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PAPER PEOPLE AND DIGITAL MEMORY: RECREATING THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE IN JAPAN

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PAPER PEOPLE AND DIGITAL MEMORY: RECREATING THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE
IN JAPAN

by

Meghan Sarah Fidler

B.A. Southern Illinois University, 2004

M.A. Southern Illinois University, 2007

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Anthropology

in the Graduate School

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DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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PRIVATE IN JAPAN

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PhD.

in the field of Anthropology

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

MEGHAN SARAH FIDLER, for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in ANTHROPOLOGY, presented on September 12, 2014 at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: PAPER PEOPLE AND DIGITAL MEMORY: RECREATING THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE IN JAPAN

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. David Sutton

This research examines how reading and writing on digital platforms establishes public and private spheres in Tokyo, Japan. Based upon findings from a group of students at an international University, I develop new modes of thinking about people and their use of Internet capable devices by exploring the paradoxes present in contemporary literacies. Contextualizing reading and writing within the speech patterns and exchange rituals (*aisatsu*) which mark public spheres in Japan, writing practices are found to reflect multiple nuanced identity performances in which the varied use of the cultural principles *uchi/soto* (inside/outside) and *ura/omote* (back/front) create parallel publics. Constructed by authors and recognized by readers, these parallel publics are the result of student agency as well as the materiality of platform programming and device capabilities. Contemporary literacies have developed conventions which account for the message recipient carrying an ever-present Internet capable device, leading authors to utilize message practices which align the proximity of a platform to levels of intimacy in a relationship. Authors also compose messages which are less likely to require the receiver to excuse themselves from any given social situation. The ubiquity of human-device pairs has also impacted memory practices, with youths prioritizing recognition skills over memorization.

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My attention to components of science and technology studies, like trends in bookstores and debates on the use of new writing technologies, were the result of Professor Roberto Barrios influence. His classes demonstrated how to align theoretical concepts and scientific practice to on the ground discourse and experience.

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Mom and Dad...you know why they don't send donkeys to college?

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CHAPTER I
WHAT IS LITERACY STUDIES?
SOCIAL TRAJECTORIES IN READING AND WRITING TECHNOLOGIES

Listening to someone read aloud is very different from reading in silence. When you read, you can stop or skip sentences: you are the one who sets the pace. When someone else is reading, it is difficult to make your attention coincide with the tempo of his reading: the voice goes either too fast or too slow.

And then, listening to someone who is translating from another language involves a fluctuation, a hesitation over the words, a margin of indecision, something vague, tentative. The text, when you are the reader, is something that is there, against which you are forced to clash; when someone translates it aloud to you, it is something that is and is not there, that you cannot manage to touch.

Italo Calvino, *If On a Winter's Night A Traveler*. 1993 [1979]: 66.

Reading, Texting, Writing, Tagging: Digital Literacy at a University in Tokyo

The quote from Calvino text highlights a multitude of important aspects for using new technologies to read and write: transnational friendships, multilingual competency, and the technological mediation of emotions. By containing elements which emplace a self within broader communities, computer-mediated communication (CMC) is a practice which entails a

negotiation of technical features, the presentation of self-identity for various groups, and the impacts these praxis have for remembrance.¹ In real time, the use of digital writing platforms is complex; users navigate social codes and machine brands to choose from a plethora of message types while writing.² While there have been many studies which focus on the intricacies of a single platform, this study attempts to incorporate the use of multiple platforms within the context of their use through literacy studies.³ Literacy is a hermeneutic practice in which gender, age, experience, and a particular socio-historic background are implicated. This dissertation focuses on these aspects of literacy to better understand the impact of technology on social interaction and to predict future patterns in technology use.

Documents, whether paper or digital, are tools for representing a person. They are also part of a person, as individuals engage in active maintenance of personal and institutional archives. Computing technologies provide individuals with neoteric possibilities in assembling correspondence and constructing self and place within a community. Authors actively select the communication platform on which to write, relying upon distinctive functions of various platforms to achieve different levels of politeness and to construct different meanings for potential readers. The choice of platform thus becomes a contextual cue for the construction of signification. Technology also enables new possibilities for grouping documents: the inclusion of

¹ Computer-mediated communication is defined as any communication that occurs through the use of two or more electronic devices. The term became popular in the early 1990s in analysis of online discursive exchange and its potential impacts for learning (Ahern et al., 1992). Language and cultural education grew to be important contexts for these studies by virtue of the geographic reach CMCs provide across distance. For examples in studying language learning, see: Donaldson and Kötter (1999); and Aitsiselmi (1999). For examples in studies focusing upon the acquisition of cultural knowledge, see: Lee (1998); and Liaw (2006). The potential in computer-mediated communication for intercultural study generated an entire journal dedicated to CMC in 1995: *The Journal of Computer-mediated Communication*.

² A communication platform is any writing medium deployed during Computer-mediated Communication. Because this research is exploring the impact of reading and writing within a range platform choice, I use the term platform as a reference to the type of forum chosen for a message rather than the act of communication itself.

³ While I use the term “literacy” in the singular, I am referring to the many “literacies” present in any community and employed by individuals. I use the vocabulary of literacy for ease in reading, it does not indicate a single set of reading and writing skills.

pictures, pictorial icons displaying the emotional state of the author, long commentaries and descriptions, the number of message recipients, the possibility that an entry may be constructed by multiple authors, links to outside knowledge archives, and borrowed genres are among the complex elements constituting platform choice in contemporary computer-mediated communication. An analysis of individual decisions, entries, and Internet navigation is essential for understanding contemporary writing and reading. Under the premise that a real-time multiple platform analysis can provide an *au courant* approach to the routines of self and engagement of others, I begin an analysis of computer-mediated literacy by focusing on social relationships and reading interpretations among a small group of Tokyo residents.

I first approached students in the classroom setting with an anonymous questionnaire.⁴ I asked those interested in further interviews to leave an email at the bottom of the page. After class I contacted these students. While I held initial interviews with almost every student who supplied contact information, I did not hold subsequent secondary interviews with international students. The first interview was conducted on campus, while following interviews were conducted in places around the city, according to the student's desires. If I gained permission from the interviewee, I recorded the interview. If the student was uncomfortable with recording, I took live notes: this is reflected in my use of quotations throughout this dissertation. If a phrase appears in quotations, it was recorded by my hand or an audio device. I have left grammatical errors in both the recorded speech and written answers gathered from the questionnaire, emails, chats, and texts. Written material is denoted by the presence of *kanji* (Chinese characters). The characters were ones chosen by the student. I do not provide a reading gloss for the characters, only a translation.

⁴ See Appendices A and B for examples of the questionnaire. For a comparison of the demographics and social network platforms utilized by the students, see Appendix C.

The use of literacy studies, alongside participant observation, as an approach to computer-mediated communication provides a methodology which is able to chronicle the plethora of potential message forms available at any time. While the inclusion of multiple communication platforms could expand the subject of this study exponentially, such an examination is necessary: digital messaging connects an increasingly diverse set of media. Platforms contain not only images, text, and response; they include videos, links to other platforms, biographical information, backlogs of prior entries, and music. Combined with the ability for users to navigate more than one web-based page at once by opening multiple windows or CMC functions, the potential recombination of information available through internet technologies is mindboggling. These new groupings of materials require an analysis which does not simply account for their existence; how symbols are deployed and how meaning-making is accomplished remain at the core of identity, memory, and knowledge in a computer filled life. In essence, this dissertation examines paper people—people whose identity, institutional and self-performed, is created through the use of documents. Along side this practice is its correlate: digital memory. As methods of storing and retrieving information change with technologies, the experiential praxis surrounding memories and memory-making. This dissertation, by being attentive to memory practices, argues that contemporary literacy requires us to reevaluate the role of memorization and recognition as co-constructive in a world filled with Internet-capable communication devices. At stake in self-digitalization is the requirement for developing new modes of thinking about people, knowledge, social exchange and interaction.

While exploring nodes of knowledge, social exchange, and interaction, it became apparent that contemporary literacy contains a number of paradoxes: the narratives, both originating from the media and from my informants, which surround new communication

technologies contain sets of social expectations which do not always smoothly mesh into older communication axioms. As I will discuss at length, the incorporation of new technologies into daily life requires groups of friends and family to create idiosyncratic guidelines of what is, and what is not, appropriate use. Different groups thus create different idioms of practice, which occasionally clash. Likewise, broad moral and social values have been attached to speech, writing, and technology use differently by different generations. There are a number of paradoxes found in modern literacy, paradoxes in which tensions of one expected form of communication pushes and pulls against another. As I demonstrate, tensions occur between age groups because generations gain different skills and habits of information retrieval, memorization, and communication. After finding strong resonance in Ellen Basso's 2009 work "Ordeals of Language," I call these tensions "cyborg ordeals." Discussed in tandem with the creation and maintenance of a recognizable "Japanese identity" on communication platforms in Chapter III, cyborg ordeals are moments ethical and expectations of communication create dilemmas, often accompanied by emotional states, for users.

New approaches to computer-mediated interactions are vital in many ways; contemporary literacy is a rough road. Congruent with their ability to recombine symbols, writing technologies represent conflicting ideologies: first, greater connectivity at the cost of incumbent isolation, second, the promise of our ability to exchange information exists alongside discussions of machine dependent social interactions, third, scenarios in which machines control their people as addicts, and lastly, the security of carrying a knowledge-accessing device against the fearful outcry that youths are losing skills and values. Such conflicts represent paradoxes in contemporary writing. Addressing the paradoxes of computer-mediated literacy requires peeling back layers to reveal fresh prospects.

While working explicitly towards memory and identity, computer-mediated literacy as a whole is imbedded within larger social paradigms: computer-mediated communication is co-constructed, co-authored, and read in multiple settings. The materiality of such exchanges embeds platforms within nuanced linguistic ideologies which often articulate the boundaries of public and private life. These boundaries are not arbitrary. The students I worked with continually demonstrated that online interactions are deciphered based upon two important elements of knowledge, identity, and memory: lived experience individuals and the prior uses of writing and language for similar message meanings or message forms. While concepts of public and private will be problematized and contextualized for Japan, what emerges from this view is a striking pattern. Internet based platforms, even those considered ostensibly public (social networking sites), are neither strictly public or private. With message construction and an author's utilization of a shared experience among readers, private messages float in an ethereal binary sea of public words.

Organization of the Dissertation

Using literacy as an analytical lens for communication technologies necessitates an account addressing a general socio-historic review as well as identity components such as gender and age, and technological materiality.⁵ “To take representations seriously...we should not have to treat them in isolating from, or as subordinated to, the other activities of society.”⁶ Any inventory of contemporary writing must trace literacy as part of a semiotic complex. This project begins the work of constructing the aspects of literacy specific to a real-time analysis of our

⁵ I am drawing my conception from the interrelationship between self and the properties of the material world from Daniel Miller's (2005a) work *Materiality*.

⁶ Keane (1997), 11.

increasingly digital world. Identifying differences and similarities in variables from person to person—such as why students primarily write in Japanese on mixi but tend to code switch on Facebook—creates the background for different forms of reading and writing. In this project I approach the sign system present in writing through cross-cultural comparisons and a historical overview (Chapter II).

The historical overview establishes Japan's unique approach to communication technologies. Such technologies have always been portals to the local and global community. The practice of sending messages from city to city—even cities overseas—extends into Japanese history. To step away from literacy as a single practice—the oft thought of accumulation of a set of standardized skills—requires accounting for the assembly of vacillating factors present within the socio-historical frame. While tracing the spread of writing technology and education in reading and writing, Chapter II also discusses important elements of literacy in Japan.

Such elements provide the interpretive foundation for the students' methods of portraying alternate identities to different groups in writing (Chapter III). Students recognize writing technologies as important places for identity performance. How one uses different platforms relates to an individual's position in diverse Japanese communities.⁷

Recognizing individualized literacy also requires the acknowledgement of structural forces at play. These include not only needs of institutions, but the materiality of digital technologies (Chapter IV). There are technical limitations on messages; i.e., one may only use 140 characters in Tweets, and emoticons do not always appear in the message bar when messages are sent between two different phone brands. Furthermore, social expectations of where it is appropriate to use different aspects of communication technologies deeply impacts

⁷ There are a large range of national and ethnic minorities in Japan, including the Ainu, Burakumin (descendants of premodern outcasts), Chinese, Koreans, and Okinawan. See: Lie (2004).

how messages are sent; i.e., there is a preference to text in public places, so as not to disturb others with your conversation. Because of this and other social codes, as we shall see, texting has become more polite—and thus more prevalent—than making a phone call.

Finally, these daily interactions have crossed into socially ascribed values of memory (Chapter V). While it is important to share events with loved ones who are away, the amount of information must fit the context of the audience. Because technologies now provide notation functions, day planners, and contact logs, information that was previously memorized is now stored and retrieved. This overlap in information storage has negative and positive effects. In Japan, for example, while character recognition has increased the actual knowledge of drawing the character may be neglected. The perceived breakdown of memorized knowledge also corresponds with a broader trend in research on contemporary Japan: there are a growing number of scholars who are exploring the anxiety of living in an unpredictable place. Japan has not recovered from its economic downturn in the 1990s, and the recent 3.11 Tōhoku earthquake and subsequent nuclear troubles have left many feeling as if they are living in precarious positions.⁸ I find, however, that even in an unstable environment, the students I worked with are drawing from meaning and social expectations that have long been established in Japan. The world may be perilous, but the innovations surrounding computer-mediated communication have grown and become meaning because of associations with historic writing and speech practices.

In concluding (Chapter VI), I revisit findings in previous chapters, fettering out the trajectories and implications of cyborg ordeals. Comparing contemporary issues with the discussed cross-cultural examples and the historical development of literacy in Japan, I demonstrate conjunctions in technological materiality and social life that are likely to be key in future moments of contestation and innovation. The final chapter revisits the makeup of

⁸ Allison (2013).

contemporary notions of public and private within communication platforms, suggesting trajectories and questions for future analysis.

To begin, this chapter provides a literature review of literacy studies and computer-mediated communication research. These sources provide cross-cultural exemplars of details important to digital writing not only in Tokyo, but for authors around the globe. Such features provide fertile grounds for locating patterns relevant to Japan's historical background.

Notes on Conventions

I transcribe Japanese using Hepburn romanization. Spoken quotes are only provided in standard style romanization, while written responses are provided in romanization followed by a replica of the sentence to demonstrate the characters written. The citation style for the bibliography and for Japanese names follows the Chicago Style, with the author's last name given first. When providing names of websites, phones, and brands, I have followed the company's method of capitalization: for example, the Japanese social network mixi is not capitalized, while Apple capitalizes the p in iPhone. I have not corrected grammar in statements recorded during interviews. Readers are reminded that speakers rarely follow grammatical rules in a strict manner.

Field Site Introduction

I was introduced to the students at a University in Tokyo through a professor, who allowed me to come into his anthropology classrooms and tell the students about my research.⁹ After I told them who I was, I asked them questions about what was appropriate to write someone by email, on social media sites, or in a text message: Is it okay to break up with someone with a text? What about an email? Would you be angry with your parents if they read the messages in your phone? Would you be angry at one of your friends if they pretended—maybe even using your account with your screen name—to be you while chatting online? I also handed out a brief questionnaire (*anketo* in Japanese), explaining that if anyone wanted to talk to me further about emails, text messages, mixi, Facebook, or sending paper letters they could leave their email on the bottom of the paper and I would contact them.¹⁰ After writing to these anonymous addresses, I met with initial volunteers at coffee shops and in the computer labs on campus. We would share the pictures on our phones with one another and sift through the students' email accounts and social networking sites. I requested interviewees to bring their machines; be it phone, laptop, or tablet, to our meetings. We opened all the sites they commonly used for writing to another person. I let the interviewee lead; they controlled the mouse and opened different pages in response to my questions. I was fortunate enough to meet with a dozen

⁹ I collected data on campus during the summer of 2010 and the 2011-12 school year in both the Professor's classes and classes conducted by other departments.

¹⁰ Mixi is Japan's version of Facebook. I will discuss the differences between these two shortly. See Chapters 3 and 4 in which I discuss relevant social platforms and smartphone models relevant in the course of my fieldwork. As I informed the classroom, following guidelines set by the Human Subjects Committee, the anonymous questionnaire was voluntary, as was the request for email contact information. The students could also fill out the questionnaire without leaving their email. Further, I told them that if they were unsure about the interview they could leave their email but choose not to respond to my first message.

students multiple times; among them Hanako, Ryan, and Amaya, whom will be introduced later in the body of this work.¹¹

The University in which I worked is an international school, and classes are taught in Japanese. Many of the students at the school had at least one non-Japanese parent or were interested in working abroad. With varying degrees of fluency, most everyone spoke Japanese and English, and there was a significant presence of students who could speak three languages, adding French or German to the mix. Switching between Japanese and English was normal while I was around, though Amaya, Hanako, and Ryan spoke almost exclusively in Japanese when they were alone.

