than anything, sexual objects.

The advertisement for sanitary napkins “Nina” is a more direct expression of the atmosphere created by the women’s liberation movement. A woman wearing a maxi dress, which was a new fashion after miniskirts, has just started to walk with strong steps on the ground. To begin with, advertising napkins in public was a new phenomenon.

The advertisement in the May 22, 1975 issue for “Emeron Shampoo” showing the young idol Okada Nana’s clean smile, decisively marked another trend of this period (Figure 17, advertisement for Lion, *Josei Jishin*, May 22, 1975). Now we see natural make-up which is quite different from the heavy make-up of 1970, as well as models in plain white T-shirts, announcing the departure of the heyday of the bathing suit. Value is now attached to the natural, the healthy and the innocent (-looking) girl, not to the artificial eroticism of adult women. The era when sex was openly flaunted had ended, no matter whether this was a separation from sex or a concealment of it. The era of chaos with its variety of overlapping images had arrived.

3. Polysemiotic Young Girls: *non-no*, 1970-90

Transforming Women’s Magazines

The 1970s were said to represent a historical epoch for women’s magazines in the Western countries. In Japan, too, the post seventies saw a repeated boom of numerous new magazines. Of the 61 leading women’s magazines circulating in 1988 (magazines with a circulation over 10,000, distributed through bookstores), only 16 were founded by the sixties. The remaining 45 were founded after 1970 (Inoue et. al, 1989, p.19). Inoue Teruko summed up three distinctive characteristics of the world of women’s magazines since the seventies: one, the diversification and fragmentation of readership and contents (the so-called specialization of stories); two, the romanization of magazine titles and the visualization of the magazine itself; and three, the circulation of famous foreign women’s magazines published in Japan (Inoue et al., 1989, p. 24). The two magazines which took the initiative in these new trends would have to be *an-an* (published by Heibon-Shuppan, whose name was later changed to Magazine House.) and *non-no*

(published by Shuei-sha).

Departure from the Sexy White Woman

An-an was founded on March 20, 1970, in the middle of a period of turmoil. The model on the cover is a white woman wearing a knit cap, and the intensity of her expression, with her blond hair fluttering, and eyes and mouth open wide as if to scream, overwhelms the viewer. She brings to mind such words as hippy or radical (Figure 18, *an-an*, March 20, 1970).



Figure 18



Figure 19

In the beginning, *an-an*, in partial cooperation with the French women's magazine *Elle*, adopted the name *Elle Japon*. With a clear orientation towards Europe, the first issue's opening feature was on a trip to Paris and London made by the model Yuri, a half (half Japanese, half white), as *an-an*'s representative. In the early days Yuri, whose body language was truly unique, frequently adorned the pages of *an-an* (Figure 19, *an-an*, March 20, 1970). Sometimes stretching her tall, thin body, sometimes bending it, she widens her already large mouth in a big smile.



Figure 20



Figure 21

She is simultaneously like a mischievous boy and an adult woman, and she makes her individuality felt. She falls short of "the wife" or "the sex symbol". It seems *an-an* in the beginning was aiming for a visual image that would be different from the roles played by women since the war.

However, from the point of view of circulation, the subsequently founded *non-no* captured the public's heart. The tall model on the cover of the June 20, 1971 issue looks half Japanese. She boldly displays her long legs clothed in shorts, bending at the waist with hips thrust and, with a hand on her cheek, she smiles sweetly (Figure 20, *non-no*, June 20, 1971). There is an imbalance between the bold, sexy pose and the ingenuous smile of the model who seems unaware of how she looks. This concept, whereby young girls unconsciously (possibly feigned) give off sexual messages anticipates the *burikko*, the girl pretenders, of the eighties.⁸ Women want to be sexually attractive but they do not want to accept the consequences of it. The same pattern of body expression with mutually contradictory messages is seen in the issue's special feature on bridal costumes (Figure 21, *non-no*, June 20, 1971).

A big change has also occurred in the racial make-up of the models. 26 of the models are

Japanese, 13 are white, 43 are half Japanese, half white (halfs), and one is black, so while there are a large number of white models, the overwhelming majority consists of “halfs.” Although these models are called halfs and many of them look more white than Japanese, this is still the beginning of the tendency to move away from the white image.

