

TOKYO AS A CITY OF CONSUMPTION:
SPACE, MEDIA, AND SELF IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN

by

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ABSTRACT

Tokyo, despite its recognition as a city of global finance and commerce, has long been precluded in the ongoing debate over cultural practices of consumption. This thesis attempts to bridge the gap between existing theories on consumption in Western literature and the actual practices of consumption in urban Japan, with a view to establishing inter-relationships among consumer practices, local geographies, urban media, and self-identities.

Specifically, I will trace the genealogy of consumer practices in postwar Japan with a focus on urban youths who, as taste leaders, play a pivotal role in the formation of the new consumer ethos. In the case studies that I present, I will locate the wider cultural changes between the 1960s and the 1980s in the parallel changes in youth culture which are associated with two particular locales in Tokyo: Shinjuku in the 1960s and Shibuya in the 1980s.

Finally, I will argue that, in the context of Japan's recent "internationalization," the emergence of the new cultures of consumption is central to the new articulations between self-identity and spatial perceptions. Tokyo Disneyland, as a case study, will be used to illustrate this cultural nexus between the economy of symbolic consumption and the organization of consumptive landscapes. Moreover, the new forms of consumption play an influential role in creating self-images for Japan's consuming public, particularly in relation to the images of the "West" that are omnipresent in the Japanese popular media.

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NOTE

All translations of Japanese texts cited in this thesis are mine unless otherwise indicated.

1. INTRODUCTION

Yumi Matsutoya—singer-song writer

It's nice to know that there are those who share my 'feeling' or shall I say my 'flow.' There must be a common 'sensitivity' among those women who grew up in a similar environment to mine. Like going straight from a private high school to a private university—this is what I call "the bourgeois sensitivity," a certain sentiment that trade-school girls and biker girls do not share. When I run out of money, that is when I die. There's no other way, really. If you take away the economic power from what I want to do, there's nothing left at all.

(Otsuki, 1990: 34)

In her biographical interview, Yumi Matsutoya (or "Yumin" as her fans call her) makes interesting connections among amorphous feelings, class identity, and economic power—all the necessary ingredients that go into the recipe of "consumerism as a way of life." What is striking about her statement is not simply the observation that economic power, which is a prerequisite to participation in consumer society, determines her survival as a human being in modern Japan, but something else. When she says "If you take away the economic power from what I want to do, there's nothing left at all," what is being suggested is that it is only in the economic sphere that her life can be defined. This is to say that her cultural wants and needs may have already been incorporated into the system of commodity exchange. As she embraces the "bourgeois"¹ state of mind, Yumin's life is possible only as a form of consumption.

The aesthetics of consumerism as represented by Yumin's "new music" [*nyu-muzikku*], a genre associated with the experiences of the youth growing up in the suburbs of Tokyo, is pivotal to her song-writing in which the perception of the everyday landscape becomes embedded in the

¹ The term, "bourgeois," here carries slightly different connotations from its English usage (at least in its mainstream usage apart from its specific usage in Marxist literature). As Yumin employs the expression to describe her own personality, it is meant to be a positive attribute here, that is, a celebratory announcement of her upper-middle-class status with no derogatory insinuations.

images of elsewhere [somewhere in the West]. Yumin herself explains how her lyrical imagination affects the way she perceives the everyday urban landscape of Tokyo:

For example, imagine that I'm writing a song, watching the rain fall outside, at an *anmitsu* [Japanese dessert] shop on a back street of Shibuya. If someone else was writing the song, there may be a melancholy mood of a "four-and-a-half-tatami room" apartment. But, for me the place may become a scene from London....So, for those who deny my songs, I would tell them "It's too bad that you can only lead such a 'wet' existence."

(Otsuki, 1990: 47)

Foreshadowing the emergence of a "dry"² urban culture of Shibuya in the coming decade, Yumin's lyrics, in the mid 1970s, stood against the "wet" folk-song³ culture of Shinjuku, symbolized by the shabby "four-and-a-half-tatami room"⁴ apartment. Yumin represented a new sensitivity of the young Japanese that relates to Tokyo as a cosmopolitan city comparable, or at least, so it is believed, to other world cities such as New York, Paris, and London. Yumin's comments indeed echoed the sentiments of the new cultures of consumption, which took hold in Tokyo in the past two decades.

Are these observations and experiences merely signs of the globalization of cultures in which Tokyo and its inhabitants join the ranks of other world cities? Or is there something else taking place at a local level which may defy the common, culturally transparent misreading of MacLuhan's "global village" as a metaphor for global understanding? What are the conditions of daily existence in a highly advanced consumer society, such as Tokyo, at the close of the century? In an attempt to answer these questions, in this thesis I will explore the ways in which the new sensitivity of the urban youth culture—as exemplified by Yumin's comments—constitutes the practices of consumption, constructs self-identities, and reorganizes urban space in Tokyo.

² The "dry" culture here refers to those qualities that are associated with the city—"urbane," "sophisticated," and "rational"—while the "wet" culture refers to those qualities that are associated with the countryside—"earthy," "simple," and "emotional." Refer to chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of the distinction between "dry" and "wet."

³ It has been suggested that the class contrast between folk music and new music is reflected in the artist's choice of the musical instrument: the former is guitar music whereas the latter is keyboard music. (Otsuki, 1990) In postwar Japan, the keyboard music with its prerequisite of childhood piano education carried a class connotation as the ownership of a piano combined with the enrollment of children in music schools constituted a class symbolism for the (upper) middle-class.

⁴ "Four-and-a-half-tatami" apartments are extremely small apartments measuring at around 80 square feet. They are often found in older, wooden apartments in central Tokyo

In a broader sense, Yumin's comments address the inter-relationship among cultural tastes, socioeconomic class, geographical imagination, expressive media, and self-identity—the very themes that I will consider in this thesis. Indeed what I hope to accomplish in the following chapters is to trace back the origin of the new cultural aesthetics, that Yumin represents, in the postwar history of consumption in Tokyo. In doing so, I will also try to illuminate some of the critical differences and similarities between cultures of consumption in the West and in Japan. This study must engage a meeting of two trajectories—the internationalization of consumer culture as a condition of postmodernity at a global level, and the sedimentation of cultural values as an inertia of place-specific history at a local level. In other words, my inquiry will be simultaneously placed in the contextual frameworks of the Western theories on cultures of consumption, on the one hand, and the local examples of consumer practices, on the other

In the next chapter, I will begin with a review of three schools of thought that offer different perspectives on the cultural conditions of modernity with respect to consumer affairs. Then, in chapter 3, I will introduce the setting of my study, Tokyo, as a city of consumption, with specific references to the city's social geography, its recent ascent as a global city and its postwar history of consumption. Having established the theoretical and geographical contexts of my project, I will examine, in detail, the cultural processes which have produced the new sensitivities of discriminating consumption, that Yumin represents, in the Tokyo of the 1980s. The historical appearance of new consumer aesthetics will be located within the transition from one place-and-generation bound culture to another, that is, from the counter-cultural youths of 1960s' Shinjuku (chapter 4) to the “crystal” youths⁵ of 1980s' Shibuya (chapter 5). Finally, in chapter 6, I will delve into what all of the new changes in consumer practices may mean in terms of the formation of self identity and the perception of geographical space for the new generation of Japanese youths.

In order to address this issue of cultural dynamics, I will, throughout this thesis, supplement the Western literature on consumption by Benjamin, Bourdieu, Baudrillard, and Featherstone

⁵ The expression, “crystal youths,” alludes to Yasuo Tanaka's 1980 novel, *Nantonaku Kurisutaru* [Somewhat Crystal]. Refer to chapter 5 for a fuller description of the term.

(which I review in chapter 2) with diverse theoretical sources and empirical observations by academics and journalists in Japan who offer valuable insights into modern consumption issues in Tokyo. But of course, the juxtaposition of the two realms is far from unproblematic. As always, the applicability of one tradition of thought at a foreign site is often marred by the possibility of de-contextualization through variations in local conditions and slippages in subjective meanings. Therefore, the use of Western literature, which may be quite useful in understanding the postmodern conditions of our commodified world, must be moderated by a clarification of local differences. This is a cross-cultural dilemma that this thesis must grapple with.

2. THEORIZING CULTURES OF CONSUMPTION

INTRODUCTION

In the genealogy of theories of consumer culture within the Western literature, three strands of thought have been prominent. The first approach, which follows the traditions of the Frankfurt School, has to do with the notion of the “culture industry” which expresses the idea that our cultural life as a consuming “mass” is increasingly becoming controlled by the capitalist media. This is a top-down view of cultural re/production, as exemplified by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer’s (1970) seminal paper “Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” which stresses the enhanced manipulability of the “masses” in twentieth-century, modern, consumer societies. The second position, which I will consider, derives from Jean Baudrillard’s semiotic analysis of the “commodity as sign,” which breaks away from the traditional Marxist notion of the “use value” of consumer goods by suggesting that the value of modern consumer goods lie in its symbolic value. The third position, which contrast with the first two approaches in its emphasis on the consumer as an active agent rather than a passive automaton, is one that is held by Pierre Bourdieu and Mike Featherstone who develop a “sociology of consumption” in which consumer habits are understood as markers of social distinction. After reviewing of these three schools of thought on consumption, I will discuss the issues of consumption in the contemporary context of global culture as they relate to the formation of postmodern city of the late twentieth century.

THE CULTURE INDUSTRY

i. Frankfurt School and Mass Culture

Commodity fetishism (as well as urban “renewal”) can be viewed as a textbook case of Freud’s concept of displacement: Social relations of class exploitation are displaced onto relations among things, thus concealing the real situation with its dangerous potential for social revolution. It is politically significant that by the late nineteenth century, the bourgeois dream of democracy itself underwent this form of censorship: Freedom was equated with the ability to consume. Benjamin writes that *égalité* developed its own “phantasmagoria,” and “*la revolution*” came to mean “clearance sale” in the nineteenth century.

(Buck-Morss, 1989: 284)

At the heart of the Frankfurt School tradition is Lukács’s notion of “reification” which describes the condition of modernity whereby “human relationships under capitalism” become “thinglike” as the development of the market economy engulfed many aspects of people’s everyday world (Arato and Gebhardt, 1993: 195). In this account of modernity, the “scientific” and “rational” organization of industrial capitalism was held responsible for the disorganization of traditional societies and the coherence of the self was said to disintegrate in the process:

Taylorism, the final step in the mechanization of the worker, separating and controlling “his psychological attributes,” is the final step in de-magicization. Atomization and fragmentation characterize not only the objective subdivision of the product and the work process but also the reduction of the worker to a single, partial operation. “The laborer is mutilated into a fragment of a man.”

(Arato and Gebhardt, 1993: 195).

This notion of “atomized” society at the level of collective psychology set the terms of debate for the Frankfurt School which by and large adhered to the Marxist concept of “society” as an expression of the logic of capitalism. The deepest divide within the discipline existed between Adorno and Benjamin with respect to their opposing interpretations of the political role of “mass culture” and the emancipatory possibilities of the new technologies of “seeing.”

Firstly, there is a pessimistic reading of twentieth century “mass culture”— a perspective which reflects both the sociology of knowledge of the time and the biographical circumstances of the two authors, Adorno and Horkheimer. Having fled the authoritarian regime of Nazi Germany, Adorno and Horkheimer found themselves in the burgeoning consumer society of Los Angeles—only to find another form of oppression in America’s culture industry. The *modus operandi* of the culture

industry was predicated upon the industrial mass production of “low” culture—Hollywood movies, radio programs, pulp novels, popular journals, and mass advertisements—which, they argue, seduced and standardized the modern “individual” who, as a result, becomes further isolated from “authentic” experiences (During, 1993). In this dualistic schema of authentic “high” and inauthentic “low” cultures, it was the desecration of “high culture” by the culture industry which, for Adorno in particular, meant the dominant position of “exchange value” in people’s cultural tastes. Thus, the mass-mediated culture, as addressed by Adorno in the context of popular music, alters “the basic conditions of the relation between art and society” whereby “the more inexorably the principle of exchange-value destroys use-values for human beings, the more deeply does exchange-value disguise itself as the object of enjoyment” ([1938] 1993: 279). In this manner, the rhetorical language of the Frankfurt School readily collapses the notion of “use-value” into “authentic,” and “exchange-value” into “inauthentic”; as a result, their stance resembles Marx’s original formulation of “false needs” as a manifest characteristic of a capitalist society. Thus, the inescapable conclusion of the “culture industry” theory leads to the caricature of the consumer as a “cultural dupe”—a formal-structuralist perspective which still persists today in some post-Marxist critical discourse of consumer culture.

If we follow this line of argument, then, whatever satisfaction may be derived from consumer activities becomes illusory as it is only seen as a superficial spectacle, while “true” fulfillment remains forever beyond reach of the consuming masses:

The culture industry perpetually cheats its consumers of what it perpetually promises. The promissory note which, with its plots and staging, it draws on pleasure is endlessly prolonged; the promise, which is actually all the spectacle consists of, is illusory: all it actually confirms is that the real point will never be reached, that the diner must be satisfied with the menu.

(Adorno and Horkheimer, ([1972] 1993: 38)

ii. The Magic of Capitalism

In the unpublished chapter from his 1961 book, *The Long Revolution*, Raymond Williams made a similar observation about the nature of modern advertising as a “magic system”:

The short description of the pattern we have is *magic*: a highly organized and professional system of magical inducements and satisfactions, functionally very similar to magical

systems in simpler societies, but rather strangely coexistent with a highly developed scientific technology.

(Williams, [1980] 1993: 335)

As Williams here contends, the modern world was not devoid of “enchantments” in the Weberian sense, as the “rational” economic organization imposes its own commodity myths. The argument is that with its advertising expertise, corporate capitalism produces the “necessary illusions” to sustain the high level of consumption. And the “scientific” key to the modern “magic” was to be found in the new advertising campaigns by the marketing professionals who now applied the knowledge of behavioural psychology to convey their messages to the consuming public. For Williams, then, “modern advertising” as an organized industry “belongs to the system of market control” (Williams, [1980] 1993: 328).

It is perhaps useful here to contrast Adorno and William’s pessimistic views on the modern “enchantments” against the more utopian reading by Walter Benjamin, Adorno’s contemporary, who saw in the age of mechanical reproduction new possibilities for human emancipation with new ways of “seeing” the world. In *Dialectics of Seeing*, Susan Buck-Morss states Benjamin’s position with respect to the new technology of representation as follows:

If industrialization has caused a crisis in perception due to the speeding up of time and the fragmentation of space, film shows a healing potential by slowing down time and, through montage, constructing “synthetic realities” as new spatio-temporal orders wherein the “fragmented images” are brought together “according to new law”

(Buck-Morss, 1989: 268).

Moreover, it was exactly in the breakdown of traditional forms of representation (or the conservatism of “authentic” high culture) that Benjamin saw the hope for transcending the bourgeois “subconsciousness” that his generation inherited:

In contrast the rupture of tradition now frees symbolic powers from conservative restraints for the task of social transformation, that is, for a rupture of those social conditions of domination that, consistently, have been the source of tradition. Thus Benjamin insisted: “We must wake up from the world of our parents.”

(Buck-Morss, 1989: 279)

To achieve this collective awakening from the “dream world” of commodity capitalism, Benjamin urged authors to harness the new technologies of representation in their critical

production of text. For example, regarding the revolutionary potential of photography, Benjamin writes:

What we require of the photographer is the ability to give his picture that caption which wrenches it from modish commerce and gives it revolutionary use-value....[O]nly by transcending the specialization in the process of production which, in the bourgeois view, constitutes its order, is this production made politically valuable; and the limits imposed by specialization must be breached jointly by both the productive forces that they were set up to divide.

(Benjamin, [1937] 1993: 263)

What Benjamin discovered in the modern technologies of “seeing,” which themselves represented the products of capitalist industrialization, was the new means of “relating” to the world whereby the inertia of tradition may be abruptly broken down. Then, for him, the emergent urban societies, with their high concentration of people and thus with the capacity for new human experiences, held the possibilities for overcoming the “esthetic passivity” towards the artistic representations of the status quo. Therefore, as Arato and Gebhardt here clarify Benjamin’s position, the “modern” state of mind is equated with the ability to see beyond the enchantment of the old order:

Modern mass society (i.e., bourgeois or civil society) means the destruction of the social bases of religious cults, and the contemporary masses suspicious of cult and mystique tend to bring things closer to themselves “spatially and humanly,” thereby abolishing esthetic distance.

(Arato and Gebhardt, 1993: 209)

In Benjamin’s functional view of art, modern life, through the mass reproduction of images, renders the master pieces of the past familiar and thus less sacred while simultaneously opening up the political dialogue. This is so because the intoxicating “aura” of traditional art may be diminished as its aesthetic distance from everyday life is diminished through rampant reproductions while the shocking “value” of modern art may further destabilize the aesthetic foundations of the bourgeois art:

In the age of mechanical reproduction “exhibition value” replaces cult value in relationship to traditional works. But in the case of the new means of mechanical reproduction political value or political function predominates. The urgency of this new situation lies in the possible alternative of a fascist politicization of art which uses the remnants or traces of older, quasi-cultic values to beatify reactionary politics.

(Arato and Gebhardt, 1993: 210)

While Benjamin advocates politicization of modern art to dispel the “magic” of traditional art, he is all too aware of the “magic” of commodity capitalism which occupies the central theme of his Arcades Project in which he grapples with the idea of “collective dreaming” under capitalist society:

This “dreaming collective” was, admittedly, “unconscious: in a double sense, on the one hand, because of its distracted dreaming state, and on the other, because it was unconscious of itself, composed of atomized individuals, consumers who imagined their commodity dream world to be uniquely personal (despite all objective evidence to the contrary), and who experienced their membership in the collectivity only in an isolated, alienating sense, as an anonymous component of the crowd.

(Buck-Morss, 1989: 260).

It is precisely this apparent “naturalness” of the consumers’ dream-world that Benjamin takes as the myth of modernity and as something which, in Benjamin’s polemic, we must ultimately overcome. What is implied here is the psychology of mass manipulation working at the level of subconsciousness in which the individuals are assumed to be “atomized” and therefore one remains anonymous before the capitalist meta-system without power to create one’s own meanings. The difference between Adorno and Benjamin in their understanding of the modern individual is perhaps that for the former, with his emphasis on the effectiveness of the capitalist culture industry, the isolated individual remains a helpless victim of the larger system while for the latter, with his belief in the heroic possibilities of modern art, the dreaming self is given a revolutionary purpose. But, the terms of debate for both Adorno and Benjamin stay within the Marxist dialectic in which the production-centred ideology overshadows the human agency and thereby largely precludes the possibility of discussing modern human experiences outside their econo-centric terms—a point which was to be addressed later by a more sociological account of mass culture.

iii. The Search for “Authenticity”

What stands out in both Adorno and Benjamin’s account of mass culture is their insistence on the contrast between “authentic” and “inauthentic” experiences within the cultural expressions of modernism. For Adorno, for example, the modern individual, caught within the magical system of mass production, is reduced to a universal, yet anonymous identity by means of top-down cultural assimilation:

In the culture industry the individual is an illusion not merely because of the standardization of the means of production. He is tolerated only so long as his complete identification with the generality is unquestioned.

(Adorno and Horkheimer, [1972] 1993: 41)

For Benjamin, however, authenticity was to be found in modern experimental art which privileged the “mundane” objects of the everyday world:

The revolutionary strength of Dadaism consisted in testing art for its authenticity. Still lifes put together from tickets, spools of thread, cigarette butts, were linked with artistic elements. They put the whole thing in a frame. And they thereby show the fragment of daily life says more than paintings.

(Benjamin, [1937] 1993: 262)

Here, then, is another division within the Frankfurt School in defining what is “authentic” in the modern era. For Adorno, modernism seems to represent the mass commodification of the “inauthentic” experiences which are spread through the channels of commodity distribution:

The art historians and guardians of culture who complain of the extinction in the West of a basic style-determining power are wrong. The stereotyped appropriation of everything, even the inchoate, for the purposes of mechanical reproduction surpasses the rigour and general currency of any ‘real style,’ in the sense in which cultural *cognoscenti* celebrate the organic precapitalist past.

(Adorno and Horkheimer, [1972] 1993: 34–35)

And for Benjamin, modern technology promised new ways to experience the “authentic” in modern life. This idea is most clearly expressed in his appreciation of the film as an instrument of sociological “awakening”:

Through closeups of what it inventories, through accentuating the hidden details of props that for us are familiar objects, through exploration of banal milieus under the genial guide of the lens, film on the one hand increases our insight into the necessities that rule our lives, and on the other hand ensures for us an immense and unexpected field of action.

(Buck-Morss, 1989: 268)

But, what is this distinction between “authentic” and “inauthentic”? (This is a question that Baudrillard—half a century later—addresses, and argues for the impossibility of their binary division.) This construction of social reality is a reformulation of Marx’s notion of “false needs,” which was widely employed in the Frankfurt tradition. For example, in *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), written at the height of postwar American “prosperity,” Herbert Marcuse describes the nature of false needs in the following way:

“False” needs are those which are superimposed upon the individual by particular social interests in his repression: the needs which perpetuate toil, aggressiveness, misery, and

injustice. Their satisfaction might be most gratifying to the individual, but this happiness is not a condition which has to be maintained and protected if it serves to arrest the development of the ability (his own and others) to recognize the disease of the whole and grasp the chances of curing the disease. The result then is euphoria in unhappiness. Most of the prevailing needs to relax, to have fun, to behave and consume in accordance with the advertisements, to love and hate what others love and hate, belong to this category of false needs.

(Marcuse, 1964: 5)

Here, like Adorno's argument, the notion of "false" needs is implicated in the manipulative power of advertising and the resulting assimilation of individuals into a monolithic taste culture. The public at large is believed to be under a collective hypnosis of commodity capitalism, which dictates and equalizes consumer tastes on a subliminal level and which deprives us of "true" experiences. Although this view helps us evaluate the influential role of marketing messages in contemporary society, it still proves to be highly problematic in its construction of social reality.

First of all, the distinction between "real" and "false" implies a parallel schema of "high" and "low" cultures in which the theorists themselves are somehow placed in the privileged domain of the "high" stratum while the "gullible" masses are said to be in the domain of "low" culture. Thus, the construction of the "authentic" and "inauthentic" leads to a parallel construction of cultural supremacy of the theorists over the masses. Then, the arrival of consumer society poses the threat of mass culture which may adulterate the purity of high culture. Or in Gary Cross's analysis of the Frankfurt school:¹

Adorno and Horkheimer condemned the presumed fact that intellectuals and artists became subjects to 'their illiterate masters.' In turn, they argued, capitalism produced an ideological truce between 'the conformism of the buyers [of mass culture] and the effrontery of the producers who supply them.'

(Cross, 1993: 50–51)

The cultural distaste for the masses renders the Frankfurt School's theorization of consumption to be detached and unengaging. Thus, their stance is not conducive to a deeper understanding of popular culture in its own terms, neglecting vast areas of investigation into the cultural life of modernity. Their theoretical position, at times, may even seem "reactionary" in the worst sense of the word:

¹ Benjamin, with his romantic belief in the possibility of the masses, is a notable exception to this characterization of the Frankfurt School.

Ultimately the only form of dissent available to the Frankfurt School was 'negation,' a cult of aesthetics raised against consumerism....It was based on a similar defence of European high culture against the mass societies of both fascist Europe and consumerist America (Cross, 1993: 51).

Another point of contention is that their understanding of "authenticity" is based upon arbitrary valorization of production over consumption: the idea that the work involved in production is somehow "real" (i.e., superior) while activities associated with consumption are "false" (i.e., inferior). In a similar way, culture is subjugated to economy as the Frankfurt School, in their somewhat determinist vision, emphasize the role of the culture industry as a functional element within the overarching system of commodity capitalism. As a result, we are left with a one-directional flow of influence, from the capitalist economy to the culture industry, and from the culture industry to the masses: people are simply assumed to be powerless. An individual's identity as a consumer becomes a mere reflection of the marketing pitch:

The people recognise themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment. The very mechanism which ties the individual to his society has changed, and social control is anchored in the new needs which it has produced.

(Marcuse, 1964: 9)

Thus, in the end, everything becomes conspiracy:

Marcuse suggests that the common claim that the rise of consumer society has seen the birth of a radical and liberating social democracy and embourgeoisement is little other than the emergence of a new ideology of capital. In their recently acquired affluence, by assimilating the new needs that have been supplied by the cultural industries, and in accepting the dominant ideology to 'relax, to have fun, to behave and consume in accordance with the advertisements'

(Lee, 1993: 18)

CONSUMPTION OF SIGNS

i. The System of Commodities

Today, we are everywhere surrounded by the remarkable conspicuousness of consumption and affluence, established by the multiplication of objects, services, and material goods. This now constitutes a fundamental mutation in the ecology of the human species. Strictly speaking, men of wealth are no longer surrounded by other human beings, as they have been in the past, but by *objects*.

(Baudrillard, [1970] 1988: 29)

Jean Baudrillard developed his theory of consumer culture by re-examining the system of commodified objects in the context of the late twentieth century consumer society. His theoretical concerns revolved around the issue of the symbolic relationship between individuals and the objects under advanced capitalism. Like the Frankfurt school scholars, Baudrillard still subscribes to a somewhat top-down view of culture, but unlike the culture industry theorists, he readily engages with the subject of consumption as a central area of investigation and develops a theory of consumer society more fully. Through his use of semiotic analysis, Baudrillard, delves into notions of consumption as both economic and cultural phenomena which are postulated to be underlain by a referential system of meanings. Moreover, Baudrillard further distinguished himself from the conventional historical-materialist approaches by pointing out the new articulations of culture and economy of the post-industrial capitalism which could no longer be accounted for by the analytical means of traditional Marxism. And it was his definition of consumption that marked a theoretical departure from the prevailing notion of consumption as an appendage of the production system:

Consumption is neither a material practice, nor a phenomenology of “affluence.” It is not defined by the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the car we drive, not by the visual and oral substance of images and messages, but in the organization of all this as signifying substance. Consumption is *the virtual totality of all objects and messages presently constructed in a more or less coherent discourse*. Consumption, in so far as it is meaningful, is *a systematic act of the manipulation of signs*.

(Baudrillard, [1968] 1988: 21–22)

In “The System of Objects” [*Le Système des Objets*], Baudrillard boldly declared that consumption did not derive from the materiality of tangible commodities, but from the system of commodity signs. In this formulation, the acts of consumption, which for him are simply incidental to the overriding hermeneutic structure, are to be understood within the system of meanings. Then, for Baudrillard consumption occurs at the level of abstraction:

The conversion of the object to a systematized status of signs entails a concomitant modification in the human relation, which becomes a relation of consumption. That is to say, human relations tend to be consumed (*consommer*) (in the double sense of the word: to be “fulfilled,” and to be “annulled”) in and through objects, which become the necessary mediation and, rapidly, the substitutive sign, *the alibi*, of the relation

We can see that what is consumed are not objects but the relation itself—signified and absent, included and excluded at the same time—it is *the idea of the relation* that is consumed in the series of objects which manifests it.

(Baudrillard, [1968] 1988: 22)

The distinction between the traditional Marxist approach and Baudrillard’s theorization is that while for the former, objects merely bear the inscription of social relations, for the latter, objects themselves are part of social relations, or better still, an “alibi” for the lack thereof. Consequently, the logic of advanced consumer society is to be found in the system of meanings that those objects construct with respect to the symbolic discourse of consumption. This leads us to the idea of “object paths”—the narrative stream of consciousness that is constructed by the series of objects in the world of consumption. The seduction of commodities is embedded within the narrative structure of spaces of consumption, which are most critical to the practices of consumption in the midst of perceived affluence. Thus, the setting for his analysis is the advanced capitalist state in the postwar world where:

Streets with overcrowded and glittering store windows..., the displays of delicacies, and all the scenes of alimentary and vestimentary festivity, stimulate a magical salivation. Accumulation is more than the sum of its products: the conspicuousness of surplus, the final and magical negation of scarcity, and the maternal and luxurious presumptions of the land of milk and honey. Our markets, our shopping avenues and malls mimic a new-found nature of prodigious fecundity.

(Baudrillard, [1970] 1988: 30)

And what the material surroundings of wealth fertilize is the narrative paths of objects which lay at the core of symbolic communications between commodities and consumers. Thus, even in the seemingly chaotic nature of consumption in the context of material abundance, Baudrillard sees systematic patterns to the practices of consumers which are organized around referential relationships among objects:

The arrangement directs the purchasing impulse towards *networks* of objects in order to seduce it and elicit, in accordance with its own logic, a maximal investment, reaching the limits of economic potential. Clothing, appliances, and toiletries thus constitute object *paths*, which establish inertial constraints on the consumer who will proceed *logically* from one object to the next. The consumer will be caught up in a *calculus* of objects, which is

quite different from the frenzy of purchasing and possession which arises from the simple profusion of commodities.

(Baudrillard, [1970] 1988: 31)

The symbolic linkages among objects and re-circulation of meanings through them —the very language of the advertising industry—is said to define the condition of postmodern consumer societies as Porter (1993) notes below in his review of Baudrillard’s work:

Meaning is produced by endless, symbolic exchanges within a dominant code, whose rhetoric is entirely self-referential; a sexy woman is used to sell a car; a car sells cigarettes; cigarettes sell machismo; machismo is used to sell jeans; and so the symbolic magic circle is sealed. Sex, youth, health, speed, style, power, money, mobility—all transvalue and interpenetrate in the mesmerising dreamworld of ‘floating signifiers’ that typifies the ephemeral, destabilized vortex of late capitalism.

(Porter, 1993: 2)

ii. Deconstructing “Use Value”

Thus there is a logic to the commodity capitalism that connects the paths among products which become naturalized and taken for granted in the everyday world of consumers. Here, consumer needs are no longer defined by people’s intrinsic necessity (as in neo-classical economic theories); rather they become a function of this systemic logic. Thus, in Baudrillard’s formulation, needs are based not upon consumers’ “natural” reaction to the value of objects, but upon a “naturalized” reaction to the logic of objects:

Needs are not so much directed at objects, but at values. And satisfaction of needs primarily expresses and *adherence to these values*. The fundamental, unconscious, and automatic choice of the consumer is to accept the lifestyle of a particular society (no longer therefore a real choice: the theory of the autonomy and sovereignty of the consumer is thus refuted).

(Baudrillard, [1970] 1988: 35)

At this point, his theory shows a strong resemblance to that of the Frankfurt School as the origin of needs is ultimately subsumed by the overriding logic of production:

The truth is not that “needs are the fruits of production,” but that *the system of needs is the product of the system of production*, which is a quite different matter....Needs are produced as a *force of consumption*, and as a general potential reserve (*disponibilité globale*) within the larger framework of productive forces.

(Baudrillard, [1970] 1988: 42)

Yet, this argument is not simply a reiteration of Marx’s base-superstructure model; rather, Baudrillard locates a possible connection between the sociology of needs and the production of

needs (although his position still remains largely deterministic). Therefore, while Baudrillard acknowledges the insatiable “need for difference” (1988: 45) as a sociological force, this need is thought to be tamed according to the forces of production. Thus, his is a model of social regulation via regulation of the means of sociological expressions that the system of consumption is said to underlie. Or conversely:

Consumption is a system which assures the regulation of signs and the integration of the group: it is simultaneously a morality (a system of ideological values) and a system of communication, a structure of exchange.

(Baudrillard, [1970] 1988: 46)

What Baudrillard radicalizes is not so much the fundamental view of the capitalist political economy as the definition and function of the intrinsic “value” that underwrites this “structure of exchange.” This point is most clearly expressed in his deconstruction of the notion of the “use value” as a common denominator between the systems of social needs and commodity exchange. For instance, Baudrillard in “The Mirror of Production” ([1973] 1988) questions the arbitrary nature of use value as a fundamental variable in Marx’s original formulation:

In maintaining a kind of dialectical equilibrium between concrete, qualitative labor and abstract, quantitative labor, Marx gives priority to exchange value (the given economic formation). But in doing so he retains something of the *apparent movement of political economy*: the concrete positivity of use value—a kind of concrete antecedent within the structure of political economy. He does not radicalize the schema to the point of reversing this appearance and revealing use value *as produced by the play of exchange value*.

(Baudrillard, [1973] 1988: 100)

Baudrillard thus states the historical particularity of the “use value” which is derivative of the system of exchange value itself as an “alibi” for the existence of the exchange value and it is ultimately embedded in the idea of economic rationality.² The assumed authenticity of the “use value,” the very notion with which the Frankfurt theorists were preoccupied, is now thought to be merely a facade to the fetishism of the exchange value itself. And it is this privileged status of the exchange value together with its corollary conceptual mirror called the “use value” that produced

² This idea also implies that even though the Marxist conceptual pair of “use value” and “exchange value” were deployed to critique the laissez-faire ideology of the neo-classical economics, the conceptual derivation of the former still remained within the real of the economic rationalism of the former.

and naturalized a historically specific Western “rationality” as a universal measure of human civilizations. And this is what Baudrillard brings to our attention in his critique of use value:

Hence it is not enough to analyze the operation of the quantitative abstraction of exchange value *starting from* use value, but it is also necessary to bring out the condition of the possibility of this operation: the production of the concept of use value of labor power itself, of a specific rationality of productive man.

(Baudrillard, [1973] 1988: 100)

The conclusion that Baudrillard draws on the state of consumer society is that it is far from “rational”: it is *hysterical*. The general condition of the hysteria that characterizes a multitude of permutations in forms and contents of consumption is thought to be the manifestations of the failure of the Western “rationalist” ideology and the dismissal of the “use value” as a universal measure:

By designating the economy as hysterical, Baudrillard forces us to examine our presuppositions about the march of western rationality. Entities which are supposed to have been subject to Weberian ‘demystification’ constituting value-free objects of disinterested scientific enquiry, still seem to possess, by some magic, a sneaky life of their own. Clearly, Baudrillard is implying, we must think of economic activity as proceeding not in a laboratory but in a theatre.

(Porter, 1993: 3)

iii. Masses and the Question of Agency

Another Baudrillardian contribution to the theory of consumption concerns the theorization of the “masses” in relation to the symbolic economy of the signs that he defines the modern media-oriented consumer society to be. The very use of the word “masses” already suggests its affinity to the conceptualization of the consumers under the Frankfurt School model; however, there are certain points which distinguish Baudrillard’s approach from this tradition. For him, the “masses” are defined not simply as the consuming public, but as a meta-consciousness which emerges out of the mass media which is said to be engulfing increasingly larger aspects of people’s everyday life. It is also in this existence of the masses as a mirror of the media that Baudrillard, in a rare moment, actually sees potential for the interpretative resistance by the mass audience/spectator:

[T]he masses, which have always provided an alibi for political representation, take their revenge by allowing themselves the theatrical representation of the political scene. The people have become *public*. They even allow themselves the luxury of enjoying day by day, as in a home cinema, the fluctuation of their own opinion in the daily reading of the opinion polls.

(Baudrillard, [1985] 1988: 212)

Yet, his underlying message here still hardly remains empowering to the consumers who are defined to be passive agents who produce a political farce, but possess little power to effect political change. The individual in Baudrillard's theorization remains "isolated" and "powerless" before the *mass-consuming* media:

As a consumer, humans become again solitary, cellular, and at best *gregarious* (for example in a family viewing TV, the crowd at stadium or in a movie house, etc.) The structures of consumption are simultaneously fluid and enclosed....This is because consumption is primarily organized as discourse to oneself, and has a tendency to play itself out, with its gratifications and deceptions, in this minimal exchange. The object of consumption isolates.

(Baudrillard, [1970] 1988: 54)

In assessing Baudrillard's conceptualization of consumer society, we may first note the deterministic tone of his systems approach to the organization of consumption with its notion of an economy of sign values in today's Western societies:

For Baudrillard the logic of sign-value represents the final triumph of capitalism in its attempt to impose a cultural order compatible with the demands of large-scale commodity production. Individuals have here been reduced to the status of mere consumers, and consumers have become nothing but the vehicles for the transmission of controlled and predetermined differences between consumer objects which function to classify the social world according to the demands of advertising and the mass media.

(Lee, 1993: 24)

Thus, very much like the Frankfurt School, Baudrillard's view hinges upon the singular logic of the capital which permeates throughout the consumption sphere—the very point Kellner (1989) raises in his critique of Baudrillard:

[Baudrillard] is theorising use-values and needs strictly from the standpoint of how they are perceived by capital and how capitalists might fantasise how they are actually producing use-values and needs. From a two-class, or multi perspectival standpoint, however, one can see that commodities have various uses, some defined by the system of political economy and some created by consumers or users.

(Kellner, 1989: 37, quoted in Lee, 1993: 24)

In this schema, human agency fades behind the forces of capitalism and we are left with a highly pessimistic view of disempowered society. As Miller (1987) observes below, this is also what

distinguishes Baudrillard from more sociological perspectives on consumption which I will discuss in the following section:

In contrast to Bourdieu, Baudrillard believed that people have become merely the vehicles for expressing the differences between objects. Rather than representing, the sign becomes the front behind which the actual disappearance of the signified goes unnoticed, and we are left merely with the medium itself.

(Miller, 1987: 165)

SOCIOLOGY OF CONSUMPTION

i. Consumption as a Way of Life

In contrast to the Frankfurt School and Baudrillard's rather top-down views on the cultural life of consumer societies, sociological perspectives on consumption—first popularized by Pierre Bourdieu and later developed by Mike Featherstone—situate the individual within the cultural matrix of “tastes” which is *related to* the economic sphere, but—by no means—*determined* by it. The sociology of consumption breaks down the singular “mass culture” into diverse classes of “lifestyles” in order to recognize both the variations as well as the structures within the activities associated with the late-20th century consumption. This is to say that consumption has its own sociological logic, somewhat independent from the economic base, which are represented by the structured diversity of cultural tastes among the population. Bourdieu's (1984) *Distinction*, based on a voluminous survey of lifestyles and tastes in France, recognized the role of cultural habits (or *habitus* as a whole way of life) which possess the dual function of the objective criteria of classifying various groups of people on the one hand and the subjective means for people to classify themselves.

The classifying subjects who classify the properties and practices of others, or their own, are also classifiable objects which classify themselves (in the eyes of others) by appropriating practices and properties that are already classified (as vulgar or distinguished, high or low, heavy or light etc.—in other words, in the last analysis, as popular or bourgeois) according to their probable distribution between groups that are themselves classified.

(Bourdieu, 1984: 482)

In this rather entangled passage, Bourdieu points out the social and socialized natures of objects that have intimate connections with definitions of various social groups in our society. Unlike Baudrillard, Bourdieu does not necessarily see a direct relationship between the symbolic economy of objects on the social level and the system of commodity exchange at large; rather, this sociological perspective emphasizes the mediating role of objects which define and are defined by the social distances among various groups—an act of social differentiation which manifests through the politics of tastes. Thus, this is a view which pays close attention to the symbolic elements of *interaction* among social classes:

Social subjects comprehend the social world which comprehends them. This means that they cannot be characterized simply in terms of material properties, starting with the body, which can be counted and measured like any other object in the physical world.

A class is defined as much by its *being-perceived* as by its *being*, by its consumption—which need not be conspicuous in order to be symbolic—as much as its position in the relations of production (even if it is true that the latter governs the former).

(Bourdieu, 1984: 483)

ii. Habitus: The Cultural Politics of Tastes

In Bourdieu's conceptualization of consumer society, the purpose of consumption is defined not as a variable within the logic of an advanced capitalist system, but as a paradoxical combination of the will to assimilate, on the one extreme, and the will to differentiate on the other. Tastes become a site of a symbolic class struggle in which there are constant contestations about what and who in fact defines the aesthetic superiority over other social groups—a symbolic battle over the aesthetic status quo. Conversely, this also suggests a cultural means of social control:

Thus *obsequium*, the deep-rooted respect for the established order which sets limits to petit-bourgeoisie. When it is a matter of selling goods and services which, like cultural goods or material 'comfort' goods—household equipment, buildings or furniture, clothing or leisure goods—are more or less successful materializations of the dominant lifestyle, the acquisition of which implies a recognition of the dominant ethical or aesthetic values, nothing succeeds better than the disposition to sell one's own virtues, one's own certainties, one's own values, in a word, the certainty of one's own value, in a sort of *ethical snobbery*, an assertion of exemplary singularity which implies condemnation of all other ways of being and doing.