When the students learned that I was doing research on contemporary communication technologies, many were eager to approach me with personal stories and experiences. Some students wanted to show me what they thought of as misbehaviors by people writing online. Those who had studied abroad, like Nobuko, showed me decorative shoeboxes filled with paper correspondence. A few, like Hanako, asked me to help them make sense of a message.¹² Most students demonstrated a personalized prowess in negotiating how to post information appropriate for the varying social groups which overlapped on networks.

¹¹ All names used in this project as pseudonyms. The gender of the names corresponds to that of the original participant.

¹² I do not think this experience is uncommon for language learners. I had a similar experience in the summer of 2011 while staying in a youth hostel in Suzhou, China. A Chinese English learner approached me in a café with her iPhone and showed me a message from an English speaking boy she had met while sightseeing. I explained my interpretation of the message and my companion (a male American Chinese speaker) translated my English explanation.

Defining Writing, Finding Literacy

While there are corollaries between computer-mediated communication and research on literacy, these relationships are not easy to identify. When I first proposed using literacy as the theoretical approach for digital media, the response from my committee members indicated that my choice was not intuitive. First, what is a text? Are messages which exist online—messages which can be changed at any time—a text?¹³ Can a written text contain a video or a song? To what extent is reading inherent in the text (in other words, the meaning of the message is available to any reader)? To what extent is literacy subjective and culturally specific (and consequently only understood by a small group)?

David McKitterick's work on manuscripts and printing in fifteenth to nineteenth century England provides a trenchant foundation for discussing binary code as a text. In *Print, Manuscript, and the Search for Order* McKitterick argues that historians maintain an inappropriate divide between manuscript and print materials. While there is a general assumption that the technology of the printing press replaced handwritten manuscripts, McKitterick demonstrates that both methods of book production co-existed for the first century of printing. The use of both methods continued because there were benefits in the production of both handwritten and printing press texts: manuscripts, for example, provided clear and easy means for illustrations (though illustrated texts were rare). Printing, on the other hand, allowed for many manuscripts to be produced in a timely manner. Thus the divide between print and hand copied texts emerged not from production, but rather from the need for libraries to devise separate

¹³ For a strong example of the rhetoric and debates which surround binary code as text, see: Ghosh (2005), esp. Marilyn Strathern's contribution "Imagined Collectives and Multiple Authorship."

cataloging systems for the sake of easily finding books.¹⁴ Today handwritten books are still produced, though in a lesser degree and often more for private audiences.

The conceptual divide between manuscripts and print material also emerged from perceptions of stability and finality in the written word; an attitude which, as we will see below, deeply influenced the theoretical discussions of oral and literate societies. Continuing this line of thought, the notion of permanence in a written phrase also influences the consideration of textual material which exists on the ethereal internet as a code. The fluidity and multiplicity of authors involved in on-line writing has repercussions for the perceptions of what constitutes public and private material on the web.

While multiple authorship may seem to muddle texts as property (particular to global capitalism, individual or copyright protected property), McKitterick's research makes clear that "printing is an exercise in communal responsibility."¹⁵ Responsibility is the correct term: thinking on John Milton's opus, *Paradise Lost*, the change of printing style from the archetype to the commercial version in successive presses may have deeply impacted the reading of the poem. *Paradise Lost*, as arranged by Milton, was originally artistically bound and printed on handmade paper using handset type (lettering which imitates handwriting). Successive printings, however, appeared with typographic lettering and upon white machined paper.¹⁶ Responsibility to texts is an act which considers the author(s) intent and meaning. Texts traditionally considered static and single authored are almost never so: printers, authors, correctors—and even readers—continually make changes and alterations to the written word. These changes emerge in the margins, as palimpsests, and paper inserts in previously printed materials.¹⁷ McKitterick continues:

¹⁴ McKitterick (2003), 20 and 43-45.

¹⁵ McKitterick (2003), 117.

¹⁶ Feather (1986).

¹⁷ McKitterick (2003), 99-120.

Texts are not fixed. They are always mobile—at the time of writing, the time of production, the time of publication, and over the course of time, quite apart from in the hands of readers. This is well known to historians of reader response, to social scientists and to literary and art critics alike. But it is not always fully understood from a bibliographical point of view; and without a clear understanding of bibliographical issues there are dangers in constructing historical, literary or critical theory.

David McKitterick, 2003: 97.

Today the bibliographic issues of texts extend from the separate classification of paper books and works from compilations of online materials which seem to lack a material physicality. Much like the dangers of seeing texts as static, there are dangers in conceptually separating paper texts from digital mediums: to do so leads to categorical misinterpretations which lends a select few forms of writing properties which make them appear intrinsically private. Or, inversely, inherently public. In a computerized world of global capital, this can have dire repercussions for discussions of rights and surveillance practices. My findings indicate that it is our relationships with texts, not their materiality, which denotes their public and private qualities. Texts that are accessible by a wide audience can be composed to share meaning with only a select few individuals, making the message both public and private. There are no clear-cut boundaries for digital texts. And, in lieu of a lack of protection programed into web communication platforms, users enact idiosyncratic models of theft defense and information safeguards.

As a final caveat, there is no way for me to address all of the materials represented in digital media. While illustrations have long graced the written word with additional interpretive

color, contemporary writing forms include an even greater array of adornments. I do not believe that we read an embedded video on a webpage, nor do I believe we read music when it accompanies a message or a website. I have set aside audio and video variables in the current study, choosing instead a holistic approach which treats the still frame of un-played videos as a print image, and, when they appear, treating the name of songs as contextual cues. While this resolution inevitably abandons some components of digital literacy for future studies, it provides the advantage of a concrete focus for the present analysis. Hence, while message platforms can contain aspects difficult to subsume in an analysis of reading and writing, I argue that messaging, blogs, social networks, tweets and emails are fundamentally a form of written texts. An author types them, and an audience interprets them. As such digitally mediated messages can be appraised using methods developed under the academic field of literacy studies.

Linking Literacy to Changing Technologies: Development and Modernity

To understand the roles of new writing technologies we must first understand the impacts of prior printing technologies, including those which surround the perception of texts as static. Until the nineteenth century, the ability to read and write were milestones which classified peoples as civilized or primitive.¹⁸ Reading and writing were understood as a single set of autonomous skills: one could be either literate or illiterate.¹⁹ In essence, literacy fell into a value laden imperial discussion of the planet in which non-literate peoples were thought to have a lack of reading and writing skill, which in turn inhibited their ability to progress. There were, however, outliers in this taxonomic system. Both Egyptian and Chinese societies were highly

¹⁸ Street and Besnier (1994).

¹⁹ Finnegan (1999), 90.

admired by early modern European thinkers for their literacy, though their writing was believed to be inferior to the alphabet developed in Greek and Latin Western civilization. Nonetheless, these societies were deemed better than others which had no writing system at all. Thus in the early model of colonial literacy other forms of writing—be it pictographic, syllabic, or the use of characters—were regarded as less efficient diversions from the eventual evolutionary triumph of writing in its true form: the alphabetic phonetic system.²⁰

The all or nothing civilized or primitive system would not last, and Jack Goody, Ian Watt, and Walter Ong were some of the first to attempt to move beyond distinctions of advanced society versus savage peoples. These authors began by exploring the impact reading and writing had upon social organization and the transmission of knowledge. In Goody and Watts' model, illiterate groups are reliant on memorized oral narratives as means of transmission. Since Goody and Watt viewed the oral message as ephemeral, the passage of knowledge in oral societies had different characteristics than literate societies. Literacy, and alphabetic literacy in particular, was a catalyst for development in society.²¹ The privileged position of alphabetic literacy fueled a perspective which regarded literacy as a transformative technology. Goody and Watt argued that literacy allowed the human cognition of language, traditions, thinking, and the creation of representations to advance towards scientific rationalism. In this model writing is a technology which enabled the precise coordination of people with an unprecedented standardization and scale, thereby facilitating the development of institutional and social complexity.²²

Goody and Ong's theoretical continuity was quite elaborate. For Goody, writing shifted socialization through teaching from kin to non-kin. In literate societies the task of teaching is delegated to teaching specialists rather than a collective, and Goody argued collective learning

²⁰ Finnegan (1999), 89.

²¹ Goody (1977).

²² Goody (1986); Goody and Watt (1963); and Ong (1982).

bound oral societies to a small scale existence. The state, through schools, expanded its institutional and ideological scope.²³ Elaborating on Goody's work, Ong described literacy as something which changed the perception of language. Literacy made abstract ideas possible, providing the tools necessary for scholars to transcending immediate contexts.

As writing technologies were consistently linked to perceptions of social development, the skills involved in orality were consistently devalued, particularly in terms of the Eurocentric bias towards unemotional and empirical details which were believed to produce real, or truthful, accounts of the natural world.²⁴ In his analysis of the psychodynamics of orality, Ong correlated the kin-community based method of socialization and learning to one which is emotional and participatory: "For an oral culture learning or knowing means achieving close, empathetic, communicable identification with the known, 'getting with it.' Writing separates the knower from the known and thus sets up conditions for objectivity, in the sense of personal disengagement or distancing."²⁵

It is interesting to note that a similar transcendence was once also associated with computer technology. The internet represented new possibilities in the freedom of information, where contextual limitations of place and physical mobility could drop away, exposing the possibility of a new social order: a civil utopia created from the free access of knowledge.²⁶ Much like literacy, the internet represented a fundamental element in a divide between developed (evolving) and undeveloped (stagnant) societies. For the internet, the access to written

²³ Foucault (1977); Goody (1999), 31; Mitchell (2002); and Scott (1998).

²⁴ Subsequent research has thrown the belief of experimentation and the scientific process into the relief of real-time confounds: for an account of the development of the scientific method and its fallacies, see: Shapin and Schaffer (1985).

²⁵ Ong (1982), 45-46; and Goody and Watt (1963), share a similar sentiment when they attempt to link oral transmission to a society's acceptance of tradition and writing to a skeptical view of tradition.

²⁶ Karim (2001).

knowledge was a divide between post-modern inequality and the possibility of egalitarianism. Writing technologies, it seems, are susceptible to quixotic visions of social progress.

The central pedagogy of reading and writing in Goody and Ong's theoretical continuity was, however, flawed. The perception of writing as advancement and the deprecations of orality lead to a common theme in early studies of literacy: reading and writing were fundamentally separate from speech. This division deeply influenced studies attempting to use writing to explain social organization. Ong's above sentiment, for example, echoes Goody and Watt's earlier work, which attempted to make a distinction between myths and history in order to delineate between opinion and truth. By separating speech and writing during analysis, oral chronicles of the past were bound to the immediacy of speech and, as such, provide representations of the past adjusted to current realities. These accounts are myths because they are perspectival. Written accounts, on the other hand, critically synthesize multiple sources, enabling the possibility of transcending perspectives.²⁷ These narratives are truthful histories. According to Goody, writing is a supplementary storage system which:

enables us to retrieve past information as well as to distribute it outside the face-to-face situation. Retrieval means that we can examine statements at leisure, give them a different level of analytic inspection than is possible with speech, and reject what does not meet our criteria and add to what does. Documents give us a shared sense of history and a different sense of culture, since we can readily retrieve the literature of our predecessors, their spoken as well as their visual records.

Goody, 1999: 31

²⁷ Goody and Watt (1963).

Oral societies are at odds with this process, becoming, according to Ong, homeostatic: “...oral societies live very much in a present which keeps itself in equilibrium or homeostasis by sloughing off memories which no longer have present relevance.”²⁸ Reviewers were quick to point out that not all literate groups obtained the criteria for their works to be considered true histories. In my research I have noted that memory loss, and the disregard for the practical skills which accompanied them, are not simply a product of oral transmission: this practice is also associated with writing. One can find an example of these kinds of discussions in numerous newspaper articles in Japan: in tandem with the increasing use of writing technologies are concerns about the potential loss of writing skills.²⁹ For example, because smartphones contain other resources, like *denshi jishō* (electronic dictionary), teachers and parents are concerned that youth are no longer memorizing the strokes of *kanji* (Chinese characters).³⁰

It is with this point that the first of a number of paradoxes found in modern literacy emerges: the same writing standards and technologies which provide a source of social prestige also threaten the social order. The use of new technologies is a source of tension between age groups because generations gain different skills and habits of information retrieval, memorization, and communication.

²⁸ Ong (1982), 42.

²⁹ See Chapter V.

³⁰ Examples of newspaper articles and debates surrounding cellphone use include “*Keitai denwa izon shō wa ippan jōshiki ya goiryoku o teika saseru?*” (Does cell phone addiction leads to diminish of general knowledge and poor vocabulary?) (2010); Kawabata (2008); and Their (2012). I am grateful for to the young woman from the university who aided my research as an assistant for bringing this article to our meeting and talking through the issues presented in the news. The students I spoke with often highlighted that a similar problem occurs with computer use. The trouble with handwriting characters is not limited to youth; it is a sociological reality for many individuals in Japan.

Critiques of a Literate-Oral Divide

Goody and Ong's literacy thesis reverberate with difficulties I had relating digital communication platforms to texts.³¹ Webpages can be amended and adapted mid-course, leaving them to appear much as Ong describes the oral transmission of knowledge: participatory, perspectival, and empathic. Moreover, because of the alacrity of these exchanges, some messages—such as Instant Messages (IMs)—model oral communication despite being written. This observation has led many researchers to approach new technology with a theoretical framework which emphasizes the principals of oral communication. I find this approach promising. Linguistic methodologies like conversation analysis can provide productive interpretations on human-machine-human interaction.³²

A juxtaposition with the now antiquated chat room form known as MUDDs will demonstrate the implications of Goody, Watt, and Ong's argument for contemporary writing practices. Participants in Lori Kendall's research were members of BlueSky, one of the earliest chat rooms.³³ The demographic was heavily male, and because of its early formation, the majority of the participants were those with careers which required high levels of computer skills. Computer engineering, like any field, had developed its own specialized terminology, and those terms were translated into shorthand abbreviations during chats in BlueSky.³⁴ While the use of this language gave the computer programmers greater ability to solve problems among

³¹ Difficulties in naming the kinds of reading and writing associated with new technologies are also noted by Ruth Finnegan: “‘Computer literacy’ is much discussed at present. The parallels to traditional reading/writing literacy are not exact, but they are close enough to raise comparable issues. New information technology can be (and is) analyzed and argued about in terms of all the [evolutionary] theoretical perspectives [on literacy and development]” (1999, 93).

³² Lucy Suchman provides multiple examples of conversational expectations and the inability to complete tasks on a copy machine or printer, see: Suchman (2007).

³³ Bluesky is the pseudonym for the group created by Lori Kendall to protect her informants.

³⁴ Kendall (2002), 20-31.

standardized equipment for their individual companies, it created a form of literacy that was not available to all potential participants. Bluesky's writing thus attracted "people who read and write the same language."³⁵ Kendall's work demonstrates not only how literacy could lead to linguistic elaboration, it also demonstrates how different kinds of literacy can shape membership in a group.

As a number of linguistic anthropologists have demonstrated, the work of Goody, Watt, and Ong's requires an artificial divide between orality and literacy in order to operate.³⁶ A clear divide between speech and writing is elusive in practice. One productive area of research emerged in studies focused on the development of literacy in colonized regions, and many of these cross-cultural cases provide clear examples of contested practices where speech and writing blur.³⁷ In regions where native languages were in danger of being displaced people "invented" literacy, or written versions of the native tongues either as an effort by missionaries to translate the bible into new languages or, alternatively, to fortify its use against an encroaching colonial speech.³⁸

Opposing the privileged status of literacy, anthropologists argue that orality contains its own advantages; many features of writing are in fact present in speech, and there are positive qualities endemic to orality which writing lacks. The belief that orality was homogeneous has also been discredited. Oral languages are incredibly complex: Apache children, for example, play a complex lexical game involving the creation and maintenance of long lists.³⁹ Indeed, it is the link between speech and writing which allowed the IMs in Bluesky to function by following

³⁵ Kendall (2001), 30.

³⁶ Collins and Blot (2003); and Webster (2006).

³⁷ For a cross-cultural examination of literacy studies, see Street (1993a).

³⁸ Street and Besnier (1994). An example of this technique can be found in the work conducted by Franz Boas who became an advocate of adapting English phonology to help preserve the language of Native Americans. See: Boas (1911), 12. Boas became an advocate of adapting English phonology to help preserve the language of Native Americans.

³⁹ Webster (2006), 297.

conversational conventions.⁴⁰ Speech influences and creeps into writing: Bluesky's IMs were a dialect and jargon saturated writing. When observations from Bluesky are placed alongside Ong, Good and Watts' treatment of literacy, their divide between speech and writing cannot be upheld. Literacy is not an autonomous set of characteristics irrespective of time and place. In practice writing is enormously varied, making it complex and heterogeneous.⁴¹ Attributing objectivity (a form of transcendence for some) to writing by conceiving of it as context free is untenable.