Meanwhile, in the Jan 20/Feb 5, 1973 combined issue we find that classical gestures, reminiscent of the fifties and early sixties have been revived. While the exposure of sex has ceased to correspond with the mood of the times, it seems that a new pattern had yet to be discovered. Outside of women’s magazines, fashion shows with models dancing and skipping about and pictures of strong women glaring back at the reader with fierce eyes, etc. were all a part of the pattern of the experimentation with new visual images of women. I must add that the “glaring woman” in the advertisements which became a fashion of the time⁹ assumes a defensive pose, and her glaring eyes looking upward indicate that she is positioned below those being glared at (in other words, the viewer of the advertisement), so that the message is often counteracted by frequently contradictory body language (Ueno, 1982, pp. 196-9).

The tendency to distance Japanese women from the standard of beauty of white women grew even more pronounced. Beauty consultants at Shiseido advised their clients to use “monotonal eyeshadow close to the eyes”, “lipstick in shades of brown”, and “skin-tone foundation” which naturally suit Japanese faces. As a matter of fact, this distancing from the white women’s standard of beauty was not just a trend in Japan. Amidst the fluctuations of the world situation after the oil crisis, attention was riveted on individual national identities. Symbolizing this trend is the international success of Yamaguchi Sayoko, a model with a classically Japanese face, that also caused a change of awareness within Japan.

Young Girls and the Beauty of Muscle

The model on the cover of the May 5, 1980 issue appears to be half Japanese and has become childish looking. The model wears a hat pulled down low over her eyes, and gives us an innocent smile while hugging herself in a self-protective manner. In the articles, as well, the number of models who seem to be in their teens has increased. The trend that characterized the eighties which should be called young girlization had begun in earnest.

Young girlization is accompanied by a variety of fads. The health fad and shape-up boom are connected in a way to the desire for the slim body of a young girl. In the special “The Health Connection Between Clothes and Underwear”, a young girl in a school locker room wearing nothing but striped shorts and a sweat shirt is standing on tip-toe, her legs fully stretched, her firm buttocks facing toward the camera.

The young girlization and health fads also change the image of male-female relations. In the May 5 special on polo shirts, the motto of which is “the uniform of a healthy young women”, we find a young couple whose clothing is almost without sexual distinction. The young man in the picture is quietly gazing sideways at the young woman from behind, and she is smiling humorously with a dab of ice cream on her nose (Figure 22, *non-no*, May 5, 1980). By acting like a young girl, the woman can secure an equal relationship, like that of classmates, with the man.

Meanwhile, the move away from white images continues and the number of half Caucasian models whose features are more Japanese than white increased. Moreover, we now find half Caucasian models in casual blouses and skirts, which look like they could also be used for school, mixed in with similarly dressed pure Japanese models on the same page (Figure 23, *non-*



Figure 22



Figure 23



Figure 24

no, May 20, 1980). Previously there had been few occasions when Japanese and Caucasian models were used together. The feeling of distance, or put more bluntly, the feeling of inferiority Japanese had felt toward white people throughout both pre- and postwar periods had abated. Although there were a large number of half white models in the Japanese model club, too, I believe that we are seeing the emergence of the awareness whereby Japanese felt they looked naturally white even without camouflaging themselves in thick make-up. I believe that this was a consequence of Japan's economic success.

In 1985 young girlization intensified. The cover of the May 20, 1985 issue furthered the youthification of 1980 (Figure 24, *non-no*, May 20, 1985). All the elements — the clothing, gesture, hair style — show a cute young girl who is delicate and fragile. Combined together are flower print, lace, frills, socks and shoes with no heels. What would have been considered unsuitable clothing for an adult woman up to now has become fashionable and taken root among women around age twenty.

On the other hand, the shape-up boom emphasizing muscular beauty for females leads to a complete metaphorical contradiction of all that came before. In the May 5, 1985 issue we find the advertisement for "On Wood" of a woman wearing boxing gloves, a combative expression in her eyes, as well as the advertisement in the May 20 issue for "Nudas" which stands out with its picture of an unclothed woman revealing the incredible muscles of her well-toned back. The coexistence of the two images of the young girl and muscular beauty is a mutually contradictory message, but these two images both represent the antithesis of the sexual object message of the seventies.

Asiatic Girls Taking the Initiative

In 1988 we begin to see yet another new trend in *non-no*. The models on the fashion pages of the May 5 issue are fully Japanese. Furthermore, they are a group with their own individuality. The girls, who have narrow eyes, thick eyebrows, full lips, and front hair cut in a bob, are not smiling. Some are looking straight ahead with serious faces, while others, their eyes narrowed, seem engrossed in something internal (Figure 25, *non-no*, May 5, 1988). However, in their clothing they have retained a look of the young girl, for example by tying their hair up in ribbons.