(Bourdieu, 1984: 456)

Bourdieu's discussion of cultural dispositions of different social groups is developed around the concept of "habitus"—a general constellation of tastes and habits which are defined by one's

personal history, that is, a combination of an individual's biographical and social circumstances as well as his or her active learning. And habitus, for Bourdieu, defines the building blocks of social differentiation in our society:

The habitus is not only a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices, but also a structured structure: the principle of division into logical classes which organizes the perception of the social world is itself the product of internalization of the division into social classes. Each class condition is defined, simultaneously, by its intrinsic properties and by the relational properties which it derives from its position in the system of class conditions, which is also a system of differences, differential positions, i.e., by everything which distinguishes it from what it is not and asserted through difference.

(Bourdieu, 1984: 170–171)

Habitus also mediates between the “economic capital” (i.e., the means of acquisition) and the “cultural capital” (i.e., the means of expression)³ of a given social group. For example, in Bourdieu's ethnographic survey, the habitus of the working class is defined as follows:

The fundamental proposition that the habitus is a virtue made of necessity is never more clearly illustrated than in the case of the working classes, since necessity includes for them all that is usually meant by the word, that is, an inescapable deprivation of necessary goods. Necessity imposes a taste for necessity which implies a form of adaptation to and consequently acceptance of the necessary, a resignation to the inevitable, a deep-seated disposition which is in no way incompatible with a revolutionary intention, although it confers on it a modality which is not that of intellectual or artistic revolts.

(Bourdieu, 1984: 372)

By contrast, the habitus of the well-to-do is defined by the apparent absence and conscious negation of the “necessity”—elements which allow the characteristic development of the aesthetic disposition among those individuals:

The aesthetic disposition, a generalized capacity to neutralize ordinary urgencies and aptitude for practice without a practical function, can only be constituted within an experience of the world freed from urgency and through the practice of activities which are an end in themselves, such as scholastic exercises or the contemplation of works of art. In other words, it presupposes the distance from the world (of which the ‘rôle distance’ is brought to light by Erving Goffman is a particular case) which is the basis of the bourgeois experience of the world.

(Bourdieu, 1984: 54)

Thus, Bourdieu brings forth a theory of sociological formations which takes into account both the economic and cultural perspectives on the world of consumption. Moreover, through his

³ Bourdieu's point is, however, both economic and cultural capital have “real” value in our economic system. Thus, one may substitute cultural capital to compensate for one's lack of economic capital. One example of this might be someone obtaining a well-paying job after investing considerable time and money in higher education

conceptual division of capital into “cultural” and “economic,” Bourdieu offers a more flexible explanation of the diversity of class configurations and the dynamics of social mobility without risking a singularly deterministic model of society. At the same time, however, within these parameters of class formations, Bourdieu develops an argument for points of convergence among different social groups which possess functionally equivalent volumes of capital:

The functional and structural homology which guarantees objective orchestration between the logic of the field of production and the logic of the field of consumption arises from the fact that all the specialized fields (haute couture or painting, theatre or literature) tend to be governed by the same logic, i.e., according to the volume of the specific capital that is possessed (and according to seniority of possession, which is often associated with volume), and from the fact that the oppositions which tend to be established in each case between richer and the less rich in the specific capital—the established and the outsiders, veterans and newcomers, distinction and pretension, rear-guard and avant-garde, order and movement etc.—are mutually homologous (which means that there are numerous invariants) and also homologous to the oppositions which structure the field of the social classes (between dominant and dominated) and the field of the dominant class (between the dominant fraction and the dominated fraction). The correspondence which is thereby objectively established between the classes of products and the classes of consumers is realized in acts of consumption only through the mediation of that sense of the homology between goods and groups which defines tastes.

(Bourdieu, 1984, 232)

iii. Petite Bourgeoisie and Gentrification of the City

Of the utmost interest in Bourdieu’s sociology of taste cultures is his discussion of the petite bourgeoisie, an upwardly mobile social group which is placed in the awkward limbo within the broad class category of the middle class. (This is also the social group that Mike Featherstone analyzes in depth in his treatment of postmodern consumer culture, which I will discuss shortly.) As it aspires to distance itself from the middle class to the cultural proximity of the upper class, the petit bourgeoisie represents a particularly visible group in the arena of “tasteful” mass consumption—a market segment which is defined by affordable (as opposed to utterly prohibitive) luxuries. To take an example in the context of North America, it is as though Bourdieu foresaw the arrival of the Yuppies in the 1980s (*Distinction* was originally published in 1979 in France). Bourdieu describes the mechanism of social differentiation for the petite-bourgeoisie in the following passage:

In short, this petite bourgeoisie of consumers, which mean to acquire on credit, i.e., before its due time, the attributes of the legitimate lifestyle—‘residences’ with ‘olde-worlde’

names and holiday flats at Merlin-Plage, mock luxury cars and mock luxury holidays—is perfectly adapted to act as a transmission belt and pull into the race for consumption and competition those from whom it means to distinguish itself. In fact, one of its distinguishing features is precisely its sense of legitimacy in teaching others the legitimate lifestyle by a symbolic action which not only produces the need for its own product, and therefore, in the long run, legitimates itself and those who exercise it, but also legitimates the lifestyle put forward as a model, that is, that of the dominant class, or more precisely, of the fractions which constitute its ethical avant-garde

(Bourdieu, 1984: 365)

What is also significant about the petite bourgeoisie is their occupational concentration in the service sector and particularly in those high-order services that are associated with the postindustrialization of the city in North America such as consulting, marketing, and advertising:

The new petite bourgeoisie comes into its own in all the occupations involving presentation and representation (sales, marketing, advertising, public relations, fashion, decoration, and so forth) and in all the institutions providing symbolic goods and services

(Bourdieu, 1984:359)

Perhaps it was no accident that these “image” oriented occupations, while serving the needs of multinationals on the one hand, also served the needs of the aspiring petite bourgeoisie who are themselves anxious to re-mould their own identity. In deed, as Mike Featherstone (1987) points out, the petite bourgeoisie “adopts a learning mode to life; he is consciously educating himself in the field of taste, style, lifestyle” (Featherstone, 1987: 65). The rise of the new petite bourgeoisie as a social group also coincides with the development of the self-help and guidebook cultures which emphasize personal transformation through active learning⁴ as well as the resurgence of the central city as the site of enlightened consumption. Featherstone goes further to argue that there are close links among the taste cultures of the petite bourgeoisie and the postmodern landscapes of the city:

If these perceptions [of postmodernism] are translated into an urban context it is apparent that the old notion of premodern city cultures which implies certain cities are sedimented in tradition, history and the arts, housing famous buildings and landmarks which provide a strong sense of place and collective identity—or the ‘de-cultured’ city, the modernist functional economic city whose spatial form is dominated by the gridiron layout and the high-rise modernist architecture—both give way to the postmodern city which marks a return to culture, style and decoration, but within the confines of a ‘no-place space’ in which traditional senses of culture are decontextualized, simulated, reduplicated and

⁴ The fact that the market is now saturated with services that sell personal improvement (for example, self-help books, how-to videos, pop counselling) is perhaps an indication of the generalization of the petit-bourgeoisie sensitivity to the *rest* of the middle-class.

continually renewed and restyled. The postmodern city is therefore much more image and culturally self-conscious; it is both a centre of cultural consumption and general consumption, and the latter, as has been emphasized, cannot be detached from cultural signs and imagery, so that urban lifestyles, everyday life and leisure activities themselves in varying degrees are influenced by the postmodern simulational tendencies.

(Featherstone, 1987: 99)

We have thus returned to the very shopping streets of the city that preoccupied Walter Benjamin almost a century before. The streets are again glittering with a phantasmagoria of commodities, but the subtle impressions do differ: there is once again a re-assemblage of past images just as the 19th century Parisian arcades, but this time around the sense of disjuncture over time and space is greater, and there is once again the presence of urban strollers, but this time the subject is more self-conscious about his/her relationship with the surrounding objects on display. This in fact is the postmodern city which joins the visual observations of Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk* with Baudrillard's notion of the hyper-real so as to produce a world of consumption which resonates with the aesthetic movement of the new leisure class, called the petite bourgeoisie. And for Featherstone, the new landscapes of the postmodern city represent the landscapes of "themes":

If postmodern cities have become centres of consumption, play and entertainment, saturated with signs and images to the extent that anything can become represented, thematized and made an object of interest, an object of the 'tourist gaze,' then it is expected that leisure activities such as visiting theme parks, shopping centres, malls, museums and galleries should show some convergence here.

(Featherstone, 1987: 101)

The "tourist gaze" consumes the images of the exotic which have been re-worked into the design of the "new" city scapes (e.g., re-creation of historic sites and simulacra of foreign places) of which Disneyland⁵ is an influential "prototype" (Ibid., 101). These are the landscapes of "hyper reality" that Umberto Eco (1986) writes about during his visit to the United States. Eco, in his deconstruction of Disneyland, argues that the hyper real is not just a matter of perfect physical imitation, but also a cultural device which induces the longing for the real: "Disneyland not only

⁵ This also begs the question of the spatial origin (inspiration) of the new city as Disneyland itself is a cultural product of suburban Los Angeles. Of course, the purist may argue the Disneylandification of the city in fact is the degenerated form of the postmodern city, which—at least in the beginning—carried an aura of avant-garde cultural experimentations.

produces illusion, but in confessing it—stimulates the desire for it” (Eco, 1986: 44). John Urry adds another twist to this observation by citing the existence of the “post-tourist” gaze:

Post-tourists have no time for authenticity and revel in the constructed simulational nature of contemporary tourism which they know is only a game. They welcome the opportunity to explore backstage regions and tackle the experience from many points of view
(Featherstone, 1987: 102)

This “post-tourist” stance is by and large a practice of aesthetic distancing which is deployed against those who are “catching up” by those who had been there in the first place. In fact, returning to Bourdieu’s formulation of cultural capital, this may be conceived as a characteristic position of the *petite bourgeoisie* (most likely cultural producers) who are better-endowed in cultural capital than in economic capital:

If mere ownership and possession of material goods alone begins to lose its potency as a marker of social prestige and distinction, then the cultural difference generated by the symbolic competences that are brought to bear upon the cultural consumption of those goods becomes the critical point of leverage at which power may be exercised effectively and relations of social plutocracy established
(Lee, 1993: 34)

What is lacking in this cultural and economic analysis of personal capital, however, is the reality of corporate capital which in fact plays a major part in the promotion of the new lifestyle aesthetics—from the Walt Disney enterprise to gentrified city streets—as they provide the infrastructure of postmodern pleasure (often at the expense of more local initiatives which began the movements in the first place). Thus, the postmodern celebration of the sophisticated consumer (which is more characteristic of Featherstone than Bourdieu himself) is faced with the age-old leftist critique of political economy:

[T]here is almost a complete failure to consider the impact of the object of consumption in its guise as a commodity and inscribed with meanings and preferred use-values at a production level. While it is certainly true that commodities become the objects *of* consumption, and are used by people as symbolic co-ordinates for the mapping and construction of social relations, this should not lead us to assume that the powers of the advertisers, designers, marketers, or point-of-sale strategists in general are negligible in the discursive framing of those co-ordinates.
(Lee, 1993: 38–39)

In particular, Lee reminds us of the “dual nature” of commodities as “the bearers of commercial ideologies” on one level and as “instruments for the use in a relatively autonomous form of cultural

expression” (Lee, 1993: 39). For Bourdieu, the conflation of the two identities is further complicated by the research methodology as Miller points out below:

What is especially curious is that this questionnaire is strongly reminiscent of others which are well established as a marketing technique, and are supplemented by actual marketing surveys. Like marketing, it classifies informants according to sociological classes combined with consumption patterns.

(Miller, 1987: 155)

Finally, we are left with the question of ethnicity and the issue of the “self and other” which present further complications and bring moral implications to the “play” of social differentiation in today’s postmodern consumer world. For Miller, Bourdieu’s lack of consideration of ethnicity proved to be particularly unsatisfactory given the ethnographer’s past research experiences:

Also surprising, given Bourdieu’s work as an ethnographer in Algeria, is the lack of consideration for the nature of mass consumption as a historical phenomenon....The subject as agent of strategy appears as highly constrained and normative....Working people are reduced to a relationship of immediacy from which they cannot escape.

(Miller, 1987: 155–156)

GLOBAL CULTURE, GLOBAL CITY

i. The Paradox of “Globalization”

The world of consumption in the postmodern era, as we have already alluded to earlier in this chapter, has strong implications for geography as it has dual tendencies of homogenization of spaces on a global level and differentiation of spaces on a local level. In this convergence-divergence paradox, there are those consumer cultural icons of the West such as Levis, Disney, and MTV that proliferate modern market places across national boundaries, on the one hand, while there are counter-tendencies of re-discovery and re-invention of local traditions, as exemplified by those gentrified “historical” markets that accentuate the distinction of the locality. The former phenomenon has been understood within the spatial discourse of multinational corporate expansion (for example, Thrift and Taylor: 1982) in which mass culture (usually American) is said to spread through the international channels of commodity and financial trade.

The geographical manifestations of globalization of the economy have been described in terms of the World Cities such as New York, London, Paris, and Tokyo which have become key centres of global corporate management. Culturally speaking, then, this globalization of the economy brought with it a parallel spread of the “middle-class” consumer tastes and lifestyles in terms of consumable commodities (e.g., Apple computers and Sony TVs) and consumable images (e.g., Hollywood films and CNN news) that are shared across the world. Here, within this array of commodities and images that are readily recognizable by consumers of most developed and developing nations, we have one area of universal commonality or in Jencks’ words a shared “*musée imaginaire*” that “naturally” binds consumers around the world:

Any middle class urbanite in any large city from Teheran to Tokyo is bound to have a well-stocked, indeed over-stocked ‘image bank’ that is continually restuffed by travel and magazines. His *musée imaginaire* may mirror the potpourri of the producers but it is nonetheless natural to his way of life.

(Jencks, 1984: 127, quoted in Harvey, 1989: 301)

David Harvey (1989) defines, in more general terms, this new taste culture of the global city within the framework of international capital whose cycle of circulation has become both accelerated and volatile in the 1980s. In particular, he emphasizes the pervasive role of the fashion industry which “provided a means to accelerate the pace of consumption not only in clothing, ornament and decoration but also across a wide swathe of lifestyles and recreational activities” (Harvey, 1989: 285). This trend was further supplemented by “a shift away from the consumption of goods and into the consumption of services—not only personal, business, educational, and health services, but also into entertainments, spectacles, happenings, and distractions” (Harvey, 1989: 285). The accelerated pace of consumption in the 1980s, what becomes emphasized is the generation and dispatching of information (e.g., fashion trends) as well as the accumulation and legitimatization of knowledge (e.g., lifestyle counselling) as Daniel Bell had predicted in his postindustrial thesis (1973) a decade earlier.

ii. The Aesthetics of the New Middle Class

Demographically, the new international cultures of consumption were also founded upon the emergence of the new middle class who occupy the privileged status of high-order service managers

(i.e., professions in advertising, accounting, marketing, R&D, etc.) that support directly or indirectly the needs of multinational corporations (Sassen, 1991). The new “gentry” of post-industrial society, most of whom come from the generation of the counter-culture, have adopted new urban-based lifestyles and in the process contributed to the phenomenon of gentrification (here simply defined by the infusion of the new middle class into the central city⁶) in large urban centres in the West and particularly in North America (Ley, 1995). The resulting spatial re-configuration of global cities thus saw an expansion of not only the office and communications infrastructure, but also cultural amenities that cater to the new middle class (e.g., art galleries, boutiques, restaurants, fitness centres, etc.). For example, in a study which examined the local impact of London’s status as an international financial centre, Thrift et al. (1987) find a close correlation between the upwardly-mobile, new middle class and the rise of consumer services.⁷

The new spaces of leisure represent a display of new affluence as well as a statement of new aesthetics, both of which demand a “qualitative” distinction from the mundane spaces of production. The cultural politics of “quality of life,” thus, manifests itself in the new spatial demand of the new middle class. In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre describes this phenomenon as a generalized disposition of the leisure class that seeks a liminal experience:

When people leave this space [of production], they move towards the *consumption of space* (an unproductive form of consumption). This moment is the moment of departure—the moment of people’s holidays, formerly a contingent but now a necessary moment. When this moment arrives, ‘people’ demand a qualitative space.

(Lefebvre, 1991: 353)

⁶ With respect to gentrification, there of course is a question of displacement, that is, the voluntary or involuntary eviction of the existing working-class population in the inner-city neighbourhood by the “Yuppie-driven” market force. The scale of residential displacement is perhaps related to the relative viability of inner city neighbourhoods at the onset of gentrification. Thus, direct displacement is probably more pronounced in Canadian and Japanese cities than in American cities where residential abandonment in the inner city was more common. In Tokyo, the city this thesis investigates, the question of gentrification is more ambiguous as there was, in general, greater displacement of residential units by corporate capital than by middle-class capital. Although, there is a strong emphasis on the “arrival” of the new middle class, the meaning and ramifications of “gentrification,” therefore, varies somewhat according to local contexts.

⁷ One of the significant conclusions of this study was, however, that London’s Big Bang (de-regulation of international finance) had reinforced the financial well-being of the existing upper-class, thus further contributing to the condition of income polarization.

The aesthetic requirement of the postmodern tourist space, with its emphasis on “quality” experience, contrasts against earlier observations made by Relph (1976) about the landscapes of mass leisure which were characterized by “gaudy colours, grotesque adornments, and the indiscriminate borrowing of styles and names from the most popular places of the world” (93). Or perhaps, it doesn’t. The elements of cultural smorgasbord denounced by Relph as an “inauthentic” space are still there in postmodern landscapes of leisure. Indeed, cultural quotations abound the dominant architectural language of postmodernism. Yet, in the realm of discriminating consumers, the “grotesque” and “gaudy” have been re-packaged into more “tasteful” dosages of exotica that invoke, in principle, aestheticized experiences which stress the importance of “authenticity.”⁸ Thus, on one level, postmodern landscapes of leisure may be understood as the reclamation of meaning in cultural landscapes which had once been dominated by the indiscriminate quality of “placelessness” that Relph (1976) spoke of. At the same time, corporate involvement in this process, however, also points to the commercialization of “authentic” landscapes: the postmodern transformation of leisurely space undoubtedly provides the linkage between the class aesthetics of “cultural capital” and the corporate logic of “economic capital.”

iii. Images of the Postmodern City

This issue of culturalized landscape is also relevant to the seemingly counter-global process found in the raised awareness of the locale, a celebration of historical local sites (usually found in the older section of the city such as Vancouver’s Gas Town and Tokyo’s Shitamachi). For Harvey, this reclamation of old urban areas as “heritage” neighbourhoods represents, at best, commodification of local history by the new middle class:

It is difficult, however, to maintain any sense of historical continuity in the face of all the tradition is now often preserved by being commodified and marketed as such. The search for roots ends up at worst being produced and marketed as an image, as a simulacrum or pastiche (imitation communities constructed to evoke images of some folksy past, the fabric of traditional working-class communities being taken over by an urban gentry).

(Harvey, 1989: 303)

⁸ The reverse implication of this is that “authenticity” requires its audience to possess a finer appreciation for culture (cultural capital) which in turn demands a process of learning.

What is emphasized in Harvey's argument is that this process of "preserving" actually takes on a very "discontinuous" form as it is the past production of the working class that is being re-made for the present consumption of the middle class. Thus, the very term "heritage" betrays itself once we identify the class specificity of the project.

There is, however, another dimension to the reclamation of local history which is rooted in the idea of romantic nostalgia which accompanies the crisis of self-identity in periods of rapid change. And as such, it has been a repeated topic in the larger discourse of Western modernization as Roland Robertson (1992) contends below:

[G]lobalization has been a primary root of the rise of willful nostalgia. More specifically, it was the take-off period of rapidly accelerating globalization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that witnessed the flowering of the urge to *invent* traditions. Willful nostalgia as a form of cultural politics—as well as the politics of culture—has been a major feature of globalization.

(Robertson, 1992: 155)

Spaces of nostalgia, in these regards, represent an emotional haven for the modern subjectivity in turmoil. To take an extreme example (in the sense that it is completely a fictive space without the backing of "actual" local history), Disneyland's Main Street symbolizes the nostalgia of the communal past for America. The thematized spaces of Disneyland, however, are not restricted to the images of a native past—there are plenty of examples that make specific references to the exotic.⁹ For example, the "It's A Small World" ride displays a "collection" of world cultures complete with appropriate ethnic costumes and iconic landscapes (e.g., kimono-clad girls in front of Mount Fuji). Again, there is a deliberate attempt to produce images of village-like "harmony" as children of the world salute, uniformly in English, "It's a small world, after all."

These notions of "imagined" communities also extend to the presentation of modern shopping centres in the West which in recent years have been transformed into mini-theme parks in their own right. In his interpretative analysis of retail environment, Gross observes trends in the re/creation of communal nostalgia as follows:

⁹ This point is also complicated by the fact that the most of Walt Disney's stories are based on European fairy tales, which can either be taken as a longing for the cultural origin (at least for white America) or as a fantasy of "foreign" places. But, most of all, these are domesticated displays of "cultural origins" and "exotic places" as the stores have been modified (sometimes very substantially) versions of the "original" flavour.

With the contemporary postmodernist penchant for the vernacular, this original form [of communal nostalgia] is undergoing a renaissance in the specialty center, a collection of high-end outlets that pursue a particular retail and architectural theme. Typical these are also idealizations of villages and small towns, chock-full of historical and regional details to convince the consumer of their authenticity.

(Gross, 1993: 23)

Furthermore, the author contends that the generally “festive” atmosphere of the mall combined with the suggestion of exotic places establishes it as a liminal space¹⁰ in which one may seek an escape from the everyday world.¹¹

Today’s consumer landscapes are thus not only the container of exotic commodities, but are themselves representations of the exotic—a spatial simulacrum of the world. In the age of mass media, however, those images of “lost communities” or “distant culture” that contribute to the construction of “liminal experience” have become referents with no firm commitment to their “origins.” Thus, the definition of “authenticity” which induces the sense of the exotic has also become more ambiguous:

[A] simulacrum is a substitution of something for something else where you forget the original; it’s a repetition with a difference that doesn’t matter—indeed, which you desire, embrace. Donald Trump based his Taj Mahal doormen’s costumes not on Indian dress but on the costumes worn by Indian characters in old Hollywood movies. “Most people haven’t been to India,” said Robert Entekin, head of the Taj’s costume department. “Their perception is what they’ve seen on movies and TV. We had to cater to the excitement of the fantasy rather than the traditional reality of Indian culture.”

(Blonsky, 1988: 185)

Here, television, with its natural ability to synthesize incoherent fragments of images, has become a perfect metaphor for the spatial strategy of consumption. The nature of “authenticity” also becomes quite contentious. In the above example, it is the prevailing images of India in the media which actually define the realism of its imitation in a thematic landscape of leisure.¹²

¹⁰ Here, following anthropologist Victor Turner, who coined the term, Gross defines it as “a state between social stations, a transitional moment in which established rules and norms are temporarily suspended” (Gross, 1993: 27).

¹¹ Of course, this kind of observation is always discounted by the discrepancy between the intent of the mall management and the mall user (Warren, 1993). There is a strong tendency for such a “festive” place to become “mundane” in a relatively short period of time without endless renovations to sustain its “fresh” image.

¹² This idea is, however, nothing new to our age. For example, in *Colonizing Egypt*, Timothy Mitchell (1988) describes how it was the images of Egypt found in novels and other Orientalist books that formed the basis of “authenticity” for Europeans. Thus, while the display of those “stereotyped” images in world fairs was able to produce the “reality effect” for the spectators, the actual trip to Egypt often produced a great disappointment because real Egypt actually lacked (their imagined) “realism” for the European travellers.

The production of foreign images is certainly a common feature among the global cities of the late 20th century where consumption is inevitably defined as a cultural expression as much as it is an economic activity. Yet, even when we employ the term “global,” the empirical examples and theoretical categories almost exclusively reflect the experiences in the global cities of the Western world (London, New York, Paris, Los Angeles, etc.). Tokyo, for example, is widely recognized as one of the major global cities, however, the debate over consumption cultures often does not address the daily experiences in Tokyo as the city possesses a dual “Western and non-Western”¹³ identity which poses the problem of categorical ambiguity. In terms of its position within the international circuit of capital is often thought of as an equal partner to New York and London; however, in terms of its cultural position, in spite of the current postmodern rhetoric of differences, there are surprisingly very few references to Tokyo as a city of cultural consumption.¹⁴

In this chapter, I have outlined three approaches to cultures of consumption which emphasized different aspects of consumption: Frankfurt School’s critique of the “manipulative” practices of the cultural industry, Baudrillard’s revelation on the symbolic narratives of consumer capitalism, and Bourdieu and Featherstone’s understanding of consumption as a sociological practice. How will these theories bear relevance to consumer practices of modern Japanese in their particular cultural and geographical context? What are the issues of consumption in Tokyo which may differentiate it from other global cities in North America and Europe? What are the common grounds that contemporary consumers share across the national boundaries by virtue of the heightened global interaction of culture and capital? How, in turn, does this process of internationalization become manifested in the formation of taste cultures and thematic landscapes which may be specific to Tokyo?

¹³ Of course, this sort of a clear cultural division itself is highly suspect as it presupposes the mutual exclusivity of the two by suppressing commonalities.

¹⁴ There are some notable exceptions in recent anthropological works on Japanese popular culture (e.g., Tobin, 1992).

To answer these questions, in the pursuing chapters, I will examine the genealogy of contemporary consumer practices in Tokyo and their spatial characteristics. I will, in fact, consider the evolution of Tokyo's modern landscapes of consumption since the 1960s, the decade which witnessed of the belated arrival of mass consumer society in Japan. But, first, in order to establish the context of my study, I will begin with a general overview of the postwar history of consumer culture in Japan as a whole and the recent development of Tokyo as a world city.

3. TOKYO AS A CITY OF CONSUMPTION

INTRODUCTION

It is the modern Japanese, before the Americans, who install the regime of lovable fakes. The front entrance of a Seibu department store in Tokyo is many television screens, showing different scenes, then all together forming a gigantic monitor offering a gentle, vast landscape in substitution of Tokyo's.

(Blonsky, 1988: 185)

Tokyo, with its vast landscapes of simulacra, is a categorical anomaly. It leads a dual existence—one that is “Western” in the sense that it is situated in the upper circle of capital in the global economy and another that is “non-Western” in the sense that it shares cultural affinities with the rest of Asia. Theoretically speaking, Tokyo falls into a dilemma: one cannot easily fix its identity as one or the other. In the past, this has led to either the assimilating view that Tokyo is just another global city within the capitalist system or the alienating observation that it is an overgrown village of the “rice paddy” culture.¹ Because of such an ambiguity, Tokyo has been “left out” from most of the debates about cultures of consumption in spite of the fact that it is arguably the largest consumption centre of the world in terms of the volume of goods and concentration of consumers². This absence is also evident in the theoretical issues and empirical examples cited in this chapter as the majority of them are restricted to the Western experience. As Featherstone states below, the whole discourse on consumption is often conceived as a “Western” project:

¹ The former is often found in theorizations by economists and business analysts while the latter is most evident in the writings of cultural anthropologists.

² This is even true of more “geographically-aware” treatment of consumption. For example, in David Harvey's *Condition of Postmodernity* (1989), references to Japan suddenly appear in his discussion of global economic change, but quickly disappear in the following chapters which describe cultural change.

We are only now—prompted by the rise of Japan—starting to think of what it might entail to translate our culture into the classificatory schemes and symbolic hierarchies of a potentially world-dominant non-Western civilizational bloc with its own self-confident global cultural project.

(Featherstone, 1989: 147)

To categorize Japan within a self-referential cultural project may be useful in identifying its differences, but it may also lead to the dismissal of obvious linkages with the cultural practices of consumers in the West. This is another variation of the general debate over the hegemonic interplay between the universal condition of global interaction and the apparent persistence of local traditions. What is needed here is, perhaps, historical, geographical, and sociological analyses which can situate the linkages between culture and consumption in their proper chronological, spatial, social contexts. For example, Rosenberger (1992) argues that even within the relatively short time span of the postwar period of economic development, the meaning of Western influence has shifted significantly:

For many years, Western-style has been associated not only with status and individuality but also with *goritekisa*, rationality and functionality. In the postwar period, the emphasis was on improving life by supplying each home with “necessary” goods—a small refrigerator, a vacuum cleaner, a water heater, a small black-and-white television set. Although efficiency and rationality are still highly valued in contemporary Japan, “style” and “fulfillment” are goods that “improve the quality of life”—with the government’s approval.

(Rosenberger, 1992: 115)

Juxtaposed upon this historical path are the spatial patterns of consumption which form the geography of consumer culture in Japan. Here, Tokyo plays a pivotal role as an entrepôt of foreign (Western) consumer trends:

There is an internal circulation of cultural and material capital in Japan: the West most often enters Japan through Tokyo, is domesticated there (made appropriately and uniquely Japanese), and is then repackaged for export to the provincial periphery. To rural Japanese, Tokyo, Osaka and other megalopolis represent the modern, the Western, the hectic, the decadent, the individual, the powerful.

(Tobin, 1992: 16)

Between Japan and the West, there were also parallel cultural shifts from the youth movements of the 1960s to the “decadent” consumerism of the 1980s. Those who subscribe to the stage theory of economic development may argue that these were to be seen as a common process of “social maturity.” Yet, its obvious ethnocentrism aside, such a view does not take into account local

circumstances which may contribute to a greater complexity of social change beyond linear notions of historical evolution. In the Japanese context, the cultural issues of consumption have always been meshed with the issue of the self/group identity which was constructed in relation to its Western “Other.” Also, in Japan the cultural politics of the new middle class is not simply a matter of social mobility, but also a matter of Westernization of their habitus:

In addition to differentiating themselves from the poor, aspiring classes seek to disassociate themselves from the Japanese-style houses in which most of them grew up.

(Rosenberger, 1992: 108)

As Rosenberger states above, such markers of social distinction can be inscribed in the language of architecture, and on the larger scale, in the commercial landscapes of Tokyo itself. But, the shifting identity was above all evident in the subjectivity of individual consumers—the definition of *watashi*³ [I]. Japanese feminist Chizuko Ueno (1992), for example, argues that in the 1980s *watashi* was constructed as an individualistic, consuming, subject. Although her argument is, in many ways, consistent with the Western formulation of the consumer as a “liberated self,” there is a stronger emphasis on the distinguishing role of the commodity in her and other critical writings on Japanese consumerism, even more so than Bourdieu’s notion of habitus. It is in this respect, that the display space for the commodity (that is, Tokyo’s landscapes of consumption) plays an important role in the definition of the self. It is worthwhile to note here Creighton’s (1992) observation about the cultural role of the Japanese department stores (*depato*), which form the main architectural reference points in the commercial landscapes of central Tokyo:

Department stores are central to the circulation of art in Japan. Many *depato* have full-fledged, legally designated art museums (*bijutsukan*); all have exhibition halls and art galleries.⁴

(Creighton, 1992: 51)

The department stores, thus, mediate between the cultural models (the West) and aspiring consumers in one convenient space of consumption. In a way, there is a breakdown of high and

³ Here, *watashi* is used as a gender-neutral pronoun, however, it is more feminine than masculine not only because of its usual feminine usage in everyday spoken-Japanese, but also because of the role of women as a consuming subjectivity (see Ch.3 for a more detailed discussion of gender and consumption).

⁴ Her point is that it is very rare for (today’s) department stores in the West to host world-class art collections which Japanese department stores exhibit as their regular monthly events.

low cultures when world-class art is exhibited in the familiar spaces of consumption. Thus, the urban retail environment is not just a site of economic activity; it is also a site of cross-cultural encounter.

In this chapter, I will establish the social and geographical contexts in which these new cultural practices in Tokyo, as a global city of cultural mediation, took roots. In order to introduce the locational setting of my study, first, I will begin with a brief discussion of the social geography of Tokyo. Then, having established geographical parameters of my study, I will describe the postwar history of consumption in Japan (and particularly in Tokyo) in two parts: the first half deals with the emergence of mass consumption in Japan during the first 20 years after the end of World War II; the second half addresses the development of new consumer aesthetics, which I call the “new cultures of consumption,” since the end of the 1960s.

GEOGRAPHY OF TOKYO

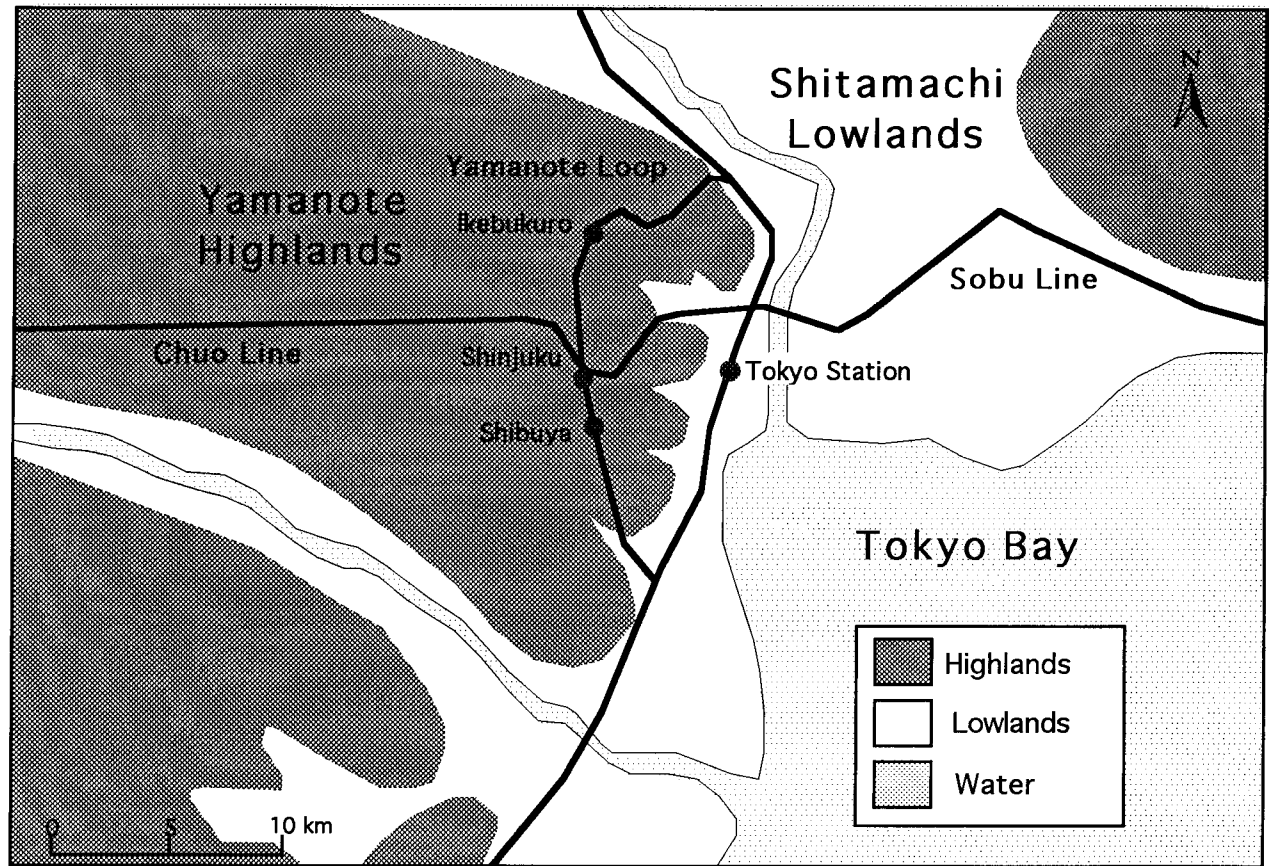
i. Shitamachi and Yamanote

One of the best ways to understand the geography of Tokyo is to picture a large “foot” extending from north-west towards south-east, all the way towards Tokyo Station (see Map 1). The large “foot” represents the highlands of Yamanote and what lies to the east of the highland are the lowlands of Shitamachi (Iozawa, 1994). During the Edo period (1603–1867) the government officials of the *samurai* class established large-scale residences (*buke-yashiki*) in Yamanote⁵ while the merchants and craftsmen built their town of commerce in Shitamachi⁶. Thus, in those days, there already was a cultural divide which separated the two worlds: Yamanote was associated with the “official” high culture of the ruling class and Shitamachi, with the “popular” low culture. In

⁵ More specifically, many of these residences were established in neighbourhoods such as Akasaka and Azabu where many of foreign embassies are located today.

⁶ During the Edo period, the merchant town of Nihombashi and the crafts town of Asakusa were the architypal Shitamachi-type neighbourhood. In today’s nostalgic discourse of Shitamachi, Asakusa is often said to be the “heart” of Shitamachi.

Map 1: Yamanote and Shitamachi



Source: Iozawa, 1994: 10.

between Yamanote and Shitamachi lay the official grounds of Tokugawa shogunate's castle, which to this day occupies the huge green "void" at the centre of Tokyo as the Imperial Palace.

Even today, this topological and social divide between the western highlands and the eastern lowlands in Tokyo is reflected in the social perception of the city. Shitamachi, Tokyo's old downtown, is said to be a "heritage" community which still has a strong sense of neighbourhood; on the other hand, Yamanote, Tokyo's uptown, evokes the images of newer and more affluent neighbourhoods which, however, lack the cohesive sense of community (Uemura, 1989: 184). According to Hakuhodo's survey conducted in the early 1980s, Shitamachi is often associated with the images of old and congested houses, low-rise structures, neighbourhood shops, temples, and

traditional festivals, and Yamanote, with large and upscale houses, luxury condominiums, high-rise buildings, celebrities and the well-to-do, and an overall urbane quality. (H.I.L.L., 1990: 124).

Furthermore, the contrast between Shitamachi and Yamanote is often expressed in personality archetypes: the warm and traditional Shitamachi merchant and the cool and modern Yamanote professional. When we extend this comparison to inter-personal relationships, Shitamachi is said to be “wet” [*shimetta*] which suggests its emotional expressiveness (as well as its actual proximity to the “wet” lowlands) while Yamanote is described as “dry” [*kawaita*] which suggests its individualist ethos (as well as its geographical location in the “dry” high lands). The images of the kind Shitamachi soul, indeed, have been institutionalized in the popular movie series *Futen⁷no Tora-san*(Kondo, 1990). The main character Tora-san is a perpetual wanderer who is old-fashioned, rather simple, and warm-hearted [*ninjo-teki*] (in the survey by Hakuhodo, his name also appeared as an iconic figure of Shitamachi).

Against such a “homey” image of Shitamachi, there is a sense of snobbery in the more “sophisticated” culture of Yamanote. Anthropologist Dorinne Kondo who was conducting an ethnographic research in Shitamachi experienced this first hand when she received rather condescending comments on her chosen site of study from her Yamanote informants :

Geography and “class” are again conflated, as two Japanese friends confirmed for me by arguing heatedly about the applicability of the word “yuppie” to describe a Shitamachi restaurant. Both antagonists were students for advanced degrees at Harvard, and both were from aristocratic, wealthy families. After going back and forth, one of them shouted in exasperation: “Yuppie is *not* Shitamachi, it’s Yamanote!” Implicit in this distinction are “class,” power, and lifestyle conceptualized in terms of symbolic space.

(Kondo, 1990: 58)

Kondo’s experience suggests a strong linkage between the habitus⁸ and the geography which is expressed in the discursive practices of native Tokyoites. Moreover, one of the common features of the Shitamachi-Yamanote discourse is the assumed “class” superiority of Yamanote as it, (literally) looks down, from the higher plateau of economic and cultural capital, on the inhabitants of Shitamachi lowlands. What is significant in this formulation is that Yamanote is given a higher

⁷ For the definition of *Futen*, refer to my discussion of Shinjuku’s *Futen* in Chapter 3

⁸ For a definition of “habitus,” see my discussion on Bourdieu in Chapter 2.

status partly because of its more “Western” attributes in contrast to Shitamachi’s “Japanese” qualities. Finally, as a classifier of habitus, the Yamanote-Shitamachi distinction extends to one’s general way of life in which class, culture, and lifestyle become intertwined. This becomes quite apparent when the resident of Shitamachi moves “up” to Yamanote:

Another indication of Yamanote preeminence lies in its general desirability as a place of residence. It is far more likely for a Shitamachi person who has “made good” to move to the Yamanote area than vice versa....Smith (1960) tells of the various adjustments the “arriviste” will have to make in order to be fully accepted into Yamanote society. Language, dress, manner (no “wisecracking” allowed, says Smith), would all have to be altered to conform to the canons of bourgeois restraint and respectability.