If writing cannot be reliably separated from speech, then the reverse is also true. Speech cannot be reliably separated from writing. Researchers must be prepared to account for the influence of speech genres upon writing. Language is extralinguistic, and utterances are situated within the framing of their dialogic interrelations to other utterances.⁴² There is no combination of semantic elements which are completely free of their context within other units of spoken and written communication.⁴³ We can, and do, write speech and speak writing within communication platforms.

Deploying Literacy for Communication Technologies

Early approaches to literacy proposed that writing was the catalyst for developing social complexity and in doing so these theories made an artificial divide between oral and written practices. Both the concepts of a linear progression and an oral-written divide have been abdicated in research by anthropologists. Yet the connection between literacy and modernity—

⁴⁰ For a studies on the link between texts and conversation, see: Bazerman (2004b); Buell (2004); Hanks (2000); and Leaner and Prior (2004). For conventions in speech, see: Bakhtin (1986) and Grice (1975).

⁴¹ Street (1999); and Webster (2006).

⁴² Bakhtin (1993). Dialogic interrelations can intertwine as writing being a theme for writing, speech as a theme for speech (Bazerman 2004a).

⁴³ Bakhtin demonstrated the extralinguistic manner of semantics in order to argue elements of Saussure's structural linguistics (Bakhtin 1986).

with all its developmental trappings of new machines and complex state apparatus—remains a salient dogma in popular culture. Encounters with different writing platforms, whether through colonial encounters or engagements with transnational web platforms, still recall the former associations of a speaking-writing divide with expectations of correct practices for each. This can be a source of difficulty when people begin to use new technologies, as seen with the appearance of Facebook in Japan, or when technology changes dramatically, described below in the example focused on Japan's Central Bank.

To understand the challenges of adapting or incorporating new writing technologies into established practices, one needs to understand literacy not only as a set of dynamic practices, but also from within a particular socio-historical moment in time. One example can be found in the incorporation of paper and writing objects into a spectrum of activities which once had no written component, like witchcraft. In Salasaca, practitioners incorporated writing into methods used to determine if an individual was cursed. Individuals who believed that their livelihood was being threatened by witchcraft would seek out a practitioner who would, for a fee, search through spiral notebooks to check for the client's name. This use of notebooks with names of cursed individuals presents a conundrum: is this real witchcraft? Or, in its inverse, are these notebooks a valid form of writing? Initially disregarded because the individuals using these texts had varied levels of reading ability, Peter Wogan argues that deciphering meaning from written texts requires more than the correlation of marks to sounds in a language.⁴⁴ The act of reading and writing is embedded within a broader socio-historical framework, and local beliefs, as well as writing practices, overlap with global ones. As Wogan describes:

⁴⁴ Wogan (2004).

Contrary to initial appearances, these beliefs are not the naïve responses of a group unfamiliar with literacy; quite the opposite, they reflect almost five centuries of contact by an indigenous Ecuadorian group, the Salasacas, with church and state documents. Beliefs in witches' books and other magical writing crystallize the Salasacas' understanding of the connections between power, social identities, and documentation. Wogan, 2004: 2

Other writing practices also developed in Salasaca, even in illiterate households. During the Day of the Dead families would recite their ancestors for scribes, who listed the names on paper. These papers were then presented to a priest to be anointed with holy water, an act which cooled the souls of the deceased. The ancestral name lists were then hidden in the home. Wogan argues that Salasacas were appropriating forms of state and church power: like baptismal records and land titles, Salasacas created written documents which affected social relationships.⁴⁵ It did not matter if they could be read or not.

Following the weave of the oral and writing praxis is an exegetical act which threads research through face-to-face social practices and technological exchanges. This observation is supported by the incorporation of speech practices into textual compositions. Technology and communal life operate in tandem; to understand contemporary literacy one needs to understand the sociable elements in technical exchanges. The conjunction of social relationships and computer-mediated transactions becomes particularly salient when an abrupt alteration in technical parameters occurs. Annelise Riles' research on the Japanese banking community is a strong exemplar of the way directives in technology use can dislevel established social arrangements.

⁴⁵ Wogan (2004), 97-110.

In the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s the financing powers in the Central Bank of Japan implemented a number of changes. Instead of settling debts electronically at the end of the day—a move which allowed banks to stack loans and payments against one another to cancel debt—the Central Bank dictated that all debts be paid at the moment of the transaction. While this move gave greater power to smaller banks and helped stabilize the economy, many members of the banking community feared that it undermined the social and hierarchical roles of individuals in the banking system.⁴⁶

Riles argues that this anxiety occurred because relationships in the banking world mirrored the social structure of daily life:⁴⁷ after-work dinners and meetings are an important opportunity to cultivate both social and business relationships. High-ranking bankers in Japan maintained elaborate contacts with their former college classmates, and many of these classmates were now working in industries regulated by the banks. Meetings between bank and industry personnel were part of a wider cultural approach to finance: paying debts at the end of the day provided room for bank collaboration, working together for a perceived common good (despite after-work dinners coinciding with accusations of, as well as genuine, corruption within the exchange system).⁴⁸ In the end the move to settle debts at the time of the transaction did not eliminate the evening meetings of bank and business bureaucrats, yet the changes in electronic banking were contested because of their perceived possibility of devaluing social norms built on status and age. While the above study does not focus on communication platforms, the findings highlight the technological materiality of relationships. Bankers were afraid that technology would replace the exchange rate they found in friendship.

⁴⁶ Riles (2004). For more on Techno-economic networks like banking practices, see: Callon (1991).

⁴⁷ Riles draws from women controlling household finance, pointing out that the word kitchen as a metaphor for fiscal stability (Riles 2004, 400-402).

⁴⁸ Riles (2004), 395.

The bureaucratic concerns brought to light by the Central Bank's shift in prescriptions of technology use exemplify a common concern: within an environment prone to rapid developments and new platforms, how do we account for the transformations and stabilities among these changes? How can research on one particular technology—soon, no doubt, to be out of date—inform an understanding of emerging technologies? Within my own research period I experienced changes in Internet platform use and the arrival of new devices firsthand. When I arrived in Tokyo in the summer of 2010 smartphones had just begun to flood the market, but most students still used flip-style cellular phones with Internet capabilities (an email address particular to one's phone came with purchase). By the summer of 2011 smartphones outnumbered the flip phones. The alteration of technological appendages was accompanied by innovations in government and institutional bodies. There were ads on television and in trains for new smartphone apps created by the Tokyo Metro system, part of the "TokyoHeart" campaign.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, bookstores were overflowing with guidebooks to a new social network that was becoming popular: Facebook.⁵⁰ No longer just a website employed by transnational companies and individuals, Facebook was now being used throughout Tokyo by clubs, companies, and institutions of higher education. Despite the seemingly arm-in-arm conversion of phone technology and new social media, the presence of guidebooks is suggestive of how users experience new technologies: using communication platforms is not self-evident, it is learned through practice. There were guidebooks describing the network to everyone, a range of consumer niches from business owners, mothers, to students.

⁴⁹ An example of these ads can be seen at: <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=hl251UdQkLQ>.

⁵⁰ There are many reasons why Facebook gained popularity in Japan after initial setbacks due to the requirement of creating a page under actual names. The movie *The Social Network*, for example, greatly improved the platform use in Japan. See: Einhorn and Yamaguch (2012); and Gilhooly (2012).

While initial use of new platforms requires a learning curve, I was nonetheless struck by the palpable ease with which different kinds of writing tools were absorbed into everyday life. During the time I spent in Tokyo I witnessed as many changes in the use of writing platforms as there were continuities. In relation to smartphones, people perfunctorily navigated the choice of multiple message platforms to send correspondence.⁵¹ College students continued to prefer writing to their professors using polite long form grammar and titles in an email,⁵² but the medium for sending a message to various friends shifted from group emails to Twitter. Furthermore, the closing of spatial distance by these instant digital letters created new overlaps of public and private in geographic space: one could check the blog of a friend met overseas, tweet to friends from school, and answer an email from a parent all while riding on the commuter train.

Yet despite the ease of choosing an appropriate platform, when I began asking people just how they decided between Twitter or a text message they often faltered. Throughout my research this question evoked two common responses, each accompanied by quizzical facial expression. First, students were dumbfounded by the possibility that I did not know how to differentiate between appropriate platforms. Second, my interviewee did not know how to answer. I asked repeat interviewees why they initially had trouble with this question. The question was difficult to answer because there are a myriad of variables to account for: the writer needs to know the gender, age, and social connection to the recipient in order to decide what method of writing was best. Considering the potential audience of these messages—ranging from large groups on social networking sites to one-on-one messages—meant not only accounting for the number of people

⁵¹ Message platforms contain different programming aspects of servers, and this research focuses on the parameters of operating systems (in this case, how many people are automatically included in any message) as an aspect of materiality in contemporary communication technologies.

⁵² Depending on the professor, students used either *denshi* (cell phone) email or the school's email address.

who would receive the message, but also the kind of relationship recipients had with the author: i.e., employment or kinship.

Close, intimate messages and the outward, public formalities thus appear as the warp and weft which knitted different communication platforms together in daily use. In line with this observation, both writing online and the offline physical world deeply influence the construction of social conventions.⁵³ Communication platforms recreate the conceptual divide between public and private in a way which makes our understanding of our modern self-other, human-technology relationships polemical: the conflicting debates which exist in tandem with contemporary literacy are often the result of differing online/offline social expectations.

As in the aforementioned paradox of differing social values surrounding the ability to write or to look up *kanji* characters, debates surrounding computer mediated literacy typically contain antipodal elements. The ability to have a diverse set of characters at one's fingertips is a positive aspect of greater access to information, yet the skill loss of impromptu *kanji* writing is seen as negative result of technology. Awareness of the paradoxes of writing upon communication platforms may, consequently, be exhibited as kind of ordeal of contradictions. Contemporary writers, especially young adults, are, in a sense, damned if they do and damned if they don't: using communication technologies provides a source of agency in self-portrayal, information retrieval, and connectivity to others, yet the same technology is accused of limiting their ability to hold conversations or write, hindering social relationships beyond the web. To quote Sherry Turkle: "We bend to the inanimate with new solitude. We fear the risks and disappointments of relationships with our fellow humans. We expect more from technology and

⁵³ Allucquere (1991); Boellstorff (2008); Castells (2007); Horst and Miller (2006); Jenkins (2006); Katz (2003); Katz and Aakhus (2002) and Van Dijck (2007).

less from each other.”⁵⁴ To provide a new mode of thinking I have termed the aggregate of antagonistic social values present with the use of communication technologies “cyborg ordeals.” This research attempts to identifying how and why moments of cyborg ordeals occur, extending these results to determine dispositions for future considerations.

Closing Remarks for Technology and Literacy

Conceptualizing any population as illiterate or literate is an oversimplification. Within any society there is a range of abilities and practices involved with being literate;⁵⁵ the recognition of multiple forms of literacy is what gave rise to New Literacy Studies.⁵⁶ New Literacy Studies questioned literacy as a social practice rather than focusing on the acquisition of skills.⁵⁷ Scholars have expanded the scope of social media research, tracing the development of digital communities and treating online spaces as sites where literacy develops, blending previous message forms and their perceived social merit with new writing and different value systems.⁵⁸ Viewing texts as powerful, agentive material coordinators in social life, this project approached communication technologies as a text-based technology.⁵⁹ Thus the tacit discursive boundaries maintained online integrate a users’ self-identity with the perception of others. As noted by Chris Tilley:

⁵⁴ Turkle (2011), xii.

⁵⁵ Collins and Blot (2003).

⁵⁶ Critiques of New Literacy Studies center upon “relativism,” arguing that attention to the local and individual practices will exclude children from varying socioeconomic backgrounds from access to standard language, thus further alienating them from another form of power (Collins and Blot 2003, xii).

⁵⁷ Street (1984).

⁵⁸ Dadurka and Pigg (2012).

⁵⁹ I am indebted to the work of Dorothy Smith, a feminist sociologist, for fully engaging with this outlook. Her work expanded my view of texts and social relationships. Smith (1990, 1999).

Notions of cultural transmission, memory, remembering and forgetting are actively transmitted through perceived material worlds. Temporalities thus shape people, but within these temporalities people also shape the future. Material culture materializes identities, but it is also a medium for understanding the processes by means of which those identities are transmitted.

Tilley, 2011: 348.

The skills surrounding literacy accompany a wide range of other technologies, institutions, and sociocultural practices. Our expectations for proper use of texts smudge lines between institutional structure and social form. Such presumptions of a correct and suitable use of writing in government, trade, and religious practices are described by Brian Street and Niko Besnier as ideological models within literacy.⁶⁰ Ideological models—such as a Japanese identity, public-private boundaries, proper gendered behaviors, and expectations of knowledge practices—shape how we write. I contend that the ideological models within literacy can be used to flesh out how new writing technologies are incorporated into daily practice.

Being literate not only involves connections to other people across time and space through the use of shared (or imposed) ideological models. Because we recognize the impacts of writing and reading literacy can become a resource for individual autonomy and self-expression: writing is a reflection of technical histories, economic histories, political histories and moral implications.⁶¹ As James Collins and Richard Blot explain; “Many [people] compose themselves by composing: diaries, letters (now of course often electronic), jotted-down poems, songs, especially in late adolescence, and, for those many adults working with ‘information,’ there are

⁶⁰ Street and Besnier (1994).

⁶¹ Feather (1986), 13; and Street (2003).

ubiquitous notes, memoranda, schedules, and reports.”⁶² With the ability to act as a foundation for collective and individual identities, literacy pervades life.⁶³

Computer Mediated Communication and Ethnographic Research

From the early 1990s the discipline of anthropology increasingly began to investigate both the tools and the cultural beliefs which made Western scientific inquiry possible. Generated by insights from colonial and gender studies, anthropologists found themselves questioning their position in the postmodern world. As Annette Weiner so aptly described in her 1993 presidential address to the American Anthropological Association, Anthropologists needed to expand their research perspectives to:

encompass multiperspectival points of view, local and transnational sites, the representations of authors and informants, the changing velocities of space and time, the historical conditions in which capitalism is reshaping global power on an unprecedented scale, and the historical conditions of Western theory and practice.

Weiner, 1993: 16.

Computer-mediated communication (CMC), which questioned both the status quo of scientific authority and gave an increasingly agentive account of the role of technologies used in experimentation and daily life, was one way the field expanded to meet the demands of reflexive

⁶² Collins and Blot (2003), 1.

⁶³ Besnier (2000), 137-139.

inquiry and international technologies.⁶⁴ Computers and internet capable technologies became a mainstay in this new line of analysis. Much in line with Weiner's call, digital writing platforms cultivate multiple modes of communication and selfhood: diasporic groups and information technologies have an analogous relationship to one another, for "in both cyberspace and the spaces of diaspora... location is ambiguous, and to be made socially meaningful, it must be socially constructed."⁶⁵ What could be more suitable to address the post-modern, multilocation, and multiseif than to study the recombinations made possible by contemporary technologies?

When digital media initially emerged as important loci of social studies, anthropologists tended not to conduct ethnographic research from within these internet-based mediums, instead choosing to focus on the cultural implications through methodological and theoretical reflections.⁶⁶ In a similar trajectory of remaining within the traditional subjects of anthropology, there was a boon in research focusing on how indigenous groups use internet technologies.⁶⁷ Those who initially dared to conduct ethnographic research from within digital platforms chose budding technologies, like chat rooms, and supplemented data gathered in online interactions with the inclusion of their analysis of face-to-face meetings offline.⁶⁸

A third trend in research was the move to map connections among online groupings, social network friending, and twitter followers to relationships outside the web. Charting networks remains a common motif in social network studies. Network maps reveal similar structures between social relationships and the use of writing platforms: platforms range from broad to narrow, with individuals who share close ties, such as family and friends, maintaining

⁶⁴ Franklin (1995), 164-166.

⁶⁵ Bernal (2005), 661.

⁶⁶ For examples of theoretical and methodological explorations into digital media, see: Appadurai (1996); Escobar (1994); Fisher (1999); and Gupta (1997).

⁶⁷ Christie (2008); Forte (2003); Landzelius (2006); O'Neil (2009); and Srinivansan (2006). For a review of another indigenous anthropological staple, language revitalization, see: Eisenlohr (2004).