In 1990, the move away from the childish look has become even more pronounced. The number of models with mature, long faces and narrow eyes has increased. Just as one thinks so,



Figure 25



Figure 26



Figure 27

Figure 28

though, there is the fashion special “T-Shirt Heaven!!” in the May 20 issue. Here the female models in T-shirts and pants are each leaning against the wall in their own manner, one winking like a naughty child, her face crinkled, another staring seriously straight ahead, and a third looking the other way (Figure 26, *non-no*, May 20, 1990). Hair styles are short, long, varied; the models have less the appearance of young girls than of difficult youths. One interesting point is the good looking white male model who appears between the female models, striking the same pose as they are. It is a combination which perfectly reverses the men’s weekly magazines of the sixties, and it is possible to read into it the message that women do not change, men do.

The trend of Asiatic girls continues in 1995. Now, the girls are taking the initiative over boys even in sex. In the special feature of the May 20 issue “Let’s have a sweeter kiss, because I like you,” a girl is holding her boyfriend’s head and kissing in the bath (Figure 27, *non-no*, May 20, 1995). Semi-nudes and explicit expressions of sex are no longer taboo in young women’s magazines. An equal or even female-centered gender relationship is already a common pattern both in representations and reality. The difference between sex as a topic in the 1970’s and in the 1990’s is that sex has become a more casual and practical matter in the 1990’s.

Figure 28 shows the Okinawan popular singer Amuro Namie, whose style became the model for Japanese young women in 1996 (Figure 28, *Uno*, February 1997, published by Asahi Shinbun-sha). Her dark, round Asiatic face creates an interesting imbalance with her long slender

legs and blonde-coloured hair. The combination of a Japanese or an Asiatic face with the body of a super model has become an ideal for young Japanese women today. They do not pretend to be white women any more. They seem to be slipping out of any nationality. However, they do not stop following the standard of the perfect body. Didn't it originate in the West? They might be thinking that it is already a universal standard.

Unhousewifely Housewives

Since women's magazines from the seventies, unlike before, had diversified in terms of age groups and tastes, it is unreasonable of course that *non-no*, a single magazine, could be used to represent all magazines. During this period, magazines aimed at young readers had a lot of influence and pulling power in terms of visual images, but how about magazines which were aimed at a middle-aged readership or at housewives?

Around 1970, on the wave of an intense boom, figures in miniskirts appeared even in magazines for housewives. However, after that, around 1975 classical body language and fashion from the fifties made another comeback.

The circulation of ladies' general magazines began to drop after the seventies, with many magazines folding one after the other in the mid-eighties. *Shufu no Tomo* managed to survive even though the age of its readership rose. *Croissant*, published by Magazine House beginning in 1977, fulfilled a role as an opinion leader under the influence of feminism. The magazines which sold well in the 1980's and 90's were the ones devoted to practical information on daily life.

In terms of representations of women, a change appears after 1980. During the same time that magazines aimed at young women emphasized young girlization, models' ages begin to drop in magazines for housewives, too, and models who were obviously no older than their early twenties begin to appear. In 1980 these young models wore rather housewifish suits, but in 1985 we find them wearing big jackets and pants, clothing which could be almost said to be completely indistinguishable from that of single women (Figure 29, *Shufu no Tomo*, May 1985). In "Challenging the Brand Clothing of the Young" from the May 19, 1985 issue of *Mrs.* we find the special issue summed up in one picture of an actual mother and daughter wearing the same brands of clothing.

There are more free and active poses, and gestures which had been stable since the fifties have finally begun to fade. This could possibly be called the breakdown of the housewife within the image. It seems that a feeling of distaste for being Mrs-like or housewifely or motherly had reached the housewives in question as well.

The honest photographing of middle-aged models' wrinkles, which at first glance would seem a contradiction to rejuvenation, is yet another change within women's magazines. It could be said that women themselves are cultivating the value whereby wrinkles, which symbolize human experience, are recognized as part of the appeal of an attractive woman.



Figure 29

4. Women in the Postwar System

Classification by Period

Having now traced the transitions within the visual images of women during the 45 year period since the war ended, I wonder what would happen if postwar history were classified from the angle of images of femininity. We have (1) the reconstruction period (1945-54) when “postwar daughters” sang the praises of the new feeling of liberation while also inheriting elements from the prewar and war time eras; (2) the period of great stability (1955-67) that saw the standardization of “housewifeliness” take root as well as an increase in young, unmarried, employed women (OL, BG), who attracted men through the use of foreign cosmetics; (3) the period of sexual revolution (1968-74) where heavy make-up for white women and bold fashions emphasized sexiness to the maximum; (4) the period of experimentation (1975-87) with its blending of messages of opposing directions such as “the young girl”, “the glaring woman” and “the girl pretenders” (*burikko*), and (5) the present (1988 ~) which has seen the hints of new standard although still vague. By organizing these periods by their distinctive characteristics, one can surmise that changes in “femininity” were closely connected to the structural changes occurring within Japanese society. Now, we must question what was the social background in which the images of women from the various periods were shaped.