(Kondo, 1990: 62)

ii. Demographic Changes and Lifestyles

While Shitamachi had long been the centre of population in the city of Edo (predecessor of today’s Tokyo), the modern history of Tokyo since the Great Earthquake of 1923 has been characterized by a “westward shift” towards Yamanote (Seidensticker, 1983). In particular, new residential developments in the Yamanote suburbs were undertaken by the private railway companies (e.g., predecessors of today’s Tokyu and Seibu⁹) along their newly built railway lines (Ishizuka, 1986). These new suburban residential developments were designed as garden cities [*denen toshi*] (e.g., Denen Chofu) and university cities¹⁰ [*gakuen toshi*] (e.g., Seijo) which were reminiscent of Ebenezer Howard’s planned city, and called by the same name the Garden City, in that they emphasized the green environment and community amenities (parks, hospitals, schools) (Ibid.). These planned communities of Yamanote, which were more “Western” than the older communities of Shitamachi, were marketed towards the city’s growing middle-class families and formed the foundation of today’s Yamanote inner-suburbs.

In the postwar period, along with the further westward development of New Towns [*nyu taun*] to the mountainous Tama district, the terminal stations of the commuter railways—such as Shinjuku, Shibuya, and Ikebukuro—rapidly developed as new commercial centres. These commercial centres were subsequently given the status of *fuku-toshin* (sub-centres or satellite

⁹ The railway conglomerates also built department stores the terminus of their commuter railway lines.

¹⁰ Unlike garden cities, university cities were actually based on German models (Ishizuka, 1986: 213).

Figure 3.1: Changing Population Balance In Tokyo (50–90)

	Tokyo	Shinjuku Ward	Hachioji City
1950	6,277,500	246,373	131,470
1955	8,037,084	348,675	148,131
1960	9,683,802	413,690	164,622
1965	10,869,244	413,910	207,753
1970	11,408,071	390,657	263,527
1975	11,673,554	367,218	337,621
1980	11,618,281	343,928	387,178
1985	11,829,363	332,722	426,654
1990	11,855,563	296,790	466,347

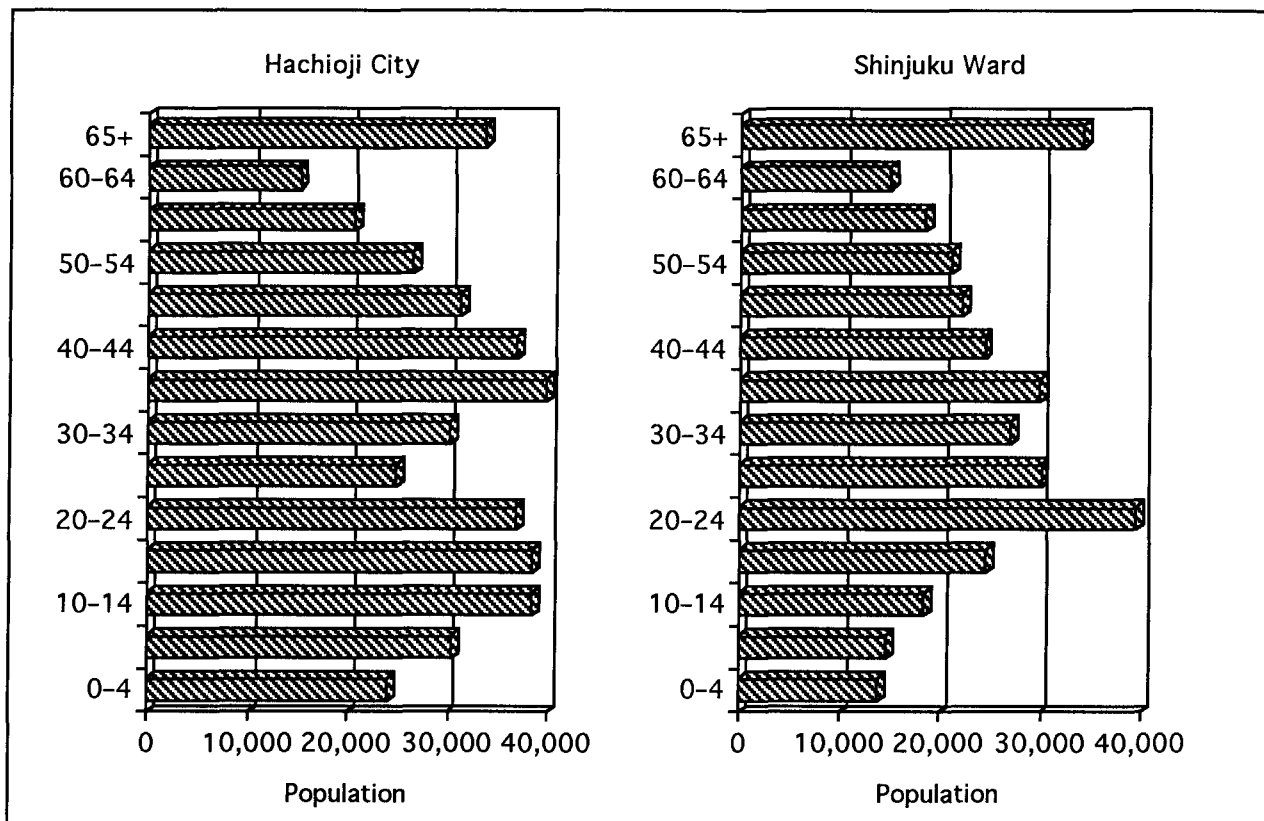
Source: Yoshimi, 1987: 284; *Population Census of Japan*, 1985 & 1990

cities) by the city government in the beginning of the 1980s (Seidensticker, 1990: 212). Of the three largest sub-centres, Shinjuku (which by far was most accessible by rail) came to rival the older central business district (CBD) of “Ginza-Nihombashi-Marunouchi” on the eastern side of the Imperial Palace (Seidensticker, 1990: 213).

Between 1950 and 1990, as the city’s population grew, the older suburbs became part of the central city and the new suburbs were developed further west. For example, during this period, the population of Shinjuku Ward maintained steady growth until the late 1960s and began to decline in the 1970s as commercial developments replaced older residential neighbourhoods (Figure 3.1). Hachioji City, a newer Yamanote¹¹ suburb, on the other hand, began to grow rapidly in the 1960s and continued to grow in the 1970s and 1980s despite the relatively small growth of Tokyo’s population as a whole. Between 1965 and 1990, Hachioji City’s population size increased more than two fold and now far exceeds that of Shinjuku Ward. These changes are consistent with the westward shift in the gravity of Tokyo’s population in the postwar period.

¹¹ Strictly speaking, Yamanote refers to the original inner suburbs of Tokyo; however, the term is often used to describe all the newer developments in western Tokyo—areas which are sometimes referred to as New Yamanote.

Figure 3.2: Population Pyramids of Hachioji City and Shinjuku Ward (1985)

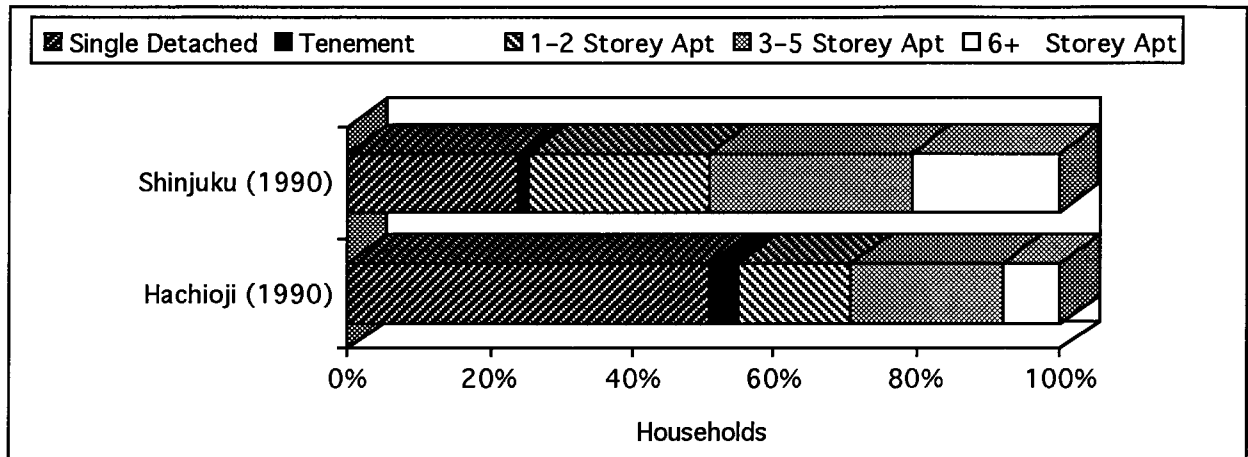


Source: Population Census of Japan, 1985.

The shifting balance of population is also reflected in the distribution of age-groups in the two areas (Figure 3.2). In Shinjuku Ward, there are two distinct peaks which represent single people in their 20s and older people over 65, respectively. By contrast, what we find in Hachioji City¹² is a profile of young families with children, which are represented by the two distinctive peaks. The parents, those between 30 and 40 years old, represent the babyboomer generation in Japan while their children, those who are between 10 to 20 years old, represent the babyboom “echo” generation (and as I will describe more fully later in chapter 5, the latter are relevant to the new culture of consumption in Shibuya). These differences between Shinjuku and Hachioji are also

¹² There are surprisingly a large number of people who fall in “65+” category in Hachioji City. This is partly due to the existence of three-generation families, but it is also the result of the available care facilities (hospitals and private senior citizens’ homes) in the suburban neighbourhood.

Figure 3.3: Composition of Housing Types for Selected Municipalities

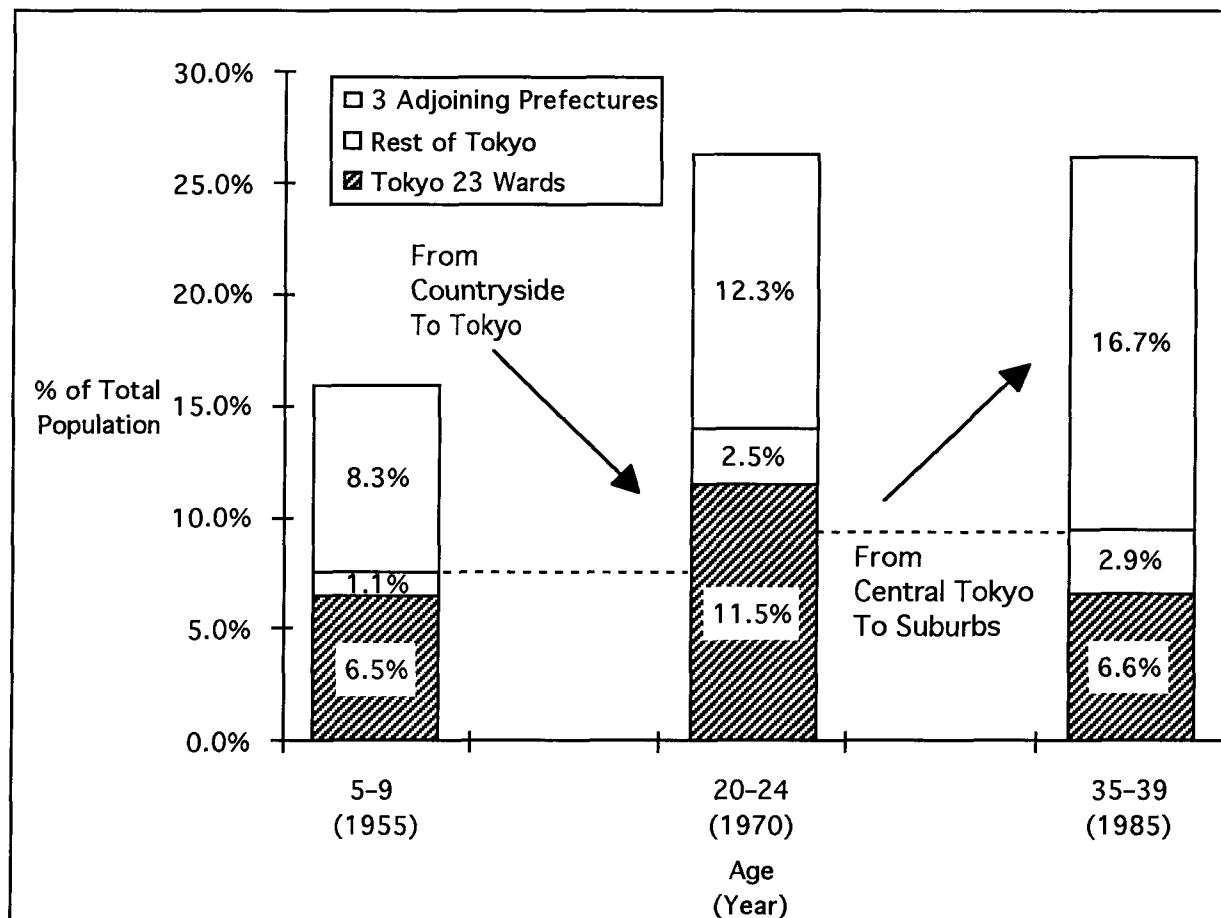


Source: *Population Census of Japan*, 1990.

evident in housing types. In Hachioji, over 50 per cent of households live in single-detached houses while in Shinjuku, the majority of the households occupy apartments of various sizes.

The suburbanization of Tokyo's residential areas was closely connected with the movements of the babyboomer generation, even on the national level. The bar charts in Figure 3.4 show the percentage of the babyboomer generation (here the sample group represents those women who were born between 1946-1961). In 1955, Tokyo and its three adjacent prefectures (Chiba, Saitama, Kanagawa) already contained over 15 per cent of the boomer generation. But by 1970, one in four baby boomers in Japan lived in Tokyo and its neighbouring prefectures. This was due to the massive rural-urban migration among those babyboomers who were born in the countryside but moved to the Tokyo region. Between the late 1950s and early 1960s, they arrived *en masse* in areas like Shinjuku which offered a substantial number of low-rent apartments for singles. But as they formed families, they moved out of the central neighbourhoods into suburban communities in western Tokyo as well as other adjoining prefectures where single-detached family units were readily available and were still (at least in the beginning) affordable.

Figure 3.4: Babyboomer Generation (Female) Residing In Tokyo Area

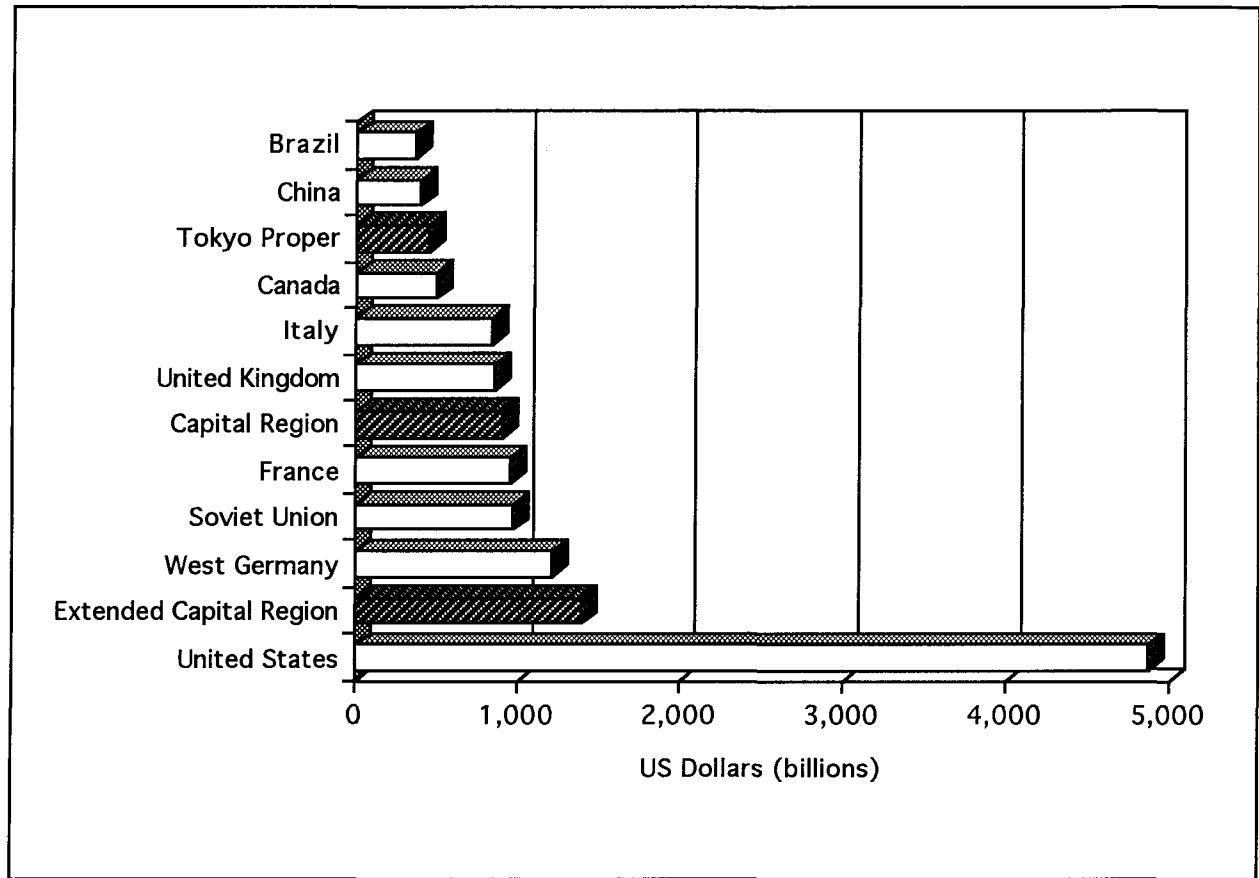


Source: Makino, 1990: 31.

iii. Tokyo as a Global City

Apart from suburbanization, during the past two decades, Tokyo was also going through another equally significant transformation. As Japan moved into second place behind the United States during the 1960s, in terms of economic size, so did Tokyo continue to increase its share of the national economy. These changes resulted in the total output of the Tokyo megalopolis matching the national economies of several industrialized countries by various measures. In 1988, for

Figure 3.5: Comparison of Tokyo Market With Other Economies (1988 GDP Figures)



Source: Makino, 1990: 3.

example, the GDP of the Tokyo Proper¹³ fell between China and Canada while the larger Capital Region¹⁴ fell between United Kingdom and France, and finally its Extended Capital Region¹⁵ outmatched West Germany (see Figure 3.5).

Furthermore, Tokyo became a city of global importance in the 1980s as a control centre of Japanese multinational corporations which amassed huge trade surplus vis-à-vis the rest of the world—capital which could now be re-circulated through overseas investment and financing

¹³ “Tokyo Proper” (or Tokyo Metropolitan Area) refers to the Tokyo Prefecture itself.

¹⁴ “Capital Region” [*Shutoken*] refers to Tokyo, Ibaragi, Tochigi, Gunma, and Yamanashi

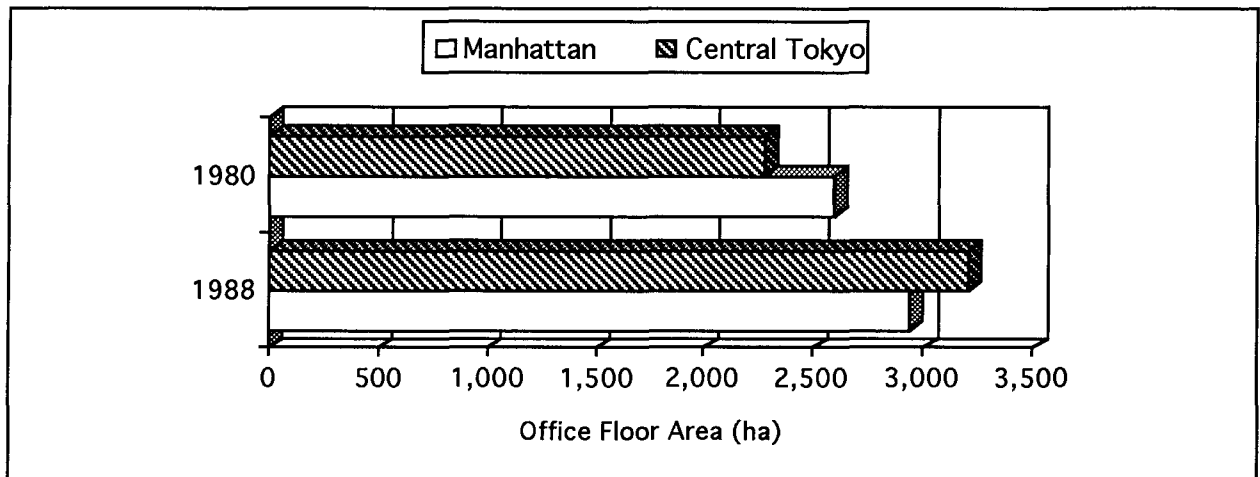
¹⁵ “Extended Capital Region” refers to the “Capital Region” plus Miyagi, Yamagata, Fukushima, Niigata, Nagano, Shizuoka, Aichi, Gifu, Toyama, and Ishikawa.

(Nihonkeizai, 1990). In other words, Tokyo became one of the largest sources of capital in the global economy. Decisions made in Tokyo now commanded global implications: during the 1980s, the Japanese banks became one of the largest suppliers of capital in Southern California while the Japanese securities firms became the chief bidder in the U.S. government's bond market (Nihonkeizai, 1991). Tokyo's financial markets, following the precedents in London and New York, also became de-regulated in the 1980s and an offshore capital market, JOM (Japan Offshore Market) was instituted in Tokyo in 1986 (Nihonkeizai, 1991).

Accompanying the rising importance of the financial economy was the development of office complexes in Tokyo. Beyond the traditional office district in Marunouchi, there were various new office projects in Tokyo's sub-centres, of which Nishi Shinjuku's new office towers have been most prominent as they are sometimes likened to Manhattan's skyline (Cybriwsky, 1991: 31). And in fact, during the 1980s, the four central wards of Tokyo (Chiyoda, Chuo, Minato, and Shinjuku) have outmatched New York's Manhattan in terms of the available office floor space (see Figure 3.6). The two districts are comparable in physical size; Central Tokyo covers 6,026 hectares while Manhattan is 6,139 hectares (Tsukada, 1991: 11).

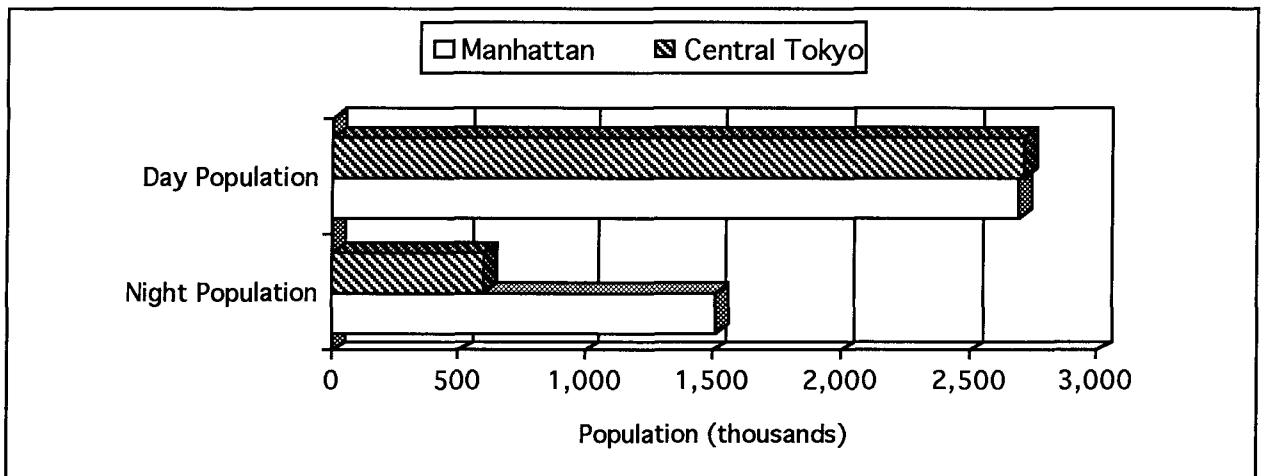
There is, however, one notable difference between them. In terms of resident population, in 1988, there were 610,000 people living in Central Tokyo, compared to 151,000 in Manhattan (Tsukada, 1991: 11). The relatively smaller population of Central Tokyo (even though the population of Tokyo as a whole is far greater than that of New York) is due to the fact that most of new commercial developments in Tokyo took place at the cost of an eroding residential base in the city centre. Thus, when the daytime working population of Central Tokyo is compared to its nighttime resident population, there is an enormous gap between them (see Figure 3.7). Manhattan, by contrast, manages to retain more than half of its daytime population at night. But this phenomenon has also been a result of Tokyo's buoyant economy in the 1980s. An abundant supply of capital during this period, though climbing stock and land markets, encouraged a boom in real estate speculation which rendered housing in the city virtually unaffordable (Igarashi and Noguchi, 1990).

Figure 3.6: Comparison of Office Floor Area In Manhattan and Central Tokyo (1988)



Source: Igarashi and Noguchi, 1990: 71.

Figure 3.7: Comparison of Population in Manhattan and Central Tokyo (1988)



Source: Igarashi and Noguchi, 1990: 71.

This speculative economy, however, also allowed the new level of material affluence in non-housing sectors as the boom sent the whole city into a decade-long consumption spree, generally known as the era of “Heisei bubble,” at its peak in the late 1980s (Ishii, 1992). The era of conspicuous consumption in the 1980s was, of course, a historically specific phenomenon. And as

such, it also needs to be located within the historical context in which consumer practices have evolved. Thus, now I will briefly trace how the patterns of consumption developed in Tokyo from the end of World War II to the beginning of the 1970s. Then, I will discuss, in detail, the period of transition in the 1970s towards the new modes of consumption which emerged in the 1980s.

POSTWAR HISTORY OF CONSUMPTION (1945–1970)

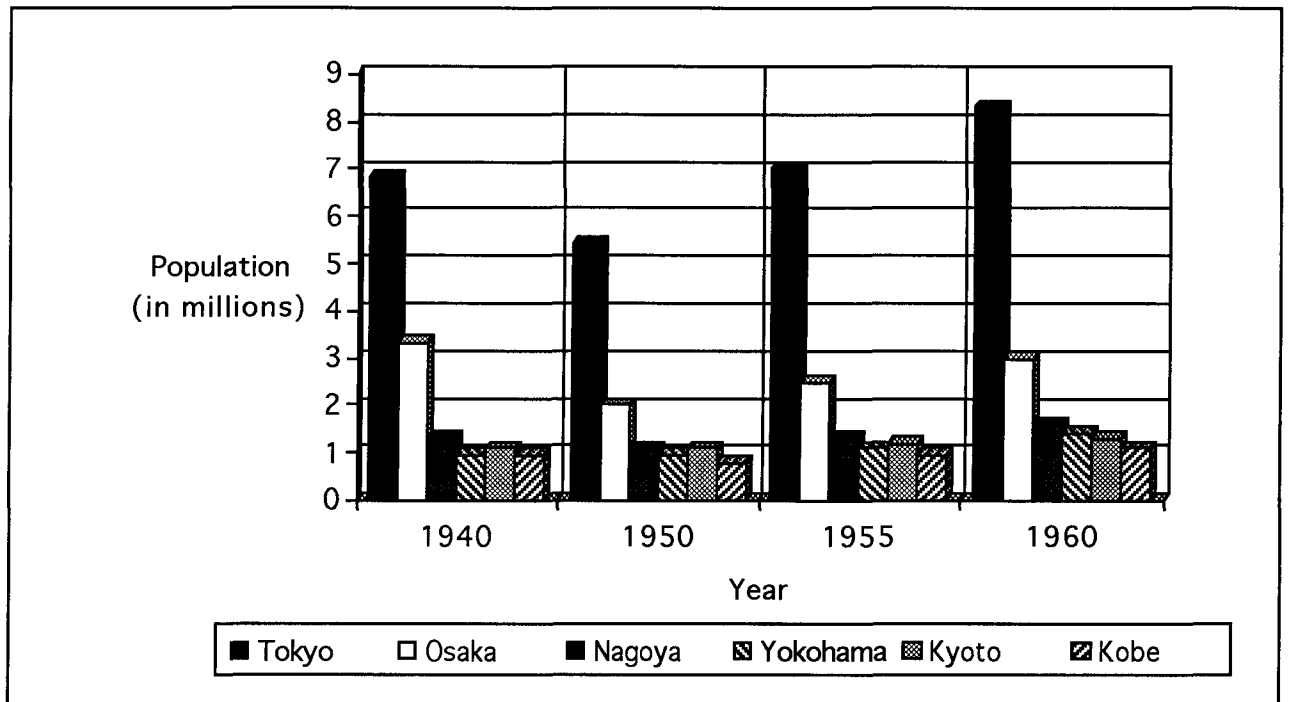
i. From Scarcity to Recovery

The postwar transformation of Japanese society has been nothing short of astounding. Today, the street performance of Harajuku *shinjinrui*¹⁶ youth, the hustle-bustle of Kabutocho high financiers, and the *karaoke* tunes of Roppongi night clubbers evoke none of the images of the war-ravaged Tokyo of the late 1940s. Today's material abundance is something that many young Japanese take for granted. With each generational succession, the memory of past poverty slowly fades away in the collective consciousness of Japanese society.

Yet, only a few decades ago, there was another Japan—a nation still recovering from the ruins of the Pacific War. Those who lived through the war could not have foreseen the impending arrival of a mass consumer society in Japan. In the first postwar decade up to the 1960s, however, changes were slowly, albeit steadily, under way. As Japan, under the gaze of the US occupation forces, rebuilt its cities and industries, people poured into the urban centres from the countryside searching for factory and office jobs (see Figure 3.8 and Figure 3.9). Tokyo, at this time, was already the primate city for Japan, which far exceeded the population of the second largest city, Osaka. Thus, as was mentioned earlier, Tokyo with its economic, political, and demographic primacy was the ultimate destination for rural migrants who sought new opportunities in the city.

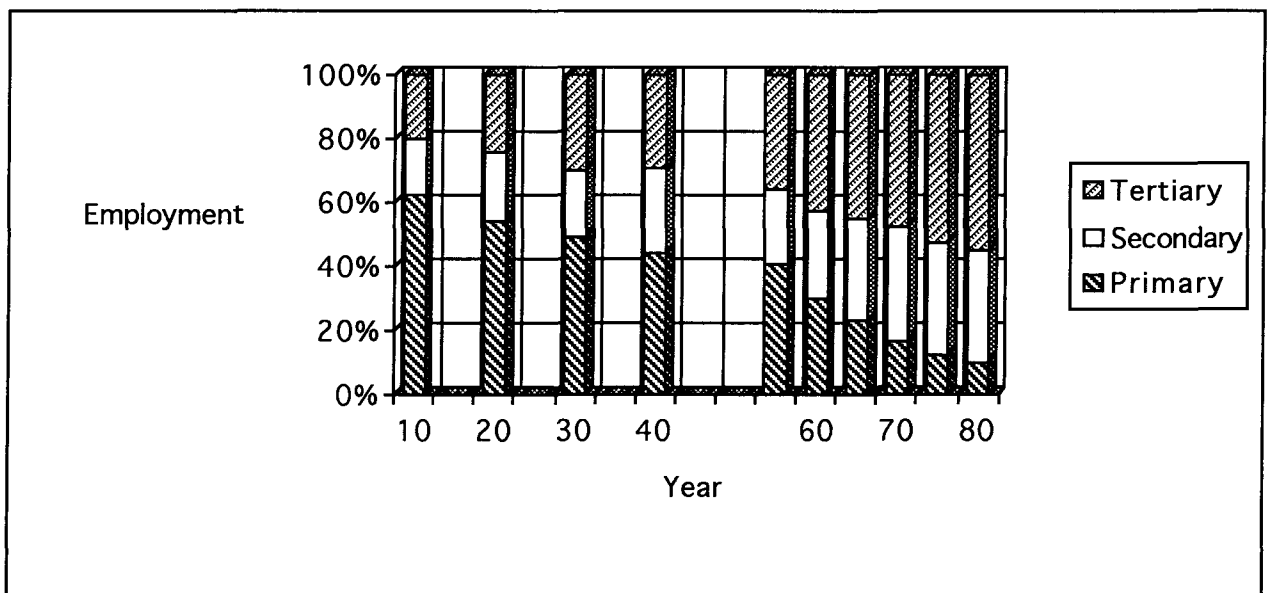
¹⁶ *Shinjinrui*, which literally means the new species, refers to today's Japanese youth who see themselves to be different from their parents' generation in their general attitude towards life (see chapter 5 for a more detailed discussion on *shinjinrui*).

Figure 3.8: Population Changes in Major Urban Areas (1940–1960)



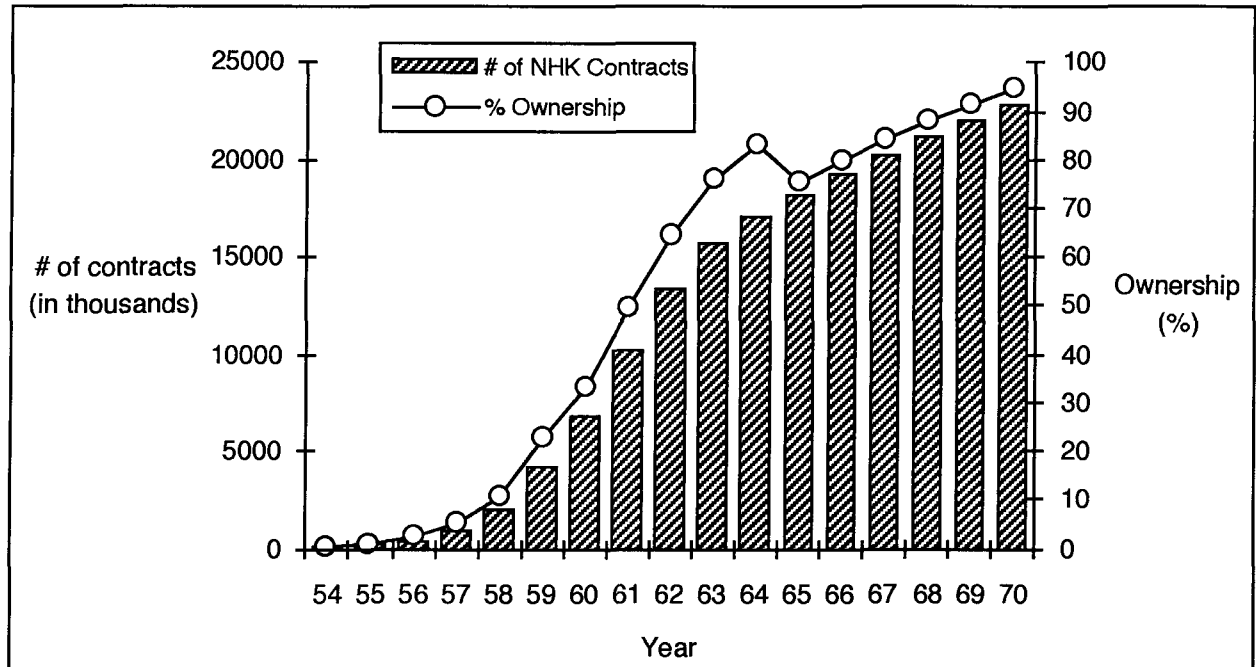
Source: Trewartha, 1965: 163.

Figure 3.9 Changes in the Sectoral Distribution Of Labour



Source: Nihonkeizai Shimbunsha, 1990: 46.

Figure 3.10: Proliferation Of TV Sets and Subscriptions (1954–1970)¹⁷



Source: Tsurumi, 1987: 63.

By 1956, the Japanese government gained enough confidence in the nation's economic recovery to announce the end of the "postwar era" and the beginning of a new era (*Nihonkeizai*, 1990). With the buoyant economy, household consumption of mass produced products grew steadily, but in the 1950s the prices for consumer durables (e.g., refrigerators and washing machines) remained disproportionately high in relation to people's incomes. It was in this material context that the Matsushita Electric company ran an advertisement for its new television set in 1960: "This is your 'once-in-a-lifetime' purchase, please take your time to inspect our product" (Fukagawa, 1991: 64). Little did the advertiser realize what was to come—as by the mid 1960s double-digit economic growth pushed Japan into the new era of mass consumption, in which eight out of ten households owned television sets (see Figure 3.10).

¹⁷ The sudden bump in 1964 seems to be the result of Tokyo Olympics. NHK stands for Japanese Broadcast Association [*Nihon Hoso Kyokai*].

ii. Dawn of Mass Consumption

Otsuka (1991b) describes the cultural shift from the period immediately after the war to the 1960s economic boom as follows:

First, there was the period immediately after the end of the war in which it was the sheer availability of commodities (*mono*) that was important....Here, the paradigm of consumption was based upon “scarcity” and the direct satisfaction of needs. During the course of the postwar economic recovery, as basic needs became fulfilled, there emerged a new consumptive paradigm based on “convenience.”

(Otsuka, 1991b: 302)

Understandably, the decade which followed the period of absolute scarcity was the heyday for indiscriminate mass consumption, as exemplified in the marketing catch-phrase “The Bigger The Better” [*Ookii Kotowa Iikotoda*]*—*a boosterist philosophy which coincided with the actual growth of the nation’s GNP which by 1968 exceeded those of United Kingdom and West Germany, placing Japan in second place in the world (Fukagawa, 1991: 114). Thus, only four years after hosting the Olympic Games, Tokyo was in the process of joining in the league of international cities, at least in its economic importance.

In the cultural arena, the height of mass consumerism in the 1960s brought with it new movements, values, and lifestyles. Youth culture blossomed with the appearance of each new trendy youthful *zoku*¹⁸ who led the way in introducing the leisurely lifestyle. Between the mid 1950s and the early 1960s, there opened numerous facilities for mass leisure—spectator sports stadiums, amusement parks, late-night clubs and cafes, bowling alleys, and golf courses—which spoke of the new affluent status which people were beginning to experience, or at least to dream of (Tsurumaki, 1984: 155). For popular culture the 1960s was a decade which brought one consumer fad after another to the growing segment of middle-class Japanese. In the process, there emerged a structure of information (i.e., the urban youth media) which privileged, according to Yamazaki (1985), the circulation of new information over the storage of existing knowledge:

¹⁸ The term, “*zoku*” (literary, a tribe) is generally used to describe various youth groups, but they are not always restricted to young people. For example, in the 1950s, there were *shayo-zoku* (salarymen who entertained each other on their company’s expense accounts) and *danchi-zoku* (dwellers of new apartment projects). Throughout this thesis, I make references to several kinds of *zoku*, most of which are related to consumer fads of a particular periled.

It was during the 1960s when information became truly enriched in terms of its “flow” at the expense of its “stock” value. The same trend could also be seen, perhaps even more prominently, in the world of art.

From painting to theatrical productions, this era saw an unprecedented level of new inventions. “Happenings,” “pop art,” “optical art,” “environmental art,” “conceptual art,” “audience-participating theatres,” “street theatres,” and so on—there was never a shortage of new topics for the cultural columns of daily papers.

(Yamazaki, 1985: 194–195)

iii. Period of Cultural Transition

The expressive youth culture of the 1960s cited above was by and large a “street” culture centred in Shinjuku which opposed the formality of the “high” culture. Andreas Huyssen (1986) contends that in the West “pop” was “the synonym for the new life style of the younger generation” who rebelled against the status quo of their society (Huyssen, 1986: 143). The Japanese youth cultural movement, which ultimately culminated in university movements towards the end of the 1960s, also shared similar concerns for cultural experimentation in the midst of an “affluent society.” (I will describe the Tokyo student movement in the following chapter on Shinjuku.) It was during this decade that “youth” as a social category came to play a central role in cultures of consumption as an expressive agent. Yet, as Huyssen rightly points out, there was also a counter-force of commercial appropriation:

[V]arious branches of industry and business (producing and marketing records, posters, films, textiles) understood immediately that the youth movement created needs that could be exploited economically.

(Huyssen, 1986: 143)

The experiences of Japanese youth were no exception to this commercial reality of the culture industry. The redevelopment of Shibuya in Tokyo was one such example, which I will describe in more depth later. In many ways, the new, more commercialized, youth cultural expressions of the 1970s may be seen as a hybrid of the counter-cultural obsession with the search for “self-identity” and the commercial adoption of the “pop” language. In Japan, this has been understood as a quest for social differentiation through the consumption of “symbolic” commodities. The new emphasis on taste cultures contrasted sharply with the “quantitative” mentality of high mass consumerism in the mid-1960s, which gave way to the new ethos of “discriminating” consumption in the 1970s and the 1980s. Otsuka describes this transition in the following way:

The high growth era, characterized by a relentless pursuit of “functionality” in “*mono*,”¹⁹ lasted until the onset of the Oil Shocks in the early 1970s which introduced a new paradigm of “differentiation” based upon the sign value of “*mono*.”