⁶⁸ For examples of these early ethnographies, see: Baym (2000); Danet (2001); Kendall (2002); and Markham (1998).

circumscribed networks of more frequent correspondence. Institutional relationships, such as work colleagues, frequently send messages using platforms maintained by the business. Acquaintances are incorporated with colleagues and friends into broader platforms consisting of few personalized exchanges. In other words, pre-existing relationships are the most important indicators of the constituency of most writing platforms.⁶⁹

Akin to early hopes of the internet ushering in an information utopia, early studies heralded online interactions as the coming of a post-human subject who resided in either a digital age or network society.⁷⁰ Responding to such sweeping claims, a number of scholars stepped forward to contest both the liberatory potential of online communities and the technological determinism that any particular technology had the power to create such changes.⁷¹

Research on technology has engaged both academic discourse, as described above, as well as addressing concerns appearing in mainstream media. As the use of communication technologies increased, for example, many news stories have remarked upon (with trepidation) the seeming demise of literacy accompanied by internet capable devices. There are many studies which focus upon this fear in various ways: some fixate on the panic itself as an object of analysis by comparing actual CMC data to the proclamations of linguistic destitution found in

⁶⁹ An example of a network study which compares international exchanges using Twitter, see: Takhteyev et al. (2010); for a statistical comparison of face-to-face social affiliations and email use, see: Johnson et al. (2012). Johnson et al. found that although an individual's email network contains overlapping content to social relationships, email networks are also significantly different. While off-line social networks are strongly shaped by gender, tenure, and hierarchical boundaries, the role of these boundaries are much weaker in the email network.

⁷⁰ Discussions of individuals inhabiting a network society or a digital age can be found in Turkle (1997). Those using the internet to posit a post-human lifeway are: Hayles (1999); and, more recently, Whitehead (2009). I emphatically disagree with the use of the term "post-human." The term is used to describe two phenomena: a new level of participant observation in which anthropologists conduct research online (Whitehead, though the focus of the article is more apt to demonstrate that Whitehead is currently participating in a "radical" band), or a new level (or, more fitting, a new lack) of embodiment for community members themselves (Hayles). I find both of these approaches problematic; for participant observation, if research involving only artifacts is post-human, all archival research and archeological explorations would also be post-human. Similarly, the lack of bodies during communicating with unknown people, giving authors the ability to create a self-image, has been found throughout history: the American scholastic practice of pen pals is one such practice. I find terminology which does not explicitly cite a different form of human, but rather focuses on the continuities cultural inventions and technological incorporation to be much more accurate when describing contemporary life: cyborgs are not post-human.

⁷¹ Miller and Slater (2000).

news stories and articles, repeatedly concluding that complex metaphor use and intertextual references are common within online communiqués.⁷² Other researchers focus on the perspective of users by following on-line commentary threads. Commentaries, such as those appearing on YouTube videos, have provided fertile grounds for the microanalysis of the play and morality in messaging as a linguistic phenomenon.⁷³

While the anxiety over literacy may be misplaced, the increased incorporation of online writing in daily communication does bequeath technologies with an influential significance.⁷⁴ Shifting speech conventions are one way writing platforms have been found to influence community norms. In a rare study of multiple modes of online communication, Naomi Baron works through an inundation of communication platforms, ranging from blogs, social networks, chats in instant messaging, and text messages to argue that the general informality found in digital communication is part of a broader process of informalization in American work and family life.⁷⁵

In the decades following the inception of computer related studies in the 1990s research on communication technologies continued to build. This body of research created an abundance of detailed analyses focusing on single machines and one function, such as smartphones and sending text messages. The resulting of twenty-five years of research on digital media can be conceptualized as four broad subjects of inquiry: representation and metalinguistic understanding (including work on identity and modes of communication), on-line social interaction (outlining social etiquette and emotional commitment within exchanges on the Internet), cross-cultural comparisons (examining how a similar technology is used by different communities around the

⁷² Taliamonte and Denis (2008); and Thurlow (2006).

⁷³ Jones and Schieffelin (2009).

⁷⁴ Anderson and Tracey (2001); and HaythornWaite (2001).

⁷⁵ Baron (2010).

globe) and politics (including human rights, ownership, and concerns over public and private information). While each of the aforementioned topics contains diverse and intriguing trajectories worthy of further description, the following sections will limit the focus to the components most relevant for understanding how students negotiate and incorporate technology within the international University: identity, publics and privacy for digital writing, gender, and insights gleaned from cross-cultural comparisons.

Identity and Technologies

As Internet capable devices became more accessible an increasing number of people began writing in binary code. When social actors use digital platforms as a base for maintaining relationships, sharing experiences, and contributing their thoughts they become, in a sense, digital subjects.⁷⁶ The possibilities for digital subjects is an important aspect of this work, and the title of this dissertation combines the digital subject with the consideration of texts as powerful, material coordinators of social life. Paper people refers to self and institutional construction of identity through the use of documents, and digital memory refers to shifts in knowledge practices and remembering as a result from the increased use of communication platforms.

Investigations of digital subjects frequently focus on youth and youth culture. Because of the nature of the internet grid, studies on youth are typically conducted in post-industrial nations like the United States, members of the European Union, and Japan.⁷⁷ Despite the ethnic and cultural diversity of—and within—nation-states, there are but a few studies which have pursued

⁷⁶ Salmond (2012).

⁷⁷ Even within industrial nations there are areas where there is no internet access. To have or not to have internet has been termed “the digital divide,” and I find it to be an interesting phenomenon in its own right. On the digital divide, see: Ito et al. (2009); and Warschauer (2004). For studies on youth identity, see: Boyd (2009); Boyd and Marwick (2009); Herring (2008); Horst (2010); and Palfrey and Gasser (2008). For studies on business etiquette, see: Faulkner and Melican (2007).

the topics of ethnicity and race in-depth.⁷⁸ Jessie Daniels, for example, argues that an assumption of white masculinity is the default mode of representation for political and corporate websites.⁷⁹ Similarly, Lisa Nakamura found the unmarked norm of racial representations online to be both white and masculine, but also discovered many users were modulating or challenging these conjectures.⁸⁰ One example of a challenge, or reification, to racial interactions is a phenomenon on Twitter known as Blacktags, or hashtags which contain explicit racial content. While #onlyintheghetto or #ifsantawasblack provide commentary on social conditions in the United States—in both positive and negative ways—they also articulate an identity performance as the formation of an explicitly African American social network, called Black Twitter by Sanjay Sharma.⁸¹ Representations in digital writing are of growing importance in the construction of ethnic identity.

While works on different selfdoms in technology within nation-states are few, there are many researchers who study youth in cross-cultural comparisons. Juxtapositions of technology use by youth in Japan, the United States, and European Union member states are commonplace. While a concise overview of these findings is useful for the present study, the comparison of youth in different nations does not address nuanced aspects of identity performance within geographically bound communities. My informants categorized themselves into three groups: Japanese, international-Japanese, and exchange students. The differences between being *jūnjapa*, or ‘pure Japanese’, and an international-Japanese are subtle approaches within identity performances which are recognized within the student body.

Comparison studies between Japan and Western industrial nations are commonplace.

⁷⁸ Eglash and Bennett (2009).

⁷⁹ Daniels (2009).

⁸⁰ Nakamura (2007b).

⁸¹ Sharma (2013).

This may be because the supposition of digital subjects is particularly salient for identity in Japan: youths in Tokyo describe social relationships as connections between *keitaisha*, or mobile-persons. In the word *keitaisha*, *keitai*—the shortened term for a cellular phone—is paired with the word person. The formation of this vocabulary term arguably points to the development of a sociality where interaction amongst one another involves a variety of possible simultaneous interactions between persons and phones. This mediation of relationships by technology has been termed technoaffectivity by Minerva Terrades and Bona Yann, researchers of youth and technology in Japan. Technoaffectivity is derived from daily interactions between people-technology-people, and it is the combination of technology with emotional expressions which fuels the decoration of *keitai* in ways which reflects both the self and the performance of the self in the larger world.⁸² With the multiple important roles cellular phones now have in social life it is not surprising that many researchers are finding that if a *keitai* is lost or forgotten its person experiences a blow to their sense of identity and place among their companions.⁸³

Communication platforms are tools for forming and expressing self-identity, and the technologies which give us access to them have become some of the most personal and intimate objects carried in daily life.⁸⁴ Technologies link identity performance to interpersonal intimacy through message exchange, but accepting that deep emotional connections can be created through digital texts can be hard to swallow.⁸⁵ One method for exploring how communication platforms create emotional ties between people is to relate contemporary writing practices to older ones. Sunil Manghani proposes a link between contemporary text messaging and famous

⁸² Terrades and Yann (2007). Terrades and Yann draw a distinction between complexity and complication within exchanges using *keitai*; complexity emerges from the possibility of multiple objects, complication occurs because the message process are made up from a succession of simple operations.

⁸³ Terrades and Yann (2007), 152.

⁸⁴ Baron (2010); Holdon and Tsuruki, (2003), 34-49; and McVeigh (2003), 19-33.

⁸⁵ This is especially true for interactions which have no face-to-face component, and there are a number of detailed monographs which attempt, among other theses, to provide evidence for emotional commitment established through CMCs. For well-received examples of this literature, see: Boellstorff (2008); Wallis (2010).

historic forms used in love poetry like *tanka* and *waka*. While these electronic messages are not poems—they do not match the meter and seasonal aesthetics of the *tanka* and *waka* verse—Manghani argues that text messages represent the literary significance of a communicative mode in which lovers are constantly affirming their relationship: short, sweet, devotional notes.⁸⁶

Studies on multilingual sites have also been fruitful in examining ethnicity and multiple identity performances online. Multilingual research is significant for the study of digital writing in an international University in Tokyo. In multilingual settings, platforms tend to foster connections among writers in a single language, though there are always outliers. Using different languages within these mono-lingual conditions represents in-group and out-group lines in addition to power relations within genders, classes, and sexualities. Language choice has explicit nationalist ties as well. The use of a non-dominant language upon a platform geared towards the dominant nation-state majority has been described as an act in which an individual chooses to associate with a different nationality or ethnicity.⁸⁷ In multilingual settings in Japan, such as Tokyo, language choice is not the only marker of national affiliation: food and clothing also serve as cultural constructs for Western or Japanese identities in public presentations.⁸⁸

Photography, providing the illustrations for texts, thus emerges as a very important component of literacy. Users illustrate events and foods associated with events in Japan, like *matsuri* (local festival) snacks or Christmas cakes. What photographs do not contain also serves as a marker for

⁸⁶ Manghani (2009). Some authors have described Tanaka poetry as following a syllable pattern of 5-7-5-7-7 (Ueda 1996), but there has been a move towards the use of the term *mora*, which describes the linguistic weight of the pauses within Japanese words. The use of *mora* to account for patterns in Japanese poetry, songs, and rap helps to disassociate Japanese poetry from Western poetic sensibilities (Tsujimura and Davis 2009). Other investigations support this interpretation of text exchanges: youth groups have also described messages as a kind of gift. Teens in a London suburb keep text messages as gifts in their phones, remembering where they were when they first read them. Because the machine becomes a piece of this memory, it is difficult to change phones. Even if they forwarded the message, the machine it is wrapped in is different, changing the feeling of the gift (Taylor and Harper 2002, 439-446).

⁸⁷ Blackledge and Pavlenko (2001); in a related study which examines language use as affiliation with national identity in Asian immigrants to the United States, see: Palvenko (2004).

⁸⁸ Goldstein-Gidoni (2001); Yoshido (1998).

identity performance.⁸⁹ In Japan, the inclusions of self-portraits on Internet platforms suggest important meanings for both gendered and national identity.

There is more to language choice within platforms: language, and its corresponding cultural codes, relates to the different base designs of communication platforms. This interaction can be seen in the two social networks which became prominent in my research: mixi and Facebook.⁹⁰ Users on mixi write predominantly in Japanese, but Facebook has user groupings of multiple languages, including Japanese, English, and a smaller percentage of bilingual writers, including pages which contain both Japanese and English. The layout design of mixi, the Japan born social network, differs significantly from its America counterpart, Facebook. While there are a few fill-in-the blank prompts on mixi, such as age, gender and name, the overall design of website is one which utilizes broad categories paired with open spaces, allowing users to fill in as much or as little data, with a focus of their choosing, as they see fit. Alongside photo albums and linked club pages, mixi also incorporates a diary feature, allowing individuals to compose long entries. Facebook uses many more templates, asking users to fill in spaces relating to education, favorite books and movies. Each response triggers suggested links for entries. Facebook incorporates a note section and an area for a longer self-introduction, but the overall layout is geared for short messages, and most information is requested in prompts.

A number of studies have compared the layout design of mixi and Facebook, concluding that the differences between the websites correspond to differing cultural expectations of social network sites. In charting four goals for both websites—creating profile pages, inviting friends, responding to content by friends, and returning to the site—the differences and similarities in

⁸⁹ Vivienne and Burgess (2013).

⁹⁰ Out of a total of 189 surveys, 98 (52% of total sample) had a Facebook or mixi account, and 66 (35% of total sample) individuals claimed to maintain both mixi and Facebook sites. With 160 survey respondents being undergraduates, this nominal data represents youth in an international community and should not be generalized as a reality in Japan.

Facebook and mixi designs were mapped to cultural differences between the U.S. and Japan. The U.S. born Facebook design is more assertive and mechanistic when compared to the subtle and indirect approach in mixi.⁹¹

More common than design comparisons, studies juxtaposing social networks tend to focus upon what users write and what images they illustrate the page with. A study of 131 Japanese who use both Facebook and mixi measured self-disclosure, numbers of contacts, in-group numbers, and levels of perceived commitment for both sites. The findings indicate that when writing on mixi authors choose lower levels of self-disclosure and maintained a lower number of individual and group contacts compared to their activity on Facebook. Users also felt a greater level of commitment to mixi contacts than to Facebook friends.⁹² The contrasting orientations of mixi to Western social networks has been aptly described as two kinds of performance: Facebook reflects “me and them” while mixi is about “me with them.”⁹³ The above sentiments are reflected in other analysis. Focusing on the comments left upon car advertisements appearing on both mixi and Facebook, one study found American Facebook users often discuss how they feel about a vehicle, while the Japanese mixi users ask for advice and provide recommendations to sites containing further information on the potential car purchase.⁹⁴

In my own research, I encountered sixty-six dual users of Facebook and mixi, and I developed extensive relationships with four. Fifty-nine of the dual users responded: *hai*, Facebook *to* mixi *wa sukoshi chigatta tsukai hōsosareteiru to omō*, “はい、Facebookとmixiは少し違った使い方そされていると思う” (Yes, I think Facebook and mixi are used a little differently). The four in-depth interviewees elaborated upon this phenomenon. Three of these

⁹¹ Fogg and Iizawa (2008).

⁹² Asai and Barnlund (1998); Kimura (2010); and Thomson (2012).

⁹³ Takahashi (2010); Matsuo and Yasud (2007).

⁹⁴ Dou (2011).

individuals were students, one male and two female, and the fourth was a young woman employed as an English-Japanese translator in a legal firm. All four described mixi and Facebook in terms of depicting the self differently for each platform; on Facebook one was to demonstrate the fullness of life, gathering comments and accolades. On mixi, however, one talked of troubles, and people you were friends with gave encouragement and advice. The young man, Daisuke, and Emma, the translator, both described the difference between mixi and Facebook using these terms: Facebook was for bragging, and mixi was for complaining. In Daisuke's own words; "On Facebook you show off, and on mixi you cry. So on Facebook they say, '*oiwai!*' (congratulations) and on mixi they say '*ganbarō!*' (give it your best)."

Thus the users of mixi and Facebook tend to write to one another in ways which reflect social expectations coherent to the parent nation of each site: both website design and majority user expectations are related to the writing patterns.⁹⁵ In a comparison of women using Facebook in the U.S. and mixi in Japan, Valerie Barker and Hiroshi Ota found additional compositional differences: American young women were much more likely to demonstrate connections with their peer group by posting photographs, while Japanese young woman preferred to use the diary function on mixi to demonstrate closeness. Barker and Ota argue that the partiality for the diary function in Japan indicates a preference for privacy among Japanese, as friending practices at the time made the diary available only to those considered close friends.⁹⁶

The observation of a privacy preference directs the literature towards the next section, which focuses on publics and privates online and in Japan. With the presence of non-Japan born social networks growing in use, youth in Tokyo people reflexively create and re-create

⁹⁵ Madden (2012).

⁹⁶ Barker and Ota (2011).

themselves within a spectrum of cultural values in everyday life with writing.⁹⁷ While research has strongly connected online practices with identity, and there has been a fair amount of comparison between the use of different social networks for different cultural environments, there has been little work focusing on how users navigate multiple platform use. Chapter III makes steps towards this level of analysis, with students separating international groups into different websites or choosing to follow a standard of writing that does not fit the normative of a website. Drawing from the aforementioned conclusions in literacy studies, my results indicate that cultural differences are mirrored in social expectations of linguistic exchanges: the use of Japanese cultural speech expectations—despite writing in English—is one method which international Japanese delineate their ties to life in Japan.