The Postwar System of Gender Roles

The major line for understanding the development and changes throughout five periods should be the formation and transformation of the “postwar system of gender roles”.¹⁰ The standardization of “wifeliness” is one important factor of the system. Roles called “housewife” existed prior to this period. The middle-class wife dating from the Taishō period would be considered a housewife by modern standards. The “housewife” who took shape around 1955, however, is a popularized full-time housewife. As a result of the increase in the proportion of employees due to the shift in the economic structure of Japan, wives who had been engaged in farmwork or the family business along with their families became full-time housewives. The proportion of females in the work force slightly declined after the Second World War until 1975, and if we draw a curved line (M-shape curve) representing the proportions of females in the work force by age and by birth cohort, we find the ratio of people staying at home for marriage or child care increases as the cohort becomes younger, from those born in 1920’s to 1930’s and to the 1940’s in this order. The “modern family” of husbands securing an income outside the home and wives devoting themselves to housework and child care became popular during this period.

Meanwhile, shortly after the image of the “housewife” was created, the “BG” was recreated, too. BGs make up the stratum of unmarried employed females. Following the high rate of growth of the economy, the main body of female labor switched from family businesses to outside employment. However, because the majority of these workers were young, they started work shortly after finishing school, and quit after getting married to become full-time housewives. The visual image of BGs is less that of working women than that of “troops preparing for marriage”.

The postwar gender system divided women into two types: decent housewives and charming BGs or troops of preparatory housewives. Other categories, such as farmers’ wives, factory girls, and office workers, which were more pronounced in the prewar period, were all relegated to the outskirts on the basis of images. The image of women centered around the role as a housewife,

which historically never had constancy, came to be standardized from the beginning of the high economic growth period, and has continued to exist for a long period of time, even affecting the present “natural” image of femininity.

National Identity and Sexuality

Another key for interpreting the history of images of Japanese women is the dichotomy of the sensual white women versus the healthy Japanese women and its modification. After the defeat in the Second World War, or even from the prewar period, Japanese were caught up in the feeling of distance toward Western people. They had a notion that the Western white woman was completely different from the Japanese woman and that the truly sexual woman was a white woman.

The image of the sensual white woman was not a simple adoration. Japanese men’s sexual desire for white women was fueled by their inferiority complex toward white men. Japanese men wanted to overcome white men by possessing white women, at least in their imagination. It is often the case that national identity is expressed in the form of sexuality, and that power relations between nations are represented as the power between sexes.

The feeling of distance or inferiority complex toward the West was the ethos that led the high economic growth in the postwar period. The representations of women of the postwar period were not solely formed by the actual gender relationship but also by various social factors including national identity and economic power balance.

The Meaning of the Sexual Revolution

It was after 1968 that the change of the postwar system began. Under the influence of the Sexual Revolution which originated in the West, ordinary Japanese women became sexy in the media for the first time. But at the same time, by imitating white women through using heavy make-up and hair dye, Japanese women were camouflaging themselves as white women. Because people believed that the truly sexual woman was a white woman, Japanese women had to become white to become sexy. Viewed from a different angle, the desire to shorten the distance between Japan and the West seemed to be maximized when Japan’s economy was about to catch up with and even surpass that of the Western countries.

At this point, however, “sexy girls” did not shake up the postwar system of gender roles. No matter how many unmarried girls sought sexual experiences, they were still passive and marriage remained their dream. Moreover, the mentality of the modern family, in which the essential bond between wife and husband is believed to be love and sex, finally penetrated to the depths of Japanese hearts with this generation who faced the Sexual Revolution. We should also note that in the long history of Japanese women, it was ironically from this active generation that the highest ratio of full-time housewives during the child care years appeared.

The Sexual Revolution in Japan did not break down the postwar system but rather completed it as a Japanese modern family.

Young Girls and Economic Success

Visual images of women became unstable after the mid-seventies. Images of liberated women far from “the wife” and “the sex symbol” developed, such as the girl pretender, the glaring woman, a model with a classically Japanese face, etc. We can describe this period as a period of

experimentation of new images. Thus, at the beginning of the eighties, the “young girl” made her entrance, and gained the support of the public.