What we experienced at the end of the 1980s, was the consumer society at the final extremity of this third stage. However, the consumer is now growing tired of living according to the paradigm of “differentiation.” To maintain our consumer society, or the economic system, a new framework along which consumption activities are to be reorganized. It can be argued that “therapeutic commodities,” such as bath products, have been established during this transition period.

(Otsuka, 1991b: 302)

In the following section, I will examine more closely the new developments in consumer culture in the 1980s, which as Otsuka argues above, represents both a continuation and a departure from the earlier paradigm. I will refer to these socio-cultural changes in Tokyo as “new cultures of consumption” to distinguish them from the consumer practices of the previous era.

THE NEW CULTURES OF CONSUMPTION (1970–1990)

i. Defining New Cultures of Consumption

What are these new “cultures of consumption”? First, they are seen to have arisen in direct opposition to the cultural ethos of production that is rooted in the disciplinary discourses of the school and work environments. By its very nature, consumption is partial to the “destructive,” rather than the “cumulative,” side of the circulation of capital. Or according to Asada’s definition, the differences between the two spheres can be expressed in a pair of “personality” archetypes—production-oriented paranoia and consumption-oriented schizophrenia: the paranoid carries the weight of the past by continually integrating history [accumulation] while the schizophrenic lives for the moment by constantly decoding established meanings [differentiation] (Asada, 1994: 10). Sensing that Japan has entered the age of “schizophrenic” consumption, Asada urges in his *Tosoron* (1984) that young people run away from the “paranoiac” drive of Japan’s corporate capitalism which tries to assimilate them through the discursive channels of family, work, and society (Asada, 1984: 23). Here, the culture of consumption, in its liberatory moment, is

¹⁹ “*Mono*” in Japanese refers to “things” in general, but it also refers to “commodities” as in this context.

understood not only as a hegemonic shift within the dialectic of production and consumption, but also as a possibility for breaking away from it all (that is, from this discourse of consumption as an appendix of production).

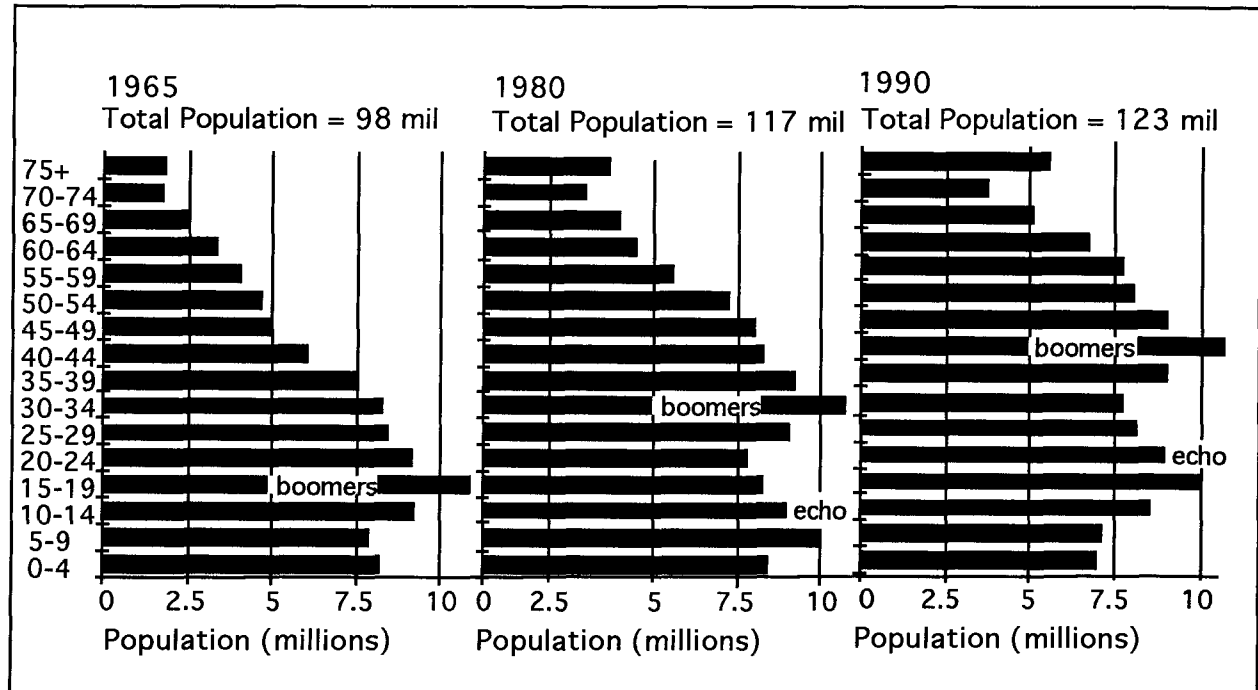
The new cultures of consumption that have emerged in the past two decades embody people's long-suppressed aspirations to enjoy the fruits of economic growth, for which so much had been sacrificed in the preceding period. Thus, in the Japanese context, these cultures of consumption need to be viewed in contrast to the rigid regimen that was found at the sites of economic production and social reproduction, the images of which underlined the postwar overseas stereotypes of the "Japanese personality": the "samurai businessman" and the "obedient pupil." The consuming selves of the new era as represented by young urban consumers, however, strive to distinguish themselves from these images of an undifferentiated mass identity. If anything, Japan's new cultures of consumption are all about discovering/establishing/remodeling a brand new *watashi* [I] on the consumptive stage that modern capitalism provides. Yamazaki (1987) expressed this as a formation of "soft individuality" predicated upon a leisurely lifestyle while Okonogi (1981) saw a fragmentation of the self within a developmental "moratorium" that consumer society offered. Although their interpretations differ somewhat, both of them stress the point that the constitution of the self was now inexorably tied to the practices of consumption. Or in Okonogi's words, the formation of the new consuming class represented a coincidence of specific historical processes:

It was a timely juxtaposition of a "socio-psychological disposition," which permits consumption without production [among Japan's youths], and the characteristics of a consumer-oriented information society that amplified the "moratorium" psychology²⁰ through commercialization and young people assumed the role of "customers" in our society.

(Okonogi, 1981: 27)

²⁰ By "moratorium psychology," Okonogi refers to the psychological state that he finds among college students as well as young office workers. In a "moratorium" state, one's developmental stage is said to be suspended in the condition of perpetual adolescence (c.f. the Peter Pan syndrome). In Okonogi's thesis on "moratorium psychology" (1981) he locates the moratorium youth's self-identity within the sphere of consumption. The symptom of the "moratorium" syndrome, according to Okonogi, includes graduate students who take forever to write their theses!

Figure 3.11: Demographic Shifts in Japan (1965–1990)



Source: Across, 1988: 18. (1990 figures are estimates).

ii. The Profile of New Consumers

There are also demographic and gender dimensions to the genesis of the cultures of consumption: in the new age of consumption (which saw its inception in the late 1960s), the youth and in particular young women, who were traditionally marginalized under the dominant cultures of production, now have come to occupy the centre stage (Sengoku, 1991). In many ways, the young women became the taste leaders in the sphere of consumption and when combined with their relatively high disposable incomes, they constituted a perfect metaphor for the “consuming class.” Thus, it was no accident that the majority of overseas travellers and exchange students from Japan were young single women who adopted a more cosmopolitan approach to life than the other cohorts of the population. It has been argued that the urban media for young men, influenced heavily from and lagging slightly behind the women’s media, shifted its “macho” emphasis to something more “feminine,” “soft,” and “fashion-conscious”; as a result, in the 1980s there

emerged whole new markets in men's cosmetic products and fashion brands. According to Parco's marketing research, the 1980s was a decade which saw a development of taste-subcultures by those urban youths who thrived on the ever-expanding information media of Tokyo (Across, 1989). Demographically, these consuming youths of the 1980s represented the babyboom "echo" generation who reached their teens in the 1980s, and whose parents were, at the time, in their thirties and forties (see Figure 3.11).

We must keep in mind that the Japanese youth subcultures (which I will describe later in this thesis) did not emerge in the same social environment of economic stagnation and chronic unemployment which formed the ideological basis of the 1970s' "punk" movement (London) and today's "grunge" culture (Seattle) in the West. Situated in an opposite context of relative material affluence, if the Japanese youth subcultures were reactionary at all, they were reacting against the stultifying monotony of daily existence in highly successful "administered society" [*kanri shakai*] which underpinned Japan's economic stability throughout the 1970s. It has been said that Japanese youth, in comparison to their North American and European counterparts, were apolitical and apathetic and their subcultural expressions, superficial. It may well be construed that in so far as Japanese society offered a reasonable degree of material abundance, there were no need to be "politically" opposed to the "system" on a practical level. For the Japanese youth, what seemed to be lacking most was not the job opportunities but the opportunities for existential meaning. The administered society promoted an ideology of "equality" in which differences among individuals were carefully controlled (Ijiri, 1988), thus creating a socio-psychological void for self-differentiation. In other words, for many, life had become too clinical, too predictable, and above all, too boring. If there was an acute desire to re-enchant the sterile daily existence, discriminating consumption was one of the options that advanced capitalism afforded.

In addition to lifestyle aspirations resulting from the recent rise of personal incomes, the concern for social differentiation and the attention to lifestyle details seemed to have been particularly amplified in Japan where the state ideology emphasized the "homogeneity" of culture and race:

Today's young people can judge who you are by looking at which fashion brands you wear, which records you listen to, and which stores you visit in which car. People, regardless of their age, prove their existence through external things. Things declare: "I am of such and such rank and have such and such taste." This is especially so in Japan where people possess the same education, the same living standard, and even the same skin color" (Tanaka, 1981: 220)

This observation is complementary to Baudrillard's observation that today the wealthy "are no longer surrounded by other human beings, as they have been in the past, but by *objects*" (Baudrillard, 1988: 2). The idea that objects speak for one's self-worth perhaps commands greater currency for today's Japanese youths who possess high purchasing power²¹ in the consumer market, but low social distinction among themselves.

As Katayama (1993) contends, unlike the student activists of the 1960s, the new generation of youth in the 1980s did not seek their identity through ideological means. Rather, as he points out, it was in the "details" of everyday life that young Japanese sought their individual identity. Although it is displaced in history and geography, this world view obsessed with lifestyle details strikes a chord with Weber's observation of the bourgeois culture:

As the objective distance from necessity grows, lifestyle increasingly becomes the product of what Weber calls a 'stylization of life,' a systematic commitment which orients and organizes the most diverse practices—the choice of a vintage or a cheese or the decoration of a holiday home in the country.

(Bourdieu, 1984: 55–56)

iii. Mediated Spaces of Thematized Consumption

In the 1980s, the urban youth media have played a central role in the presentation and creation of new lifestyle themes. But the magazines certainly do not have a monopoly for the presentation of lifestyles permeated throughout the popular media:

Not only the print media, but also television became an agent of cataloguing. For example, in the latter half of the 1980s, most of the high-viewer-rating "trendy dramas" were also "catalogue dramas." Catalogue dramas are a new type of drama in which lifestyle

²¹ It is helpful here to note the differences between North American and Japanese university students in terms of their disposable incomes. The latter students enjoy higher levels of consumption for two reasons. First, unlike the majority of parents in North America with their independent ethos, Japanese parents normally pay for their children's living and educational expenses. Secondly, despite its Spartan reputation, the Japanese educational system, when it comes to university education, is far from strict: with the near 100% assurance that they will graduate no matter what, students (especially those in arts) often do not attend lectures; instead, they take up part-time work at relatively high hourly wages.

information such as fashion, interior decoration, and gadgets become incorporated into the drama. The first thing to note is not the development of the plot, but rather the details of what kind of fashion that the protagonist likes, what kind of room he/she lives in with what kind of interior decoration, and what kind of stores they shop in. Once these details are clarified, the personality of the character is defined accordingly and the drama takes care of itself from then on.

(Katayama, 1993: 181)

It was this nexus among the sophisticated lifestyles, the symbolic commodities, and the cosmopolitan identity that underlay the logic of the catalogue-like presentation of materials that has been prevalent in Tokyo's urban magazine genre. What this scheme of displaying commodities according to particular lifestyle themes accomplished was the contextualization of everyday objects in larger narratives:

Few objects today are offered *alone*, without a context of objects to speak for them. And the relation of the consumer to the object has consequently changed: the object is no longer referred to in relation to a specific utility, but as a collection of objects in their total meaning. Washing machine, refrigerator, dishwasher, have different meanings when grouped together than each one has alone, as a piece of equipment. The display window, the advertisement, the manufacturer, and the *brand name* here play an essential role in imposing a coherent and collective vision, like an almost inseparable totality.

(Baudrillard, 1988: 31)

Therefore, it may be argued that although the marketing intelligence claimed that in the 1980s Japanese consumers were after "*mono igai no mono*" [things other than things] (Creighton, 1992: 53), it was not that people simply stopped buying tangible goods in favour of intangible services; but rather, they were responding to the *symbolic narratives* that were embedded in products. The signifying images in the media breathed "life" into ordinary commodities, thus engendering recognizable "product brands" that were synonymous with good taste. Corporate capital accordingly invested an inordinate amount of energy and resource into establishing such "personality" for their products via advertising; and thus, it is no accident that copywriters (i.e., the creative brains of advertising), who held the key to the new era of image merchandising, became the new cultural elites in the Japanese media (Trucco, 1984). What the "information age" brought to marketing was a situation in which commodities could no longer be sold for their "functional utility" alone: products more than ever needed to be packaged with appropriate cultural cues. Thus, as Featherstone states, contemporary consumption needs to be regarded not as "the consumption of use-values," but as "the consumption of signs" (Featherstone, 1987: 57). The information-loaded

commodities promised, at least on the surface, to provide new narratives to the aspiring consumer's lifestyle.

In his essay on *Consumer Society*, Baudrillard points out the sequential nature of today's consumption habits which bridges the gaps among seemingly unrelated objects by virtue of its narrative scheme:

The arrangement [of objects] directs the purchasing impulse towards *networks* of objects in order to seduce it and elicit, in accordance with its own logic, a maximal investment, reaching the limits of economic potential. Clothing, appliances, and toiletries thus constitute object *paths*, which establish inertial constraints on the consumer who will proceed *logically* from one object to the next.

(Baudrillard, 1988: 31)

This notion of consumption "pathways" can also be extended to spaces of consumption as the construction of the self is increasingly tied to urban stages which allow the display of desired lifestyles. The reconfiguration of Tokyo's commercial landscapes in the 1980s, for example, was a deliberate move to create a street scene conducive to such lifestyle enactment. In the past two decades, Shibuya, the new Mecca of Japan's youth culture, has been transformed from a lacklustre train terminal into a maze of character streets by the corporate agendas of Seibu, which started the trend by opening a fashion department store Parco, and of Tokyu which followed suit with its Tokyu Hands, 109, and Bunkamura (Yoshimi, 1987). Matsuo (1989) recalls the opening of Tokyu Hands and the new style of merchandising that came with it:

People began to appreciate and enjoy the fact that Tokyu Hands had nothing to do with weekend carpentry; instead, it was all about "conversing" with "humanized objects" that speak of lifestyles....The objects that "stage" our lifestyles are also tools by themselves. We rediscover our lifestyles through the use of these tools.

(Matsuo, 1989: 133)

In Parco's marketing vision, this new consumptive space of Shibuya was to be expressed through a theatrical metaphor in which the consuming self is reconstituted as a performer-spectator:

Centred on Koen Street, this town is a fashion environment. A fashion environment is one which allows an expression of individuality....If fashion is a form of performance, Koen Street is the stage. And of course, the main actor is "*watashi*" [I].

(Yoshimi, 1987: 296)

In discussing the new spaces of thematic consumption, which arose in Tokyo during the 1980s, one cannot deny the important role played by the urban and fashion magazines—*Popeye*,

JJ, Pia, Hanako. The urban youth media, with the targeted readership of those between 18 to 24, were pivotal in spreading new urban trends and molding the mental map of Tokyo as a city of lifestyle consumption. The proliferation of these “cultural guidebooks” in Japan has been consistent with Ewen’s (1990) discussion of the contemporary obsession with “style” in consumer habits in the West:

Alongside this development [of style], there has arisen a vast array of cultural guides (books, magazines, films and the star system, television programmes, advertising) which serve as ‘useful,’ everchanging charts of navigation.

(Ewen, 1990: 46)

The “charts of navigation” not only guide what people consume, but also where they make their purchases as well. In Tokyo, urban lifestyle magazines have reshaped people’s perception of the city—the cycles of new trends and the locales of fashionable boutiques and restaurants were now catalogued in the media. In effect, they have commodified Tokyo’s urban spatial units as readily consumable products (Naruse, 1993). As with the manufactured goods, the marketing of urban space was also imbued with “personalities”—real or imaginary—that are supposed to differentiate one locale from another. Tokyo’s various *machis* (urban neighbourhoods) have been endowed with new narratives that facilitate such dramatized consumption. At the same time the heightened areal differentiation brought about a contradictory process of standardization as Yoshimi observes:

In Tokyo where the complexity of the city renders it impossible to comprehend, these catalogue magazines offer “scripts” for young people on where to go and what to do. As urban spaces become registered in these scripts, reorganized as items that people can freely pick and choose, and detached from their organic relationship with one another, they are transformed into objects like video game machines laid out in arcades and amusement parks.

(Yoshimi, 1987: 307)

How did these new practices of consumption, which bring together lifestyle imagery, commodity aestheticism, urban media, and consumer landscapes, emerge in Tokyo in the 1980s? As I have described in this chapter, there are social and geographical histories to the emergence of today’s consumer culture scene in Tokyo. First, in Tokyo the cultural practices of distinction has been aligned along the Yamanote-Shitamachi axis, in which there was a conflation of local geography with social class. Secondly, the development of mass consumption in Tokyo coincided with a westward shift of its centre of population; accordingly the new centres of consumer culture,

such as Shinjuku and Shibuya, are found on the western side of Central Tokyo, away from the historic centre of Tokyo in Shitamachi. And finally, the advent of the new cultures of consumption in the 1980s coincided with the city's new global status.

The cultural permutations found in those practices of discriminating consumption in Tokyo certainly constituted a new phenomenon in Japan, but were not merely a “replica” of similar changes in consumer habits in the West. In order to understand Tokyo's new cultures of consumption in the 1980s, it is necessary to delve into the local history of consumption, especially since the introduction of “mass consumption” as a new way of organizing everyday life in the postwar period. So now I will turn to discussion of Tokyo in the 1960s—a decade which brought a new era of mass consumption in Japan.

4. SHINJUKU IN THE 1960S

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will sketch out the specific cultural changes that are associated with the eventful decade of the 1960s and establish their geographical implications in the city of Tokyo. I will focus my argument around the cultural practices that have been associated with Shinjuku, as it was this neighbourhood that prominently emerged as the new centre of youth culture in Tokyo during this period. Here, it is important to note that in the Japanese context,¹ the 1960s, in many ways, represented a “break”—that is a break from both social and economic conditions of the “postwar” period. But it also represented a “bridge”—that is a bridge to the new cultural practices of consumption that were to unfold in the 1970s and were to proliferate in the 1980s. First, I will briefly examine the changing material conditions in the 1960s and accompanying changes in popular culture and urban politics. Then, I will provide accounts of their manifestations on the street stage of Shinjuku with specific examples.

The 1960s was a decade which saw the beginning of a mass consumer society in Japan, where the visible signs of postwar prosperity arrived a decade later than they had in the United States. This was a decade in which Tokyo, with its hosting of the 1964 Olympic Games, became re-introduced to the international community after a long period of absence following the massive destruction of the city in World War II. Having been “kick-started” by the so-called Iwato economic boom (1958–1962), which set the pace of annual GDP growth at 14.1% in 1960

¹ This is not to say that the new changes in the 1960s were specific to Japan. There are certainly many points of convergence with the Western experience, as I will discuss later.

(Takahashi, 1986: 173), the 1960s ushered in an era of mass consumerism which was characterized by (1) the popularization of consumer durables², (2) a dietary improvement through wider availability of meat, fruit, and dairy products³, and (3) the beginning of mass leisure (Nihon Keizai, 1990: 406).

Demographically, this was a period of rapid urban migration leading to an accelerated process of urbanization, especially in the capital region⁴ [*shutoken*]. The overgrown capital, which contained a disproportionate amount of the nation's economic activity, attracted young people from the countryside who sought employment and educational opportunities. The exodus of the babyboomer generation from the countryside into the city meant the decline of rural Japan through depopulation, on the one hand, and the expansion of urban Japan through over-concentration, on the other. As a result, the landscapes of "traditional" Japan were at risk both in the dilapidating countryside where villages became abandoned and in the urban fringe where new residential and commercial developments sprung up on formerly agricultural land. Culturally, these changes were manifested in a loss of regional diversity and in a trend towards a greater homogenization of tastes among new residents in urban areas:

What we must not forget is the fact that these [cultural] changes are not at all unrelated to Japan's rapid urbanization in which people began, willingly, losing touch with their "home town." As specific habits and tastes associated with particular regions began to be generalized and thus homogenized....

Moreover, it was this period that people, espousing the notion that "the postwar era was over," began losing clear objectives and lost confidence in their life approach.

(Yamazaki, 1985: 61)

Thus, the 1960s represented an economic, social, and psychological departure from the nation's recent and distant pasts. And the new identity was being formed around the idea of a "middle-class" lifestyle filled with all the trappings of mass consumerism enshrined in the notion of individual freedom. The younger segments of the population aspired to a new "middle-class"

² The "three divinity possessions" of the time were three C's (car, color-TV, and coolers [air conditioners]).

³ The fact that food was an issue at the time attests to the severity of food shortages only a decade before.

⁴ Tokyo and its surrounding prefectures which include Chiba, Saitama, Kanagawa, Yamanashi, Gunma, Tochigi, and Ibaragi.

lifestyle, as personified in the “my-car” and “my-home” syndrome,⁵ that came to define one’s class status in the burgeoning consumer society. But, this idea of an ideal “middle-class” situated within the logic of mass consumption nonetheless had its own contradictions, and was to become challenged in the latter half of the decade.

THE AGE OF DISCONTENT

i. “Do It Yourself”

The 1960s was also an era of home automation in consumer electronics⁶ and of packaged services such as package tours, and weddings. People began to embrace the signs of technological progress, which were equated with, and accepted as, the rising standard of living. Yamazaki (1985), who writes extensively on the history of consumerism in postwar Japan, calls this “packaging” of everyday life “black-boxing” as it insulates individuals from the actual mental or physical process of labour. The new consumer gadgets and delegation services (e.g., wedding planners and travel consultants), which became both available and affordable in the 1960s, promised “packaged convenience” which anyone could purchase over the counter. But during the same period, according to Yamazaki, there were also signs of resistance to such forces of “black boxing” which insulated people from “real experiences”—or in other words, there were those who enjoyed (or were able to afford) the pleasure of taking time to do things themselves, which often meant simply purchasing items off the shelf:

Even in the 1960s, there were those perceptive individuals who realized this fact [that blackboxing of life could potentially empty life of meaningful experiences] and began pursuing lifestyles which opposed the “black boxing” of everyday life. It was generally organized under the motto “do it yourself” (DIY) and began with Sunday carpentry and gardening and eventually spread to areas such as arts-and-crafts and home-cooking. This was also the time “my-car touring” became popularized as people began personalizing their holiday trips.

⁵ “My-car” and “my-home” are used strictly as compound nouns which can be embellished with another personal possessive in Japanese. For example, you can have your “my-car” and your friend can have his/her “my-car” and your “my-car” may be parked in front of their “my-house.”

⁶ This was the decade when the streets of Tokyo became littered with numerous automatic vending machines [*jidohanbaiki*] which sold everything from light snacks, beer, cigarettes, underwear, to pornography.

(Yamazaki, 1985: 110–111)

The “Do-It-Yourself” attitude, perhaps, was an expression of individual freedom, on one level, but it may also have been a symbol of “gentry” luxury; that is, people exhibited their new experiential lifestyle as a statement of their leisurely disposition, which indeed afforded them the time to become involved in the “personalization” of their activities. The significance of the latter is also linguistically shown in the new terms which were introduced during this period: for example, “*mai-ka*” [my-car] and “*mai-homu*” [my-home] both indicate, through their borrowing of personal possessive pronouns from English⁷ that the possession of property is very much an “individual” and “personalized” act. Thus, more than anything, “Do-It-Yourself” represented a new state of mind:

If “black-boxing” was a force which rendered everyday living carefree and unconscious, the “do-it-yourself” movement was an opposite process in which people attempted to make life an extremely conscious process. There is an impulse to consciously control aspects of life by getting personally involved in mundane activities which can easily be avoided, if so desired.

(Yamazaki, 1985: 110)

But for Yamazaki, the idea of “Do-It-Yourself” was quite paradoxical in itself as people’s quest for genuine, self-motivated experiences was often predicated upon the use of “black boxes”:

When Sunday carpentry became popular, people grabbed the “carpenter’s kits.” With the “my-car travel” boom, people began driving “automatic-shift” cars on the new freeway system complete with destination signs and service stations....This was also the time when some people were no longer satisfied with merely being a corporate cogwheel and began “dropping out” from organizations and *salaryman*-lifestyle. A newspaper article of the time reported that what some of those people chose to do instead was to open a franchise business.

(Yamazaki, 1985: 110)

ii. Rise of Reformist Politics

The general sense of discontent, despite (or perhaps because of) the economic success of the 1960s, also manifested itself in urban politics. The pre-Tokyo Olympic preparations from 1961 to 1964 subjected the urban residents to incessant noise and air pollution from un-coordinated road construction (in fact, in 1961 alone, 57% of Tokyo’s major roads were dug up for electric lines,

⁷ The fact English is used here also suggests the cultural assumption of personal ownership of consumer products to be Western.

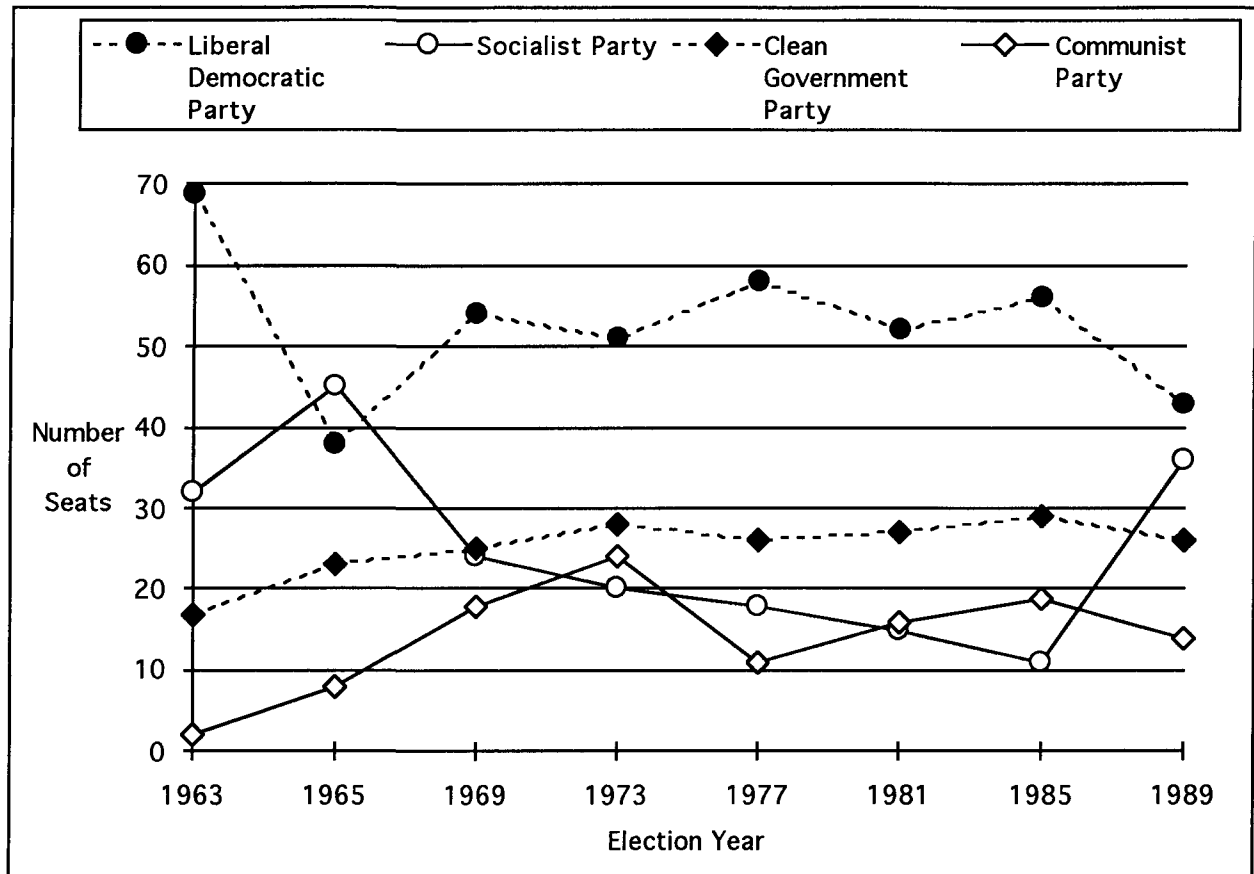
water mains, and gas pipes) (Baba, 1985: 115). The popularity of “disposable convenience,” which went hand in hand with the rapid industrialization and urbanization of Tokyo, created a new problem of garbage disposal: by the mid-1960s, the city’s landfill site in Koto Ward was filled to the capacity. (Baba, 1985: 133). These urban problems also resurfaced in environmental issues such as the daily occurrences of photochemical smog and traffic jams as well as in social issues such as the re-discovery of urban poverty in the area known as Sanya,⁸ northeast of Ueno.

The election results of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government from this period reflected the changing attitudes of Tokyoites towards the urban problems, which, in many cases, were the unwelcome by-products of unfettered economic growth. In 1965, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) lost its majority in the metropolitan government to the Socialist Party (see Figure 3.1). In the following 1969 election, even though the LDP managed to reclaim some council seats, the majority of Tokyoites voted for the socialist candidate, Katsuyoshi Minobe for their governor. Minobe with an academic background⁹ was “different” from his predecessors who largely represented business interests; in addition, he was also “fresh” in that he advocated open government and welfare initiatives (Baba, 1985: 146). Minobe’s new urban policy was based on the concept of a “civil minimum” which emphasized the “the absolute minimum standard of living” be guaranteed to the residents of Tokyo (Ishizuka and Narita, 1986: 335). Minobe’s new policies included a “welfare-oriented budget, assistance to community daycare services, free medicare for seniors, enrollment of all physically handicapped students in schools, the establishment of an urban pollution research institute, provisions to deal with garbage problems in Koto and Suginami Wards, and alleviation of traffic congestion in the city” (Ishizuka and Narita, 1986: 336). In retrospect, many of Minobe’s welfare-oriented urban projects were financed by the growing urban tax base arising from the very economic growth which contributed to the problems of the day;

⁸ One might say that this is the Japanese version of “how the other half lives.” There were numerous riots in Sanya in the 1960s which forced the media to recognize the existence of slum areas within Tokyo. Most of the residents of Sanya were single men who worked as day labourers. It was their labour which indeed helped the reconstruction and re-development of the city in the 1960s (especially in the pre-Olympic years). It is also noteworthy that when the student protesters took over Tokyo University campus, over two thousand Sanya residents came to their support (Arii, 1985: 142–143).

⁹ Minobe was an economist who had support from both the Socialist and Communist Parties.

Figure 4.1: Electoral History of Tokyo Metropolitan Government (1963–1989)



Source: Makino, 1990: 15.

thus, as Baba (1985) aptly puts it, Minobe was a governor “who fixed the aberrations of the economic growth with the money from the growth and ended his career with the end of the growth” (147) (see Figure 4.1). But, perhaps, it was more than just the practical considerations of his policies that won the support of Tokyoites: Minobe was an icon of new societal ideals which were just beginning to take shape back then—a point which will be evident as we consider the evolution of new youth cultural expressions in the 1960s.

But, Minobe’s welfare-driven politics was soon to be emulated by the LDP opposition in its attempt to gain popular votes, making the distinction between the left and right more ambiguous at best. In this appropriation of the left agenda by the status quo (i.e., the LDP) Yamazaki (1985)

sees a new form of social containment whereby the political right opts for “kinder and gentler” strategies of control.

During this period, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party indeed seemed to thrive on appropriation of the opposition party’s agenda. At this time, the labour and management disputes were also becoming peaceful because of the surplus from the high economic growth period. The management of universities and the conduct of the police on the street were beginning to change in subtle and tactful ways. Discipline at home became lenient. Violence was denied and physical discipline, rejected. People were gradually losing patience with things that were “rigid” and “abrasive.”

(Yamazaki, 1985: 61)

It was indeed this kind of bureaucratic social management and societal complacency that the student movement of the late 1960s fought against and ultimately was defeated by.

iii. Counter Culture and the New Aesthetics of “Feeling”

Yamazaki (1985) argues that these signs of new social attitudes and values were most evident in the political discourse of the 1960s student movements:

Parallel to the changes in lifestyles were the gradual changes in the nature of many social problems, in particular political ones. In the preceding “era of suffering,” social movements could be expressed in clear and unambiguous language. For example, social conflicts bore slogans such as “anti-capitalism” and “anti-imperialism” or even more concrete objectives such as “give-us-something-to-eat” and “give-us-something-to-wear.”

By contrast, in the new “era of discomfort,” social movements no longer demanded concrete *mono* [material], and the perpetrators of oppression no longer carried specific ideological “isms.” Of course, this did not mean the end of classical labour and rural disputes; however, there emerged new issues of urban and environmental problems which both spread the front line of social conflicts and changed their fundamental nature. As the “enemy” became multidimensional and diversified, the slogans of social movements also came to be summarized under the ambiguous term, “anti-establishmentarianism.”

Of all the social movements of this era, the most influential was the “student rebellion” which seized university campuses across the nation.

(Yamazaki, 1985: 46)

A shifting emphasis of student conflict from tuition fees (i.e., material conditions) to the university curriculum (i.e., social and political conditions) was indicative of the fact that Japanese society had entered a new era of non-material discontent with a newly aroused consciousness about its existential conditions. Moreover, as Yamazaki argues above, this was a period when the ideological power of meta-discourses began losing its traditional support among social activists and the object of protest became the anonymous status quo itself.

In a typical confrontation between students and university authorities, their language of negotiation revealed a discursive fissure between the “rational” regime of the university administration on the one hand, and the “emotional” appeal of the student protesters on the other. This linguistic opposition was, partly, possible because of the hierarchical construction of the Japanese language where the use of personal pronouns reflects one’s relative social position¹⁰ vis-à-vis others. What seemed very unnatural in the context of college disputes was that there was indeed the reversal of this hierarchy:¹¹ the administrators and professors, even in their “emotional” moments, kept addressing the students as *anata* [polite and formal, you] while students called them *kisama* or *omae* [impolite and informal, you]. This contrast is further embedded in the concept of *omote* and *ura* [front and back] which defines the cultural codes of social interaction in Japan. The university authority employed the language of *omote*, that is, their formal and public “positions” [*tatema*] while the students responded with the language of *ura*, that is, their informal and private “feelings” [*honne*]. The students’ stance against bureaucratic “rationality” was also reflective of the changes in Japanese society at large where “the mood of the moment was expressed by ‘*firingu*’ [feeling] and ‘horizontal thinking’ as people rediscovered the value of the non-logical and the non-structural” (Yamazaki, 1985: 47). The various youth cultural movements in the 1960s constituted one of the most visible areas in which these new values were played out. Now, I will turn to more specific examples of Tokyo’s youth cultural scene and its geography in the 1960s.

GEOGRAPHY OF YOUTH CULTURES IN THE 1960S

i. Tokyo’s Urban Youth Culture

Not unlike its counterparts in the West, Tokyo’s youth cultural scene was also going through turbulent changes in the 1960s. The first wave of the “British rock’n roll invasion” hit the radio

¹⁰ Here, the most important consideration is perhaps one’s age, followed by other factors such as gender and socioeconomic status.

¹¹ One might argue that there was no linguistic reversal here at all by insisting that it was the social positions of the two parties that had changes.

indeed the reversal of this hierarchy.¹¹ the administrators and professors, even in their “emotional” moments, kept addressing the students as *anata* [polite and formal, you] while students called them *kisama* or *omae* [impolite and informal, you]. This contrast is further embedded in the concept of *omote* and *ura* [front and back] which defines the cultural codes of social interaction in Japan. The university authority employed the language of *omote*, that is, their formal and public “positions” [*tatemaie*] while the students responded with the language of *ura*, that is, their informal and private “feelings” [*honne*]. The students’ stance against bureaucratic “rationality” was also reflective of the changes in Japanese society at large where “the mood of the moment was expressed by ‘*firingu*’ [feeling] and ‘horizontal thinking’ as people rediscovered the value of the non-logical and the non-structural” (Yamazaki, 1985: 47). The various youth cultural movements in the 1960s constituted one of the most visible areas in which these new values were played out. Now, I will turn to more specific examples of Tokyo’s youth cultural scene and its geography in the 1960s.

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i. Tokyo’s Urban Youth Culture

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¹¹ One might argue that there was no linguistic reversal here at all by insisting that it was the social positions of the two parties that had changes.

hitherto unknown.¹² Beginning with the *Taiyo-zoku*¹³ (the Sun Tribe) of the late 1950s, there was a successive series of youth consumer/fashion/lifestyle trends which made the 1960s a decade in which the “youth,” as a cultural category as we know it today, first emerged in postwar Japan.

Geographically, this was also a decade in which Ginza, Tokyo’s Fifth Avenue since the Meiji era, was beginning to lose its centripetal force as a leader in the latest fashion to the newly renovated areas in Yamanote, across the forests of the Imperial Palace. Edward Seidensticker, a long-term observer of Tokyo, remembers the last of the youth groups that appeared in Ginza in the period immediately before the 1964 Tokyo Olympics—an event which, in many ways, accelerated the westward shift of focus in Tokyo as the national funds were poured into the redevelopment of the vicinity of the Yoyogi Olympic Park adjacent to Harajuku:

It may have been in the Olympic years that Ginza could for the last time confidently claim the fealty of that very important crowd: adolescents and those slightly older. Two other tribes [*zoku*] came and went during the Olympic years, and Ginza was their base. The Miyuki Zoku¹⁴ took its name from the Miyukidori, Street of the Royal Progress, in Ginza, along which the Meiji emperor passed on his way to the Hama Palace. It was also known as the Oyafukodori, Street of the Unfilial, or possibly Street of the Prodigal Son. The first element in Ivy Zoku is borrowed from English, indicating a presumed resemblance in Ivy League style of the United States. The two came in such quick succession and were so similar that it is not easy to distinguish between them. Perhaps it is useless to try, since both designations were invented by the mass media. Both favoured casual dress, plaids and stripes and tight high-water trousers for the boys, long skirts, sweaters, and blouses for the girls, big shopping bags without distinction as to gender. The dress could be rumpled and ill-shaped, but, frequently imported, it tended not to be inexpensive—hence the element of prodigality. Ginza has not had *zoku* since. The very young crowds have tended to favor the Southwest, though in recent years there have been signs that they may be coming back to Ginza.¹⁵

(Seidensticker, 1991; 248–250)

¹² Except for, perhaps, the nation’s first phase of modernization. For example, in the 1920s, Japan’s “jazz age” also brought the consumer fads of the West to Tokyo and Ginza was established as the shopping street for the *moga* and *mobo* (modern girls and modern boys). However, Japan’s version of the “roaring ‘20s,” like that of the West, was not extended to the majority of the working class—a point which makes the mass consumerism in the 1960s an unparalleled phenomenon.

¹³ *Taiyo-zoku*, the Sun Tribe, are Japanese “beach boys” whose naming was taken from Shintaro Ishihara’s (currently, a Dietary politician representing the Liberal Democratic Party) award-winning novel *Taiyo no Kisetsu* [the Season of the Sun] (1956). The novel later inspired a series of *Taiyo-zoku* films which depicted the stories of “reckless youths” featuring his actor brother Shotaro Ishihara as the protagonist.

¹⁴ The rumor has it that Miyuki-zoku, who numbered in thousands at its peak, were “cleared away” by the authorities before the foreign visitors arrived for the Olympic Games.

¹⁵ Recently, Ginza has been recognized as a town of mature sophistication and magazines, particularly career women’s fashion and lifestyle magazines, have featured articles on Ginza as such.