Publics, Privates, Japan and the Internet

The modern concepts of public and private have different origins in the Western state and the Japanese intellectual tradition. Classic anthropological accounts of publics describe their formation as the interlocking modes of social interaction: a self-understanding produced through dialectical exchanges with circulating texts: legal, religious decrees, and the public performance of reading.⁹⁸ According to the philosopher Jürgen Habermas, modern publics in Western nation-states emerged as the rational field between state and society: property owners created a discursive space in which to supervise, through debate, the legitimacy of rule.⁹⁹ Publics would

⁹⁷ Nakamura and Wantanabe (2005).

⁹⁸ Geertz (1973).

⁹⁹ Habermas (1989 [1962]).

eventually forge their own legitimacy through the medium of a common discourse, without the need to reference any sovereign power.¹⁰⁰

For studies in literacy, public and private social interaction can be viewed as the circulation of texts, whether on a mass or small scale. These events mark the emergence of new modes of self-understanding and categorical divisions of information.¹⁰¹ The impact of reading and writing on the conception of public and private arenas was noted as early as Immanuel Kant's work on enlightenment, where the "public use of reason" is exercised "before the entire public of the *reading world*" (emphasis in original). In such early accounts, the reading world was opposed to the private sphere of one's position in the family.¹⁰² Benedict Anderson took this rationale further, describing the emergence of assemblages of political subjects as derived from mass media's ability to give a sense of contemporaneity among horizontal solidarities in a nation.¹⁰³

Delineations between public and private in the West eventually met with multiple critiques, especially from within feminist scholarship, which are discussed extensively in the gendered writing section below. For the time being, however, there are three critical trajectories which are important in discussion of reading publics: the pronouncement of multiple publics, social imaginaries, and language ideologies. All of these directives contain important variables for the findings in this research project.

Earnest discussions of multiple publics emerged with Nancy Fraser's critique of Habermas.¹⁰⁴ Fraser developed the concept of subaltern counterpublics, a place where disenfranchised individuals develop spaces for sharing their experiences and thoughts, even if

¹⁰⁰ Cody (2011).

¹⁰¹ Collins and Blot (2003).

¹⁰² Cody (2011), 41; original in Kant (1996).

¹⁰³ Anderson (1983). For a trenchant critique of Anderson's analysis through an in-depth examination of the time fallacies found in the Sapir-Whorf theory of language, see: Lucy (1985).

¹⁰⁴ Fraser (1990).

their discourse is against those in power. This phenomenon creates a number of parallel publics, a concept that I will return to in my discussions of the varied digital literacies which surround *jūnjapa* and international Japanese identities.

Social imaginaries have come to take the place of a synthetic division between public and private. Public spheres are now seen more as the communicative effect of recognizing textual circulation. In other words, circulated texts become part and give substance to an individual's ability to articulate mass-mediated subjectivities, and subjectivities travel through differing levels of social inclusion, from intimate exchanges to communal announcements.¹⁰⁵ I will return to this subjectivity in Chapter V, discussing the conjunction of news sources and advertisements as a potential source of symbolic meaning. Finally, language ideologies highlight the ability of different social groups to develop particular communicative acts, like Black Twitter. These acts are intertwined with large-scale regimes of value.¹⁰⁶ I will provide an example and a deeper explanation of a cultural regime of value shortly in the discussion of the Japanese public sphere and the communication expectations known as *aisatsu*. I develop all three critiques with examples from Tokyo students, demonstrating that multiple publics, social imaginaries, and language ideologies remain salient concepts for understanding public and private spheres. The concepts of public and private are how contemporary writers negotiate the fluid boundaries of self, other, and information on communication platforms.

The beginning of public and private as concepts in Japan has been ardently debated. Many historians “deny altogether the existence of a Japanese public sphere before the occupation. They emphasize the docility of a public habituated to obedience or (what is much the same thing)

¹⁰⁵ Anderson (1998); Appadurai (1996); and Calhoun (2002).

¹⁰⁶ Kroskrity (2000); for a comparative analysis of western and Chinese senses of internet publics, see: Qiu (2010); and Lange (2008) for multiregional views of competing public spheres found on YouTube.

the lumpishness of a public that an activist state had to prod into purpose.”¹⁰⁷ There is, however, mounting evidence demonstrating that a form of public life has been long present in Japan. Discussing this public sphere has required stepping away from western definitions of self-awareness expressed as the opinions of autonomous individuals. Japanese linguistic models and discursive identity do not fit this model.¹⁰⁸ Public and private in Japan’s civil society need to be considered through a curtain of rituals, following the cultural grammar of *uchi/soto* 内/外 (inside/outside) and *ura/omote* 裏/表 (front/back). These terms will be discussed at length in Chapter III. For now it is important to note that Japan’s bureaucratic ethos functions through social classification and hierarchizing mechanisms: in other words, while Japan lacks an American sense of public and private, it has developed and maintained its own determination of these concepts through rituals.¹⁰⁹ Japan does, however, mirror some foundational aspects of the Western European definition of public and private discussed above. Japan has a long history of circulating texts: religious, poetry, state-sponsored histories, and other texts all increased in circulation as manuscripts became more widely available due to a mounting diversity in religion and an increasing number of schools.¹¹⁰

If we are not to dismiss an early formation of a public sphere in Japan, what exactly was Japanese public space? Extending critiques on Habermas’s conception of publics, Eiko Ikegami argues that “*the structure of the institutional field of publics in a society is profoundly affected by the organizational structure of the state. The types, shapes, and hierarchies of publics in turn affect the contents of the emerging discursive and cultural properties*” (italics in original).¹¹¹ In the case of Japan under the Tokugawa shoguns (Edo Period 1603–1867), the rise of a civil public

¹⁰⁷ Berry (1998), 134.

¹⁰⁸ McVeigh (2013), 17-22.

¹⁰⁹ McVeigh (2013), 45-52.

¹¹⁰ Berry (1998).

¹¹¹ Ikegami (2005), 63.

sphere was not a byproduct of bourgeoisification, but the rise of print-as-commodity, distributing etiquette manuals on table manners, letter writing and gift-giving.¹¹² These manuals, read alongside a strict reality of social stratification by rank and trade, produced a culture of “civility as the cultural grammar of sociability that governs interactional public spaces.”¹¹³ Following insights developed from Fraser’s critique, Ikegami continues, delineating the existence of parallel public in pre-modern Japan:

The hierarchies of communicative spheres of publics that emerged under the Tokugawa shogunate were highly idiosyncratic. In the “official” arena of social interactions, which might be called dominant publics, the formal code of social interactions predictably emphasized the maintenance of existing social hierarchies. Political ritual underscored the various status ranking through physical and linguistic expressions.

Ikegami, 2005: 37.

Staying with the formation of governance as the major influence upon the shape of a public sphere, Ikegami argues that the hierarchical aspect of civility is a cumulative result of state development coupled with the expansion of Japanese market economy.¹¹⁴

Due to the Tokugawa indirect control system, wide enclaves of free discursive spheres emerged outside the boundaries of the formal public world. These spheres of

¹¹² Ikegami (2005), 19-34.

¹¹³ Ikegami (2005), 19.

¹¹⁴ Ikegami (2005), 38.

communicative activities can be called enclave publics since they were officially unconnected with the hierarchical order of dominant publics.

Ikegami, 2005: 39.

It was not just etiquette manuals, a genre bound to class, which shaped the public sphere: From the Heian (794-1185) and the Kamakura periods (1185 to 1333), poetry and poetry books extended their popularity in enclave publics.¹¹⁵ Poetry would eventually evolve into a popular Edo period pastime, and Ikegami takes care in describing the cultural grammar of sociability which permitted different ranks of individuals to participate in poetry events. It is with these foundations in which public gatherings to hear and exchange poems amount to a sense of an aesthetic public.¹¹⁶ While Ikegami's thesis is focused upon poetry, there are many other works which link participating households, and the materials they produced, into cultural grammars of sociability. The production of sutras and devotional texts, for example, led to an awareness of social interaction as having a component assessable by a wider spiritual realm.¹¹⁷ This awareness continued through the medieval period and the Edo period, where increasing publications focused upon travel within Japan. The printing of maps, descriptions of famous places and foods, and travel accounts became commonplace.¹¹⁸ The establishment of social prescriptions of politeness, ambiguity, and appropriate adjacency pairs allowed individuals in Japan to participate in a public civility which would grow from participation in hometown poetry circles during the

¹¹⁵ Kornicki (2001), 114-131.

¹¹⁶ Ikegami (2005), 4.

¹¹⁷ Buddhist Sutras were one of the earliest and most frequently copied texts. Evidence of sutra copying exists from both the Nara and Heian periods (710 – 1185) (Kornicki 2001, 80-96).

¹¹⁸ Berry (2006).

early Edo period to the eventual widespread travel which would mark communal life in Japan during the late Edo period and Meiji reign (1868–1945).¹¹⁹

Following Ikegami's substantial contribution to the understanding of Japan's public sphere, I define the framework of publics for this study as interactional spaces of discursive or non-discursive communication emerging through the actions of shifting network connections. Connections, such as shared cognitive tools (e.g. poetry or narratives present in the mass media), shifting group membership (which creates a collection of loosely organized multiple identities for any one individual), and institutional or technological associations work together, creating a co-dependent network in which public spheres emerge.¹²⁰

However different its origin, with Commodore Perry's compulsory trade and the later American occupation, as well as the influences of capitalism, globalization, and computer technologies, contemporary public spheres in Japanese communities occur both as sites of localized practices and as cosmopolitan exchanges.¹²¹ The global-local is markedly true for digital texts, which exist among the potential of other texts, communication platforms, and websites produced worldwide. Understanding contemporary literacy in Japan's public can thus be considered "develop[ing]... our children[']s 'readership skills for a culture of simulation.'"¹²² In this analysis, where a co-dependent network includes parallel publics consisting of nuanced linguistic ideologies, to understand contemporary literacy is to learn how readership skills affect memory, simulate identity, and articulate the boundaries of public and private life.

¹¹⁹ Ikegami (2005), 94, 128-135.

¹²⁰ Ikegami (2005), 46-56.

¹²¹ The localization of global products is a common presence in the contemporary world, and is discussed extensively in Daniel Miller's 1995 anthology *Worlds Apart: Modernity through the Prism of the Local*. In particular for the focus of localized practice co-existing with global exchanges, see: Abu-Lughod (1995); Miller (1995); and Wilk (1995).

¹²² Turkle (1999); 82.

Japan, Communication Platforms, and Public and Private Spheres

Defining publics as created through actions within networks which contain interactional spaces of communication creates an analytical capacity for social imaginaries, language ideologies, and parallel publics to remain pertinent to digital writing in Japan. Indeed, a handful of researchers have done just this, drawing from the above issues in the discussions of civil society for technologies in Japan. Focusing on mass media and the internet, Laurie Freeman demonstrates the tangible overlaps in public and private spheres in Japan. With media coverage closely tied to the politics of the ruling party, the internet has become a subaltern public where social actors can pursue advice and share concerns that relate to family and personal life. The acknowledged presence of subaltern political publics creates one contemporary form of civil society in Japan: discussion of government connects social actors and family ties into the ruling dialogs of the state.¹²³

Ideologies about the self which construct the sense of a Japanese public and private self have also been analyzed within internet communication platforms. In a linguistic comparison of Japanese and English, Yukio Hirose demonstrates that in both languages authors have two different aspects of self, the public speaker and the private self. The public self is a speaker with an addressee, while the private self is without an audience, becoming a thinking subject. The contrast between English and Japanese speakers' sense of addressing others or thinking to themselves can be demonstrated by glossing terms. Japanese has a special word for the private self, *jibun* "self," but not any special word for public self. In Japanese, various words are used to represent the public self, depending on who is talking to whom. By contrast, English has a special word for public self, "I," but not any special word for private self, so that in English,

¹²³ Freeman (2003).

personal pronouns are diverted to represent the private self, depending on the grammatical persona associated with the private self in question. Hirose argues that such basic vocabulary differences not only refer to different forms of identity in Japanese and English speakers, but they also reflect divergent communicative expectations which can be troublesome for business and social exchanges, especially when conducted in digital texts.¹²⁴

Like linguistic ideologies, cultural grammars of sociability are demonstrated both in this project and other research findings as important aspects of public intercommunication in Japan. Risako Ide's research on interactional rituals in public Japanese discourse is an excellent example of a cultural grammar which facilitates a sense of public space. For Risako, the use of the word *sumimasen* in public exchanges is not simply an expression of gratitude and apology, but rather a "metapragmatic ritual activity that is an anticipated, habitual behavior in public discourse in Japanese society."¹²⁵ Ide fits *sumimasen* and *arigatō* into the folk notion of *aisatsu*, a set of verbal and nonverbal rituals which mark demeanor among interactants: common adjacency pairs like *ohayō* (good morning) and *ojamashimasu* (said upon entering another's home or workspace, meaning "I will get in the way") are examples of *aisatsu*. As such, *aisatsu* feelings function as the ground rules for appropriate Japanese public interaction.¹²⁶ *Aisatsu* are also behaviors and textual exchanges: exchanging *meishi* (business cards), *shinnen no kotobuki* (New Year's Greetings, often sent as cards) and ritual gift exchanges on *barentain dei* and *howaito dei* (Valentines' Day, where women give chocolates to men, and White Day, where men give presents to women) are also part of social functions held in place by *aisatsu*.¹²⁷ As a cultural grammar, *aisatsu*: 1) confirms that some kind of interaction is about to take place; 2) maintains a

¹²⁴ Hirose (2000).

¹²⁵ Ide (1998), 510; Ohashi (2008).

¹²⁶ Suzuki (1981). I am in special thanks to the language exchange facilitated by Masa Nakatsugawa, who helped me read through this and related Japanese academic texts as I helped him with English academic texts. *Aisatsu* rituals in Japan are mirrored in many other speech communities, see: Hymes (1972).

¹²⁷ Ide (1998), 514; Ide (2007).

friendly relationship with the interlocutor; and 3) ritualistically maintains the interpersonal exchange in a smooth, non-problematic manner.¹²⁸

Similar to the need to redefine and contextualize the meaning of public spheres for life in Japan, one also needs to contextualize Japanese privacy. Indeed, there is no word for privacy in the traditional Japanese language, and modern Japanese speakers have adopted the English word, *puraihashii*.¹²⁹ It may appear that, without the term, Japan did not have an early formation of privacy, yet one of the fallacies established in early public-private descriptions in the West was the assumed contrast of public with private: without one, the other could not exist.¹³⁰ This however, is an oversimplification. The characters for the concepts of a “public servant,” “public school,” and “public life” are compounds derived from *ōyake* or *kō*: *kōmuin*, *kōritsu gakkō* *kōseikatsu* respectively.¹³¹ These categories are juxtaposed with the first person pronoun, *watakushi* (formal), *watashi*, or *shi*. Thus *shijin* is a private individual, *shiritsu gakkō* a private school, and *shiseikatsu* a private life.¹³² Juxtaposing public and private, then, is not an act in which the “private self,” or *jibun*, emerges, rather the self-identity which is particular to Japan as a “lifeway.”¹³³ I will describe the Japanese identity lifeway in greater detail in Chapter III, but for now it will suffice to note that identity in Japan is not an autonomous set of characteristics inherent in any given individual. In Japan, the makeup of any social group provides a map denoting the appropriate use of linguistic terms and the approach of topics. Thus the very performance of self is reliant upon a contingent logic where the self is individualized, but consists of the social components of any given circumstance.¹³⁴

¹²⁸ Suzuki (1981), 46.

¹²⁹ Mizutani et al. (2004).

¹³⁰ Cody (2011), 44.

¹³¹ Mizutani et al. (2004), 122; Ikegami (2005), 135.

¹³² Mizutani et al. (2004), 122.

¹³³ Quinn (1994).

¹³⁴ Lebra (2004).

There are cultural grammars in Japan which demarcate public and private interactions: when referring to private affairs in a public speech, the speaker will most likely begin with an apology, saying, ‘I am sorry to refer to my private affairs, but...’ Personal feelings, impressions, opinions (although there are appropriate moments for breaching the opinion convention, seen in Chapter V), and affection are regarded as private affairs. As such, they should not appear in public speech. The distinction between public co-constructed selves and private concerns must be clear, which is an important assumption in Japanese social relations.¹³⁵ The importance of the *aisatsu* practices which hold this divide in place becomes clear during moments when individuals accidentally overhear or see information relating to the private affairs of others. Such accidents can be common place: homes and apartments in Japan are small, and the walls—once constructed of paper—are still notoriously thin for the majority of residences. It is a fact of life in Japan that people unintentionally see or listen to speech not intended for the eavesdropper. Most often in cases of accidental peepers, the receiver will not divulge the information.¹³⁶ Privacy in Japan is thus not a type of information or a specific place: it is the range of individuals, and the appropriate social circumstances, that *jibun* information, thoughts and feelings is restricted too.¹³⁷ For privacy, there is a correspondence between the sharing of internal feelings and opinions and the creation of intimate friendships. In response to a survey conducted in 2005 which focused on sharing personal revelations on communication platforms, 70.6% of respondents agreed that doing so marked deep friendship.¹³⁸ The ability for Japanese authors to ensure personal thoughts and feelings would be restricted to the intended audience is important

¹³⁵ Yoneyama (1971, 1989). I am indebted to Masa Nakatsugawa for directing me to the 1971 article, and for his help in reading the academic Japanese article with me.