Playing the part of the “young girl” is undoubtedly like being in a moratorium where maturity is rejected, but it is also one expression of an attitude of shunning society and its roles for women. Moreover, because a “young girl” is not treated seriously by society, a variety of images — sexy, healthy, strong, or teasing men on equal footing — can be experimented with, while not sanctioned. Japanese women used the image of the “young girl” to try out possible choices in this transitional period.

The “young girl” fad paralleled the boom of half Japanese half Caucasian models. Japanese changed their attitude toward the West after having reached its level of economic success. Now they did not have such a strong feeling of inferiority as they had before. However, Japanese and their government could barely make decisions in their own way without a model. They were not used to doing so. The image of the young girl which remained in a moratorium seemed to symbolize Japan at a loss after achieving its economic goal.

Creation of a New Drama

Statistically Japanese women made an astonishing degree of changes in their lives in the eighties. In the future, this will undoubtedly be called the foremost transitional period of postwar Japan. The proportion of working women, which had been in a downward trend after the war, hit the bottom in 1975 before shifting to an upward trend. The women in their late twenties to early thirties, who had formed a valley of the M-shape curve, came back to the work force after becoming housewives due to a lowering of the age of reemployment and to later marriages (Takahashi ed., 1988).

The gender roles established in the postwar period, which centered around the modern family with a full-time housewife, had begun to lose their basis in reality. The eighties saw the disappearance of “housewifeliness” within visual images. In the nineties, the feeling of distance toward the West is also dissipating. Japanese are feeling that they do not need heavy make-up to become white anymore. Perhaps they consider themselves as half Asian and half white by nature. The national identity of young Japanese seems to be weakening.

The Japanese women in magazines have ceased to smile as before. They are beginning to show naturally serious faces and hearty laughs which in former days barely existed. First of all, they look confident. What of contemporary Japan is symbolized by this confidence? What kind of representations will we produce in the coming century? The new drama for both women and men and for the nation is just now in the process of creation.

NOTES

- 1 The title *non-no* has no meaning.
- 2 Reported in *Asahi Weekly*, 06/08/1952.
- 3 A type of trouser for agricultural workers.
- 4 The actress in Figure 3 is Yamamoto Fujiko.
- 5 The woman in Figure 6 is Hara Setsuko, the most popular actress of the period.
- 6 Kashiwagi uses the expression “white looking women” instead of “white women.” During the war period, it was impossible to use Caucasian models in magazines. All the models of that time were Japanese. Nevertheless, Kashiwagi noticed the fact that

- Japanese-looking models with round faces played the role of a healthy girl expected to become a good wife and mother, and the Caucasian-looking models with longish faces and high noses appeared sensual (Kashiwagi, 1987, Chapter 1).
- 7 The rate of Japanese women having sexual intercourse before marriage increased since the end of 1960's, according to the survey on sexual behavior of the Japanese conducted by Kyodo-Tsushin sha in 1982. The cohorts who were 18 to 22 in 1970 showed a dramatic change (Ishikawa et. al, 1984: 233-234).
 - 8 Matsuda Seiko, the most popular singer in the 1980's, was regarded as a symbol of *burikko* girls.
 - 9 "The glaring woman" was typically seen in the advertisements for Parco, a department store which opened in 1975.
 - 10 I proposed a concept of the "postwar family system in Japan" to discuss the features of the Japanese family between 1955 and 1975, the period of stability and standardization. One of the three major characteristics is the "housewifization" of women. For details, see Ochiai (1996).

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「品のいい主婦」と「官能的な白人女性」
——戦後日本雑誌における女性の表象

落合恵美子

要旨：本稿は戦後52年間の日本の女性雑誌の写真や挿し絵に表れた日本女性の画像表現を分析する。画像表現を分析対象とするのは、多様な要素の微妙な組合せにより形作られる性役割を研究するのに適切な方法であるうえ、画像メディアの力なしには戦後大衆社会の文化統合は有り得なかつたろうからである。具体的には『主婦の友』、『女性自身』、『ノンノ』をそれぞれ1945-60年、1960-75年、1975年以降を代表する雑誌

として分析する。結論としては、戦後日本の女性の画像表現の変遷を理解するには、二つの鍵があることが見いだされる。一つは「性役割の戦後体制」の形成と変容であり、主婦役割の成立がその重要な要素である。二つ目は「官能的な白人女性」と「健康的な日本人女性」との二分法である。女性の表象は、現実の両性関係を反映するのみではなく、国民意識や国家間の経済力バランスによっても形作られる。