During the same period in Yamanote, Roppongi, for example, came to be known as a new after-hours entertainment district of night clubs frequented by celebrities and foreigners¹⁶—or according to the words of the popular press of the time the area was reputed to be “filled with the smell of butter, creating a colonial atmosphere”¹⁷ (Takahashi, 1986: 187). Roppongi also spawned its own youthful *zoku*, known as (what else!) Roppongi-zoku, a few of whose “graduates” later became screen stars in Japan’s still fledgling movie industry. Roppongi, situated in the Minato ward, with its many foreign embassies and its highest concentration of foreign residents in Tokyo, has functioned since then as the “port of entry” for foreign entertainment culture (for, example, it was in Roppongi that *Saturday Night Fever* inspired discothèques opened in the late 1970s). It was also in this neighbourhood that many of Japan’s postwar celebrities held (or could still easily afford) their Western-style residences, giving the area flair from the entertainment industry.

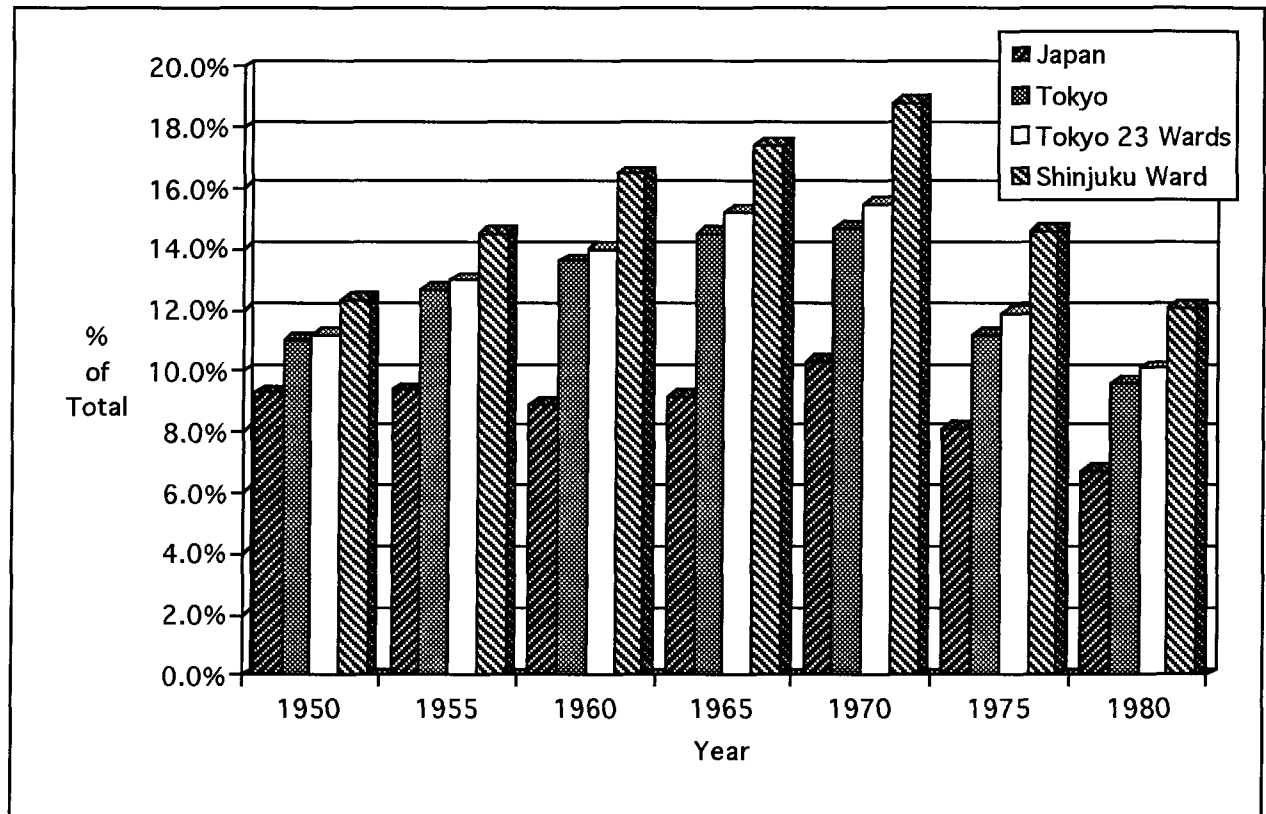
ii. Shinjuku as a New Mecca of Youth Culture

In the 1960s, however, as the decade progressed, the centre of action was clearly moving to Shinjuku—a new satellite centre of Tokyo centred on the Shinjuku Station which linked Tokyo with Japan’s periphery. Shinjuku was *the* destination for the young workers and students from the countryside who headed for the booming capital region in search of employment opportunities and higher education. Shinjuku—after it arose from the ashes of the war and before it became a world class office centre—contained a fair amount of cheap accommodation (mostly wooden, two-storey, walkup, rental-apartments) which housed the migrant workers and college students of the day. Thus, in the 1960s, Shinjuku was a burgeoning neighbourhood in which “the countryside met the city,” as it were.

¹⁶ Here, categorically speaking, the “celebrities” and “foreigners” carry the same weight— a point which will be discussed in depth in the section on the “images of the West” later.

¹⁷ The “smell of butter” is often used to describe (often in a derogatory manner) the bodily odor of the Westerner in Japan. The “colonial atmosphere” refers to the presence of American GIs in clubs in Roppongi.

Figure 4.2: Percentage of Those Between 20–24 Of Total Population (1950–1980)¹⁸



Source: Yoshimi, 1987: 283 (based upon national census reports).

Until the 1960s, the postwar history of Shinjuku revolved around two functions: Shinjuku as a market centre and Shinjuku as a sex centre (both elements are still there today). Immediately following the conclusion of the Pacific War, Shinjuku's reconstruction began with the opening of a market in a war-torn open field, which later became upgraded into the full-scale department stores (such as Seibu) (Kamino, 1985). The huge success of the market was also paralleled by the growth of the sex industry, mostly run by *Yakuza* (the Japanese version of the Mafia), which culminated in the establishment of Kabukicho, the *de facto* red-light district, as people recognize it today (Seidensticker, 1991). In between—or more often, side by side with—the market and the

¹⁸ The graph shows the percentage of residents who are of ages between 20 and 24 as a total of the census area's population. At its peak in 1970, over 18% of residents in Shinjuku Ward fit into this category.

brothels were numerous inexpensive bars, clubs, cafes, and eateries which catered to migrant students and workers.

The influx of young people to Tokyo in the 1960s represented a meeting of the babyboomer generation in the economically “booming” capital region. It was in this “double-booming” of Tokyo that opened up unique cultural possibilities which would reshape the cultural geography of Tokyo thereafter. Statistically, the census data confirm a high concentration of young adolescents in Tokyo, and especially in Shinjuku, that outmatched the national average by far (see Figure 4.2). Tokyo grew, on average, by 600,000 to 700,000 people per annum between the height of economic growth in the mid-1960s to the onset of the oil shocks in the early 1970s (Yoshimi, 1987, 281). This, according to Yoshimi (1987: 281) coincided with the maturing of babyboomers born between 1947 and 1949.

The physical and cultural growth of Shinjuku pushed the neighbourhood to the forefront of media attention:

[B]etween 1967 and 1969, the mass media focused on Shinjuku. To cite a few, there were *Asahi Journal's* article on “Shinjuku—An Enormous Amoeba,” *Chuo Koron's* “Shinjuku an earthly town of the future,” *Shukan Genron's* “Shinjuku—Town of Underground Culture,” *Sandei Mainichi's* “Shinjuku Jungle” and “Today's Town Square,” and *Gendai's* “All About Shinjuku: The Town Ready to Explode.” In popular music, beginning with Keiko Kudo's 1969 hit song “Shinjuku Woman,” there followed many other songs (mostly *enka*¹⁹ and blues²⁰) that paid tribute to Shinjuku: “Shinjuku Blues,” “Born in Shinjuku,” “Shinjuku in Rain,” and “Shinjuku Saturday Night.”

(Yoshimi, 1987: 273)

Thus, in accordance with the demographic composition of the area, Shinjuku was portrayed as an “earthy” neighbourhood of pathos, on the one hand, and as a youthful neighbourhood of experimentation, on the other. Yoshimi, in his historical re-examination of the area, points out four qualities that made Shinjuku the natural “stage” for critical events in the youth cultural scene which

¹⁹ *Enka* is a musical genre which combines elements of Japanese traditional music with modern popular music; as such, its targeted audience is usually middle-aged people. *Enka*, with its traditional themes of pathos, has also strong regional associations; therefore, it seems quite plausible that *enka* was popular in Shinjuku when the neighbourhood was the home to newcomers from Japan's countryside. Thus, even today, the genre seems to suit Shinjuku. Shibuya, in contrast, characteristically rejects *enka* as it favours *yogaku* (Western music) and *J-pop* (light popular music by Japanese artists).

²⁰ Again Shinjuku is “bluesy,” but such a concept is foreign to Shibuya (as far as I know there have never been blues that sing about Shibuya).

unfolded in the late 1960s. First, Shinjuku had an “indiscriminate capacity to absorb outsiders” or in the words of a young man who came from Kyushu:

“Compared to Roppongi and Ginza, it wasn’t very fashionable or beautiful; however, Shinjuku was like a gigantic stomach which could digest anything—country bumpkins, outlaws, Yakuza, wanderers, beggars, left-wingers, gays, prostitutes....”
(Yoshimi, 1987: 276)

Unparalleled diversity and an openness to socially disadvantaged groups seemed to contribute Shinjuku’s popularity for new migrants to Tokyo.

The second and third qualities of Shinjuku, Yoshimi argues, were its “unpredictable” and “visionary” dispositions (1987: 276) which made it a breeding ground for new cultural experimentations as well as political movements. Finally, progressive movements were able to take off in Shinjuku because, despite its heterogeneity, it was a cohesive community which hosted “folk-song assemblies,” “student rallies,” “underground theatres,” and various other “happenings” in the 1960s (Yoshimi, 1987). Thus, it was almost inevitable that if the counter cultural movements were to take off in Japan, they would have had their roots in Shinjuku. So they did. By the late 1960s, Shinjuku was the home to many underground cultural movements as it attracted left-wing students, experimental theatre groups, and folk-musicians who turned the streets of Shinjuku into a “stage” for their progressive cultural engagements (Yoshimi, 1987).

iii. Shinjuku and Counter-Cultural Movements

These localized cultural expressions of the late 1960s were, in some ways, in sync with the cultural changes on a larger societal level—changes which were taking Japanese society beyond its narrow materialistic goals.

The lifestyle of nomads was popularized by Shinji Nagashima’s (1967) *Futen*, a *manga*²¹ drama which depicts the life of Goichi, a son of a well-to-do family who leaves home for the aimless street life in Shinjuku (Sakurai, 1985: 64). This life of *Futen* [Wanderer], in some respects, was a model for the Japanese version of the Western “Hippies.” When the “Hippie”-

²¹ *Manga* may be translated simply as a comic book, but in many cases the *manga* genre, unlike its most common North American counterparts, is more akin to epic novels.

inspired youths began appearing in large numbers on the streets of Shinjuku during the summer of 1967, the long-haired youths were known as *Futen-zoku*. According to the police records, the *Futen* youths were classified into three groups: (1) dedicated *Futens* who left home permanently for the Shinjuku lifestyle; (2) commuting *Futens* who stopped by Shinjuku on their way home from work or school; and (3) tourist *Futens* who came from the countryside and stayed on (Sakurai, 1985: 67). By this time, Shinjuku was firmly becoming recognized as the stage for new youth movements.

Two summers later, Shinjuku was in full swing. Hosaka, then a 15-year old student activist, remembers his eventful Shinjuku summer in 1969:

On Saturdays, young people came out of nowhere to form a “spontaneous town meeting.” There were those wearing a helmet and face-mask²² soliciting support for their cause; middle-aged women selling works of poetry and *mini-comi*²³ which were laid out on a straw mat; long-haired, guitar-bearing, “Folk²⁴ Guerrillas” in (strangely) US army uniforms who sang anti-war songs. Between the spring and the summer of that year, this circle of people kept growing and tens of thousands of people filled the West Exit Square of the Shinjuku Station on those hot Saturday nights in Shinjuku.

I was only a grade eight student, dressed in a high-collared school uniform and carrying a black, leather school bag, who cowardly looked on to the scene at the “square.” Perhaps, for those who were “in” the “square,” I must have looked like a mindless, puny junior high student.

But, my head was filled with ideas about “Zenkyoto²⁵ student movements” and “anti-Vietnam War slogans.” Every week I read articles on “wars on campus” in the *Asahi Journal* and every morning I anxiously read the newspaper in hopes of finding articles on “anti-war demonstrations” and “campus barricades.”

(Hosaka, 1985: 160)

The youth demonstrations at the West Exit Square in Shinjuku, however, came to an abrupt end in the summer of the same year when the youth congregation was forcefully dispersed by the state forces:

Eventually, the government forces moved in on the West Exit Square; on Saturday nights hundreds of uniformed policemen patrolled the area, announcing on their megaphones:

²² The helmet and the mask were the *de facto* uniform of Japanese radical leftist student organizations of the day.

²³ *Mini-comi* is an antithesis of *mass comi* [literally mass communications] which in Japanese refers to the mass media; thus, *mini-comi* is a small medium of communication circulated among those people who share the same non-mainstream interests. *Minicomi* often takes the form of low volume, independently published magazines and books sold at informal gatherings such as described in the passage above.

²⁴ Here, “Folk” [meaning folk songs] refers to the general idea of the anti-war movement.

²⁵ *Zenkyoto* was a national student collective which helped organized various student protests in the 1960s.

“This is not a public square. This is a passage way. Do not stand around. This is a passage way. This is not a public square.”

At the time I distinctly remembered that there used to be signs saying “Western Entrance Square” on the western side of the Shinjuku Station. What happened? When I looked for the signs, they had all been switched with “West Exit Passage Way” signs. This is how I learned what “power” meant.

Thus, our 1969 was surrounded by the thick walls of the state and the riot police on both ends; the street demonstrations gradually became silenced by this “power.”

The enthusiasm of the “Square” disappeared as if it never happened. The autumn wind which blew on the “Passage Way” told the symbolic death of the neighbourhood of Shinjuku. It ended before I had the chance to join in. When Shinjuku was still hot in its final climax, I had been too cowardly to do so.

(Hosaka, 1985: 160–161)

In Hosaka’s recollections of the events of 1969, the Shinjuku youths were confronted literally by the “symbolic battle” over public space that the state, backed by the riot-police, waged against them, and the movements eventually dwindled into oblivion. In the Shinjuku summer of 1969, the youths, who defied the re-classification of the “public square” by the local authorities as a “passage way,” were fighting a symbolic battle over the meaning of the social space on one level, but were actually defeated by the physical force of the riot police who employed tear gas against the agitated crowd, on another level.

Another, less sympathetic, observer—an old Shinjuku-hand who had mixed views about the violence and its aftermaths—remembers the events of 1968 which led to the showdown in 1969 in the following way:

In retrospect, it was in 1968 when Shinjuku was becoming the “blaring” heartbeat of already overgrown Tokyo. The riot of October 21. The street rioting by anarchist hoodlums and the subsequent intrusion into the Tokyo University campus. Burning down of the police box on the East Exit of the Shinjuku Station by ordinary hoodlums, all of these happened in Shinjuku in 1968. In some ways I myself felt a sense connection with these events; but by 1969 Shinjuku began unfolding itself, beyond my league.

The “Folk Guerrilla” which appeared in February was forced out of the area by July. Under the code name of “Operation Dandelion,”²⁶ the police cracked down on the hoodlums. Many were arrested and the so-called “underground cafes” were closed down one by one. I did not, however, feel strongly about the end of an era which these events had marked. My relationship with Shinjuku was already so distant that I could not care less whatever happened to those hoodlums.

(Asakura, 1985: 171)

²⁶ This naming was obviously a pun on the Flower Generation: the youth protests were likened to the weeds, dandelions, which had to be eradicated.

Asakura also recollects the series of events in the early 1970s which severed his intensely personal relationship with Shinjuku forever:

[B]etween 1968 and 1969 and the early 1970s, Shinjuku was going through its time of transition in which it lost its fundamental connections with the humanity.

In 1970, the Sunday Pedestrian Zone began.

In 1971, Keio Plaza Hotel, the first highrise in Shinjuku, opened.

In 1973, subterranean arcades completed.

In 1974, the Sumitomo office complex was completed where “Shinjuku Promenade of the Four Seasons” used to be.

Of course, if someone asked me “How can you have a heart-to-heart connection with a neighbourhood, in the first place? Like a man and a woman?” at a bar in Shinjuku, I wouldn’t be able to answer back. One might say, it’s only an imaginary fragment of one’s exaggerated personal history. Even so, how can an assembly of those holding “imaginary fragments” be talking about a neighbourhood, if it no longer offered a fundamental connection with the worldly view?

Shinjuku once had the power to bind those “fragments” and had the ability to amplify its “assembly.”

In the 1970s, the changes in Shinjuku led to the abstraction of this “assembly” into something symbolic and eventually became half absorbed by the media simply as a sign on the urban map.

(Asakura, 1985: 172)

The Sunday Pedestrian Zone [*Hoko-sha Tengoku*], that Asakura here mentions, opened up the city streets for Sunday visitors in an attempt to reclaim the city streets from cars. On one level, this introduction of the weekend pedestrian mall expressed Tokyo’s attempt to break away from the monolith of economic boosterism by encouraging non-productive, leisurely use of city streets. However, It is important to note that the former streets of youthful protests which had been violently taken away from one social group (counter-cultural activists) were now being released to another (weekend shoppers) under completely different premises. Thus, on another level, what was at work here was a process of symbolic cleansing of the streets, which paved the way for the coming transformation of Shinjuku into a large-scale retail and business centre. A transition was underway from the informal sector of the economy to the formal sector—from the underground bars of the counter culture to the office complexes of Japan Inc. So, Asakura’s sense of loss was no less concrete than the disappearances of these iconic landmarks of the 1960s youth movement.

On a larger scale, this transformation of the neighbourhood meant a repositioning of Shinjuku within the growing metropolitan structure of Tokyo:

The most important outcome of the construction of the highrise office park on the western side of the terminal is that Shinjuku no longer was a satellite centre of Tokyo: it was the centre itself. Until then, no matter how much Shinjuku boomed as an entertainment district, Tokyo's centre remained in Marunouchi and Ginza which stood in front of it. However, with the construction of a mega urban office centre in West Shinjuku,²⁷ the relationship between West and East Shinjuku is now functionally identical to that of Marunouchi and Ginza.²⁸ This kind of similarity brought the "Ginza attitude" to Shinjuku which once had more in common with the "Asakusa atmosphere." By 1971, the land prices in Shinjuku exceeded those of Ginza and the local merchants began saying "As Shinjuku will be the face of Japan, we must clean up our streets and offer fine shops to outmatch Ginza." A cafe owner, who had just installed a bright all-glass window, says:

"Before I renovated the cafe, we used to get many *Futens* and realtors²⁹, but after the renovation, we began seeing more fashionable young girls. We thought about getting rid of hoodlums altogether. In order to suit the image of new Shinjuku, we must start thinking about creating businesses that sell expensive, but high quality merchandise."

(Yoshimi, 1987: 285)

Shinjuku was now poised to become the new commercial and consumer centre of Tokyo, which by this time included a growing population of nuclear families in its western suburbs away from the core 23 wards. Although Shinjuku never completely lost its culture of alternative lifestyles, it was clear by the mid 1970s that the neighbourhood was definitely set on a different path. But, the changes were not quite as abrupt as they might have seemed. There were signs of the coming consumer-oriented society even at the height of the counter-cultural student movements.

²⁷ By "Nishi Shinjuku," I am referring to the area immediately west of the Shinjuku Station [*Shinjuku Nishiguchi*], not to the actual neighbourhood of the same name [*Nishi Shinjuku*] (although they overlap each other). Similarly, here, East Shinjuku refers to the eastern side of the railway terminal.

²⁸ This parallel was finalized recently when the City Hall, the symbolic centre of Tokyo, moved from Marunouchi to West Shinjuku.

²⁹ The presence of realtors here is quite significant as they were most likely to be involved in land assembly as they anticipated the coming large-scale projects in Shinjuku.

A PERIOD OF TRANSITION: FROM SHINJUKU TO SHIBUYA

i. End of an Era

There were, in fact, various signs of changes in the development of the student movements which foresaw the coming of the new consumer society in the 1970s. At the national level, the university students' collective was already marred with the lack of leadership even before the actual campus standoffs began in the late 1960s. The divergence within the students' collective was in fact a process which began unfolding in the mid 1960s:

We must not forget that, echoing these [changes in social values], the activists in anti-establishment movements themselves began denying the principles of their own organization. The dictatorial leadership for students movements had been on the decline since the 1950s, but during the 1960s it was lost completely. The unifying leadership of *Zengakuren* [National Students' Assembly]³⁰ was weakened and student movements split into various factions....While the conflicts in the 1950s were mostly fought by collective organizations (as exemplified by the labour union movements and communist political movements), the 1960s' social movements were characterized by an informal assembly of micro-rebellions by students and residents.

(Yamazaki, 1985: 48)

Similar changes were also occurring at an individual level; Nakano, as an insider, here recollects his involvement in counter-cultural student movements:

There were many unforgettable episodes. On campus, we did things together in a "group" (in our language it was an "organization"), yet we were against the idea of "collectives." We argued endlessly among ourselves that it was simply our individual "subjective" decisions that happened to appear in unison. This was the time when various factions were in decline and Zenkyoto was beginning to take its initiatives. Our lack of leadership indeed confused the university authorities.

We were individually alone. The decisions that we made were not based on the ideological beliefs which underlay our organization; rather, it was based on a more *tactile feeling*,³¹ almost at the level of aesthetic preferences. Thus, it was something within ourselves, not an external authority that led our "movement."

(Nakano, 1989: 79–80)

Again, consistent with Yamazaki's earlier observation, Nakano locates the motivation of his fellow student activists within the new structure of feeling, "tactile feeling," but not within any

³⁰ *Zengakuren* was later replaced by *Zenkyoren*, which was a more loosely organized association of students across the nation.

³¹ This emphasis is mine.

particular ideologies.³² This was, indeed, a precursor of the “soft individualism” which came to characterize the new youth cultural scene in the 1980s. Even as early as the beginning of the 1970s, Nakano, for example, encountered the new type of students on campus, who were in fact the first of the new generation of the Japanese youth. Nakano, who was by then a professor at one of the still “troubled” campuses in Tokyo, remembers the following episode:

This was at one of these student cafes. The students no longer harboured the “bad habits” of my generation—nursing the same cup of coffee for hours to engage in debates over literature, life, love, and philosophy. As they entered the cafe, they quickly snapped up a couple of comic books stashed at one corner of the cafe and sat down on one of those box seats. They read the comic books for some time, occasionally exchanging the books among themselves. Then, one of them uttered “Well, let’s go.” I was utterly amazed the first time that I encountered such a scene. As I believed my “bad habits” to be the norm, I approached them to protest: “C’mon, guys. Why don’t you talk to each other here? You know, the campus is in turmoil, there are no lectures, and the whole society is upside down—there must be something to talk about? But they replied: “we don’t do what your generation did any more. When we get together, we don’t talk about things like love, life, or struggle. Even when we get together at someone’s house, we just read some books, magazines, or comic books, or play the guitar, or do some knitting—we don’t argue. That would be too tiring.”

(Nakano, 1991: 171-172)

In the winter of 1970, there was also another event which was symbolic of the end of an era for the 1960s student movement. A young female student activist was apprehended by the police authority on a busy street of Tokyo. It was not so much her arrest that captured media attention as the new image of youth she projected: at the time of her arrest, she was dressed in the latest mode of fashion and was carrying a copy of *An An*—a new urban lifestyle magazine for young women which had just been launched earlier the same year:

At the time she was dressed in the latest fashion of the day: a Maxi coat that comes down to her ankles, a mini skirt above her knees, and John-Lennon style glasses³³, these were what defined the “cool” those days. It was newsworthy enough that she was a radical student who was both fashionable and beautiful. In fact, on the following day, every newspaper featured a photo-article on her arrest. The topic of the day was that she was carrying a copy of *An An* at the time of her arrest.

(Ueno, 1992: 143)

The image of a fashionable, radical student was indeed very striking, considering the fact that most of the student protesters of the day were wearing outfits which had more in common with

³² There was, at least initially, a strong linkage between the student activists and the Japan Communist Party.

³³ “Tombo” [dragon fly] glasses in the original article.

construction work-clothes and military uniforms than anything even remotely “fashionable.” And her possession of *An An*, rather than any leftist manifestos, was just as shocking. *An An*, was indeed a sign of things to come. Here. Ueno, who was the part of the very generation to which *An An* was targeted, remembers its launch as follows:

The first issue of *An An* was launched in March 1970³⁴ by Heibon Shuppan (today’s Magazine House). We were 21 then. The target readership was those between 18 and 24 and our generation fit perfectly in this category. From its inception, *An An* had a clear editorial policy.

The first policy was that they only dealt with ready-made clothes; this was a revolutionary idea at the time...

The second policy was that by emphasizing the fashion element, it did away with entertainment scandals which were still common in most women’s magazines. According to historian Teruko Inoue who specializes in women’s journalism, the two major issues of women’s magazines in the postwar ear had been the news of the Royalty and the scandals of the celebrities. These were articles which fulfilled women’s fantasy about another world....However, for the “non-elitist” student masses of the 1970s, there no longer were elites.

(Ueno, 1992: 144–146)

One might say that *An An*, which represented a new genre called *joho-shi* (an “info-logue”), opened up the way for new cultures of consumption. For one thing, the magazine guaranteed its informational value with the promise that its readers (at least those who lived in Tokyo) could readily acquire the commodities that were featured in its articles. Secondly, this accessibility of information, was further strengthened by the fact that by eliminating articles on “celebrity scandals” and “royal gossip,” the magazine mainly dealt with urban fashion and lifestyle issues which are relevant to the daily lives of its readers. By the end of the 1970s, the trend that began with *An An* spread through numerous monthly and weekly publications such as *Non No*, *Popeye*, and *Olive* which followed its urban and lifestyle themes.

Thus, like their counterparts in the West, in the 1970s, the fervor of student movement in Japan was also fizzling out as new forms of consumer culture, which was less esoteric and more pragmatic, took its place. During this decade, the demise of the counter-cultural crowd in Shinjuku set the scene for the “crystal” generation in Shibuya, a subject which I will turn to shortly. But before starting the discussion of Shibuya, it is also important to note here that similar changes of

³⁴ This was the very month that I was born.

equal importance were also occurring at another social sector of the city, namely, the urban office workers.

ii. Urban Office Workers and the City

In the 1960s there were also social changes among those who were not too politically inclined. Their daily actions (and inactions), nonetheless, had profound consequences on the urban configuration of Tokyo just as much as the counter-cultural youths had their impact on the local geography of Shinjuku. As Tokyo's economic and demographic bases grew in the boom of the 1960s, young urban office workers, who largely represented the new middle class in Japan, began appearing in large numbers in Tokyo's business and shopping districts. According to Yamazaki (1985), these changes in the 1960s were transforming the perception of urban space from that of "non-everyday" special space into "everyday" ordinary space. In the early 1960s, for example, Izumi (1991) remembers his childhood routine:

My routine was that I would get on the Marunouchi Line with my mother and brother, get off the train at Nishi Ginza (today's Ginza), eat a chocolate sundae at the Fujiya, look through the telescope on the rooftop of Matsuya, and buy a Pokko candy from Olympic restaurant on the way home. Around Christmas, I would go to the toy department in Matsuya or Mitsukoshi (strangely, it was always on the 6th floor of every department store) and buy something like a deck of Nintendo³⁵ playing cards with my initials on. Thus, my childhood "Ginza" life was organized around department stores.

Of course I could have done all of those things in Ikebukuro or Shinjuku, or even in Shibuya, but at the time these areas carried the atmosphere of Tsudanuma or Omiya and were rather pitiful. So if I went to Shinjuku, I'd wear cheap shirts and to Ginza, a blazer and leather shoes. That's how I distinguished them.

(Izumi, 1991: 62)

It is this contrast between formal Ginza and informal Shinjuku, which Izumi felt as a child, that was breaking down and was being reorganized in the 1960s. The new urban spaces which sprung up in the 1960s particularly exhibited the "informal" sense of place associated with Shinjuku which did not produce the same level of "tension" which Ginza demanded of its visitors. Thus, relatively speaking, the new urban spaces of Tokyo were more readily familiar to its visitors than they had

³⁵ Nintendo, which is known for its video game machines, began as a manufacture of game cards.

been in the past. Yamazaki (1985) expresses this idea of accustomization in his discussion of the new urban crowds in the 1960s, which he calls *tsuide-zoku*³⁶:

The generation of *tsuide-zoku* began to avoid attending events at baseball parks and stadiums which confined them in the same place for a long time. This fact is, in a way, linked to the larger cultural history of the nation. Just as *nagara-zoku* [whose who engage in multiple activities at once] changed the nature of family life in Japan, the massive spread of *tsuide-zoku* led to dispersal of urban culture.

The city for a long time had been the site of labour as well as the site of *hare* [positive sense of non-everydayness]. To be there on the weekend meant literally to wear *hare-gi* (formal attire) with a mindset ready to engage in a full day of enriching or entertaining activities. Thus, the city was a “sacred area” which had its centre and periphery. But, *tsuide-zoku* diffused this centre in the vicinity of major train terminals, and in effect transformed the city into an area in which people no longer had the sense of awe.

(Yamazaki, 1985: 86–87)

What followed in the urban transformations during the 1970s and 1980s was the re-establishment of this lost “sense of awe” in the urban environment, which once again redefined people’s physical and personal “distance” to the city. This is to say that the new projects of urban transformation in Tokyo had been a process of “re-enchantment” of the city which eventually led to the emergence of “thematic” streets of consumption in the 1980s. The street stage for Tokyo’s new youth cultural scene, however, was no longer in the domain of Shinjuku, which by the early 1970s was losing its counter-cultural edge; the centre of new culture was taking shape in another neighbourhood to the south, Shibuya where a new urban space—which would have more in common with Ginza than Shinjuku—was being developed.

iii. From Shinjuku to Shibuya

In his study of the social history of Tokyo’s “hot spots,” Yoshimi (1987) locates the beginning of a gravitational shift from Shinjuku towards Shibuya in the 1970s, a geographical shift which also mirrors a parallel shift in social values on the larger scale. Matsuo, for example, saw the arrival of “Shibuya-type” development in the 1970s as a “degeneration” of 1960s’ student activism:

³⁶ By *tsuide-zoku*, Yamazaki refers to those who frequent urban areas not for single-purpose visits, but for multiple-purpose visits. The difference, which he tries to emphasize here, is that the single-purpose visitors represents an attentive crowd while the multiple-purpose visitors a restless crowd. He sees the *tsuide* culture in the city to be an extension of *nagara* culture in the private home where *nagara-zoku* refers, for example, to people who watch TV while eating or who listen to music while studying.

The Shinjuku youth of the past expressed their frustration with the unknown future. Today, the youth in Shibuya display a sense of ennui with the predictable (in their mid) future....Here there is no sense of the camaraderie that the Shinjuku youth once possessed in their enthusiastic involvement in the pseudo-destructive “happenings.” Instead, one can assume the role of a fantasy protagonist in the theatrical stage of street performance....The illusion that the market is the model for cultural concepts, has obtained a physical landscape through the meticulous urban designing by the former student activists (as they moved from Shinjuku to Shibuya).

(Matsuo, 1989: 114)

The new social composition of today’s Shibuya youths also contrasted with those of 1960s’

Shinjuku youth:

In short, those who have been supporting the “Shibuya-type” development since the 1970s are young people, mostly students, and even if they work they work mostly in white collar or technical fields. Their homes are centred on southwestern Tokyo and extend to areas as far as Yokohama and Kawasaki. Therefore, the majority of young people who are drawn to Shibuya come from families who live in Yamanote or the suburbs of Tokyo and the social composition of Shibuya today differs from Shinjuku in the 1960s where single people who moved to the city from the countryside dominated the scene.

(Yoshimi, 1987: 305)

Thus, unlike the Shinjuku youth who migrated to Tokyo from Japan’s countryside, the Shibuya youth, having grown up in the nearby suburbs of Tokyo and its neighbouring prefectures³⁷, show a greater urban orientation in their values and beliefs—tendencies which are manifested in the obsession with “urban” and “urbane” lifestyles.

Historically speaking, Shibuya, until the 1970s when the tidal wave of new changed engulfed the town, remained a transfer terminal where most of the visitors were commuters on their way elsewhere. The transformation of Shibuya in the 1970s was related to the provision of new cultural and shopping facilities—urban amenities which, in various ways, appealed to the new, younger crowd:

What is interesting here is the transformation of Shibuya since the end of the 1970s. In the postwar era, Shibuya had long been an ordinary terminal *sakariba* [entertainment centre]; there was a small underground theatre, called “Jan Jan,” which attracted quite a young audience. Then, as NHK’s concert hall and Seibu Parco’s rooftop theatre opened in the vicinity, the atmosphere of the area changed dramatically. The new crowd of Shibuya was no longer part of *tsuide-zoku* [who come to a town centre incidentally]; they came to this place intentionally and stayed there for hours.

(Yamazaki, 1985: 88)

³⁷ This is so because their parents, the babyboom generation who moved to Tokyo in the 1950s and 1960s, were priced out of the housing market in central Tokyo and bought houses in suburban locations.

Figure 4.3: Social Perception of Shinjuku and Shibuya (1989)

Shinjuku	Shibuya
Old Mass	New Mass
Developed in 1950-1970	Developed in 1980-1990
Kanto, inland-oriented	Shonan, ocean-oriented
Regional culture	Urban culture
Earthly	Sophisticated
Entertainment district	Fashion district
Somewhat dark	Somewhat bright
Somewhat poor	Somewhat rich
Volume retailer, large store	Specialty store, boutique
Price-conscious	Quality, design-conscious
Men in 30-40s	Women in 10-20s
Youth from the countryside	Youth from the city
Migrant mentality	Resident mentality
Blue-collar	White-collar
Tourist group or single men	Nuclear family, single women, students

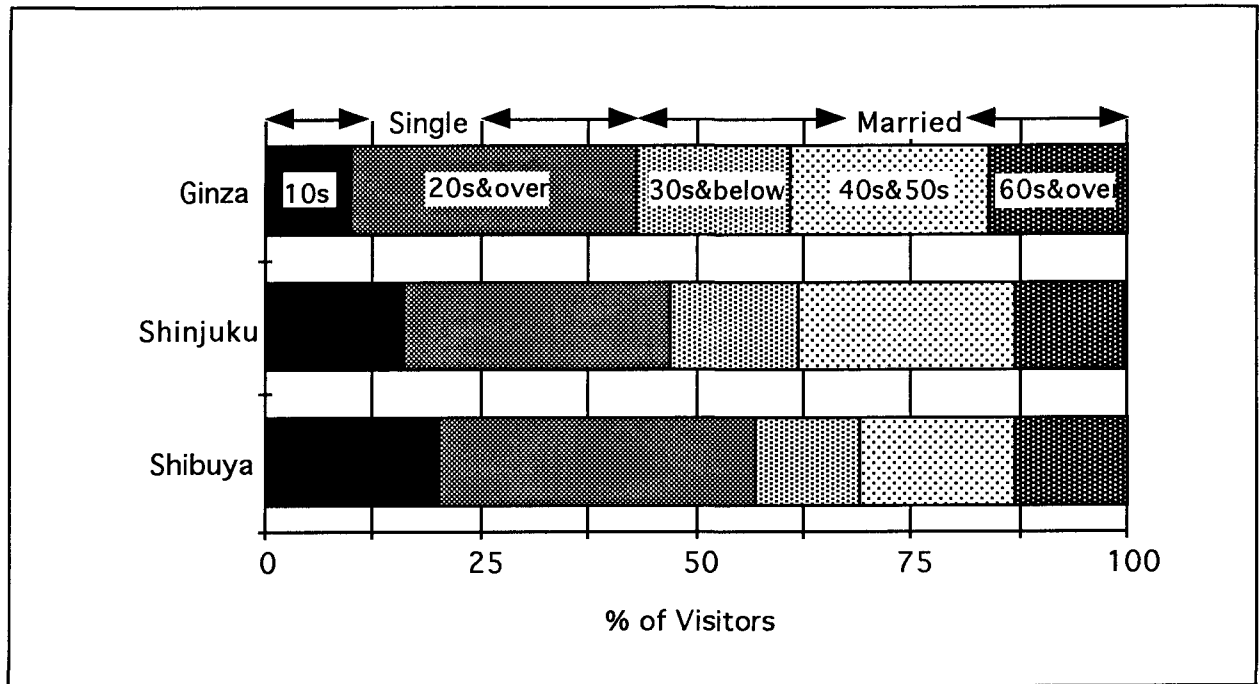
Source: Uemura, 1989: 201-202.

However, with the opening of Seibu's Parco³⁸ and the subsequent fashion infrastructure, the flow of pedestrian traffic around Shibuya began to change. In fact, Shibuya became a captive urban space where people "hung around." Using a dramaturgical metaphor, Yoshimi finds that Shibuya, or more specifically the Shibuya-Harajuku-Aoyama triad, has become an urban stage for the self-conscious "I/Eye" to see and to be seen. The essence of this urban street stage was captured in the opening advertising copy for Seibu's Parco: "The passers-by are beautiful—Shibuya, Koen Street" (Yoshimi, 1987, 299).

Characteristically, Shibuya, which embodied the emerging new consumer ethos in the 1970s, is perceived almost as an antithesis of Shinjuku. This contrast is evident in peoples' perception of

³⁸ Seibu's Parco (the name comes from *Koen* (park)) opened in 1973 as part of the company's new experimentation in "lifestyle" marketing.

Figure 4.4: Visitors to Three Tokyo Areas by Age Groups (1988)



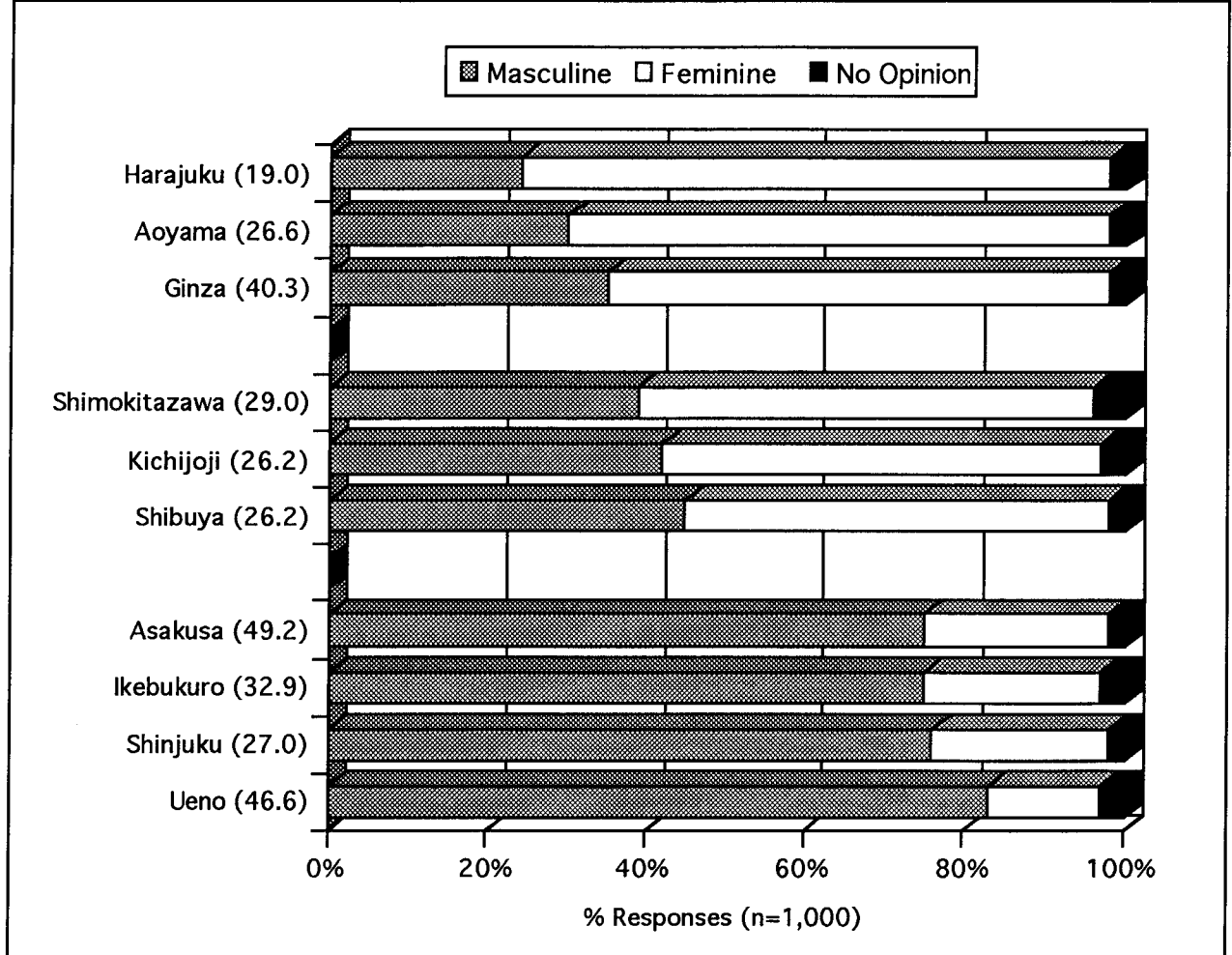
* The survey targeted those who were above 16 and who would visit the area at least once a month

Source: Mitsuoka, 1989: 18.

the two areas as shown in the survey summary above (Figure 4.3). All in all, Shibuya stands as a consumption-oriented place with an urban lifestyle emphasis. It is perceived as more “feminine” and “fashionable” than Shinjuku which seems to embody culturally less “sophisticated” qualities associated with the countryside. As another survey from 1988 shows (Figure 4.4), Shibuya attracts unusually high percentages of young and single people, especially in contrast to two other large shopping centres, Ginza and Shinjuku, where over 50 per cent of the visitors are above 30 and married.