¹³⁶ Boling (1990); Moore (1984).

¹³⁷ Mizutani et al. (2004), 124.

¹³⁸ The survey question was yes or no to the following statement: ‘‘Do you want to get ‘true’ friends by expressing or sharing secret information concerning your or your friends’ private or personal experience such as disappointments, moments of shame, or guilty conscience?’’ (Nakada and Tamura 2005).

for conceptions of privacy on the internet. In practice, then, the details of privacy in Japan are different from western counterparts, but the contrast is not great enough to necessitate the development of an entirely new term. As many prior researchers have noted, the basic elements of the concept of privacy for one group tends to be very similar between basic accounts of privacy in other cultures; it is only the elaborated performances of the concept which differ.¹³⁹

Closing remarks on Japanese Public and Private

There is a sense of public and private in Japan, but these concepts are founded from historical circumstances that are very different from the way they were originally hypothesized in the West. As such, public and private are concepts which need to be fit to the cultural background in which they are deployed, and the above discussion does so.

As my findings demonstrate, there are a number of *aisatsu* exchanges which have evolved to fit exchanges upon the web as public. Similar in form to those which occur during face-to-face exchanges, these cultural grammars are highly dependent not only upon the age and social position of the individuals involved, but also to the gender of the participants as well. The next section focuses upon the ways in which gender becomes important for private autonomy and public ideologies.

Gendered Writing and the Public-Private Divide

Gender is an important element of enacting the self in a public reading world. Despite the insights which can be gained with revised definitions of public and private, one must

¹³⁹ Mizutani et al. (2004), 25.

acknowledge the residuals of a devalued female-gendered private and valorized male-gendered public. This historic pattern is the foundation for ideologies within the concepts of public and private, providing the reader with labels with which to evaluate identity performances. Feminist scholars have battled against such perceptions, confronting the value laden principals of public and private spheres to dissect the relationships between gender ideologies and the performance of gender. Feminist scholars demonstrated that the assignment of gender to biological origins was a myth which devalued women's labor as a force in economics and political arrangements. An underlying Cartesian dualism pitted negative values associated with the emotional care-giving provided by wives and mothers against the highly-valued rational androcentric political and scientific discourses.¹⁴⁰

For literacy, "the 'performance' of gendered realities (private self-individual) creates the 'fiction' of 'natural gender' relationships of which the performances were aiming to mimic (public interpretation of performance)."¹⁴¹ Whether as a concern for the overall well-being of society or the health of the individual, writing and reading ties gendered performances to prestige or social stigma. Examples of prestige and stigma of reading material will be discussed in Chapter II, but it is illuminating to note that gendered qualifications of reading and writing are a trend about the world, particularly in light of the global qualities of contemporary communication platforms. One example of a gendered disfavored reading can be found in Europe during the early nineteenth century. The growing population of women readers aroused a great deal of alarm: women were not only reading, they were reading novels! Part of the alarm arose from the ideological perception of novels as a lower, and undesirable, kind of book. Novels were stigmatized as being vernacular and were contrasted against moral lessons found within

¹⁴⁰ Errington (1990); Leacock (1981, 1983); and Shapin and Schaffer (1985).

¹⁴¹ Butler (1990b), 279; and Davis (1997).

biblical texts. This negative characterization of novels spread into the medical community. Women who read novels were thought to develop a malady which manifested itself mentally and physically. Ailing individuals developed a psychological disorder associated with too much reading; symptoms included lofty notions of romance and a general idleness, both of which were thought to lead to further excessive consumption of novels, a condition termed “reading-fever.” It was primarily Europe’s women who were diagnosed with this “bibliomania” and medical experts treated it as a disease, the novel-reading disease.¹⁴² Women were considered prone to becoming addicted to a new writing technology.

In nineteenth century Europe the proliferation of novels created by the changes in both the mechanical design and accessibility of the printing press represented a major shift in the use and application of communication technologies.¹⁴³ For those diagnosed with this condition, private reading had consequences for their public interactions.

Writing and Japan’s Feminists

As with reading fever in Europe, the reality of gender expectations in Japan have always been contested. Researchers trace feminist thought to the 1870s, and have followed the movement in its various guises to the present day.¹⁴⁴ Writing has been one method through which women engaged political negotiations during waves of the feminist movement. In the socialist-feminist and anarchist streams of prewar Japanese feminism, key female figures of the movement, such as Fuduka Hideko 福田 英子 (1867-1927), would write in *Seitō* (Bluestocking)

¹⁴² Littau (2006), 4-11.

¹⁴³ Changes in the accessibility of print material include moral conceptions of how women use their leisure time (or if they should have any at all), disposable income, narrative development and shifts in social organization (Littau 2006).

¹⁴⁴ Mackie (2003).

and another journal known by the English title *Bluestocking*, writing platforms which were “created for the first time with the brains and hands of today’s Japanese women.”¹⁴⁵ Fuduka also published her own magazine called *Seikai fujin (Women of the World)*.¹⁴⁶ These journals joined the circulating texts of Japan’s reading world as proclamations on the inequalities facing women in Japan. Later the postwar feminists would have to contest social realities in writing in a different way: they would need to challenge the truth value presented in history books. History textbooks glossed, or left out altogether, the issue of enforced military prostitution or sexual slavery.¹⁴⁷

While feminist movements in Japan never attained the participant numbers of those in Europe and United States, those involved are known for their tenacity, as many early feminists—often labeled rebels—were sentenced to death by the state.¹⁴⁸ By 1889 the Japanese state had established civil codes and educational policies which effectively barred women from political life.¹⁴⁹ The debates surrounding female roles in social life focused on the framework of the *ryōsai kenbo* 良妻賢母 ideology: the model of being a “good wife and wise mother” propounded by politicians, educators, and media sources.¹⁵⁰ While *ryōsai kenbo* provided women with influence in the public realm through their power as mothers and educators, the ideology also required women to organize new bases for themselves in the pursuit of education, social action, and economic equality.¹⁵¹ The feminist movement in the Meiji period is thought to have developed a form of a public sphere, where the sense of shared community developed across diverse groups and regions. This public sphere was created through women playing active roles

¹⁴⁵ Sievers (1983): 163.

¹⁴⁶ Mackie (1997).

¹⁴⁷ Nozaki (2005); Nozaki and Inokuchi (2000); and Ueno (2004). This debate continues for online forums; see: Morris-Suzuki and Rimmer (2002).

¹⁴⁸ Hane (1988).

¹⁴⁹ Sievers (1983); and Fujimura-Fanselow (2011).

¹⁵⁰ Mackie (2003).

¹⁵¹ Sievers (1983).

in debating and discussing their own daily lives.¹⁵² In economic terms, the 1898 civil code which forced married women and children into dependence on a male house head with no protection from his economic decisions remained in effect until 1947.¹⁵³

Gender Performance on Public and Private Writing

While there continue to be strong efforts to problematize the constructs of gendered realities,¹⁵⁴ language—written and spoken—continues to recreate social presumptions of appropriate behavior for public and private space. For literacy studies focusing on contemporary communication technologies, the sliding nature of private writing—such as entries composed in mixi’s diary options—into mediums which make messages available to a broad audience is a viable concern, especially in terms of valorizing one form of gender performance over others. There appears, after all, to be little or no expectation of privacy for most writing on Internet communication platforms. Educational groups in both Japan and the United States have maintained campaigns to warn youths to be prudent in what they post online. This narrative creates another paradox of contemporary literacy: writing is an essential component for identity performance, but to enter the literary arena places an individual at risk. The student response to this particular bipolar framework was to increase the level of web platform surveillance. This additional workload is born entirely by the individual, with the cost of greater time invested on machines. Extensive time online has fueled complaints that youths have lost the social skills

¹⁵² Patessio (2011).

¹⁵³ Hane (1988).

¹⁵⁴ Two essential Japanese sources on women’s history containing women’s enunciation and writings on the public and private spheres are Takamura Itsue’s *Josei no rekishi (Women’s History)*, which focuses on the liberation of women from male oppression, and Inoue Kiyoshi’s *Nihon Joseishi (History of Japanese Women)*, a piece written in postwar Marxism to free women from class oppression.

pertaining to face-to-face interaction. Still, students believed that they needed to protect themselves, and each developed a plethora of unique methods to do so while using new mediums.

The concerns over what should be protected, however, had generalizable differences for men and women in multiple *jūnjapa* and international Japanese identities. As Susan Leigh Star notes, when the necessity of internalized surveillance is set alongside a need to operate within the standardized technological system:

Our multiplicity has not been the multiple personality of the executive, but that of the abused child, the half-breed. We are the ones who have done the invisible work of creating a unity of action in the face of a multiplicity of selves, *as well as*, and at the same time, the *invisible work* of lending unity to the face of the torturer or of the executive. We have usually been the delegated *to*, the *disciplined*. Our selves are thus in two senses monstrous selves, cyborgs, impure, first in the sense of uniting split selves and second in the sense of being that which goes unrepresented in encounters with technology” (emphasis in original).

Star, 1991: 29.

Reflecting an individual’s identity, students’ efforts to monitor materials surrounding the self as a digital subject effectively create cultural applications of gender appropriate public and private boundaries. The spectrum of gendered lives is often experienced in economic privilege and social status, and social inequalities related to power are marked linguistically.¹⁵⁵ Negotiating language is one way in which students conduct the “invisible work of creating unity” between their identity and the identity which others ascribed to them.

¹⁵⁵ McElhiney (1997), 107.

Feminist scholar Bonnie McElhiney describes the demarcation of public and private language as a separation of everyday language from institutional language. This separation recreates gender biases through the idealization of fraternal interactions. Women who have entered the workforce are often discounted because they use language that is perceived as emotionally laden, or too colloquial.¹⁵⁶ When the concepts of public and private are applied through cultural grammars as evaluations of identity performances, public and private become ideological labels unevenly applied to varied social situations.¹⁵⁷

In regard to contemporary writing, the concept and maintenance of public and private emerges from the impact of media ideologies—the beliefs and perceptions surrounding communication technologies—on the enactment of identity through representations.¹⁵⁸ Literacy and orality influence one another, and are reflected in the choice of register.¹⁵⁹ To elaborate upon the self-other public-private dialectic described above I would like to provide a case study from Nepal. This cross-cultural example has been selected because it resonates with Japan-focused details—historical and ethnographic—which I offer later.

Writing in Nepal exemplifies another moment where ideological evaluations of gender appropriate public behavior shapes text construction, particularly when a young woman writes love letters. The ability of Junigau women to read and write represents a dramatic shift in the social organization of Nepal: until the modernist movement of the late 1990s, most women were not taught to read and write. For women in Nepal, however, the desire to appear modern has influenced the use of their newly found writing skills. The concept of modernity has also influenced the marriage process, making arranged marriages appear old fashioned and backwards,

¹⁵⁶ McElhiney (1997).

¹⁵⁷ McElhiney (1997).

¹⁵⁸ Gershon (2010), 3.

¹⁵⁹ Besnier (1999).

while associating love marriages with modern conventions. Love is increasingly associated by the youth in Junigau with being developed and successful, and, to enact this new social value, young women write love letters.¹⁶⁰

Unlike other kinds of correspondence in Nepal, the love letters written by young women include the dramatic use of ellipses. The authors often leave their names off the page and break off mid-sentence, leaving embarrassing or compromising statements out of the written record and to the imagination of the reader. As Laura Ahearn observes, this style of writing invites the recipient to co-construct meanings with the author, creating moments of intimate exchange. Yet however much love marriages are valued, writing love letters is deemed an illicit activity, one which could jeopardize the public evaluation of a woman's virtue.¹⁶¹ If the letters are intercepted, or—in one case of a former jaded male lover—sent to a new husband, the female author faces dire consequences: a woman's schooling can be discontinued and her blemished status can leave her with the brunt of grueling household tasks.¹⁶²

The love letter ellipses thus function in two ways: first, they are a form of self-censorship, a means by which the author attempts to protect herself from harm. The recipient may never truly know what the woman was imagining. Second, they are a performance of femininity which is combating a paradox in writing, the desire for a modern love marriage and the risk involved in enacting these desires. This femininity is performed and embodied: some things are too dangerous to ever set down in ink. Within literacy are notions of different social roles, each associated with particular performance of self in relationship to other people.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Ahearn (2004).

¹⁶¹ By virtue I am referring to the patriarchal control the female body, in which the moral appraisal of virtue represents the delivery of a woman with an unbroken hymen from the parents to the new guardian/possessor, the husband.

¹⁶² Ahearn (2003).

¹⁶³ Besnier (1991).

While the conceptualization of gender appropriate literacy differs between places and within groups, the above examples provide a template for identifiable patterns in writing. Drawing basic descriptions of literacy from the elements of these case studies provides building blocks for examining contemporary writing using new technologies: 1) different forms of writing genres are markers of identity as well as cultural grammars containing ideological evaluations of individual actions; 2) the lived gendered reality of an author can be performed within a text; 3) public and private are constructed in interactional spaces of discursive or non-discursive communication emerging through the actions of shifting network connections; and 4) spreading knowledge across networks changes the routes by which we learn (the acquisition of symbolic illiteracy) as well as affecting the ways in which we think (the introduction of cognitive behaviors.).

Examples of Literacy in Communication Technologies

The next section illustrates new communication technologies through the lens of literacy. I develop a methodology for tracing shifting network conventions in the performance of gendered identities, historical forms of and values for kinds of writing. This methodology provides room for the effects technologies can have on sets of skills and memories. Life in an international University in Japan—and in Tokyo in general—requires bumping against non-native speakers and foreign cultural practices. Likewise, Internet technologies allow communication platforms designed for different speech conventions. This section draws from cross-cultural examples in order to outline trends endemic to writing with machines. The first case study focuses on Friendster, highlighting the imbrication of individual identity performance

and the difficulties which arise when different communities maintain varying ideological labels of what is appropriate to write in public. The second example is a digest from Van Dijck's *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age*,¹⁶⁴ a work focusing on changing technologies that provides a glimpse of the effects of these mediums on memory and identity.

In an internet case study which analyzed data collected as models of oral communication,¹⁶⁵ an early social networking site called Friendster became a source of contested gendered evaluations of appropriate public and private discourse. Friendster was launched in the United States in 2002, and shortly thereafter the site became the communication medium of choice for participants of the Burning Man festival. Held in the Black Rock desert of Nevada, Burning Man is an annual week-long event culminating in the eponymous burning of a large wooden effigy. Friendster offered an opportunity for participants to remain in contact with one another after the event and, in some cases, develop intimate relationships. People on Friendster tended to write in themes which were derived from experiences at Burning Man after the festival.¹⁶⁶

Friendster, however, allowed anyone to join. Participants from the Burning Man festival, writing primarily for the satirical audience of other festival participants, eventually ran into trouble because the symbolic play associated with Burning Man themes were taken literally by Friendsters who were not festival participants. A festival-going teacher, for example, had students who joined the social network. The students noted that many of their teacher's "friends" on the network openly discussed using drugs. One student also remarked upon one friend who wrote about desiring young ladies and had images of girls in catholic school uniforms on his

¹⁶⁴ Van Dijck (2007).

¹⁶⁵ A redesigned version Friendster is still (as of 2013) very popular among East and South Asian users, and most of the traffic on the site is from the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore.

¹⁶⁶ Boyd and Heer (2006).

page. In essence, Friendster created collapsed contexts, one in which face-to-face interactions that were created through public and institutional genres of speech and writing were bumping into private interactions that used different expectations in meaning making. For Burning Man participants, metaphors and jokes are the normative expectation of communication. The students, who were not festival participants, questioned their teacher about her relationships outside of school because they interpreted the narratives on Friendster as accurate representations of people. Students read the symbolic content of the writing and images at face value and missed the intended hidden meaning of the author. There were, in a sense, overlapping publics within the communities of writers upon Friendster.

It is important to note that conflicts emerging from the existence of parallel publics can be both positive and negative. In Susan Dewey's 2009 article "Dear Dr. Kothari," the emergence of multiple kinds of publics in social interaction contained reifications of inequalities. Dewey argues that a parallel Indian public emerges alongside a dominant white-European-male public, demonstrating that the blurring of public and private discourse can have the power to subordinate: parallel publics permit marginalized groups to voice concerns to a wider audience (although that the voicing is often constructed in ways which reinforce gender and group inequalities).¹⁶⁷

The semantic meaning of texts—even the so-called essentially public internet texts—can be hidden.¹⁶⁸ Hiding them, however, may or may not insure that the author has not breached cultural grammars fitting personal statements to appropriate social circumstances. This is true for social expectations and for the programmer's expectation in platform use. While the creators of the Friendster social network intended for a legal name-legal person correspondence, the Dada

¹⁶⁷ Dewey (2009), 125 and 134.

