

Lost In Translation

This topic is directly relevant to the Society and Culture course as it examines how individuals within society interpret gender constructions at different periods of times, emphasising how the concept of gender is fluid and constantly evolving. A nation's history and experience in conjunction with forces of globalisation has seen major changes occur in regard to how gender roles are perceived, indicating that the aftermath of war and forces of globalisation have led to dramatic shifts in the acceptance of androgynous behaviours, which have been reinforced through social mediums. Gender therefore is socially situated, and is therefore an essential part of the cross cultural component to be integrated in the PIP.

Throughout history the media has been criticised for being highly selective in their constructed portrayals of society. However media representations reflect the historic context of the time that corresponds to shifts in perceptions of masculinity. For example the film, movie, and manga "Train Man" (2005) distinctively conveys the notions of 'herbivorous men' and shifts with conventional masculinity in which the film embodies the acceptance and understanding of the changing nature of gender as the protagonist personifies feminized qualities and characteristics, which has been seen as a conversion from the traditional patriarchal society that was seen previously. The behaviour of the 'Train Man' deconstructs traditional norms and allows for the mix of conventional femininity and masculinity. The movie challenges patriarchal norms as well as expressing the nations desire to combat androgyny and stabilise gender norms. The use of visual media hence has been imperative in projecting the modern day version of masculinity, and hence the modern version of the masculine hero. Therefore the film emphasises the effects of economic stagnation and corporate restructuring that threatened patriarchal institutions in society, reflecting upon concerns of this contemporary time period. In recent times Japanese media has continued to depict the male protagonist as "grass-eating" boys who have a gentle and cute demeanour. The popular television series "otomen" (girly men) depicts the protagonist as a the most popular guy at school, yet he is not interested in female fans, but cooking and female associated domestic roles. This demonstrates the image that has been projected throughout Japan to enhance and redefine the micro and macro meaning of masculinity.

Kimura Takayu popular young male actor singer and self- confessed "herbivore"²⁷ in recent years has been voted number one in setting fashion trends for youths in young male magazines such as Big Tomorrow. The ascendance of popular "herbivorous" and feminised actors such as Takayu reflects a shift in society's paradigms towards traditional hegemonic masculinity. The popularity of actors such as Takayu represents how young males are solely focused on their status as aesthetic and sexual appraisal as opposed to the tough "Samurai" and "Corporate Warrior" image that represented Japanese perceptions of pride and courage previously. The recent importance of externalization has stemmed from the proliferation of these images that have been adopted and accepted as the normality, and hence have resulted in recent fads or permanent fashions.