Yet in another survey shows that Shibuya, along with its neighbouring areas to the south, Harajuku and Aoyama, which arose during the same period, is distinguished from Shinjuku in its perceived “age” and “gender.” The survey by Hakuhodo asked people about what age-group and gender they associated with the ten selected areas in Tokyo (see Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5: Imagined Gender and Age of Tokyo Neighbourhoods (1985)



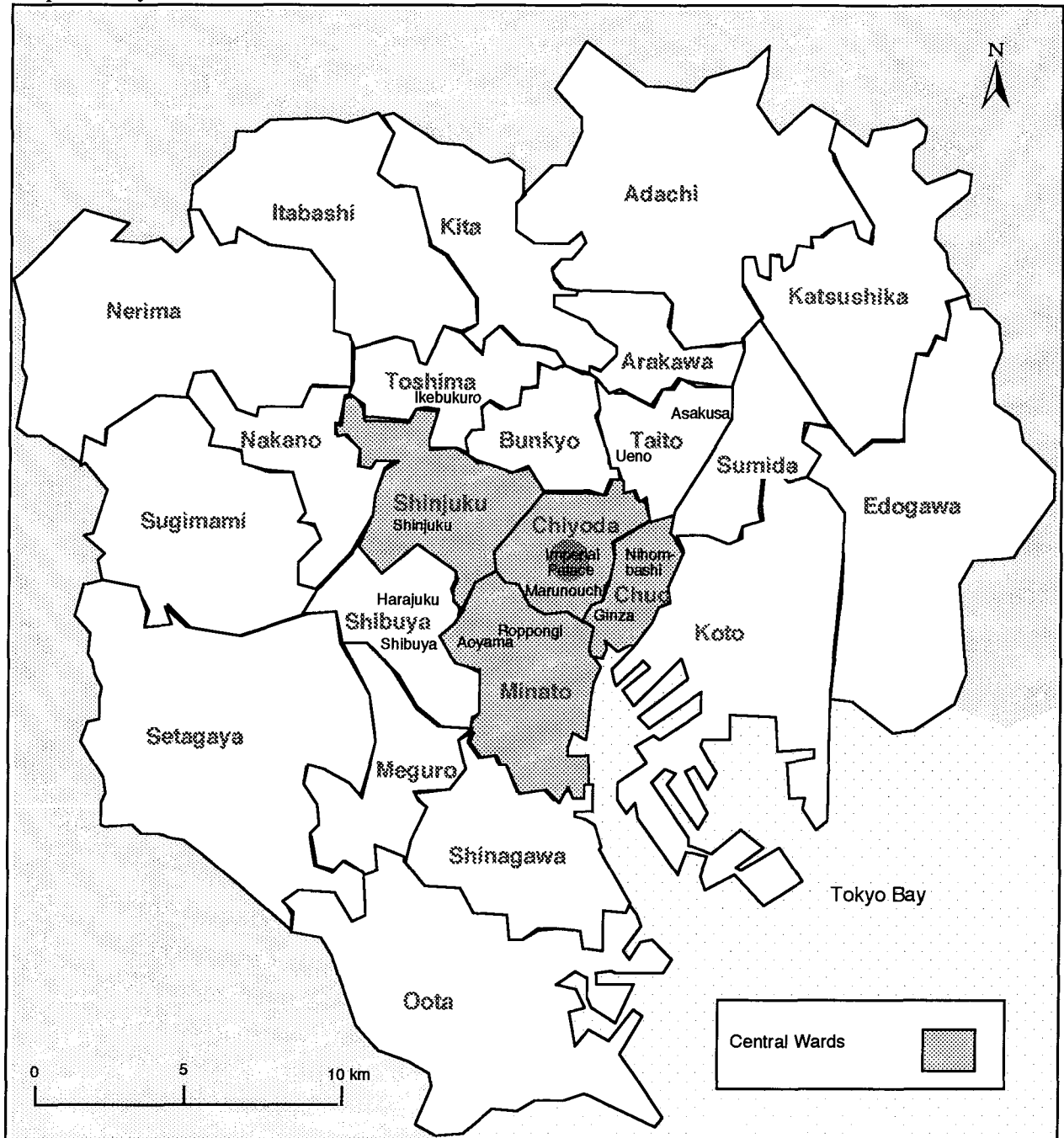
* The numbers in the parentheses which follow the neighbourhood names refer to the “imagined age” for the respective areas.

Source: Hakuhodo Institute of Life and Living, 1990: 109.

The profiles of various neighbourhoods are quite remarkable. In fact, in terms of its “gender” identity, Shibuya is very much closer to Ginza, Tokyo’s more established shopping area, than Shinjuku³⁹. Both Ginza and Shibuya are perceived to be more “feminine” while Shinjuku is seen as mostly (over 75%) “masculine.”

³⁹ This survey also shows that Shibuya is much younger than Ginza, which is expected because of the former’s position as a newer development. What is notable, however, is that at least in this survey, Shinjuku is still perceived as an area for younger crowd.

Map 2: Tokyo 23 Wards



Source: Kokusai Chigaku Kyokai, 1994.

The division between the six “feminine” neighbourhoods at the top and the four “masculine” areas at the bottom, is also suggestive of the division between Yamanote and Shitamachi. For

example, Shinjuku and Ikebukuro, despite its physical distance from Shitamachi is placed among Asakusa and Ueno which are part of the Shitamachi area. Shibuya, on the other hand, is culturally akin to a Yamanote neighbourhood such as Aoyama, although not as well as its younger “sibling” Harajuku.

The new cultural geography of Tokyo in the 1980s, thus, was predicated upon a different value system from the counter-cultural ethos associated with Shinjuku in the 1960s, such as those that I have described in this chapter. The phenomena of mass consumption and urban migration in the 1960s produced a particular type of community in Shinjuku. Indeed Shinjuku was a community of inclusion (as opposed to Shibuya in the 1980s, which was no longer a community, but an urban space of exclusion⁴⁰). Shinjuku, with its ability to accommodate the “newly arrived,” was a cultural melting-pot in 1960s Japan. But, Shinjuku’s cultural dominance came to a gradual end as it entered a new decade of the 1970s which brought with it a beginning of a new cultural ethos. The social dismantling of its counter-cultural base was paralleled by the physical redevelopment of the neighbourhood into a new business and commercial centre (and later into a governmental centre) of Tokyo. As Shinjuku declined as a centre of youth culture in the 1970s, it was Shibuya that emerged as a new locus of youth culture.

What were the new cultural practices that have led to the emergence of Shibuya-type areas, which seemed to carry a “Yamanote” identity, in the 1980s? What was the profile of the new generation of youths who frequented the new “fashion” spots in Tokyo since the demise of Shinjuku as an epic centre for the youth cultural scene? What was the geographical expression of the ascent of the new consumer values? In the next chapter, I will examine the formation of new cultures of consumption in Shibuya and their implications for the geography of consumption in Tokyo.

⁴⁰ Refer to my discussion of deodorant culture in chapter 5.

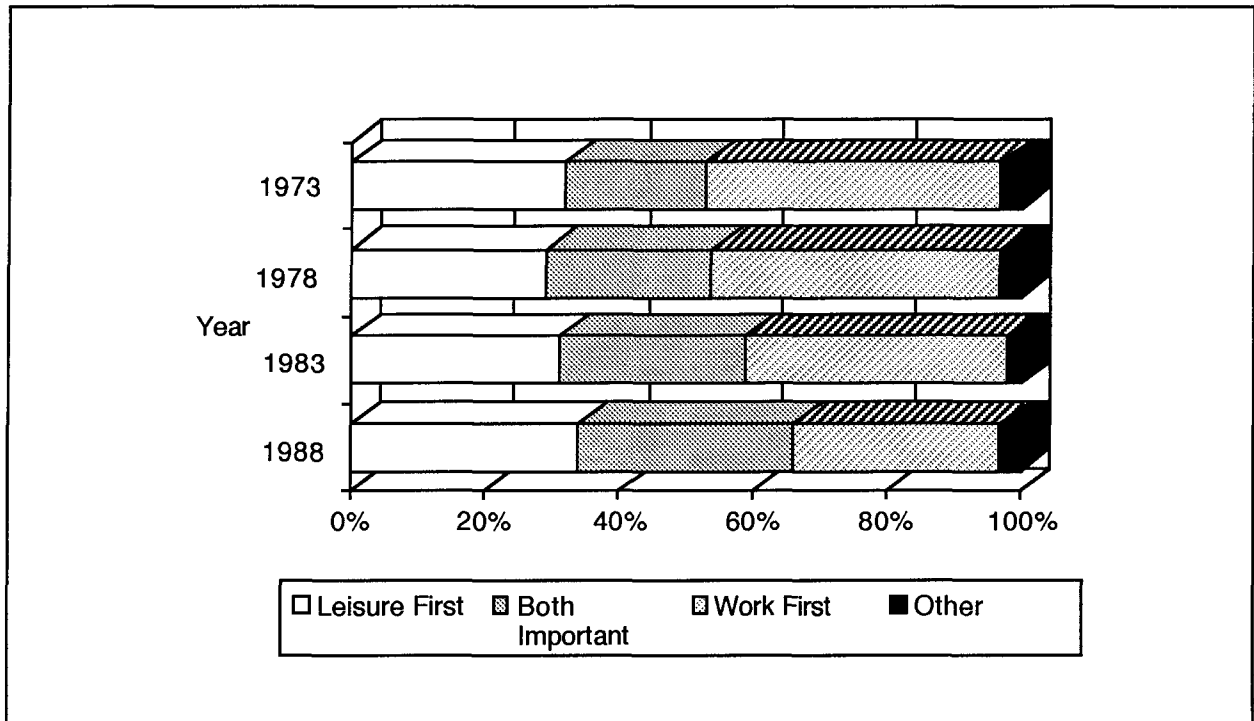
5. SHIBUYA IN THE 1980S

INTRODUCTION

I feel a little embarrassed to say this. I don't have any particular aspirations or dreams for the future. I think about my future life in terms of day-to-day "good" living.
(H.I.L.L., 1985: 262)

There was an inchoate, yet unmistakable change in the air in the streets of post-industrial Tokyo as the voices of a new generation of young and affluent consumers reverberated through the Japanese media, proclaiming the pursuit of *la dolce vita* as their motto. The old virtues of collective sacrifice for the sake of economic growth were now passé and those who adhered to them were said to be "behind the times." This advent of a new culture of consumption in Japan reflected a historically specific juxtaposition of a demographic trend, marked by the entry of the "babyboom echo" generation into the market place, with a structural shift, characterized by the excess production capacity of a maturing economy. The babyboomers' offspring was the first postwar generation to grow up in the midst of material affluence—a relatively recent phenomenon in the history of Japan's modernization. The emerging taste of the new "spoilt" consumers, however, was at odds with the paradox of "diminishing choice" that capital experienced: mass production technology, which orchestrated Japan's economic miracle in the 1960s, now rendered it nearly impossible to distinguish one product from another in terms of functional utility. New strategies were required to meet the awakening desire for the "freedom of choice": manufacturers adopted

Figure 5.1: Changing Social Attitudes On Work & Leisure (1973–1988)



* The questionnaire asked whether people valued work over leisure or vice versa.

Possible responses were:

1. leisure over work; 2. balance between leisure and work; 3. work over leisure; 4. no opinion.

* NHK conducts a national attitudinal survey every 5 years using a stratified sample population of 5,000+.

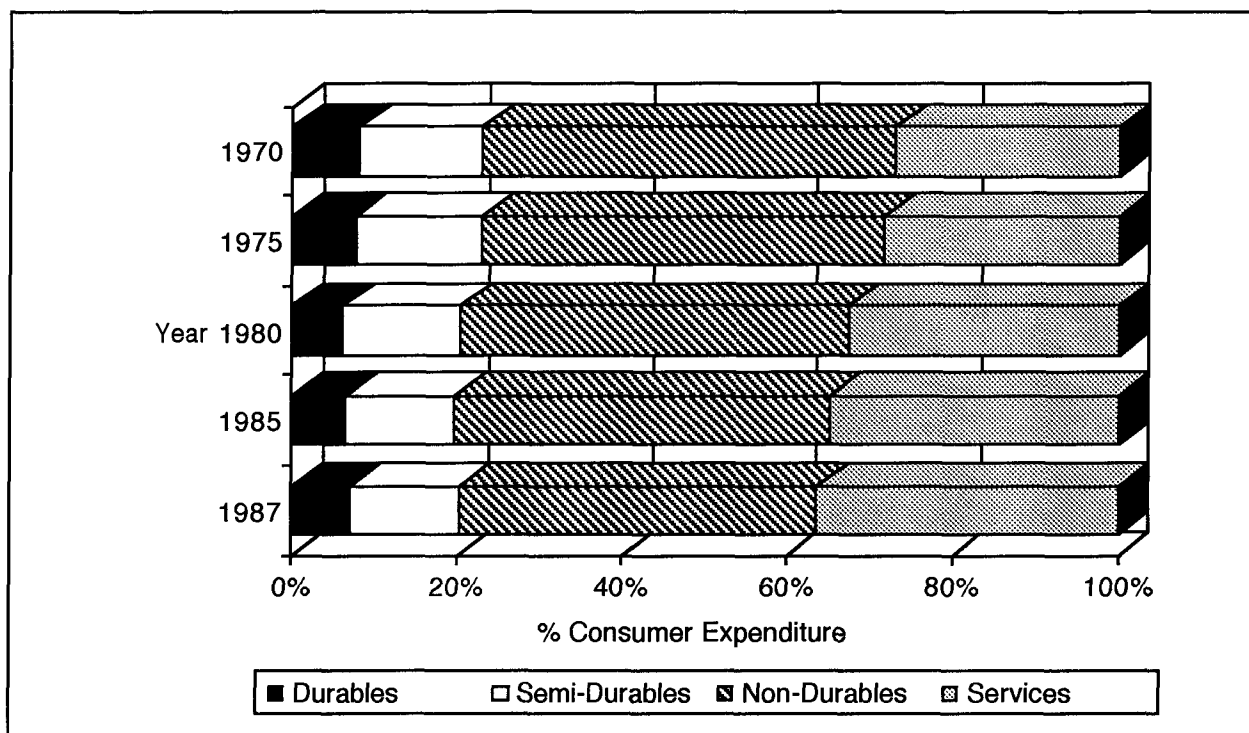
Source: NHK Public Opinion Poll Department 1991: 68

flexible technologies to deliver a wider variety of products in smaller batches while advertisers created another layer of differentiation through “lifestyle” images which spawned further “artificial” distinction among products.

Undeniably, the arrival of the consumption-led economy in the 1970s was made possible by the exponential expansion of the Japanese economy in the previous two decades, which earned Japan’s new international status as an economic superpower. In the meantime, Tokyo’s Capital Region¹, as the primate centre for the nation’s economic, political, and cultural activities, gained the “lion’s share” from Japan’s economic success. Thus, this material reality of localized affluence

¹ The Capital Region includes Tokyo and its surrounding prefectures, which together constitute Japan’s heartland.

Figure 5.2: Changing Consumer Spending Habits (1970–1985)



* This is a statistical summary of the national government's survey on household spending.

Source: Nihonkeizai Shinbun-sha 1990: 52.

in an advanced capitalist economy opened up existential space for new social formations that had been hitherto implausible (Nakano, 1989). In Bourdieu's view, the power of affluence is what guarantees the hedonistic practice of "consumption for consumption's sake":

Economic power is first and foremost a power to keep economic necessity at arm's length. This is why it universally asserts itself by the destruction of riches, conspicuous consumption, squandering, and every form of *gratuitous* luxury.

(Bourdieu, 1984: 55)

The flux of societal changes was partly manifested in the changes in people's attitudes towards work and leisure: even in this nation with a reputation for its "workaholics," the "non-productive" activity of leisure was now at least as important as work (see Figure 5.1). In the 1980s, predictions were made that the Japanese economy was shifting from an economy of "hardware" to one of "software" as people's "material needs" were becoming superseded by "socio-psychological

wants” with a greater proportion of their discretionary income being spent on intangible services (Figure 5.2). Japan was said to be entering the age of “*mono igai no mono*” [things other than things] (Creighton, 1992: 53), a theme which was exploited by innovative department stores now marketing lifestyle images instead of product concepts (e.g., the Seibu department store’s “*Oishii Seikatsu*” [Tasteful Living] featured Woody Allen posing as a lifestyle counselor).

The emphatic association between the act of enlightened consumption and urbane sophistication in lifestyle advertising promised a means of differentiation from the generic and monolithic “masses.” The well-documented phenomena of “micro-masses” or “market fragmentation” in the 1980s might be seen as a creation of new marketing strategies as well as an expression of individuality by the consuming public; however, the symbolic act of differentiation must be also understood in the context of social polarization in the midst of material affluence: a social distinction between “haves and have-lesses” (White, 1993) which was being worked out not only along an occupational-income axis, but also along a property-ownership axis. Tokyo’s ascent as a world-city brought with it a prohibitive inflation of the urban land market, which created a new class division between the “propertied” and the “property-less” (Do Rosario, 1990).

Another important consideration is that in Japan the liberatory ethos implicit in the culture of lifestyle consumption, emerged in the context of the stultifying milieu of *kanri-shakai* (administered society) which had sustained “cultures of discipline”:

In Japan, this liberation of desire assumes a striking resolution in relation to the strictly codified educational system and the rigidities of its examination process, and to the demanding system of production.

(Ivy, 1989: 44)

The nebulous relationship between the discipline of productive control and the freedom of consumptive practices will be examined later in the context of the political economy of hyper-consumption.

There was also a geography of this new consumerism of the 1980s: it was expressed in the commodification of Tokyo’s various towns (Naruse, 1993a): Shibuya as the new centre for youthful consumption, Harajuku as the Mecca for suburban teenagers and street-performers, Daikanyama as the high mark of sophistication for urban adults, Roppongi as the trendy spot for

night life. The differences among the different *machis* (neighbourhoods) are articulated not only by the city's constant urban renewals, but also by urban lifestyle magazines such as *Pia* and *Hanako*² which regularly feature articles and illustrated maps on how to explore different towns in Tokyo. In commodifying the images of Tokyo's landscapes of consumption, these urban lifestyle magazines established an intertextuality of towns whereby differences in socio-geographical associations set one area against another.

In this chapter, I will first consider the sociological roots of the new geography of consumption in Tokyo, namely the rise of the new lifestyle aesthetics of the new generation of youths, called *shinjinrui* (new human species). Then I will discuss the manifestations of their new culture of consumption in the locational dynamics within Tokyo with a special case study of Shibuya as a new Mecca for youth culture. Finally, I will end the chapter with an examination of the role of the media in the formation of Tokyo's new landscapes of consumption.

CULTURAL SHIFTS IN THE 1980s

i. The End of the *Majime* Metanarrative

The advent of the new cultures of consumption in Japan coincided with the appearance of the *neaka* [extrovert] culture that challenged the *majime* metanarrative [a trinity of seriousness, effort, and perseverance] that had been a hallmark of postwar Japanese cultural ideals (Sengoku, 1991). Take an example of *ijime* [group-bullying] in school, a phenomenon which received much attention from Japanese educators in the 1980s. The victims of *ijime* were often said to be those who were introverted or studious. This element of the school culture was reflective of the mainstream *neaka* culture that saturated the Japanese media as a whole. During the recent field research in Japan, I

² *Pia*, which began as a student publication, mostly targets college crowds while *Hanako*, a newer entry in the town magazine business, aims at single working women in Tokyo. *Hanako*, which boasts a weekly volume of over 350,000 copies, has its own magazine concept:

In the midst of information overload, we will provide useful and fun information in a timely fashion for those working women leading an urban lifestyle. Our readers are expected to be women between 25 to 30 years old who have serious concerns about career and marriage. (Naruse, 1993: 2)

was struck by the widespread currency of *owarai* [comedy] shows on Japanese TV. It seems that during the past decade, mainstream comedians have infiltrated every aspect of the Japanese media—from talk shows, quiz programs, serial dramas, documentaries, all the way to prime-time news. There seemed to be a tyranny of comedic disposition as the *neaka* culture demands that everyone laugh along with the *nori* [flow] of the time. And the *neaka* culture with its capacity to influence the “masses” was the driving force behind Japan’s fast changing cycles of urban consumer trends.

Yoshimoto (1989) believes that in Japan this “boom” mentality, predicated upon massive commodification of new ideas, has become extended to the treatment of academic knowledge as academic discourses themselves became consumable fashion trends:

In this type of boom-based society, discourse on postmodernism can exist only if it itself is commodified first. When there is a postmodern boom, intellectuals can be heard only if they can sell their discourses on postmodernism as attractive commodities.

(Yoshimoto, 1989: 9)

In Japanese academia, the 1980s saw the rise of what was then called “new academism”—a movement led by young celebrity-intellectuals such as Akira Asada and Shinichi Nakazawa. Suddenly, knowledge became an object of play, something to have fun with [*tanoshii chishiki*], and above all “fashionable.” In the popular media, Asada was known for his achievement without effort or what Ivy (1990) calls the myth of genius:

[According to this myth,] he was a piano prodigy who was expected to die young; there’s not a single book in his apartment (there is a piano, however); he never reads a book from cover to cover, but only does “stand-up reading” [in the bookstore]...The genius is the perfect metaphor for the postmodern intellectual and the complete antithesis of the labouring student masses in contemporary Japan.

(Ivy, 1990: 30)

Asada claims that reading a book is no longer necessary; if you managed to glance at the book cover, that was enough. The instant genius sans “sweat” is, not surprisingly, Japan’s new cultural hero. Today, popular cartoon characters often possess—a priori—magical power, much unlike the self-actualizing heroes of the “sports comics” that were cherished during Japan’s hyper growth era two decades ago.

ii. The Cultural Dynamics of *Neaka* and *Otaku*

As an antithesis of the *neaka* culture with its amorphous superficiality, in the 1980s, Japan's material affluence also gave rise to another breed of social formation, *otaku*—they were people who went far beyond being a mere hobbyist and created an existential space of their own (Ishii, 1993). They were the “video gamers,” “B-idol groupies,” “camera boys,” “anime [animation] freaks,” and “computer nerds.” Although *otaku*, with his/her inward-looking disposition was construed as an opposite of the extrovert personality which dominates school culture, it might also be true that *otaku* exists as the “other” within—that protected part of the self which refused to yield to the mass “boom” mentality. Yet, it was still the material affluence of the society at large that guaranteed the existential space for *otaku*.

In the past, abandoning the conventional values of society and leading an independent lifestyle used to required a strong resolve to withstand extreme poverty and loneliness. However, in the 1980s' advanced consumer society, excessive affluence reduced labour requirements; thus, one no longer needed to “work to live.” As value systems have diversified and mushroomed, there emerged social and geographical *ba* [space] for those who shared the same interest. (Ishii, 1989, 5).

It is possible to see this growth of various *otaku*-type social formations as an expression of resistance against the monolithic constraints of school culture as well as the mainstream *neaka* culture. The *otaku* culture with its single-minded determination to pursue a particular lifestyle was an inwardly-directed resistant front to Japan's “postmodern” conditions that demanded constant change with every new cycle of booms. The *otaku* were able to break away from a value system called “the reality” [read status quo] by constructing their own alternative “realities.”

What gave impetus to the formation of various *otaku* groups in concrete form was their physical concentration in large urban areas. In Japan, the Tokyo metropolitan area with its capacity to support specialty shops and mega events for the dedicated *otaku* has been the natural centre of the *otaku* universe. For example, Akihabara, an electronic market, is a habitat for the “gamer” *otaku*, Kanda, a book market, for the “anime” *otaku*. On one level, it is the sheer size and diversity

of Tokyo that allows it to function as an incubator for *otaku* subcultures. But on another level, one could argue that more than the geographical space, it is the intensity of Tokyo's informational space that *otaku* subcultures, with their emphasis on specialized knowledge, thrive on.

At the beginning of the 1980s, when the new generation of young people—*neaka*, *otaku*, and other variations in between—began appearing in large numbers, a new term was coined to categorize the new cultural aesthetics of the new generation. They were called *shinjinrui*, a “new human species.”

iii. *Shinjinrui*: The Birth of a New Individualism

I went to an orientation meeting at a company. The man who gave the orientation was really “gross.” I thought to myself, “I don’t like this company.”

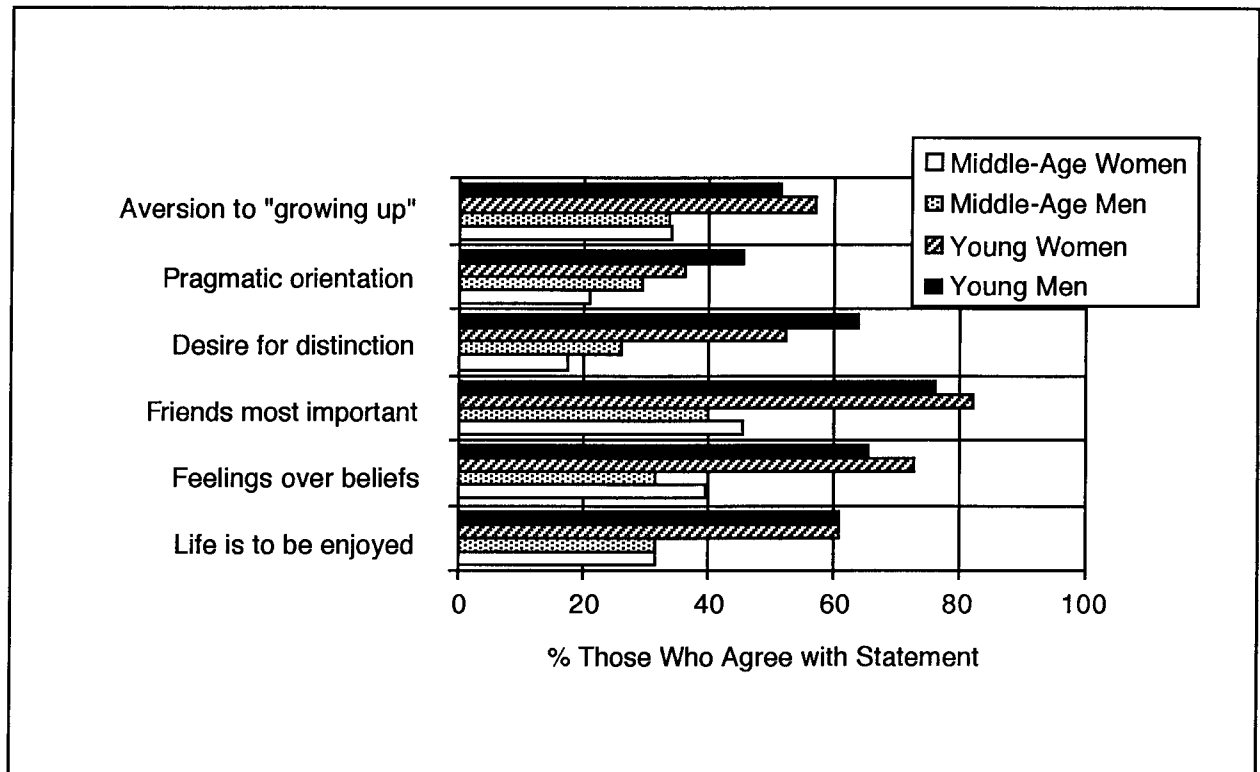
Adults say that today’s youth drift back and forth with the tide and easily change their minds about the things they like. That might be so, but you know I think we young people have a “sharp sense.” We know what is real and what is counterfeit a lot better than many adults.

(H.I.L.L., 1985: 254)

Casual and intuitive, the young taste-leaders of urban living in the 1980s exhibited signs of a new individualism that stood in stark contrast against the conservatism of the older generation—so much so that they became known as *shinjinrui* (the new human species). It was *kansei* (intuition), not *risei* (reason) that apparently motivated the day-to-day activities of the *shinjinrui* youth who saw things in terms of “likes and dislikes” rather than “good and bad” (Fujioka, 1986:33). To their parents’ dismay, the new youth no longer responded to the values of school and work cultures: dedication, endurance, and loyalty were no longer “in vogue.” In the eyes of the previous generation of youth leaders who had once organized the student activism of the late 1960s, the *shinjinrui* generation, with their single-minded pursuit of the good life and their nonchalant disregard for traditional values, appeared helplessly “apathetic” and “apolitical.”

A survey conducted by the Hakuhodo Institute of Life and Living revealed a noticeable gap between the life orientations of two generations—the *shinjinrui* youth and their middle-aged parents (Chart 5.3). Alluding to Aesop’s well-known allegory, Fujioka (1986) calls them “the ants and the grasshoppers” with the former symbolizing “work ethics” and the latter, “carefree hedonism.” In one respect, this analogy is very befitting because like the grasshopper in Aesop’s

Figure 5.3: Inter-Generational Attitudinal Gap



* "young" here refers to high school and college students and "middle-age," 40~50.

* The data also suggest gender differences; however, the overriding differences are between the two generations.

* This chart is a summary of an attitudinal survey conducted by Hakuhodo in the early 1980s.

Source: Hakuhodo Institute of Life & Living 1985: 252-263.

original parable, the lifestyle of the *shinjinrui* youth was, more often than not, being supported by the "ant" generation both indirectly and directly: indirectly, the "grasshoppers" benefitted from the high-wage economy in the part-time work labour market that the sacrifice of the previous generation built up; and directly, their parents' as well as grandparents' generation subsidized the costly lifestyle of the *shinjinrui* youth through a massive inter-generational transfer of wealth (Nishimura, 1991).

Gradually, however, the *shinjinrui* views on life came to dominate (or became appropriated by) the Japanese mainstream media as the "grasshopper" message of "live to play" rather than "work to live" appealed to the "overworked" urban office workers. By the end of the 1980s, even the elder

statesmen of the Japanese Diet began talking about *seikatsu-taikoku* (lifestyle superpower) as a desirable goal for a nation which had already attained economic superpower status. The Japanese manufacturing industries also caught up with the aesthetics of the new generation: there was a realization that “high quality and low price” no longer guaranteed sales and that the product design and image now had to possess “intuition appeal” (Fujioka, 1986). What followed was a frenetic aestheticization of everyday objects: from audio tapes, automobiles, band-aids, beer cans, bicycles, book covers, dustbins, erasers, nail clippers, notebooks, pens, pencil cases, refrigerators, slippers, staplers, scissors, stereos, toilet paper, toothbrushes, television sets, to washing machines, absolutely everything had to have the “right look.”³ Nissan’s peppermint green sports car, Sylvia, was advertised not as an “Ultimate Driving Machine,” but as an “Art Force.”

LANDSCAPES OF NEW CULTURES OF CONSUMPTION

i. Crystal Aesthetics and the “One Room Mansion”

When introducing trendy city apartments (or “one-room mansions” in the native vernacular), the weekly apartment-rental-guides speak of the “beautifully tiled exterior” as the buildings’ mark of distinction. In his recent book on the geography of Tokyo, Cybriwsky (1991) comments on how he was visually struck by the rows of these “bathroom-tiled” luxury condominiums in central Tokyo. Go (1990), in a similar vein, refers to the rise of a new aestheticism among young people (especially among high school girls) as the “deodorant culture.” He begins his discussion with the new morning rituals that were spreading among young people, called “*asa-shan*” (the morning shampoo). What was implicated in this “deodorant culture” is a new lifestyle which was associated

³ The majority of these “aestheticized” products have been kept within the domestic market even if the manufacturers have an export division. For example, in the automobile industry, many of the “specialty” cars sold in Japan are not exported to North America; the ones that do become exported to North America (except for top-end luxury cars) are more “utilitarian” stripped-down versions. To take a more mundane example of audio tapes, there are actually many TV commercials advertising cassette tapes emphasizing both the quality of the sound and the look of the case. Even in terms of variety, audio tapes are usually available in 10 min., 30 min., 40 min., 42 min., 45 min., 50 min., 52 min., 60 min., 70 min., 74 min., 80 min., 90 min., 100 min., and 120 min. lengths (in North America, there are usually 60 min., 90 min., and 120 min. tapes). A tyranny of excessive choice?

with “fashionable lifestyle, fashionable behaviour, fashionable conversation, and a fashionable love relationship based upon these three elements” (Go, 1990, 25). As such, this lifestyle lacked what Go calls “*seikatsu-shu*” [the smell of everyday life] (hence the term “deodorant culture”). The “deodorized” aestheticism⁴ consisted of only bright surfaces—or should we say the “bathroom-tiled exterior”?

Tokyo’s answer to the demand of the new generation, subscribing to the “deodorant culture” was the introduction of “one room mansions”—mid-to-high rise “bathroom tiled” apartment buildings which first appeared in Tokyo’s affluent inner city neighbourhoods (and later spread to other areas). The “one-room mansions” were the residence of choice for those *shinjinrui* youths in their college years or early 20s, who were able to afford to rent their own apartment near the centre of the city. During the 1980s, the number of new “one-room” apartment building under construction increased along with other facilities that cater to single life. The figure on the following page shows a roughly parallel growth between “one room mansion” development permits and the sales of Seven Eleven convenience stores.⁵ What “one room mansions” and Seven Eleven’s replaced was an older stock of wooden low rise apartment buildings which featured Japanese *tatami* rooms and various corner stores which once dominated the landscapes of inner/central city neighbourhoods in Tokyo.

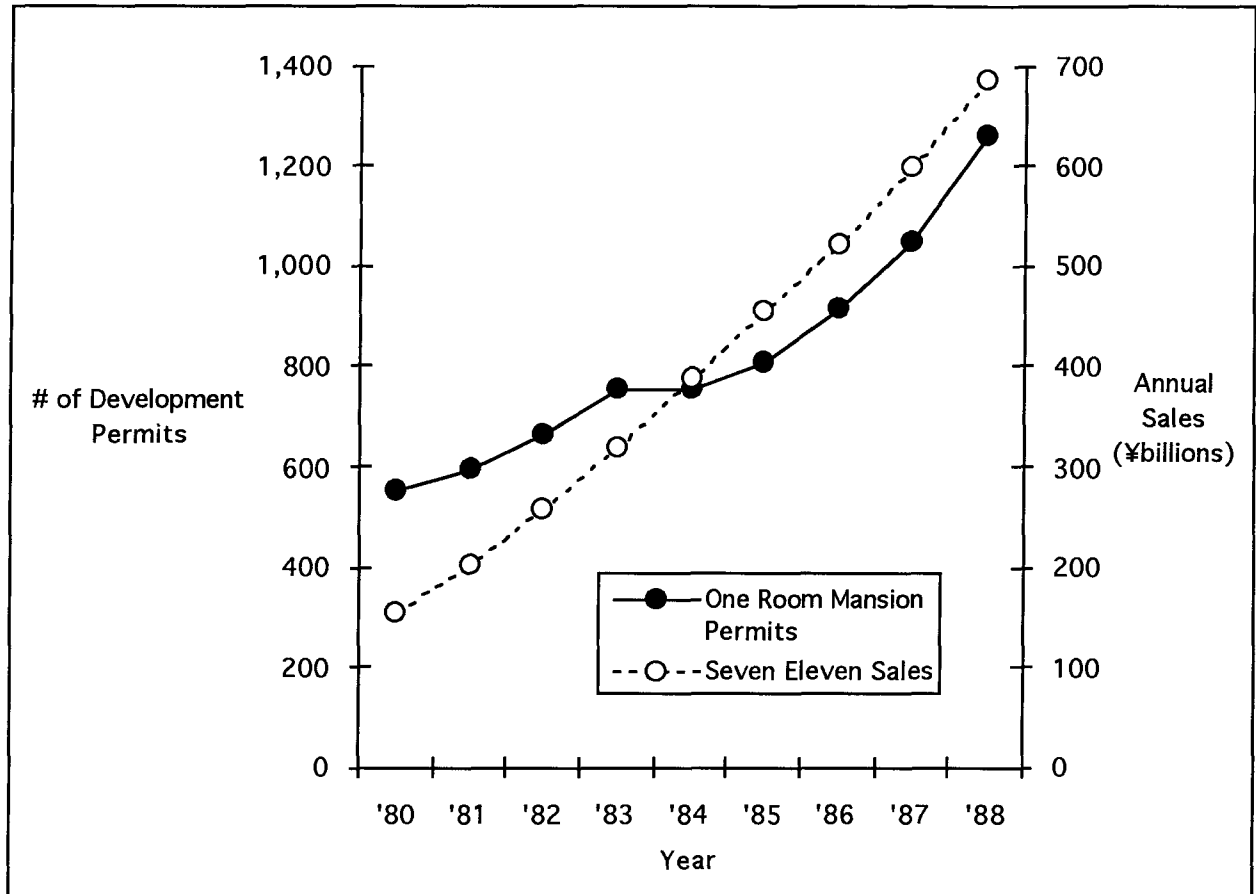
Living in a “one room mansion” is a lifestyle statement in itself as it suggests an active urban lifestyle for single young people. For example, in Marui⁶ Department store’s shopping catalogue

⁴ The aesthetic demand of the “deodorant culture” manifested itself through a process of social purification with a specific target. Under the “deodorizing” culture, the middle-age father, once the head of the household in the old *ie* family system, now had to be culturally exorcised. The wife calls him “unwanted garbage” [*sodai gomi*] and the daughter refuses to have her laundry done with his. Moreover, the quintessential *ojisan* [middle-age man] with his unsophisticated manners is also scorned by female office workers. (see, for example, Shimizu and Furuga 1993) What is being eradicated is the old value system based on labour and “sweat”—qualities that are personified in *ojisan*.

⁵ In Japan, unlike North America, Seven Elevens have maintained a more positive image among consumers. In Tokyo, for example, their outlets are frequented by white collar office workers and university students. Rather than targeting teenagers, Seven Eleven Japan (which now owns its former parent firm in the US) targeted this age group with advertisements that emphasized the city lifestyle.

⁶ In the 1980s, Marui became a major player in youth-oriented retailing as they opened up the new market called DC brands (DC stands for designer and character) which appealed to trend-conscious urban youths.

Figure 5.4: Provision of Single-Life Oriented Infrastructure



Source: Serizawa, 1990: 71.

there is a suggestion of excitement as a single, which is built upon the “learning mode” towards life.⁷

“The single life you dreamed of....There are so many things you want to do. For example, arranging flowers when you are alone. Writing letters to your friends and Mom back home. Drinking camomile tea before going to bed. Keeping a diary. Having a plain yogurt for breakfast. Mastering the backhand stroke. Attending a driving school. Becoming a social drinker. Partying while wearing the brand-name dress you’ve been dreaming of. Learning how to cook pasta well. Enjoying late-night telephone conversations with your friends. Swimming once a week. Losing 3kg weight. Making the bed every morning. Getting a pair

⁷ Featherstone sees this “learning” disposition to be one of the main characteristics of the petite-bourgeoisie (see Chapter 2). In a sense, the appeal of “one room mansion” suggests the desire on the part of the new generation of the Japanese youth to “move up” just as Japan as a nation was ascending in the global order.

of sunglasses. Learning to walk elegantly in pumps. And so on and so on....Oh, and finding more than three boyfriends, of course! Do them all.”