¹⁶⁸ Bakhtin (1993).

like qualities of Burning Man and the misinterpretation of festival participant pages lead to the creation of theatrical identities. The emergence of Fakester profiles—profiles with fake names paired with comedic images and texts—went against the desired use of Friendster designers. One fake profile was for Girl Drink. Drawing upon stereotypes of mixed drinks reflecting individual personality, this punny user posted drink recipes which created a gendered commentary about an individual.¹⁶⁹ Another Fakester profile was Quotester, a user who wrote and replied to messages using only obscure quotes. Quotester’s intertextuality—or the ability to make new meanings by adding choice texts to surrounding ones—was a genre of communication on Friendster.

The emergence of Fakester profiles represents a second level of text-as-gendered identity signifier, where an individual engages in a particular identity performance for a specific circumstance. This, unfortunately, went against the programmers design. As Danah Boyd and Jeffrey Heer observed: “friendster was designed for identity performance to be public.”¹⁷⁰ The website’s open joining policy and design made the emergence of fake profiles which represented famous men and women in a satirical manner a legal liability for the company. In the end the conflict between the creators of the social network and the creative desire of the users made Friendster impossible to maintain in the United States.

Conflicts arise not only from clashes between users and programmers, but from discord between older mediums and new ones. Akin to the knowledge of Burning Man’s rhetorical genre as a prerequisite to understand the satire on Friendster, knowledge of ideological values associated with mediums of writing plays a key role in human memory. People tend to keep objects in their surroundings as placeholders for memories. Some written mediums, such as handwritten love letters which one could keep in a box, are easily incorporated into new

¹⁶⁹ Boyd and Heer (2006), 7.

¹⁷⁰ Boyd and Heer (2006), 7.

technologies; as typed love letters kept in an inbox. Others require a large investment of time and effort, such as scanning the images of heirloom family photographs for grandchildren.

The medium of a text affects the way people interact with, talk about, and remember the past. One study, by José Van Dijck, explores the intersection of the psychology of memory and technology in *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age*. Beginning with a reflection arising from shifting his personal paper documents (family pictures) into a digital form by scanning, Van Dijck found:

The contents of my shoebox indeed posed the challenge of fitting digital memories into analog frames for storage and retrieval, but beyond my idiosyncratic dilemmas, it raised poignant concerns about the relation between material objects and autobiographical memory, between media technologies and our habits and rituals of remembrance. My collection of personal items made me reflect on how we present and preserve images of ourselves to others; it cause me to speculate on how private collections tap into the much larger phenomenon of communal rites of storing and retrieving.

Van Dijck, 2007: xii

Following the meaning of those pictures from paper to computer would leave Van Dijck to propose that although we commonly conceive of memory as a static snapshot in a mental box, it is actually a fluid life process which shifts over time with added experiences. The development of memory, he argued, involves internal and external factors. “Like the human brains’ tendency to select, reconfigure, and reorder memories upon recall, people also consciously manipulate their memory deposits over time: they destroy pictures, burn their diaries, or simply change the order of pictures in their photo book.”¹⁷¹ There is a similar form of manipulation in digital

¹⁷¹ Van Dijck (2007), 37.

repositories, in which email, message, image repositories, or social networks pages are intentionally lost or maintained. Though there are many differences between writing-preserving physical papers and typing-archiving digital documents, Van Dijck demonstrates that there are also overlaps between the two: old writing habits inform new ones.¹⁷² As with concerns in Japan over the use of *keitai* and computers and the retention of how to draw characters, memory is deeply intertwined in the use of technologies. Memory thus confronts both personal self-knowledge as well as social values linked to the factual and practical memorization of information.

The maintenance of digital messages impacts the way contemporary authors and readers make meaning from texts on digital platforms, and these negotiations parallel life changes. Writing messages on communication platforms can sustain—or terminate—romantic relationships. Placing text messages within a continuum of oral communication, Ilana Gershon demonstrates that students at Indiana University developed heterogeneous standards for using communication technologies, creating personal idioms of practice. These idioms were defined by an individual's perception of appropriateness for the content and timing of text messages. When a group of individuals share perceptions of appropriateness the members create a media ideology surrounding computer use. The use of familiar representations follows groups of people who have similar idioms of practice, and there are multiple ideologies within any given community.¹⁷³ In essence, when someone stops maintaining an email inbox or closes their page on a social networking site, they stop interacting with others using these accounts; this is

¹⁷² Van Dijck (2007).

¹⁷³ Gershon (2010).

understood as possibly losing a set of symbols which create the perception of potential meanings in texts.¹⁷⁴

What Can We Draw from Literacy?

Research accounts of reading and writing using new technologies, although pervasive, remain unwieldy and scattered. As Karin Littau aptly states: “By reflecting on our previous encounters with once new technologies... it is possible to chart connections between the *effects* of old media on their consumers and the *effects* of the new media on their users” (emphasis in original).¹⁷⁵ The hermeneutics of communication technologies require similar considerations of the circulation of traditional printed materials. The students I worked with synthesized many different considerations: gender, age, audience number, the type of telephone or computer a receiver might own, to name but a few. Knowledge of factors like these creates part of the hermeneutical arc of contemporary reading and writing. There is a relationship of a sign to an object, and that relationship is reflected in the interpretation a reader gives to the sign. The exchange between the writer and the reader occurs through a shared semiotic complex.¹⁷⁶

Accounting for gender, identity, and meaning making in contemporary writing practices thus traces the creation and maintenance of public and private space. People take an active role in shaping their information and writing on these systems, a role which gives the paradoxes of current literacy practices an experiential value for contemporary readers and writers. Conducting ethnography on reading and writing in Japan requires considerations of the author-self and the

¹⁷⁴ Shared references and symbols can be thought of along the lines posited by Bakhtin: “Any sign system (i.e. any languages, regardless of how small the collective that produces its conventions may be), can always in principle be deciphered, that is, translated into other sign systems (other languages). Consequently, sign systems have a common logic, a potential single language of languages...” (1993, 106).

¹⁷⁵ Littau (2006), 4. Italics in original.

¹⁷⁶ Ricoeur (1995).

recipient-other: “The ethnography of writing begins with the premise that writing is a cultural practice that needs to be understood within particular cultural contexts. Ethnographic studies of writing are part of the more general investigation of literacy.”¹⁷⁷ This dissertation argues that reading and writing using new communication technologies are parts of a semiotic complex which, in its free-form operation, creates and maintains cultural constructs, including ones which surround paradigms and prejudices.

Performing gender and identity in writing and reading is a relationship between the author and the reader. Depending on how a writer views the self and how they want others to understand them, these negotiations require an engagement of appropriate social circumstances for personal information and an awareness of shifting network connections.¹⁷⁸ This is not entirely different from what we commonly conceive of as public in physical space, like walking through a busy train station with a book or a smartphone. There are publics within publics, and awareness of the differences within interactional spaces is a stage for gender roles, and national citizenship in an individual’s life. Distinctions in parallel publics are one way that individuals gain an awareness of marginalized discourses. Discourses which do not fit into the contemporary social and political environment, but continue to exist, mark the leaky boundaries between different cultural grammars for public and private. For the students I worked with, such distinctions create new modes of thinking about people, knowledge, social exchange and interaction.

¹⁷⁷ Shuman and Bennis (1999), 108.

¹⁷⁸ Boyd and Heer (2006); Dewey (2009) This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter V as “the I-for-myself,” “I-for-the-other,” and “other-for-me.”

CHAPTER II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITERCIES IN JAPAN

Letters are Commonplace

Letters are commonplace enough, yet what splendid things they are! When someone is in a distant province and one is worried about him, and then a letter suddenly arrives, one feels as though one were seeing him face to face. Again, it is a great comfort to have expressed one's feelings in a letter even though one knows it cannot yet have arrived. If letters did not exist, what dark depressions would come over one!

Sei Shōnagon, *The Pillow Book*. 1971[1002]: 207

Introduction

The above quote from the famous *Pillow Book* is an expression of wonder and amazement: that such an ordinary thing—a letter—has the possibility to transport people's thoughts across long distances, bridging experiential gaps between friends and alleviating emotional concern. Shōnagon may as well be writing of emails, text messages, or posts on social networks: many of my informants told me how important receiving messages were, how writing kept those who were far near in the mind and heart. The social aspects of letters are not only

emotional: writing in Japan is imbued with aspects of the *aisatsu*, containing ritualized responses and formats. Choosing kinds of responses and constructing kinds of texts entangles social life in writing: authors in Tokyo recognize differences in written presentations, making the digital text an important aspect of identity. Social and technological histories are also entangled in writing. Shōnagon's letters, her list making, and her abilities in poetry have shaped contemporary engagements with digital texts. Much like the co-existence of handwritten manuscripts and printed books, new interactional spaces perpetuate prior discursive genres, meanings, and styles alongside shifts in conventions. Authors do not altogether abandon older etiquettes when fashioning new forms of messages.

In light of the possible transnational reach of information on servers, the previous chapter sculpted the meaning of literacy by drawing from a diverse set of cross-cultural comparisons. This chapter sketches a scheme for understanding literacy in contemporary Japan. This historical review draws from the results of previous literacy and computer-mediated communication studies to identifying patterns of relationships between texts, among written materials and identity, and the gendering of appropriate reading material, hunting out motifs from the past which are salient for contemporary Japan. This methodology seeks a local socio-historic foundation as a social framework for the use of new technologies.¹⁷⁹

There are numerous sources which look at the history of texts in Japan. The field of book history emerged in the 1950s from scholars who were organizing traditional bibliographies.¹⁸⁰ Japan's book culture or print culture is a detailed and developed research field.¹⁸¹ For Japan,

¹⁷⁹ Gershon (2010), 7-16; Kendall (2002), 51; Turkle (1997), 34; and Van Dijck (2007).

¹⁸⁰ Darnton (1990), see esp. Chapter 7.

¹⁸¹ To aid this endeavor I have drawn details from many early Japanese histories and narratives alongside available English translations. I am indebted to the work of scholars whose expertise in classical Japanese allows them to wade through time-yellowed tomes of primary documents. I was sensitive to the integrity of the translators during this work in much the same way that I followed the authority of the scholars of print culture. I choose this method of reading for two reasons. First, to gain the proficiency required to understand arcane phrases is outside the scope of

there is a trend in the scholarship of book culture to describe the book through exhaustive accounts on the development of markets for printing, buying, and reading particular texts.¹⁸²

While there is much overlap in this subject matter and my own, the framework presented here veers away from production and consumption of books as the primary explanatory schema.

Instead, my storyline is colored by the inky pursuit of a different narrative: pursuing literacy, or the details of cultural values which emerge as important interpretive frameworks for texts.

Literacy researcher Niko Besnier, drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus, stated that literacy can be described as "another form of habitus, and linguistic anthropological approaches to literacy take the investigation of how literacy-as-habitus functions as a central beacon in their endeavors."¹⁸³ Literacy is the "product of history, produc[ing] individual and collective history, accordance with schemes engendered by history."¹⁸⁴ Texts are shaped and constrained by cultural ideologies.¹⁸⁵

New Literacy: A Brief Review

With multifarious elements constituting individual identity and collective history, how can one identify which details of print history will yield specifics upon literacy past, present, and future? Previous research on literacy enunciates a number of reoccurring factors pertinent to the hermeneutics surrounding texts. Before beginning the historical development of writing in Japan,

my contemporary project, and second, I deeply enjoyed the artistry with which the wordplay of the original text can be mirrored (though never replicated) by a skilled translator.

¹⁸² C.f. Berry (1998); and Kornicki (2001).

¹⁸³ Besnier (2000), 138. Pierre Bourdieu defines the habitus as "durably installed principal of generative improvisations, produces practices which tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective conditions of the production of their generative principle, while adjusting to the demands inscribed as objective potentialities in the situation." (Bourdieu 1977, 78).

¹⁸⁴ Bourdieu (1977), 82.

¹⁸⁵ Street and Besnier (1994), 528.

it will be useful to review the findings from literacy studies. These established variables will form the loci of discussion points for the habitus surrounding reading and writing in the past.

To begin, the form of the writing itself is a technical feature. Logographic, syllabic, alphabetic, consonantal alphabet, and the featural alphabet all have implications for the transmission of texts, whether by hand writing, printing presses, or computers. The number and complexity of characters is a cultural feature which shifts levels of accessibility within different writing systems.¹⁸⁶ The complexity of characters in Japanese has been a hot button issue throughout history, with multiple attempts to reform the writing system. These debates shifted the number and style of characters used in Japanese communication, causing a plethora of hurdles in integrating the Japanese language into computer interfaces. The emergence of personal computers occurred late in Japan compared to western nations because of the difficulty in programing and copyrighted character forms.¹⁸⁷

For a literacy which contains multiple writing systems, as in the modern day Japanese utilization of Chinese characters, *hiragana*, *katakana*, and alphabetic *romaji*, each set contains interpretive directions: they can act as a deictic which point the reader towards social functions.¹⁸⁸ Historic examples from Japan initially linked poetry and writing in Chinese characters to learned individuals who enjoyed high social status and economic prosperity. In practice, however, the writing systems became divided in use. Chinese characters and Chinese words would become associated with masculine occupations and male ways of writing. *Katakana*, on the other hand, became feminine, a connection which I will highlight in my later discussion of the *Tosa Nikki* 土佐日記 (Tosa Diary) as the relationship of a text to individuals and households. Gendered associations with lettering continue, as we shall discover in the

¹⁸⁶ Bledsoe and Robey (1993).

¹⁸⁷ See Chapter IV for details.

¹⁸⁸ Street (1993b).

discussion of text messages shared between two close male friends containing the word “secret,” or *himitsu*, written in *hiragana* in Chapter V.

Related to gender affiliated writing forms are large grammatical structures which historians have used to classify texts as “private” (*shiteki* 私的) and “public” (*kōteki* 公的). I take these categories one step further in analysis, arguing that powerful historical personages used the forms which marked writing as *shiteki* and *kōteki* in ambiguous ways, intentionally overlapping categories so as to use expectations for both in advantageous manners. Recognizing the intentional construction of ambiguous texts is essential for understanding much of the work authors undertake in maintaining multiple communication platforms. Digital texts, like their forerunners, can be composed as both *shiteki* and *kōteki* at once.

Adapted to structural characteristics of grammar and the macrolinguistic context, situations where writing systems coexist offer fruitful grounds for investigating the perception of, or cultural ideological evaluations, present in different writing systems.¹⁸⁹ In Japan, the historic the association of Chinese characters with masculinity made it difficult for woman to read texts written in Chinese without comment from onlookers. The use of and reading in different languages remains tenable in contemporary practice: as noted in the discussion of multilingualism and web platforms in the previous chapter, language choice can be an important indicator of social and national affiliations. In Chapter III we shall see this process is important for Aimi-san, who carefully separates Japanese and English in different writing platforms in order to negotiate career expectations for women in Japan and the budding relationships with her fiancée’s family.

Ideological evaluations of texts, analogous with the deemed appropriateness of reading material, are often born in tandem with a group of institutions which sponsor campaigns to

¹⁸⁹ Collins and Blot (2003); Burns (2010).

increase literacy in a community. Government and religion both create and maintain tenets for the written word.¹⁹⁰ In Japan, Buddhist monks making notes in religious texts, attempting to aid in reading sutras written in Chinese, produced the contemporary consonant-vowel syllabary used today. Likewise, the Edo government divided reading materials into two categories, deeming many works unsuitable for public reading. The spread of literacy is accompanied by more than a set of technologies and institutions; literacy is accompanied by sets of values which mark class, religious orientations and discussions of morality.¹⁹¹ Those in power tend to wield literacy as a tool for control, a condition which associates it with social capital.¹⁹² The ownership of a communication device and participation on social networks has become a large component of youth exchanges, and message composition can raise or lower social standing.¹⁹³

In education, literacy becomes a reflection of the formation of nation-states and the embodiment of a national identity.¹⁹⁴ Despite attempts by government polities to standardize reading and writing, multiple forms of literacy always emerge within any population, meaning that each group exchanging texts develops their own small nuanced set of jokes, punctuation, and references which allow meaning to be transmitted.¹⁹⁵ People learn to write themselves into the community, with agentive intent towards a desired form of identity.¹⁹⁶ Within these overlapping circles, literacy practices position the personal identity of men and women in relation to authority and submission as well as to public and private domains.¹⁹⁷ The discussion of the *Genji Monogatari* 源氏物語 (The Tale of Genji) as a book unsuitable for women by Sinologist Yamaga Sokō (1622-1685) will demonstrate how personal identity relates to authority and the

¹⁹⁰ Street and Besnier (1994), 532.