(Serizawa, 1990: 64)

There is also a mutually-classifying association among occupational categories, residential choices, and geographical locations. A special feature on “one-room life” in *An An* (1984: February, 24), for instance, describes how a fashion designer chose to live in a “one room mansion” located near Harajuku:

“Miss Hideko Kadota (designer), who moved into her apartment last July, felt “This is it!” just as she approached the building [near Harajuku] for the first time with her realtor....She lives and works in her apartment. Without taking her shoes off inside⁸, she leads a very urban, simple, and compact life here. Taking advantage of the Murphy bed and built-in closets, her apartment does not seem cluttered despite her extra furniture for storing clothes and work-related documents.”

(Serizawa, 1990: 64)

There were several features of the “one room mansion” which distinguished it from the traditional “apartment” housing for single young people, such as those “four-and-a-half-tatami” apartments found in Shinjuku’s student quarters⁹, which had been available in large supply before. For starters, the Japanese *tatami* mattresses have been replaced by wall-to-wall carpeting (and nowadays by hardwood floors¹⁰). The sleeping arrangement also changed accordingly as Japanese-style *futons* became replaced by Western-style beds. And finally, as each unit in “one-room mansions” was now equipped with a “unit bath,”¹¹ the practice of communal bathing (*senjo*) almost disappeared among this generation. By the end of the 1980s, this “one room mansion” lifestyle has become a common feature of college life, especially among those who move to Tokyo from the countryside:

⁸ In Japan, not “taking off shoes” indoors signifies Western lifestyles as in most Japanese homes, shoes are taken off at the entrance the house. So the woman’s habit of not taking her shoes off would sound very unusual in the local context.

⁹ These were mostly wooden buildings featuring extremely small “four-and-a-half tatami” rooms.

¹⁰ Hardwood floors are currently called *furoringu* [flooring] (there are native words which mean hardwood floors, but are never used to describe “one room mansions”), again, emphasizes its associations with Western style homes.

¹¹ A “unit bath” is simply a combination of a toilet and a bath/shower facility.

He came from Hokkaido and now lives in Mejiro where our university is located. He lives in a six-tatami size [rather small] “one room mansion” apartment. It has a kitchen, unit bath, and toilet.

In the past, students used to live in four-and-a-half-tatami units—with no bath and shared toilet. Today such an apartment would be very unpopular. Thus, this student of mine is leading a perfectly “normal” student life. His rent is ¥55,000. According to a newspaper article, the new apartments are usually six-tatami size with bath and toilet facilities and they rent for anywhere between ¥67,000 to ¥77,000. So his rent is very average, too.

(Fujitake, 1991: 98)

The urban lifestyle that the “one room mansion” embodied, in some ways, was also suggestive of the “New York-style” loft apartments that Sharon Zukin writes about in *Loft Living*.¹² In fact, quite a few of the “one room mansions” were advertised as “loft” units. There were, of course, obvious differences between New York’s lofts and Tokyo’s “one room mansions.” The former consisted of large, warehouse conversion units while the latter represent small, pristine concrete structures; aged brick walls in New York’s lofts were replaced by brand new ceramic tiles in Tokyo’s “one room mansions.” Finally, the “lofts” in Tokyo actually referred to small attics attached to “one room mansions” as shown in the example below:

Ms. N is an OL [office worker] in her early 20s; she lives alone in Sasazuka [in Shibuya Ward] which is only a few minutes away from Shinjuku on the Keio Line. “My apartment has two rooms—a six-tatami room and three-and-a-half tatami one. The ‘three-and-a-half-tatami’¹³ size room is a loft,” she told me the other day. “You know, the loft rooms are in fashion lately. I have turned it into my bedroom.” “Loft” sounds really chic, but it’s really an attic. But, I often see the characters in TV dramas who have lofts; they indeed seem very fashionable. I wonder whether Ms. N lives in her loft apartment in the image of these TV dramas?

(Fujitake, 1991: 99)

For some people, the “one room mansion” represented a space that substituted for the actual apartments in foreign countries that they had lived in before. A recent article in *Popeye*, for example, described the Paris-inspired lifestyle of a young woman who had just returned from France:

¹² In 1987, Seibu opened a lifestyle department store called “Loft” in Shibuya. Again there is a suggestion of New York-style single’s lifestyle here.

¹³ Here ‘three-and-a-half-tatami’ refers to the size of her loft addition, not the actual flooring of the space, which is most likely to be carpeted.

“I went to school in France before. So I was trying to recreate the attic of an *appartement* in Paris, but my Japanese futon gets in the way of the *appartement* image.” ...

After leaving her OL life, Rie went to Provence to study. After she returned to Tokyo, she misses the French café atmosphere, so she spends her free time café-hopping in the city.

“I want to become a connoisseur of the café culture. The concept for the interior of my apartment has been inspired by the café image.” ...

In this ultra simple space, there is nothing unnecessary in her living room below the loft. Her furniture includes a sofa, a writing table, a table & a chair, and a TV set.

(Popeye, April 25, 1994: 159)

What is peculiar about her apartment is that while it is a decorative space on one level, it is also a highly “rational” space in that the rest of the apartment has been consciously trimmed down to bare essentials. The “rationality” here represents a particular logic of spatial display, which privileges the “style” of the personal living space at the cost of physical comfort and everyday convenience. Serizawa, in his analysis of another “one room apartment” dweller, suggests that there is a deliberate attempt to remove any traces of everyday life:

First of all there is a conscious effort to minimize household utilities. Secondly, she hides anything that evokes a “lived-in” feeling [*seikatsu-shu*] from a visitor’s view. And thirdly, she sleeps on a sofa-bed. All of these contribute to dissolving the core of private space. In short, she has succeeded in erasing the traces of the private from the apartment.

(Serizawa, 1990: 67–68)

In this selfconsciously controlled environment what became concealed was in fact *seikatsu-shu*, the “smell of life”—the very quality that, in Go’s earlier observation, the deodorant culture attempted to eliminate. It was in this sense that the concept of “one room mansions” was less “suitable” to earthy Shitamachi than to fashionable Yamanote. Thus, there was a strong association between the residential choice and the patterns of consumption. Now, to look more closely to this relationship between consumption and space, we will turn to the subject of retail geography in 1980s Tokyo.

ii. Retail Geography of the Crystal Lifestyles

It was Yasuo Tanaka’s 1981 novel *Nantonaku Kurisutaru* [Somewhat Crystal] (1980) which first captured the spirit of what was then called the *shinjinrui* [new human species] sensitivity which defined the new sensitivity of tasteful consumption:

If I had a choice between identical products, I wanted to choose the one that felt good. It's not that I have no mind of my own. The choice was not of no consequence. My choice was certain right from the start. I just didn't want to make a deliberate decision. Somehow choosing what felt good, unconsciously, I found my present lifestyle.

(Tanaka, 1981: 54)

The keywords here are “feel-good” and “lifestyle.” Decisions are to be made “intuitively”; the “lifestyle” is defined by one's taste which in practice means the mastery of “product brands” which the book's extensive footnotes painstakingly describe. However, the acquisition of certain brands per se does not define the lifestyle; the brands of distinction are geographically situated in Tokyo's selected neighbourhoods:

For import records, there's Pied Piper House in Aoyama.... But, you may still miss some records here. Once in a while, I drop by Melody House in Harajuku for fusion and Cisco in Shibuya for rock. Junichi, as a music lover, looks for minor labels at Opus One in Takadanobaba or sometimes takes the Inokashira Line to Kichijoji's Meruri Do to find out-of-print records.

(Tanaka, 1981: 46)

Indeed, the crystal lifestyle was an urban experience with a specific locational slant. The geography of the crystal lifestyle had its centre of gravity in the Yamanote part of central Tokyo, the area which covered fashionable Aoyama, Daikanyama, Harajuku, Hiroo, Roppongi and Shibuya. The crystal lifestyle's occupations were *katakana* professions [fashionable occupations with Western sounding titles]: in Tanaka's novel the protagonist was a fashion model and her boyfriend, a jazz musician. It was partly the “upper-class” connotations of Yamanote which attracted the pioneering fashion designers who transformed Harajuku. A designer in his 30s remembers his conscious decision to leave Shitamachi to attend high school in Yamanote:

For high school, I had to come to Yamanote. With my “Yamanote complex” being so strong, I ended up choosing the art program at Komaba Metropolitan High school just because it was a school that anyone who lived anywhere in Tokyo could attend.

(Kato, 1986:10)

What differentiated the shopping experience of the “crystal” youth from that of the *kyujinrui* (older generations) was that for the former, the prolonged drama of shopping—where, when, and how—was just as important as the actual act of purchase (which might indeed be an anti-climax) while for the latter shopping could easily collapse into the act of purchase alone. In order to cater to the demands of the “crystal” lifestyle, certain Tokyo neighbourhoods began providing new

narratives to the age-old practice of shopping. For example, Hakuhodo's market research (1985) shows the appearance of a new type of business, called the "600 meter shops,"¹⁴ that particularly appealed to the trend-conscious youth. Often bordering on the residential areas, these shops were found on the edge of the train-terminal-centred commercial areas. According to Hakuhodo's report, the "600-meter shop" did not conform to the "traditional" locational geography of retailing. First, the shop was very difficult to get to, even if you had a map, for it was, as a rule, located in a maze of narrow nameless streets. Supposing you had managed to get there, you might still not be able to notice it because it was located either in the basement or on the upper level of the building—and probably it affected no store sign. It was not a shop that one casually walked into in the course of one's daily routine; one had to make a conscious effort to get there. Its apparent exclusivity was above all a sign of differentiation; those in the "know" could feel distinguished from the "rest." It was no accident then that these "600-meter shops" are found on the edges of areas like Shibuya and Roppongi. These were Tokyo's new spaces of *exclusion*.

iii. Shibuya as a Space of Thematic Consumption

Shibuya is a super Disneyland where no matter how much money you have, you spend it all—an American tourist.

(Mitsuoka, 1989: 15)

On a typical weekend, Shibuya's commercial district attracts over 700,000¹⁵ visitors with its criss-crossing character streets—"Spain Hill," "Penguin Street," "Organ Street," "Park Street," "Fire Street" "Cat Street"¹⁶—which bridge Shibuya's station square to Harajuku's fashion district, beyond which lie the sacred forests of the Meiji Shrine. It was Shibuya, where a new breed of lifestyle merchandising began with the opening of specialty department stores such as Parco, which first began image-based advertising in the 1970s; Tokyu Hands, which markets "raw

¹⁴ The "600 meter" here does not mean the actual distance, but is used to suggest the relative distance (more than half a kilo meter) from the existing retail areas.

¹⁵ This figure is based upon the survey by the local Committee for Urban Redevelopment (Mitsuoka, 1989: 34).

¹⁶ All, but "Park Street" [Koen Doori], is pronounced in Japanized English. But Koen Doori itself is named after a specialty department store, Parco.

materials” for creating personal living space, and Loft which, unlike its D.I.Y.¹⁷ competitor Tokyu Hands, sold pre-coordinated assemblages of lifestyle-conscious products (Mitsuoka, 1989). As Nancy Rosenberger (1992) observes, for the aspiring middle-class, “Western-style” home-furnishings represent the refined taste of urban living, but for many the size of their small dwelling units restricts how much furniture they can buy and as a result, they place more emphasis on smaller, yet still expensive space-saving items to decorate their living space. The specialty department stores displayed thematically assembled collections of such aestheticized commodities—many of which were thought to be “Western” in origin. Quite often, the things “Western” were actually the creations of Japanese lifestyle marketers themselves, their own images of a fantasized and idealized “West”:

The symbols and images of the West packaged by depato [department store] for domestic consumption do not necessarily reflect the reality of any part of the Western world. More often they are blurred refractions, decontextualized fragments of various Western traditions and practices that have been culled and then altered to fit the Japanese cultural context and the expectations of Japanese consumers.

(Creighton, 1992: 55)

The “grasshopper” teens who frequented Shibuya thrived on the “discriminating” information which town and lifestyle magazines provide—the “most up-to-date” reviews of trendy fashions, hobbies, and lifestyles and particular places where such commodified culture should be consumed in style. Thus, in Tokyo where the fashion cycle was tightly compressed, today’s “apathetic” and “unmotivated” youth nonetheless showed their enthusiasm for timely information:

What Japanese teen media purveys is information, and teens are eager for information on pop stars, clothes, gear, trendy places, and other ephemeral lore. This data becomes currency in the intense exchanges of a group of friends and teenagers become *info-maniakku* [info-maniacs].

(White, 1993, 114)

Shibuya is said to be a “town where a fashion magazine hot-off-the-press today is already walking down the street tomorrow” (Mitsuoka, 1989: p.13). What was the economy of such a tightly-knit nexus of production-information-consumption which made the rapid circulation between knowledge and capital, thus a profitable manipulation of place-bound information, possible? In

¹⁷ D.I.Y stands for “Do It Yourself”. When Tokyu Hands first opened some people mistook it for a tool shop for “weekend home carpenters”. The store, however, is for “weekend lifestyle designers”.

spite of the emancipatory connotations of consumer heaven replete with endless choices and constant renewal, the logistics of such socio-economic-cultural orchestration required discipline, first on the part of the consuming public:

It needs discipline and control to stroll through goods on display, to look and not snatch, to move casually without interrupting the flow, to gaze with controlled enthusiasm and a blasé outlook, to observe others without being seen, to tolerate the close proximity of bodies without feeling threatened.

(Featherstone, 1991: 24)

Second, even greater control was required on the part of the retail organization. To take an example of an apparel retailer in Shibuya who handled “10-second fashion” items, the sales representative of the manufacturer electronically gathered the latest trends in fashion via a portable computer terminal while visiting client retail shops, then the information was transmitted to the people in the planning division who analyzed the data, decided on a new design, ordered the fabric, and initiated the production process (Mitsuoka, 1989: p.10). It took a mere 10 days before the merchandise was on display. As of 1985, in the Shibuya Ward, there were over 900 apparel retailers with 64 thousand square meters of retail space. Ironically, the delivery of the leisure-oriented lifestyle and consumptive pleasure seemed to have been predicated upon further intensification of the labour process—sweatshop workers and sales people had to work overtime to service the needs of info-maniacs.

THE STAGING OF THE MEDIATED CITY

i. *Otaku* in an Informational City

Yasuhiro Nakasone, former prime minister of Japan, has observed:

No other nation has the abundance of information as Japan does, and in no other nation does information come so naturally into one’s head... [There] is no other nation which puts such diverse information so accurately into the ears of its people. It has become a very intelligent society—much more than America.

(Ivy, 1991, 23)

Although Nakasone, in his controversial speech, was referring to the level of literacy in Japan in comparison with the United States, there was another, perhaps more important, point in his

argument that in Japan the intensity and concentration of information is such that it “comes so naturally into one’s head.” This is particularly so in Tokyo where every form of media—from the “mass” media [*masukomi*] of radio, television, and publishing, to the “mini” media [*minicomi*] of privately produced works—originate to be distributed to the rest of Japan¹⁸. Tokyo’s primacy is most potent in the concentration of information vis-à-vis the “rest of Japan”:

What is the difference between Tokyo and the countryside? They say the definitive difference is information. The difference is in the quality and quantity not only of the mass media and the distribution of information, but also of the informationalized events, commodities, people, and urban space. ... Some one points out: “After a week’s stay in my home town, I begin to feel suffocated. Maybe it’s because I know all the people that I see on the street, but a lack of information is the same as thin air. This is how I get “Informational high mountain sickness.”

(Nakano, 1991: 240)

The new urban-oriented magazines which were launched in the 1970s and 1980s were known, as a whole, as *johoshi* [informational journals] in that they did not offer articles per se, but they provided “information” [*joho*] which itself became the medium of communication. *Otaku* subcultures represent info-addiction in its extreme form as they dedicated a significant amount of their waking hours to the collection of anecdotal information which is only understandable to the members of their boundless community.¹⁹

While Castells’ (1989) notion of the “informational city” largely privileged the type of information that was critical to the operation of multi-national corporations, there was another dimension to this idea of the “informational city” which defined the new lifestyles which took the information infrastructure for granted. In other words, there was a cultural dimension to the notion of the informational city. In the 1980s, according to Otsuka (1991), there emerged an

¹⁸ By way of illustration, all the Japanese reference sources that I use in this thesis come from Tokyo, not even one of them originates in Osaka, Japan’s second largest city. The same applies to most weekly and monthly magazines that are published in Japan. The new trends from overseas, by the same token, are usually introduced to Tokyo first before they spread to other cities in Japan.

¹⁹ One of the most bizarre stories of information addiction could be seen in children’s play. A few years ago, school children across Japan became interested in barcodes which are attached to the everyday products they bought. There was a video game in which one had to scan a barcode to keep playing. The strength of your player was dependent upon arbitrary combinations of barcodes. Some children became expert at this game and began buying products just to obtain their barcodes. This is one instance in which the unexpected informational value of commodity packaging exceeded the product’s *use value*. Here, the barcodes which were *intended* to keep track of the sales of products have superseded the value. This reversal reveals the shakiness of the use-value assumption, on the one hand and the unpredictable nature of the modern system of consumption, on the other.

“informational body,” as opposed to the “physical body,” which required a certain level of informational flow for its survival. But Otsuka, in his more Baudrillardian moments, argues that the cult of information, which prevailed among the *shinjinrui* generation, was imbued with ideological implications of commodity consumerism:

The reality of the body as an informational body is an ideology which, for better or for worse, dominated the 1980s. The footnotes attached to Yasuo Tanaka’s *Nantonaku Kurisutaru*²⁰ foreshadowed the condition in which we were to live as an assembly of signs. Indeed, we could argue that we allowed ourselves to be absorbed in information such as fashion, knowledge, and cartoons. While grasping the self as an informational body, we began seeing the environment as an agglomeration of information. It is needless to state that the majority of the trends and mass cultures in the 1980s operated on the gimmick of capturing the body and the world as an accumulation of information.

(Otsuka, 1991a: 182)

The “artificiality” of the demand that the informational body made upon urban individuals was illustrated by the following anecdote from Kayama Rika, an author of popular psychological books on young modern Japanese women, who had lost her business bag on the commuter train:

Without my appointment book, credit card, medical card, I couldn’t tell when my articles were due or shop for big-ticket items. My newspaper clipping and list of books that I wanted to buy were also gone.

On the first day, I felt as though the whole “system” was down and could not work at ease.

But, on the second day, I discovered something. I could live without my bag just fine. Once I used to think that I would die without Dior’s Mascara Parfait and Chinese herbal remedy for stiff-shoulders, but when I realized that I no longer had them I felt a certain sense of relief. I feel good when I am walking down the street and think to myself “well, I look like everybody else, but I don’t even have an address book!”

(Kayama, quoted in Otsuka, 1991a: 181)

The symbolic death of her informational body obviously did not prove to be the death of her physical body, but the sense of freedom (that is, the freedom from information) that Kayama felt was an indicative of the compulsive nature of the informational body in modern Japan. For Otsuka, then, her “out of (informational) body” experience struck at the core of the informational society as:

Kayama frankly breaks the taboo for those who live by the scenario of an advanced informational society that the physical body will survive without the informational body. It was the inner crisis of the “informational body” that motivated people to join the computer communications network, to subscribe to cable television and radio, to purchase satellite

²⁰ See the section on *Nantonaku Kurisutaru* [Somewhat Crystal] later on this chapter for a more detailed discussion of the book and its relevance to the geography of Tokyo.

TV dishes, and to order cellular telephones. At the same time, the informational industry only needed to appeal to the perceived famine within the “informational body.”
(Otsuka, 1991a:182)

There might be temporary lapses of the informational body but for the most part, it did not cease to exist in Tokyo as the “artificial” being became increasingly more “real” with the advance of informational society. The January 15, 1994 issue of *Brutus*, an offspring magazine of *Popeye*, boldly declared “Farewell to Information” on its cover. The articles inside the magazine, however, told a different story: this issue was full of information on how to better organize information, with one section entirely dedicated to the catalogue of various PIM (personal information management) gadgets. Towards the end of the magazine, there was an extensive coverage of global ecological and animal rights movements, which was followed by an equally elaborate article on Taipei in which the reader was given detailed information of where to obtain personalized “ivory” stamps. This was not simply a contradiction within the magazine itself; rather, it was a cultural mode of modern informational society. If Marshall MacLuhan was visionary in stating “the medium is the message,” the implication of his observation in our context would be that since information is presented in a catalogue format with no regard for consistency of content, the message of the medium here emphasizes the circular logic of “information for information’s sake.”

ii. Guidebook Society

Guidebooks, catalogues, info-logues, manuals—these are all belong to the media. The question is, then, how to link the media to the individual character.

Fortunately, the new generations, who grew up with TV as their “surrogate mother,” are very much accustomed to the media. The media filled their childhood environment and continues to overwhelm their current lifeworld; as a result, they feel psychologically stable when their media receptors are turned “on.” Their individual character is wrapped with the media; they are wearing multiple layers of the “media suits,” so to speak.

(Nakano, 1989: 105)

Nakano argues that the new generation of youths, having grown up with the media, have assimilated the media as part of their personality. Similarly, urban space was a highly mediated space, especially in Tokyo where a close network of information media surround the day-to-day social and geographical experiences of the city. The current style of “info-logues” (*johoshi*) is largely based upon *Pia*, one of the first urban event journal, which began as a student publication

in the 1970s. The presentation of information in *Pia* is said to be “non-judgemental,” that is, all the events are laid out in a strictly catalogue format just like a shopping catalogue:

The magazine spares the message, but concentrated on delivering a high volume of information of art, theatre, entertainment, leisure, events. It was up to the reader to figure out how to use the magazine and there were no directives or judgements on value.
(Nakano, 1991: 152)

For Nakano, the new informational format, pioneered by *Pia*, represents a cultural shift among the student population, who have, in some ways, relinquished their control over the production of information:

Before the appearance of *Pia*, the traditional lifestyle of students depended upon gathering information from newspaper and magazine clippings as well as from their own communication network. Thus, in order to obtain the same level of information, they had to expend much greater sums of time, money, and effort. In short, information was not cheap and required certain skills and experience for acquisition. Perhaps, it was through this gathering of information that students obtained their own intellectual identity. Thus, the students possessed (internalized) the informational culture.
(Nakano, 1991: 152)

Thus, the nature of urban information became something which was less personal, but widely shared among the readership. A survey taken in 1985 suggests a surprisingly high percentage of young people across education, employment, and gender types read *Pia* regularly (Figure 5.5 and Figure 5.6).

iii. Mediation of Urban Space

For geographer Yoshimi (1987), these popular magazines, which feature urban lifestyle and shopping information, represent a form of “script” for the street theatres of enlightened consumption: “If the city streets are the stage, then the city magazines are the script for the street performers” (Yoshimi, 1987). Here, the mutual referencing of the city and the media is said to produce new imaginative geography of Tokyo, one which is highly dependent upon the wide availability of mass-mediated information.

Figure 5.5: Top 10 Magazines Read By Young Men (1985)

	High School	University	Working (HS)	Working (C/U)
1	Pia (47.8)	Focus (41.6)	Weekly Playboy (32.8)	Focus (44.2)
2	Focus (25.2)	Pia (38.7)	Focus (31.8)	Pia (38.3)
3	Hot Dog Press (24.3)	Weekly Playboy (34.6)	Pia (27.4)	Weekly Playboy (34.2)
4	Motorcycle (23.5)	Hot Dog Press (27.9)	Heibon Punch (21.4)	Popeye (25.8)
5	Popeye (22.6)	Popeye (26.1)	Goro (17.9)	Hot Dog Press (19.2)
6	Goro (20.0)	Goro (21.7)	Popeye (15.9)	Scholar (15.8)
7	FM Reco Pal (20.0)	Heibon Punch (19.1)	Hot Dog Press (15.9)	Goro (15.8)
8	Weekly Playboy (14.8)	Scholar (18.2)	Motorcycle (14.4)	Big Tomorrow (15.8)
9	Scholar (14.8)	Arbeit News (17.6)	Car Top (13.4)	Weekly Asahi (15.0)
10	FM Fan (12.2) Music Life (12.2)	Men's Club (10.0) FM Reco Pal (10.0)	Weekly Post (11.9)	Weekly Post (15.0)

* The numbers in parentheses refer to the actual percentage of people who read the respective magazines (n=848).

* HS stands for high school graduates while C/U stands for college/university graduates.

* To roughly categorize the magazines:

Event Information: Pia
Fashion & Lifestyle: Popeye, Hot Dog Press, Men's Club
Weekly Magazines: Focus, Heibon Punch, Weekly Post, Weekly Asahi
Hobby: Car Top, Motorcycle, FM Reco Pal, FM Fan, Music Life
Men's Magazines: Big Tomorrow, Goro, Weekly Playboy, Scholar
Employment: Arbeit News

Source: Hakuhodo Institute of Life and Living, 1985: 34.

Figure 5.6: Top 10 Magazine Read By Young Women (1985)

	High School	Junior College	University	Working (HS)	Working (C/U)
1	Non No (50.5)	Non No (63.5)	Non No (53.8)	Non No (55.3)	Non No (50.0)
2	An An (30.6)	JJ (55.2)	Pia (46.9)	An An (35.0)	Focus (43.1)
3	Pia (27.0)	CanCam (36.5)	Focus (46.9)	Josei Seven (33.5)	Pia (37.5)
4	CanCam (27.0)	An An (33.3)	JJ (46.2)	Focus (32.0)	More (33.3)
5	JJ (26.1)	Pia (25.0)	CanCam (36.2)	JJ (32.0)	JJ (32.6)
6	Pucci Seven (22.5)	Focus (21.9)	An An (29.2)	Josei Jishin (29.9)	An An (31.3)
7	Olive (20.7)	Josei Jishin (17.7)	Arbeit News (19.2)	Pia (28.9)	Croissant (22.9)
8	Myojo (20.7)	Arbeit News (60.7)	More (70.7)	CanCam (27.9)	CanCam (20.8)
9	Josei Seven (20.7)	Croissant (15.6)	Olive (14.6)	Young Lady (22.3)	With (19.4)
10	Mc Sister (20.7)	More (15.6)	From A (14.6)	Weekly Josei (21.3) More (21.3)	Olive (16.0)

* The numbers in parentheses refer to the actual percentage of people who read the respective magazines (n=752).

* To roughly categorize the magazines:

Event Information: Pia
Young Fashion & Lifestyle: An An, Non No, JJ, CanCam, Olive
Mature Fashion & Lifestyle: More, With, Croissant
Weekly Magazines: Focus, Josei Seven, Pucci Seven, Myojo, Weekly Josei, Young Lady
Employment: Arbeit News, From A

Source: Hakuhodo Institute of Life and Living, 1985: 34

For Tokyoites, the 1980s meant “manualization” of lifestyles—weekend shopping, college dating, after-work entertainment, theatre and play, and secret love affairs, every conceivable urban activity became “catalogued” by the information media. The city magazines became, on a massive and influential scale, the guidebooks for experiencing the city:

Among women’s fashion magazines, *An An* and *Non No* were launched in 1970 and in 1971 respectively, starting the boom which was followed by *JJ* (1975), *More* (1977), and *Olive* (1982) which appealed to different age and taste groups. In the field of information media, *Pia* (1972) and *City Road* (1975) rapidly gained their readership. According to a survey by Asahi Shimbunsha, among people who visited Shibuya at the end of the 1970s, 18.8% of women read *An An* and 31.8% read *Non No* while 23.2% of men read *Popeye*. And 23.7% of both men and women read *Pia*.

(Yoshimi, 1989: 305)

In her auto-biographical essay, Yoko Mure (1988) recalls her first visit to Daikanyama, an upscale fashion and office area near Shibuya. Her encounter with Daikanyama was not about a discovery of a new locale; rather, it was about re-affirmation of the images that she found in the pages of a fashion magazine, *An An*:

We kept walking aimlessly in the opposite direction of Shibuya. Then, a pure white building appeared before our eyes. The sign read “Hillside Terrace.”

“Oh! I’ve seen it before in *An An*!,” unwittingly I blurted out, pointing my finger at the building. There was a building that looked exactly like the picture in *An An*.

“Don’t embarrass me by suddenly yelling out like that,” said giggling Keiko.

“Well, I think there’s a place called Tom’s Sandwich around here”

“You mean you’ve seen it in *An An*?”

Just as I saw it in *An An*, the restaurant was there. But when we opened the door, we were immediately taken aback. Every customer there was clearly a different type of people from us. This was exactly the world of the magazine that Magazine House²¹ publishes.

(Mure, 1988: 27)

The world that Mure speaks of is the world of a new Tokyo—one that appears cosmopolitan and that actively rejects the elements of the old Tokyo. This is the world that TV’s “trendy dramas” [*torendi dorama*] depict and that the lifestyle magazines “urge” their readers to acquire a taste for. This is a world, which is decidedly “Western”—at least in the Tokyoites’ understanding of what it

²¹ Magazine House, located in Ginza, publishes bi-weekly and monthly lifestyle & fashion magazines such as *An An*, *Popeye*, *Olive*, *Brutus*, *Hanako*.

stands for. Thus, it is Tokyo's *kokusaika*, [internationalization] not only in the functional sense of the word, but also in its cultural implications that provides the key to understanding of the forces which were behind the urban reconfiguration of Tokyo since the early 1980s.

The new patterns of consumption that unfolded in the 1980s were, in many ways, articulations of the commercial landscapes of Tokyo with the new sensibilities of the *shinjinrui* youth; this decade was characterized by the maturing of the babyboom “echo” generation in the middle of a booming global city. Although the appearance of new “taste cultures” in the 1980s may have been a common experience between Tokyo and other world-class cities in the West, this particular *demographic and economic* co-incidence was perhaps unique to Tokyo. To take a specific example, the “Yuppie” consumer culture in New York was based on the older group, the original babyboomers in their 30s while that of the *shinjinrui* in Tokyo was based on a much younger group in their late 10s and early 20s. The taste leaders in the two cities, then, were a whole generation apart.²²

In this chapter, I have identified specific examples of the new consumer landscapes in Tokyo—“one room mansions,” “600 meter” shops, and Shibuya. Geographically and culturally, these changes were closely associated with the neighbourhoods in Yamanote. This may have been an indication that the new generation of the youths in Tokyo, most of whom were the children of the babyboomers who moved to Tokyo in the 1950s and 1960s, was adapting, like Yumin in the opening quote to this thesis, the “bourgeois” frame of mind²³ (as represented by Yamanote) while denying their parents’ regional roots.

In the last section of this chapter, I have argued that the new consumer landscapes of Tokyo, which this generation was associated with, is a highly mediated space. In particular, the widely-circulated, urban lifestyle magazines—with their specific spatial references—played in the shaping of the geography of consumption in Tokyo in the 1980s. This gave a new meaning to the notion of

²² This fact probably reflects the generational distribution of wealth in the two nations.

²³ I was told that in the late 1980s, an expression of social status, “*kuraasu*” [class], became popular among high school students in Tokyo. Until then, the word, “class,” [*kurasu*] in Japanese usually meant school classes. The two variations of “classes” are distinguished by the elongation of the vowel for the one which refers to social status [*kuraasu*].

the “informational city”: it is a city not of economic significance, but also of cultural significance. In the next chapter, I will further develop on this notion to argue that in Tokyo the mediation of space is also implicated in the construction of self identity.

6. OCCIDENTAL GAZE

INTRODUCTION

The new geography of consumption in Tokyo in the 1980s was predicated upon the cultural sensitivities of the *shinjinrui* youths who grew up in the midst of Tokyo's internationalization. The new cultural practices that emerged during this period were not only the manifestations of new social values, but were also the expression of new individual identities. The decade indeed posed various questions about the identity of Japanese society as a whole. For the Japanese youths, in particular, it was the images of the "West" that played a critical role in their construction of self-definition in the 1980s. In this chapter, I will explore the ways in which the search for a new self identity formed a new cultural perception of the city and the countryside in Japan. There are, moreover, questions about the relationship between the new "international" or "Westernized" identity and the new cultural landscapes in Tokyo. As a case study, I will examine the cultural processes that operated in establishing Tokyo Disneyland as a successful space of a cultural display in the mid-1980s. Then, with another case study on domestic tourism in Japan, I will also deal with the notion of self-exoticization in representation of rural Japan by the youth media. I will thus situate the new practices of consumption in the particularity of the Japanese experience in the 1980s in order to bring attention to the specific ways in which the meanings of commodified images became articulated with the larger issues of the representation of Self/Other and the ramifications of "globalizing culture." But, first, I will begin with the images of the "West" that saturate the streets of Tokyo.

IMAGES OF A FANTASY “WEST”

i. Consuming The West

In the Roppongi District during the 1980s, college students tooled through the narrow streets in tail-fin Caddys, while teenagers in Harajuku—kids with packs of unfiltered Camels rolled up in the sleeves of their T-shirts—did ritualized group versions of old American Bandstand dances.

(Marling, 1992: 107)

From the scaled-down medieval castles of love hotels to smiling Flintstones on billboards, the street scapes of Tokyo’s urban centres are replete with countless images of “fantasy West,” turning the city into a hodge-podge assemblage of mini-Disneylands where the acts of conspicuous consumption are immersed in the gratifying images of various themes. The customary presence of love hotels, decorated in Western fantasy themes, in close proximity to shopping areas (e.g. Shinjuku and Shibuya) consummates the chain of loosely associated images: the Western fantasy—transcendence of everyday—emanticipatory hedonism—tasteful lifestyle—conspicuous consumption—(il)legitimate pleasure—liminal experience—sense of elsewhere—definition of Otherness—reaffirmation of Self.

Yet, the symbolic linkages among these images are in constant danger of self-degeneration under the homogenizing forces of mass-mediation in a society of “info-maniacs.” The construction of a fantasy West is, by its very nature, a deconstructive process: as the images become too ubiquitous in the everyday landscape and in the mass media, they take on the connotations of the ordinary, the common place, and the familiar; therefore, they risk becoming too domesticated to be exotic. While Featherstone (1987) contends that in the game of social differentiation, “total otherness” presents the “danger of being unrecognizable,” total familiarity—the other extreme—also perilously negates the possibility for *discriminating consumption*.

There are, however, various strategies for creating new differences, which the image marketers of the symbolic economy exploit. The recent “retro-boom” in Japan, for example, juxtaposed temporal and spatial dislocations of images by reconstituting the American “Golden Age” of the 1950s in the context of Japan’s conspicuous consumption during the late 1980s’ “bubble

economy.” It has been argued that the success of the retro-boom had, in fact, little to do with actual nostalgia for “someone else’s” past glory. Rather, the commodified mosaic of the pastiches offered pristine visual experiences for the *shinjinrui* youth who have grown up in an era of rapid material progress. For them, the visions of the future became too “familiar,” but the vistas of the past appeared “fresh” (Nakano, 1989).

In the following sections, three more strategies of differentiation will be considered with reference to the fabrication of “authenticity” in Tokyo Disneyland and the dialectic of self-images in the Occidentalist mode of representation. First, I will begin with a discussion on the question of “authenticity” inherent in the cultural politics of Tokyo Disneyland—the single most significant addition to Tokyo’s landscape of consumption in the past decade.

ii. Kokusaika: Domesticating the World

The new aesthetics of consumption, which has manifested itself most visibly in Shibuya, was undoubtedly situated in the context of Japan’s *kokusaika* (internationalization), which for Tokyo meant its designation as a world city with its own share of international flair. On the street level, *kokusaika* meant a greater infusion of foreign [read Western] artifacts, commodities, food, languages, music, signs, and visitors in the everyday life of native Tokyoites. Foreign faces, famous or otherwise, smiled from every direction on TV commercials, magazine ads, and billboards—marketing consumer products, government programs, department stores, and amusement parks, bearing Western-sounding names. Tokyo’s vernacular landscape became a parody of American iconography with the Statue of Liberty, the Stars and Stripes, Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presly, and James Dean all adorning the commercial glitter of urban space. Tokyo was beginning to look, at least on the surface, “international.”

It seemed as though Tokyo’s natives were voraciously consuming the images of commodified America in every form of everyday experience, thus consuming their way to the international status. Yet, what have been the social and political implications of this frenzy? In the age of consumption, it is said that one’s self-image and class-distinction is beginning to be defined more by what one consumes than by what one produces:

The central notion is to create an identity of one's own through enlightened consumption. One purchases not things in themselves but a lifestyle defined by things. The new ideal is the man or woman who is not self-made but self-consumed.

(Tobin, 1992: 24)

Then, what exactly is the nature of this supposedly “international” identity of the new Japan? It was not coincidental that in the midst of internationalization, the Japanese media became obsessed with its tireless inquiry into *nihonjinron* (discourse on what it means to be Japanese)—a popular subject on which a surprisingly large number of books and articles are published every year. On one level, *nihonjinron* may be construed as a reactionary movement against the onrush of a perceived or real foreign influence on modern Japanese life. Yet, on the other hand, *nihonjinron* seems to be central to the very process of “internationalization” in Japan where the flow of information from outside, the representation of foreign images, and the packaging of things exotic all fall under the purview of the Japanese culture industry:

Since they [other cultures] are allowed to enter Japan only as pre-packaged, commodified images frequently seen on television or in flashy pictorial magazines-as-catalogues or as actual goods themselves (*mono*), other cultures, whose differences are safely contained or erased, can never have any direct impact on the Japanese.

(Yoshimoto, 1989: 22)

To put it another way, the ideological impetus of *nihonjinron*, which insists upon the “uniquely unique” identity of Japanese culture vis-à-vis the rest of the world, works its way through the process of internationalization so as to create strategic images of “foreignness” that would re-emphasize and re-confirm the socio-categorical distinction between “us and them.” Thus, far from the perspective of globalization of culture with its assumption of the annihilation of differences, Japan's internationalization has been conceived, directed, produced, and marketed by the Japanese themselves—just as many of the domestic consumer products bearing foreign names. Accordingly, what anthropologists call the “domestication of the West” (Tobin, 1992) frames the perspective through which the images of the West are reconstituted and reorganized in the mass media and popular imagination in Japan. As Barthes once saw Japan as an “empire of signs,” today its semiotic tradition has engulfed the symbols of Other in the process of re-constituting the image of Self:

Internationalization is on the one hand, to fragment and transform the outside into floating signifiers as the decoded flux, and on the other, to recuperate them into the master narrative of neo-nationalism.

(Yoshimoto, 1989: 22)

And in the 1980s it was in Tokyo Disneyland where the most visible sign of this interplay of Self and Other was to be found.

TOKYO DISNEYLAND

i. Authenticity and Simulation

Tokyo Disneyland outmatches others [objects of consumption] in its otherness....However, mass consumer society produces only what it can consume. If this is true we can assume that Tokyo Disneyland's otherness is matched by the capacity of mass consumer society to dissolve it. Otherwise, we would have experienced symptoms of indigestion by now. ... The enormity of the cultural gap represented by Tokyo Disneyland's otherness means that it would take us a long time to consume it away (as measured by the level of attendance). Our mass consumer society is now in the process of dissolving (consuming) the colossal gap between the self and Tokyo Disneyland. The unconscious motivation of mass consumer society has been objectified by the 8.5 million visitors in the first 8 months of the opening. It is likely that Tokyo Disneyland will slowly reach the periphery of the everyday world and eventually it will transformed into an ordinary landmark.

(Serizawa, 1987: 169)

The success and the strength of Tokyo Disneyland since its well-publicized opening in 1983 seem to stem from its thoroughness in replicating the original, in recreating the details, and in reconstructing the "authentic." Unlike its European cousin, Tokyo Disneyland was conceptualized to be an exact copy which reiterates the grand narratives of America's Disneyland without adding local narrative conventions. One of the ways that postmodernism destabilizes the notion of authenticity is to problematize the taken-for-granted distinction between "what is original" and "what is copy" as artificial. Baudrillard comments on Disneyland:

Disneyland is there to conceal the fact that it is the "real" country, all of "real" America, which *is* Disneyland. Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation.

(Baudrillard, 1988: 172)

What happens, though, when what is supposed to be a “simulation” becomes the “original” for which an “authentic reproduction” is made? For Yoshimoto, Tokyo Disneyland takes on a deconstructive function which undoes the magic of illusion that Baudrillard speaks of:

The difference between Disneyland in Los Angeles and Tokyo Disneyland is that while the former produces the imaginary distinction between real and imaginary, the latter exposes the imaginary nature of a distinction between real and imaginary.

(Yoshimoto, 1989: 17)

Yoshimoto may be right in saying that Tokyo Disney disenchant the original for America, but what about the magic that the theme park offers to the Japanese visitors, or more importantly how are the deconstructed meanings of Disneyland reconstructed in Tokyo’s context where its narrative landscape does not represent a reflection of native mythologies, but an image of elsewhere both in time and space? It has been reported that in an opinion poll taken in the mid 1980s, “over fifty per cent of Japanese adults when asked ‘where they experienced their happiest moment in the last year responded by saying ‘Tokyo Disneyland’” (Van Maanen, 1992: 24-25). What is the attraction? Here, it is helpful to locate Disneyland in the historical context of depreciating images of America—trade conflict between Japan and the United States, media coverage of “crime waves” in American cities, industrial and urban “decay.” These are not the images of America that people like to remember, especially for those who grew up in the 1950s under the benevolence of “American generosity,” absorbing the images of the “good life” in American movies. Tokyo Disneyland, with its all-assuming innocence, presents an alternative to the “reality” of America in decline: it is a better America than America itself. To convince people that this was an “authentic” piece of America, it was Japan’s Oriental Land Corporation¹, which owns the majority of shares in Tokyo Disneyland, who—despite suggestion from their American partner to add Japanese narratives to the theme park—insisted that everything should be an exact replica of the “original.”

¹ It is interesting to note that this company that is in the business of bringing “America” to Japan calls itself “Oriental” and that the name itself is written in English, not Japanese. While the project of constructing Tokyo Disneyland can be seen in terms of Japan’s Occidentalism, there is simultaneously an opposite effect of Orientalism in the naming of the corporation. Thus, there is a mutual reinforcement between Orientalism and Occidentalism.

By insisting upon being a perfect simulacrum of the original and by suppressing elements, Japanese culture, Tokyo Disneyland is effectively presented as a cultural exhibit of Other:

What is more important is, however, to present Tokyo Disneyland as another world—that is a world which is governed by rules and taboos which differ from everyday life....[T]hese strategies of differentiation work not so much as a refusal of the Japanese everyday conventions as marking the otherness of Tokyo Disneyland itself.

(Serizawa, 1987: 181)

The methods of cultural presentation that operates at Tokyo Disneyland is reminiscent of what anthropologist James Clifford calls “collecting” of the world—a mode of cultural appropriation which aids in the formation of Western subjectivity:

Some sort of ‘gathering’ around the self and the group—assemblage of a material ‘world,’ the making-off of a subjective domain that is not ‘other’—is probably universal. All such notions embody hierarchies of value, exclusions, the rule-governed territories of the self....In the West, however, collecting has long been a strategy for the deployment of a possessive self, culture and authenticity.

(Clifford, [1988] 1993: 52)

What about Tokyo Disneyland? The theme park consists of a collection of Western cultural icons in their authentically re-created “natural” environs. The zeal with which, this miniature world has been “cloned” is certainly akin to the passion of the “Western subjectivity” that collected the world in their colonial past. Can the imperial practice of collecting, then, also be actually extended to the “non-Western” world or has Japan merely adopted the Western *modus operandi* of collecting the world?

This also suggests the changing socio-economic positioning of Japan itself: in the 1960s, the Western culture was something to be “admired” and “emulated,” but in the 1980s, it became something to be “exhibited” and ultimately “possessed.”

ii. Cultural Differences

There are, however, a few notable differences between Anaheim’s Disneyland and Tokyo’s. In physical size, the former occupies 30 hectares of land whereas the latter stretches over 46 hectares of land (Tsurumaki, 1984: 81). The smaller scale of the original Disneyland perhaps creates more of an intimate setting for the park strollers; but, the spread-out spatial layout of Tokyo Disneyland engenders a greater sense of openness, which corresponds with the Japanese perception of

America as a country of vast space and contrasts with the extreme congestion of Japanese city-scapes. Perhaps, an even more significant difference is Tokyo's Disneyland's substitution of Main Street with its World Bazaar—an enormous shopping arcade covered with a glass ceiling for weather proofing. For the original park, the narrative landscape of Main Street was central to Disney's presentation of “hometown” USA as a sacred and unspoilt sanctuary of American values:

The idea of the small town has come to function in U.S. culture as the home of nostalgia for a pre-urban Anglo-America. It is the place where harassed people in a dangerous, impersonal, and unfriendly world can symbolically locate friendship, order, intimacy, innocence.

(Fjellman, 1992: 170)

World Bazaar,² on the other hand, is “a contemporary mall devoted exclusively to retailing” with a sales density that greatly exceeds the other Disney facilities” (Marling, 1992:107). In 1989, Tokyo Disneyland grossed a total sales volume of ¥126.4 billion, of which merchandise sales accounted for ¥45.2 billion (entrance fees and food and beverages brought ¥52.7 billion and ¥20.7 billion, respectively) (Lazarus, 1991: 58). Thus, in strictly functional terms, Tokyo Disneyland is strikingly similar to the shopping complexes of Shibuya:

For Watanabe, 37, Tokyo Disneyland is the city's largest shopping centre, and his main concern is staying in touch with customers' tastes. “We have to know what is trendy.” ... He says Tokyo Disneyland introduces a new product in its shops every single day, and thus at least one product disappears from shelves daily.

(Lazarus, 1991: 59)

As Zukin aptly puts it, “shopping and tourism are not merely modes of appropriation they are also paradigmatic quests for social meaning in a consumption-biased world” (1990: 47). Especially for the younger generation, Tokyo Disneyland embodies social meanings beyond the experience of consumption. One aspect of Tokyo Disneyland which distinguishes itself from other amusement parks in Tokyo is its “non-everyday-ness” (Tsurumaki, 1984: 38) as it strives to be a piece of foreign fairy-tale land away from the everyday existence of urban Tokyo. Tokyo Disneyland promises to be a sort of liminal space that Victor Turner (1979) speaks of in regard to religious

² To be sure, World Bazaar does incorporate the Victorian architectural element of Main Street; however, unlike the original which emphasizes spatial intimacy with its “three-quarter scale” storefronts, World Bazaar's storefronts are “full-size” (Brannen, 1992: 222).

sites with their marked differentiation from the ordinary³: in Tokyo Disneyland street and building signs are, for the most part, strictly kept in English (for important names, Japanese *katakana* syllabaries are used in small, discreet print) and the tracks of Disneyland Railroad, which encircle the whole park area in Anaheim, have been painstakingly rerouted in such a way that the “enchanted” visitor will not be inadvertently exposed to the views of the secular world of Japanese suburbia that lies beyond the walled perimeters of the Magic Kingdom (Tsurumaki, 1984). For believers, the enchanted world of Disney opens up a possibility for liminal experiences by suspending the everyday rules of society:

Tokyo Disneyland provides the ideal atmosphere for true love. In fact, one of the largest groups of regular visitors to Disneyland consists of couples on “dates,” acting out what they identify as an American social ritual acceptable within the parameters of a fictive visit to the USA. The cuteness component is thus associated with a view of courtship and romantic love at variance with the Japanese practice of arranged marriage ⁴
(Marling, 1992: 109).

iii. Space of Reclaimed Identity

What are the spatial parameters of Tokyo Disneyland which allow it to provide a sense of departure from everyday life in Japan? One clue to this question lies in the process of “cultural cleansing” of the multi-acre site in Urayasu which has been stripped of its local history, only to be supplanted by the distant history of Other. The transformation of Urayasu from a fishing village to a suburban centre is a process of creating a new identity at the expense of its “original” roots, which, for Serizawa, also parallels larger societal changes:

³ To make a further comparison with Turner’s ideas, Tokyo Disneyland can be seen as a new destination for pilgrimage in modern Japan. In the past, school children made their pilgrimage to the old temples of Nikko on their extended school field trips. Nowadays, however, Tokyo Disneyland is fast becoming the preferred site for school trips.

⁴ It must be noted that today the ideal marriage for young people is that of romantic love, but many prefer to combine the elements of arranged marriage (such as having a go-between) for the sake of appearance.

Reclaimed land is free of tradition and *seikatsu-shu* [literally, the smell of living]. In other words, it does not display any identity other than being a mere reclaimed site. This differentially point-zero zone echoes today's mass psychology in which people can classify themselves only as a "middle-class." Reclaimed land symbolizes the condition of identity break-down within the mass society. Just as there is no origin for reclaimed space, the middle-class consciousness as a product of the "salary-man society" also lacks a material alibi. Thus, as reclaimed land inherently represents the other world, in reality the middle-class consciousness is also the other world.

(Serizawa, 1989: 181–182)

The *seikatsu-shu* Serizawa refers to is also the very quality that is being eradicated in the deodorant culture of Tokyo's new youths—a paranoiac elimination of the "body" as a representation of one's own biographical history.⁵ In turn, the identity "void" created by this eradication is to be fulfilled by a cultural adaptation of a cosmopolitan identity, which, however, cannot be resolved fully because of the "ambiguous" nature of Japan's *kokusaika* [internationalization] itself. Tokyo Disneyland, similarly, is ultimately a place with no fixed identity. Although it is located in Chiba, a neighbouring prefecture of Tokyo, it *pretends* to be in Tokyo by calling itself Tokyo Disneyland. Moreover, Tokyo Disneyland is situated in a local space which attempts to belie its "nationality" by imitating Los Angeles:

"Recently, it has been said Urayasu, spelled "uLAYasu" instead of "uRAYasu," is becoming Japan's LA. There are many similarities. Disneyland; yacht and motorboat harbours; young people engaging in windsurfing and motor-crossing; not only high-rise condominiums, but also, posh single-detached houses, and co-op terrace houses; the illumination from the coastal highway that runs through the city centre—the landscape appears rather un-Japanese."

(Serizawa, 1987: 178–179)

Tokyo Disneyland and is thus a space not only of imitation, but of pretension. But, what about the cultural identity of those who frequent the park? How do the consumer practices of contemporary Japanese affect their own self identity? Now I will turn to the question of self identity and the new cultures of consumption in the 1980s.

⁵ One of the most effective way to achieve this is, of course, through plastic surgery to minimize one's features.

CONSUMING IDENTITIES

i. Search for New Self Identity

“In the end, brands are the weaknesses for our generation. Well, maybe this applies to the Japanese society as a whole.”

“You’re probably right about that.”

“When a product has a foreign brand name, even if it’s made in Japan under license, somehow it looks attractive. But if you take off the label,” it will never sell.”—a passage from *Nantonaku Kurisutaru*

(Tanaka, 1981: 77)

In the cultural rhetoric of consumption, you are what you buy. But, “things” do not innately take on meanings in a socio-economic vacuum; in an advanced consumer society, it is the mediating forces of mass images which create associative meanings between market commodities and social identities. Images commodify cultural capital, generating a value-added called “brand names” which in turn command economic capital. In the 1980s, an elite echelon of Japanese copywriters became the nation’s cultural heroes as creators of the mass-consumed aesthetically-pleasing images which whet the appetite of the differentiating masses. In one observer’s words, “image, important in advertising everywhere, takes on added importance in Japan, a nation obsessed with appearances, surfaces and ‘face’” (Trucco, 1984: 99).

The daily diet of image consumption in Japan, however, consists of a high dosage of “exotic” ingredients. In his study of Japanese advertisements, Haarmann (1989) reports that the TV commercials in Japan contain an inordinate amount of “foreign elements” ranging from foreign actors, foreign landscapes, to foreign cultural icons. Even greater in magnitude is the usage of foreign-sounding names for products or services advertised using either *katakana* syllabaries⁶ or English alphabets both of which signify foreignness in the semantics of modern Japanese language. The same tendencies apply to the naming of institutions: to take an example of recently privatized corporations, during the 1980s, Dendenkosha became NTT (Nippon Telephone &

⁶ Apart from foreign names, the *katakana* syllabaries are also used to indicate non-human sounds (i.e. animal sounds and natural sounds).

Telegraph) while Kokutetsu became JR (Japan Railway). Occupational names, especially those implicated in the fashion business, also went through a transformation: sales clerks in boutiques became “house mannequins” [pronounced ‘hausu manukan’ by mixing English with French] and fashion coordinators became “stylists.”

Why so much English? On one level, as Herman explains below, it is because English is an arch-metaphor for Japan’s notion of modernity:

The Japanese mass media producers have created their own standards for using English and have thus promoted English as a special symbol of modernity in Japanese society. It appears that TV viewers and magazine readers have accepted this role for English and willingly identify themselves with the “fashionable” style of the mass media.

(Haarmann, 1989:17)

But, to assert that it is “fashionable” to use English does not suffice to illuminate the underlying forces of power and meanings that are embedded in the specific history of Japan’s present and its past. Why is it English or things Western in general, rather than say Arabic or Chinese, that inspire the creative imagination of Japanese cultural intermediaries? Consider the following statements:

A Western opinion is a persuading force. Japanese are led to buy the products approved by Westerners because if Westerners like the products, Japanese too must like them as a result of identification.

(Kitahara, 1983: 108)

But, I don’t think the West or the Westerner is superior. Even when it comes to the particularity of table manners, there’s no shortage of Caucasians who use forks and knives in an incredibly rude manner. I know for a fact that nowadays Tokyo is much cleaner than London. — *Nantonaku Kurisutaru*

(Tanaka, 1981: 76)

First, Kitahara’s assessment, which perhaps represents the prevailing understanding of Japan’s psychological identification with the West, suggests the cultural articulations of Japan’s modernization project which hinged upon the goal of “catching up with the West.” The second statement, an excerpt from Tanaka’s novel, throws in a twist to the argument: here, the protagonist denies the superiority of the West; however, the cultural standard by which the judgement is made is *already* and *unquestionably* Western. To be sure, the measure of superiority has little to do with the “real” West, but it is rather the “idealized” West in the Japanese imagination.

In today’s context, the exchange value of the “idealized” West no longer derives from its technological know-how: what counts is its cultural heritage. What nouveaux riches seek is a mark

Figure 6.1: Recognition & Comprehension of English Used in Japanese Advertising*

Catch-phrase (Company)	% Recognition	% Comprehension
“For Beautiful Human Life” (Shiseido)	95.6%	46.9%
“Do You Know Me?” (American Express)	82.4%	79.1%
“Fun to Drive” (Toyota)	79.6%	43.5%
“My Life—My Gas” (Tokyo Gas)	51.5%	36.5%

* the survey population for this study involved 800+ university students.

Source: Haarmann, 1989: 145-146.

of distinction in that which is imbued with already *recognizable* historical depth—emblems, symbols, artifacts of old money—so as to belie the ephemeral and temporal nature of their new station in life. It is the West’s “reputable tradition” (*yuisho-aruru dento*), that is, its cultural capital, that offers a means of social differentiation for the modern Japanese. Thus, the aesthetics of “tasteful living” entail the consumption of commodified images and artifacts of such cultural capital.

In Haarmann’s analysis of the use of English phrases in Japanese advertising, he claims that “although a majority of viewers can recognize catch phrases in English from TV commercials, their meaning is completely clear only to a minority” (see Figure 6.1) (1989: 145). Although Stanlaw is right in problematizing Haarmann’s assumption that “there are ‘true meanings’ for these English phrases somewhere waiting to be understood”⁷ (1992: 69), he misses the more pertinent point that it is precisely because *not* everyone can “understand” the ads that those *who think* they understand can differentiate—perhaps with a sense of superiority—themselves from the “unappreciative” masses.⁸

⁷ Stanlaw rhetorically asks: “But how many Americans can give the true meaning of ‘It’s the heartbeat of America’?” (1992: 69)

⁸ It is worthwhile here to note Featherstone’s (1987) observation on the question of differentiability:

The tendency for consumer culture to differentiate, to encourage the play of difference, must be tempered by the observation that otherness like total individuality is in danger of being unrecognizable. (Featherstone, 1987: 60)

ii. Of Mice and Pandas

[C]ulture is not only an integrating device, but a differentiating device as well, a way of making boundaries. ... Tokyo Disneyland maintains, indeed amplifies, Self and Other contrasts consistent with Japanese cultural rules.

(Van Maanen, 1992: 22)

How do images of the West become articulated in the identity construction of consuming selves in Japan? In *The Japanese Version*, a documentary which portrays what happens to “American culture” when it comes to Japan, filmmakers Kolker and Alvarez (1991) find that the images of Westerners in Japan are usually shown in an idealized manner, but at other times, they are also made fun of as something quaint and incomprehensible. Internationalization in Japan tends to intensify this polarized representation of the Westerner—a process which marks the distinction between the Japanese Self, which is almost always multidimensional (i.e. human), and the Western Other, a monolithic caricature (i.e. non-human).

This Self-Other dialectic brings us to Edward Said’s (1979) concept of Orientalism as a discursive practice which allowed the West to define itself by constructing the images of the Orient as its existential antithesis. Although it was originally seen to be a Western monopoly, the ideological power of the Orientalist discourse, however, seems to work both ways. As internationalization challenges Japan’s self-definition, the binary construction of the West and the East implied in the Orientalist thinking becomes strategically employed and manipulated by the Japanese as a means of affirming their own, separate identity. Constructing the Japanese national identity, with its implicit myth of a homogeneous society, vis-à-vis its transcendental Other, the West, involves casting *gaijin* (foreigner) in unidimensional roles. Therefore, the foreigners depicted in the Japanese media are either “revered or ridiculed.” Dave Spector, a well-known *gaijin tarento* (foreign talent) in Japan, calls himself a “panda” because, as a foreigner, he has been accorded a new cultural identity by the Japanese media as a “non-human”—something that people “look at and play with,” but “never get personally involved with” (Kolker and Alvarez, 1991). It is the objectifying gaze of the Japanese media which strips the *gaijin tarento*’s humanity, and thus

What guarantees recognizability in the case of advertising is, of course, that it is a mass-mediated phenomenon.

transforms him into an exotica, which can be observed from a safe distance. “Pandas” are *not* exclusively found on the screens of Japanese television; they are also paramount in the fantasy spectacles of Tokyo Disneyland as the park enforces a deliberately different set of rules on its “foreign casts”:

To maintain their distinction as exotic, *gaijin* employees are asked to speak only in English and not to wear name tags, presumably so that guests do not relate to them as individuals. Rather than function (like their Japanese counterparts) as facilitators of the Disneyland experience, *gaijin* employees are put on display. Gaijin cast members appear as a group in the place of honor at the front of the daily Disneyland parade, and gaijin craftspersons are displayed throughout the day at their boxed-in workstations, not unlike animals in a zoo.

(Brannen, 1992: 230)

A visit to Tokyo Disneyland is just as much a visit to a “human museum” of Other as a visit to the fantasy land, both of which confirm the distinction between what is Self/real and what is Other/imaginary while at the same time fueling the *unfulfillable* desire to be that which one is not. Tokyo Disneyland is, from its inception, in the business of constructing an immutable and transcendental Other and thereby creating the distinction between Self and Other that the Japanese visitors can experience, and as such it does *not* have room for identity dislocation via the cultural synthesis of Self and Other:

When, for example, Disney officials expressed an interest in providing some home country attractions like a “Samurai Land” to replace one of the four compass points of the American parks, or, at least, creating a ride and narrative based on a classic Japanese children’s story, like “the Little Peach Boy” or “the House of Sparrows,” the Japanese partners in Tokyo Disneyland resisted strenuously and insisted on a duplicate American version, thus retaining (presumably) the cultural purity of the original.

(Van Maanen, 1992: 9)

It is this uncompromised maintenance of “cultural purity” that works the magic of Tokyo Disneyland and this “magic” makes the enterprise profitable.

iii. “*Egizochikku* Japan”: Exoticized Self

The very international-ness of the lifestyle makes the traditional Japanese arts appear quite alien and exotic. We look at our tradition the way a foreigner does, and we are beginning to love it.

(Kurita, 1983: 131)

Still, the project of self-definition, in a rapidly changing society such as Japan, is no easy task and is inevitably fraught with confusing complexity and contradictions. What Kurita describes

above exposes one of the ironic consequences of over-consumption of “foreign” identities by the Japanese. It seems as though constant exposure to the images of Other and the active reshaping of one’s material conditions after them have made, in some sense, what was once exotic familiar and what was once familiar exotic. There has been a shift in the positioning of the gaze that sees the self, for it is the appropriation of the Western gaze that renders one’s tradition so much more “exotic.” As a result, even appreciation of “native” tradition tends to demand the perspective of a non-native:

When the T.V. stations broadcast old festivals and ceremonies in various parts of Japan, as a matter of routine they also show Western tourists who watch these events and their reactions.

(Kitahara, 1983: 108)

In her analysis of “Egizochikku Japan,” an advertising campaign for Japan’s national railway, Marilyn Ivy (1988) exposes an adroit manipulation of the Eye/I by the Japanese advertisers to project fresh images of Japan as *unfamiliar* and thus re-inventing the tradition and self-identity for modern consumers. As she deconstructs the textual strategy of “Egizochikku Japan,” it becomes apparent that the gaze that exoticizes Japan is not simply that of a foreign tourist; instead it is a paradoxical gaze of the native Japanese who self-consciously appropriates the tourist gaze in a play of difference:

There is a double movement: because “Exotic Japan” is written in *katakana*, it is marked as foreign, as non-native. Foreign, that is, to Japanese, since in the normal state of things, non-Japanese cannot read *katakana*.

(Ivy, 1988: 25-26)

From another—geographical—perspective, the gaze that exoticizes Japan can be also seen as the cosmopolitan gaze of urban Japan, seeing its countryside as Other within. As Ivy notes, the exoticizing gaze, attuned for the taste of young urbanites, aestheticizes decidedly vague, quaint, and anonymous images of rural Japan, instead of more clichéd images of well-known local landmarks. Is it the genuine nostalgia for lost tradition that conjures up a fresh appeal for the landscapes of “pre-modern” Japan or is it the joy of being able to afford an aestheticizing perspective of a *gaijin* tourist? Creighton (1992) contends that “in contemporary Japan, traditional Japanese goods and practices are essential to the search for identity precisely because they provide

a material contrast to Japan's modern Western veneer" (Creighton, 1992: 55). The quest for self-identity in the emergent consumer society in Japan revolves around the commodification of this categorical schism—imaginary or real—seen through a constantly shifting gaze.

Here, I cannot help alluding to the ways in which Tokyo Disneyland maintains the park's near-perfect cleanliness. The theme park does not have the wire-net garbage bins that are common to most Japanese amusement parks; instead, it offers garbage bins which conceal its content and which match the surrounding architecture (Awata and Takanari, 1987). The fashionably dressed "custodials" (a title which apparently has a nicer ring to it in its Japanized form) perform their carefully stylized ceremonious task of street sweeping according to prescribed movements of the body. Or in Sengoku's view:

Tokyo Disneyland regards street sweeping as a form of performance for young people. The designated sweeper "dance" on the street [stage] and draw the attention of the park visitors. Here Disneyland has become a stage for the consumption-oriented youth. With its unexpectedly high demand, the street sweeper represents a new form of labour.

(Sengoku, 1991: 195)

This "new form of labour" derives its value by virtue of making a display of "work." As Wills (1991) argues, the display value of work is increasingly becoming a common element in our modern-day shopping environment. While her separation of "real" and "display" work is somewhat problematic, it is worth noting that the "theatrical" metaphor extends to even "mundane" practices of grocery shopping:

The current practice in many supermarkets is to put a theatrical form of production on display, while the real work that goes into maintaining the store and serving the customers is either hidden from view or made to appear trivial because of deskilling.

(Wills, 1991: 17)

The work on display becomes valorized in a consumer society only if there exists a consuming gaze that appreciates it. In Disneyland, the collection of waste thus has been polished up to meet the demand of the aestheticizing gaze of the park visitor.

The aesthetic gaze of young urban consumers, like Yumin, also changed the ways in which the landscapes of Tokyo have been perceived. For example, technological advances and innovations in electronic media made it possible for people to experience the city in a "cinematic" mode. Asato Izumi, Tokyo's popular columnist, recalls his first commute with a Walkman portable stereo:

As I get on a commuting train with the Walkman on, sweating salarymen turn around at the metallic sound that escaped from the headsets. Avoiding their gaze, I lean on the train door and look out to the scenery outside. Through the sound of “English songs,” the landscape is transformed into an aesthetic object.

The dirty alleys behind the lovehotels in Shinjuku and the grotesque scenery of the eastern exit to the Shinjuku Station—I look at them from the gaze of a stranger, like someone who is sightseeing in Southeast Asia. Through the sound filter, even the swaying salarymen on board with their black socks begin to look like actors of some substance. The images of their ugly patterned ties and tired facial expressions seem quite appropriate for a documentary film.

(Izumi, 1988: 118)

Here there is a double movement of the gaze. With the aid of his Walkman soundtrack, his gaze transforms other commuters into movie casts; thus, their existence becomes incorporated into his imaginary cinematic narrative while at the same time his gaze removes himself from the scene to assume the detached position of a movie spectator. In this process, his national identity also slips into that of non-Japanese—perhaps, Western—as he, listening to “English songs,” re-reads Tokyo’s “unpleasant” landscapes as “Southeast Asian.” His gaze, in short, becomes that of a cosmopolitan, *gaijin*.. This movement of subject position is also apparent in his essay on viewing CNN news programs:

I read in a magazine interview before that “for environmental images emanating from a 28-inch monitor laid directly on a hardwood floor, it is a lot “trendier” nowadays to have foreign news programs rather than MTV.” The images of MTV have already become the scenery which evokes the images of “cafe bars in Nishi Azabu” rather than those of New York or London. Therefore, the viewing individual can no longer picture himself to be a “gaijin in a New York apartment” to the same degree.

As they mix Japanese and English in their unusually fast narration, the content [of the CNN news program] is almost incomprehensible. On the TV screen, there appear images of a mountain fire somewhere in America and figures of the foreign exchange market—I’m left with a pleasant feeling as though I was watching the news program in a New York apartment. This news program is like an indoor plant.

(Izumi, 1991: 370)

Apart from the interesting and unexpected reception of Ted Turner’s CNN as an “interior adornment” half way across the globe, Izumi’s identification with a New Yorker indicates the continuing theme of living in a global city not as a Japanese, but as a *gaijin* whose gaze can exoticize the “ordinary” everyday landscapes of Tokyo into scenes from a cinema.

This is one of the many manifestations of the *Occidental Gaze*, as I have shown in this chapter, which underlay the new perceptions of geography and self identity in Tokyo. Both the new spaces

of consumption and the urban media function to mediate between one's everyday practices and one's cultural identity. They have become a cultural filter through which ordinary experiences can be transformed into "cosmopolitan" moments in people's lives. There are two processes at work: the domestication of the "West" as something familiar and the exoticization of "Japan" as something foreign. This is moreover a distinctly 1980s phenomenon—the defining characteristic of the generation who grew up listening to Yumin's cosmopolitan "new music." This is also a Shibuya phenomenon. Unlike the inclusive space of 1960s Shinjuku which accommodated the native culture of its countryside, Shibuya was an exclusive space which did away with its "Japanese" past.

7. CONCLUSIONS

THE CULTURE OF CONSUMPTION

i. Consumption as Ideology

In this thesis, I have outlined the ways in which the new practices of consumption have affected the social geography of Tokyo as well as the perception of its urban space. In particular, the transition from Shinjuku's counter-cultural scene to Shibuya's "crystal" landscapes has been identified as one of the key shifts that has led to the current geography of consumption in Tokyo. In many ways, the Shinjuku youths of the 1960s were explicitly political in their cultural expressions of resistance while the Shibuya youths of the 1980s seemed, at a very superficial level, apolitical. Yet, there are—unmistakably—ideological processes that sustain the new practices of consumption, no matter how "passive" they may appear to be. Here I will consider two relevant issues to the political implications of the new cultures of consumption as I have defined it in this project. First, there is the question of consumer tastes as a political strategy of social differentiation. Second, the practices of "hyper-consumption," which characterized the "consumer craze" in 1980s Tokyo, raises the question of commodification as an integral component in current manifestations of postmodern culture.

ii. The Cultural Politics of Differentiation

In his critique of Japanese consumer culture, Ijiri (1993) laments the loss of "orthodoxy" as a measure of moral judgment, in the midst of growing relativism in an increasingly consumer-oriented society. Paradoxically, it is also true that during the same period, in the midst of

supposedly “pluralizing” values, a certain value system—the new orthodoxy of consumption—has singularly gained widespread currency. The experience of shopping, for example, is said to be a great levelling device of tastes because anyone regardless of class or gender is theoretically able to identify with his/her purchase. Yet, of course, the distribution of purchasing power remains unequal in an advanced consumer society. Indeed, the 1980s witnessed the emergence of new economic disparities in the supposedly “classless” society (Ozawa, 1985). Watanabe’s (1988) comic rendition of the “lifestyles of the new rich and the new poor” [*Kinkonkan*] was a best seller perhaps because it struck chords with the popular awareness that the gap between “haves” and “have-lesses” in Japan was growing. Instead of flattening, “tastes,” then, become organized somewhat hierarchically:

Lifestyle is all about knowing the style-code, and the fewer the people that know, the slicker the lifestyle...the lifestyle pyramid: the more you know the style, the fewer the people that can de-code your own lifestyle, and the higher your place in the pyramid. This is the cornerstone of modern marketing.

(Young 1985 as quoted in Tomlinson, 1990: 27)

In Tanaka’s *Somewhat Crystal*, the protagonist indeed expresses her disdain for Shibuya, which has become too “major” in her view, and in so stating, she secures herself a superior vantage point in the world of fashion trends:

I love “urban” lifestyle, but terminal-stations like Shibuya turn me off. I get irritated seeing crowds of people....Another thing. Kids walking around in Shibuya bore me as they all look alike.

Lately all I see are girls in their reversible wraparound skirts with sweatshirts or flower-print blouse or others in baggy-top jeans with surfer-like shirts. I myself used to go around in my “Yokohama Trad” fashion, but when I see so many kids on Koen Street in their Yokohama Trad or Land Surfer getups I can’t help feeling rather weird.

(Tanaka, 1980: 150)

As Bourdieu observed of the French petite-bourgeoisie, it is in the negation of “popular tastes” that one finds one’s cultural superiority:

Tastes (i.e., manifested preferences) are the practical affirmation of an inevitable difference. It is no accident that, when they have to be justified, they are asserted purely negatively, by the refusal of other tastes.

(Bourdieu, 1984: 56)

The new “hierarchy of tastes” currently found in Japan has implications for the nation’s position as a “cultural” and “economic” leader in the Asia Pacific region. Consider Otsuka’s response to a

suggestion that the whole Japanese society, in its present trajectory, is poised to adopt the mentality of the “gentry” and subsequently its lifestyles:

Supposing that indeed everyone has become a gentry, then who will be his/her labourers and servants? With the aging of the population, the absolute number of the work force will decline after 1995. As can be seen in the example of the flight from “3K”¹ occupations, there already is a trend towards “gentrification” within the job market. Needless to say, the consumer society of the 1980s has been established by externalizing “production” away from the city to the countryside, then from the countryside to the Third World. Thus, “gentrified” society necessitates either an active “colonization” of these externals of the consumer society or a creation of a serving class within....No doubt someone will voice the idea that the gentrified society will try to resolve this contradiction by “utilizing” the neighbouring countries in Asia.

(Otsuka, 1991a: 220)

Thus, the regime of “discriminating consumption” carries the potential for “discriminating” against an Other (in Tokyo’s case, the people of its poorer neighbours in Asia). In the case of New York City, for example, Zukin (1990) has already documented the fact that the practices of aesthetic consumption in the city are indeed predicated upon the labour of those culturally less dominant, immigrant workers. Although Tokyo’s immigrant base is still small in comparison to other global cities such as London, New York, and Paris, *consumption of discriminated labour* may well soon become an issue for Japan in the near future.

iii. Commodification and Identity

Another critical issue over the ideological implication of consumption lies in the notion of commodification and its relevance to the formation of modern subjectivity. The rhetoric of consumption promises the possibility of attaining a new personal identity through enlightened consumption: you are what you buy. Thus, the new culture of consumption is defined more by its associative symbolism than by its functional utility. But as Ewen argues in his discussion of “style,” the democratic rhetoric of free-spirited consumption and lifestyles conceals the underlying relationships of power: “Relations of power in society are transformed, by style, into things of

¹ 3K stands for “*kitsui, kitanai, kiken*” [hard, dirty, dangerous (the very qualities that deodorant culture attempts to eliminate), the job categories that today’s youths avoid. Tokyo’s new global status, in this case, meant that foreign workers, especially those from the rest of Asia and the Middle East, took those 3K jobs that Japanese themselves no longer wish to carry out. This is most prevalent in building and road construction and small factory jobs.

beauty”(Ewen, 1990: 49). Aestheticization of certain lifestyles simultaneously affirms and reifies the existing relationships of power as something to be admired. The “postmodern” disposition as appropriated by the Japanese media has been rewritten as a monetary “play of difference” within the market mechanism.

At the end of two decades of rapid economic expansion, Japanese social commentators—albeit in a resigned tone—began to question the social and political aspects of their increasingly commodified everyday world:

The new generation of youths, who were born in a country where there are more than a dozen weekly and monthly fashion magazines targeted to teenagers, have always been, since their childhood, sensitized to be materialistic. More than any school policies of the Ministry of Education, the economic policies of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry must have had an enormous impact on children.

(Fujii, 1994: 164)

Thus, another important aspect of the Japanese 1980s is the trend towards the accelerated commodification of young people’s lifeworlds. Teenage sexuality is one of the most visible areas of commodification. First, in a trendy late-night TV show entitled “All Night Fuji,” college girls became a saleable brand, then in “Yuyake Nyan Nyan” high school girls attained a similar status (Across, 1989). Perhaps, the recent *buru-sera* phenomenon is the epitome of such a trend. *Buru-sera* shops sell used garments worn by high school girls. On the one hand, there is a fetishism of the “middle-age” male customers—the very target who have been exorcised by the aesthetic standard of high school girls—to buy the clothes that are stained with young girls’ “bodily dirt.” But, there is also a cool, calculated stance of those “average” high school girls from middle and upper middle-class families who understand the system of commodity exchange: many of them reportedly sell their clothes for play money. The street value of a pair of worn underwear is said to be ¥ 10,000 (\$100) or more (Fujii, 1994). The high price tag given to this particular “good” by the patriarchal market translates into purchasing power. Thus the widened socio-psychological gap between the high-school girl and the *ojisan*² is momentarily filled by the bond of money.

² “*Ojisan*” is a generic term for middle-aged men and is sometimes used in a derogatory sense.

For Japanese journalist Fujii (1994), the buru-sera phenomenon represents a natural consequence of Japan's new "peaceful" materialism:

For the high school and junior high school students of the previous generation, "school uniform," along with "school regulations," was a symbol of oppression....[Today] the school uniform is no longer the symbol of oppression but a "product brand" and private high schools use "designer uniforms" as an effective means of attracting new students. This is an age of fashion without oppression or violence on the surface. "Buru-sera high school girls" emerged under such a background. For now, the adults living in the 1990s have no power to control their moneymaking venture by [selling] underwear and school uniforms.

(Fujii, 1994: 8)

The commodification of everyday life, which underlies Fujii's argument, became accelerated by the flow of "easy money" during the post-endaka bubble economy that Japan enjoyed in the late 1980s. The incredible return on the Nikkei stock capitalization certainly transformed people's expectations about the value of work and its return. It was perhaps very befitting that during this period Showa Women's College adopted the Visa Card for its student ID: the ability to purchase defines an individual's identity (Iwai, 1991).

As a form of representation, the "catalogue" culture of the urban youth media, which promote such forms of "differentiating" consumption, has—at the same time—the effect of reducing differences among the displayed objects into a simple question of style. "Toraddo" [traditional], "Retoro" [retro], "Konsaba" [conservative], "Ame-Kaji" [American casual], "Gurange" [grunge]—fashion styles that saturate the youth media do not necessarily imply a specific political or historical statement; the dominant ideology found in style is, one may argue, the ideology of consumption which strives to translate social relationships, historical facts, and political views into exchangeable commodities. It has been often said that the Japanese television industry is in its golden age of quiz shows. One of the most popular quiz shows of the 1980s was Kyosen Ohashi's "Sekai Marugoto How Much"—an info-tainment show which lets its celebrity guests guess the prices of "exotic" goods and services from all over the world. Every Thursday night, the Japanese audience went on a shopping spree of foreign cultures. The program assures the viewer that every culture has its price (tag). And it is perhaps befitting that Ohashi, the show's host, owns a chain of gift shops in major tourist destinations in Canada, including one on Alberni Street in Vancouver.

But the above observations need to be tempered by the fact that “commodification” does not proceed by its own logic or in a cultural vacuum: we can restate the case by noting that consuming selves express their need for social differentiation through commodified means that are readily available to them and in such a process they bring in their own agendas. A 30-year old fashion designer based in Harajuku comments:

My generation wants to make money in a fashionable way. If I were to decide whether to open a Japanese pub or a “cafe-bar,” I would do the “cafe-bar.” I might make more money running a pub, but it is the fashionable element of the work, rather than the financial reward, that is more attractive to me.

(Kato, 1986: 17)

Thus, even within the constraints of the consumption-oriented society, there still is room for negotiating subjective meanings and for making decisions that may not result in maximization of profits. This, then, would be a qualified version of Featherstone’s view of the sphere of consumption as an “autonomous playful space beyond determination” in which:

Rather than unreflexively adopting a lifestyle, through tradition or habit, the new heroes of consumer culture make lifestyle a life project and display their individuality and sense of style in the particularity of the assemblage of goods, clothes, practices, experiences, appearance and bodily dispositions they design together into a lifestyle.

(Featherstone, 1987: 59)

THE NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR THE 1990S

In this thesis, I have outlined issues surrounding the new cultures of consumption which emerged out of Tokyo’s postindustrial conditions. In particular, I have focused upon the interplay among the dramatized selves of the *shinjinrui* youth, the corporate narratives of Seibu and Tokyu, and the urban stage of Shibuya. Following the collapse of the counter-culture of student activism in Shinjuku in the early 1970s and the transition into the culture of lifestyles throughout the 1970s, the new cultures of consumption emerged in the context of the 1980s’ economic boom just as the babyboom echo generation was entering the urban consumer market in large numbers. Geographically, there has been a parallel shift of the centre for youth cultures from yesterday’s Shinjuku to today’s Shibuya. There has been a fusion of constructions of the self and of urban space, as the spatial organization of Shibuya as a thematic landscape of consumption has been

matched by the aestheticizing gaze of the *shinjinrui* youth who seek a cosmopolitan identity within—what they perceive to be—the sea of “homogeneity” in modern Tokyo.

Although young people in Tokyo live in a highly advanced consumer society just like their counterparts in North America and Western Europe, their existential conditions (both cultural and economic) set Tokyo youths’ experiences apart from those of Western youths. (It would be interesting to compare conditions in Japan to those in the rapidly growing parts of Asia such as Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan.) There are many more international and cross-cultural comparisons that can be made on the new cultures of consumption in Japan, which have not been dealt with here because of the somewhat limited nature of this thesis.

In this paper I have suggested that in the midst of seemingly pluralizing values, the ideology of commodification has become the dominant political ideology of the apparent “non-politics.” Yet, at the same time, the ideological potency of commodification is moderated by the politics of identity that the *shinjinrui* youth sought in the details of their everyday world. On the one hand, Marilyn Ivy, echoing the Frankfurt School’s “cultural industry” perspective, finds the whole situation rather grim:

[T]he continued precarious status of these forms and practices [of resistance], both in Japan and in a global order where the massive capitalization and consolidation of culture proceeds unabated, is at once both the sign and the guarantee of the powers of the mass cultural industries of the late twentieth century.

(Ivy, 1993: 258)

But on the other hand, her top-down observation is countered by Shunya Yoshimi who sees slightly more self-determination in the hands of human agency:

Even if young people are being made to “dance” under the strategy of corporate capitalism, they are still “dancing” by themselves. The important thing to know is why they are dancing to begin with and the meaning of their subjectivity. Dramatized stories become fully actualized only if the performers are willing to carry them out.

(Yoshimi, 1989, 301)

What is needed here is, perhaps, a local scale ethnography that brings out this “meaning of subjectivity” to the fore. Although market analyses of Tokyo’s youths abound, there is a pronounced lack of ethnographical literature on the new cultural practices of urban Japan (with some notable exceptions, most of the anthropological writings on Japan have dealt with rural

Japan). This is particularly important at present when, with the bust of the *Heisei* economic bubble, the lifestyles that emerged out of the cultures of consumption are—at least for the time being—fast losing their material underpinnings. In the 1990s, as they enter the labour force, how will the *shinjinrui* youth of the 1980s handle the workplace politics to sustain the lifestyles that they have become used to? How will the next generation of youth fare in the recent climate of a recessionary urban economy and widening social polarization? Above all, how do today's young Tokyoites perceive their lifeworld and negotiate their identity in their information-rich urban environment? These questions beg further, close-to-the-ground ethnographical work yet to be undertaken in Tokyo.

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