¹⁹¹ Riles (2006).

¹⁹² Besnier (2000).

¹⁹³ Bohn et al. (2013); Wellman et al. (2001).

¹⁹⁴ Street and Besnier (1998).

¹⁹⁵ Camitta (1993).

¹⁹⁶ Camitta (1987).

¹⁹⁷ Collins and Blot (2003).

public and private spheres.¹⁹⁸ Drawing from this and other historic examples will provide the linguistic tools necessary for understanding contemporary versions of private exchanges in public view.

The themes of politics, identity, gender, public and private spheres, knowledge, and memory are detailed in the cross-cultural examples of Chapter I. To further contextualize the literacy emerging in the international population of my informants the hermeneutic details of literacy must first be situated within their historical roots. I have organized this chapter chronologically rather than thematically; and I will return to the arguments illustrated by the historical examples presented here throughout my analysis. As described by Karen Littau: "...the study of the consumption and reception of literature within the remit of material cultures allows an insight into the ways in which technology shapes sensibilities and thinking self."¹⁹⁹ In this study the sensibilities and thinking self are those of schizophrenic cyborgs and the digital memories of paper people, whose patterns run deep into the past.

The Earliest Evidence of Writing and Authors

Japan's script is deeply rooted within the greater East Asian context; in particular, a Sinophilic intellectual world and the pervasiveness of what Peter Kornicki has referred to as "the Latin of East Asia."²⁰⁰ Both Korea and China played a fundamental role in writing in the archipelago: China in its development and Korea in its transmission. As a result, Japanese

¹⁹⁸ Kornicki et al. (2010), 9-11.

¹⁹⁹ Littau (2006), 6.

²⁰⁰ Kornicki (2010).

perceptions of the Chinese imperium were evoked alongside reflections of Japanese identity.²⁰¹ Evidence of early contact between residents of what the geographical areas now occupied by China, Japan, and Korea, are found scattered among objects bearing Chinese characters in tombs. One question inspired by these objects: can a talisman be a text?²⁰² The earliest surviving objects which bear full inscriptions are imported items. Primarily coins, mirrors, and swords, these materials appear in the archeological record around the mid-Yayoi period (300 B.C.E. to 300 C.E.).²⁰³ The first written phrase recovered in Japan is Chinese: *huo quan* 貨泉 (coinage). These items, along with religious paraphernalia and texts, appear to have arrived in the archipelago before any diplomatic missions from the island visited their places of origin.²⁰⁴ When envoys from China and Korea did begin making contact with Japan, bronze mirrors and decorated swords were the primary gifts. At this time mirrors and swords were highly prized objects and, as such, they became some of the first commodities which Japanese artisans attempted to copy, script and all. The infatuation with mirrors is particularly productive for understanding writing at this time. When mirrors began to be domestically produced during the Kofun period (300-538 C.E.) the Japanese craftsmen mimicked the formulaic Chinese inscriptions found on the back of their models. These inscriptions detail wishes of long life, wealth, and strong family lines. There

²⁰¹ A national “Japanese” identity is notoriously difficult to pinpoint. While most scholars recognize that the seed of national unity was planted by Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s rule which unified the country after the Warring States Period (1467-1568), Carol Gluck (*Japan’s Modern Myths*) places the formation of a national identity in the final state-sponsored process of solidifying national myths during the late Meiji (1868-1912). Timothy Screech and Donald Keene however, place the formation of nationalism earlier in the discussions of *Rangaku* scholars (an intellectual movement during the Edo period in Japan focusing on the study of the “West,” in particular Dutch scholarship and curios) sparked the reflection of a unified Japanese life (Keene 1952; and Screech 2002).

²⁰² Lurie (2011), 18-19.

²⁰³ Lurie (2007), 92.

²⁰⁴ The first evidence of Japanese envoys visiting China is emissaries to the Capital of Luoyang in 247 C.E., and possibly in 243 and 245 as well. (Seeley 1991, 10.)

are a number of odd mistakes in many of these inscriptions, and some mirrors have pseudo-inscriptions: a series of graph-like patterns that look similar to Chinese characters.²⁰⁵

The pseudo-inscriptions on mirrors are a clue representing literacy at this time. Despite the inscription changes mirrors are an interesting repository for meaning. Mirrors reflect the image of the person and reproduce the possessor's broader cultural and fiscal affluence to others. Writing, and the objects associated with it, became tied to social and economic capital. Connections to power and authority were reproduced in the mimicry of swords, in which the artisans again attempted to copy the text. The ability to read the duplicated script was probably secondary to the meaning of power, economic capital, and social authority.²⁰⁶

Similar to objects, people from faraway places also traveled to visit the elite in Japan. Some were migrants from the Korean peninsula. A general interest in their writing skills emerged during Emperor Oijin's reign (270-310),²⁰⁷ and around 284 C.E. the Korean migrant scribes were given formal positions in the courts of the ruling class. The handful of initial scribes from Korea maintained their relatively elevated positions in society hereditarily.²⁰⁸ Inscriptions at this time were written in classical Chinese—a language, presumably, that very few of the Nara court could speak.²⁰⁹ Yet the acquisition of high court position through the possession of writing skills marks the importance of Japan's image within the East Asian world. Literacy was a skill of

²⁰⁵ Lurie (2011), 56-62. One engraver apparently missed a character while copying the text and simply inserted it at the end of the phrase (59).

²⁰⁶ Seeley (1991), 9-13.

²⁰⁷ This is according to Japan's two earliest surviving historical texts: the *Nihon Shoki* 日本書紀 (The Chronicles of Japan), finished in 720 and the *Kojiki* 古事記 (Records of Ancient Matters), completed in 712. These texts contain a number of origin stories, lineages, and historical examples of the brilliance of these early scribes. See Seeley, *History of Writing in Japan*, 3-9 for sections translated into English, or Aston's translation published in 1972.

²⁰⁸ The number of people in the first scribal positions is contested. The *Nihon Shoki* 日本書紀 (720) accounts for only two or three scribes at most, though the genre of this presentation (ancestral links to historically important and powerful people) may preclude mention of others. The errors in later texts have been argued by both Keene (1952) and Seeley (1991, 26) to have arisen from a decreased proficiency with the Chinese language as one generation self-taught the next generation of scribes.

²⁰⁹ Seeley (1991), 6.

developed governance; particularly of its neighbor, China. With such a small number of scribes in the courts it is highly likely that texts, along with other inscribed objects appearing at this time, were not meant to be read by the majority people. Texts did not need to be read to be surrounded with a cultural ideology of power. From the start, part of the hermeneutics traveling with writing was the ability of script to indicate wealth, and to illustrate positions of rank. Writing was a currency of social capital.

However reading and writing began in those formative years, the practice would not remain bound to Chinese characters or scribal families. While there is no exact method to determine when spoken Japanese began to re-shape the use of characters for reading, the first example of a known hybrid text is an inscription from the Gangōji temple.²¹⁰ Dating from 596, this inscription, and its Hōryū-ji temple counterpart in Nara (dating between 586 and 607), display characters that have been rearranged to reflect Japanese syntax.²¹¹ Authors and scribes were breaking from Chinese to form new ways of documenting, creating a plethora of non-standard writing techniques. The existence of local and specialized literacy is indicated by a handful of surviving textual relics.

Rubbing the Inkstone:

Government Reform and Nara and Heian Texts as Borrowed Manuscripts

Most researchers mark the appearance of Japanese syntax within messages using Chinese characters as the beginning of a major shift of the potential spread of writing. The written word

²¹⁰ Hybrid texts show the influence of both Chinese and Japanese. In early exemplars this often manifests characters which are arranged in congruence with Japanese word order and increasingly represented Japanese linguistic and conceptual elements.

²¹¹ Seeley (1991), 26-29.

arrived in Japan tangled with ruling hierarchies and religious traditions, and as writing spread to non-specialists both religion and politics continued to play vital roles. The details of the religious and political environments provide the bedrock for a set of cultural practices which were to surround early literacy and its multiple forms of habitus.

Written in the seventh century, the *Kojiki* 古事記 (Record of Ancient Matters) is a stunning example political interests motivating writing and writing change. The *Kojiki* was composed by Ō no Yasumaro 太安万侶 to provide clarity and a single unified historical narrative to the emergent Nara state. Written in classical Chinese, following the style of Chinese dynastic histories, the introduction to the *Kojiki* relates why the text was commissioned. Emperor Tenmu was troubled by the conflicting historical accounts of events... partly because he had killed his brother and was thus in desperate need of legitimacy.²¹² One can speculate that an aspect of the *Kojiki* is born out of early associations of authority which surrounded the written word: Ō no Yasumaro followed the style of Chinese dynastic histories. Emperor Tenmu's rule may have appeared tenuous to some. By following the form of a different legitimate authority, the Chinese state, Tenmu was drawing power from the creation of history in three ways. First, he solidified a narrative which would be, in all likelihood, shared primarily with other households in position of power. It was likely that only other ruling families had the economical means to acquire a scribe or train and keep members of their families as scribes. In sharing this narrative Emperor Tenmu not only congealed a historic overview which supported his rule, the history was written in a form which mimicked a recognized ruling power. Finally, the written word was associated with economic and social rank. Ordering the *Kojiki* reflected the Emperor's position to direct different aspects of life in Japan.

²¹² Ooms (2009).

Whatever the motivations, Emperor Tenmu ordered the Ō no Yasumaro to scrutinize the archives and provide a clear, single account.²¹³ This edict for clarity would require Ō no Yasumaro to explain his transcription techniques, which he did by marking *kun* and *Ōn* readings for characters and by writing in three different styles.²¹⁴ According to historian Christopher Seeley, these choices were designed to make the *Kojiki* accessible to a broader audience:

The preface is written in Chinese style, as was appropriate to a text which was originally composed as a formal document addressed to the sovereign. The main text is in hybrid style, which Yasumaro considered to be preferable to the other two styles for that purpose, given the ideals of lucidity on the one hand and reasonable brevity on the other. Finally, the Japanese style in phonogram notation was employed by Yasumaro for the *Kojiki* songs.

Seeley, 1991: 46

Thus Yasumaro spends a great deal of time describing the process of reading to his audience. Reading and writing presented unique difficulties at this time: many small localized circles of authors and readers had emerged, and each of these probably contained a different set of habitus for transcribing characters or using certain characters for certain pronunciations. Yasumaro had to describe how he used Chinese characters in order to write a manuscript containing quotes using native vocabulary so that this reported speech could be legible to multiple addressees in Japan. The *Kojiki* includes tales of Japanese and Chinese origin, and the use of this hybrid style marks the *Kojiki* as the oldest surviving text written in *Kanbun*, the archetype of writing for

²¹³ Seeley (1991), 43.

²¹⁴ *Kun* are the Japanese pronunciations of Chinese characters.

modern language.²¹⁵ The details surrounding the care taken to ensure the *Kojiki* was legible is particularly relevant to considerations of communication technologies. Even with the limited audience of aristocratic members of the Japanese court, writing technologies required authors to reflect upon their personal knowledge to speculate on a text's ability to convey meaning to others: in Ō no Yasumaro's case, the ability for different readers to correctly assess the pronunciation of a character.

Development of Katakana and Hiragana Scripts

The *Kojiki* exemplifies the need to decipher Chinese for a Japanese audience. Deciphering Chinese into Japanese was not isolated within the governing polity; as Buddhism spread, the requirement to read religious texts also became a critical catalyst in the development of the writing system used in Japan. Thus during the seventh and eighth centuries the *hiragana* and *katakana* syllabary developed. An early version of what was to become *katakana* is the first formed, and its development is strongly associated with Buddhist monasteries and the reading of Buddhist texts. Called *kuntenbon*, *katakana* began as marginalia made on Chinese Buddhist sutra as aids in reading the characters in Japanese.²¹⁶ These marks are not uniform and vary widely between monasteries, so *kuntenbon* was of limited use at first; often the only marks that could be shared between religious groups were small marks indicating punctuation and reading order.²¹⁷ Only later did *kuntenbon* begin to reliably indicate pronunciation.

²¹⁵ *Kanbun*, often referred to as Classical Japanese, draws from elements exemplified by all three of Yasumaro's written styles.

²¹⁶ Seeley (1991), 60.

²¹⁷ The word order in Japanese is SOV, while Chinese is SVO.

Each monastery's specific set of skills, phrases, and diacritic marks which constituted their specific literacy was likely to have been drawn from shared experiences, speech patterns, and pronunciations among the monks. Taken alongside the *Kojiki's* introduction and the records of hybrid texts in temples, one can expect that small, close groups who share experiences are likely to develop their own terms and references, creating a unique set of interpretive allusions known only to a select few. For Monasteries and Ō no Yasumaro, this was an issue: they were attempting to make reading coherent for a number of people. In reverse, however, when a number of people are reading a text the acknowledgement of multiple literacies can be used to convey a message to many but have it understood by only a few. I will return to this in the discussion of texts as public and private spheres on social networks.

Before 900, all *kuntenbon* markers are exclusively in Buddhist works,²¹⁸ but their use spread from sutras to other scholarly Chinese texts.²¹⁹ By the middle of the tenth century *katakana* began to appear outside academic works in poems, indicating that the script had gained usage as a shorthand way of writing Japanese.²²⁰ *Hiragana*, a cursive script developed from Chinese characters, began to appear in the late ninth century. Many of the early examples of *hiragana* come from informal documents like private letters and inscriptions on fans.²²¹

The spread of both Chinese characters and the two syllabaries outside of religious and scholarly milieu can be attributed, in part, to the first of many subsequent government movements to reform writing. The first major reformation movement began around the end of the seventh century in conjunction with political tensions at home and abroad. As political unrest in Japan appeared alongside budding overseas conflicts with Tang dynasty (618-907) China and

²¹⁸ Seeley (1991), 62; and Kornicki (2001), 2 and 98.

²¹⁹ I am greatly simplifying the development of *katakana* and *kutenbon*. For a more detailed discussion of the subtleties of development and the distinction between the two, please refer to Seeley's *History of Writing in Japan*.

²²⁰ Seeley (1991), 63.

²²¹ Seeley (1991), 72.

its Korean ally, Silla (668–935), Japan’s sovereign embarked on a widespread campaign of administrative reform. This reform pushed the Yamato emperor’s to initiate programs intended to create a more centralized regime, a proposition which required scribes.²²² But it was not just a desire to protect Japanese interests against nearby foreign polities which made reading and writing of interest to Japan’s rulers. China’s cultural influence remained a driving force. Consequently the Taika Reform 大化 (645-649) created a state which mirrored a Chinese style government, prompting the need for inventories, trade records, and family registers. These new institutions required a large number of literate officials; figures which, at that moment, were scarce. To fill the need for administrators the reform included measures to found a school, called the *Daigakuryū* 大学流 (literally, “Current of Great Learning,” an allusion to the influential Confucian classic “The Great Learning”) during the reign of emperor Tenchi (661-672). The main texts for learning in this school were of Chinese origin: the *Lunyu* 論語 (The Analects) and the *Xiao jing* 孝經 (Classic of Filial Piety). Newly formed legal codes also drew on texts originating from China; mostly inspired (or borrowed) from the Tang legal codes.²²³

The political conditions which surrounded the writing reformation are important. First, the ability to write was now not only linked to social rank; it was linked to a schooling system which was sponsored by a governing body. The process of learning to write included the reproduction of a Japanese-styled-Chinese governing body as well as an engagement with books of religious and moral tenors. The information within these texts, especially within the Classic of Filial Piety, denotes behaviors appropriate for men and women. Concerns entwining gender and perceptions of suitable reading material continue into the future. As we shall see shortly with the creation of women’s reading shelves in Edo bookstores, as the contents of famous manuscripts

²²² Lurie (2007), 92.

²²³ Seeley (1991), 39-40. The Tang Legal codes were a combination of Confucian morals and Legalist terms of rule.

become well known in the community, reading material being held in the hand has the capacity not only to reflect a meaning exchange between author and reader, but from outside observers upon the moral character of the reader. The denotation of moral character by different forms of literacy remains pertinent for writing online. With the tenor of an urban legend, gentlemen youth in the Tokyo area discuss the appropriateness of approaching the opposite sex online: texts take positions in sexing morality.

Mokkan: Examples of the Spread of Early Writing

The success of this push for more literate people to read and write is best seen in the recent archeological finds of *mokkan* 木簡.²²⁴ *Mokkan* are wood tags which vary in size: from luggage tags, to storehouse shipping records, to roadside signposts, these wood and ink tags demonstrate extensive administrative record keeping, and the possibility of widespread writing and reading skills. *Mokkan* were used alongside paper documents in Japan.²²⁵ Unlike paper, wooden tags represent a material which was easy to make as well as reusable (one could erase words by shaving the wood).²²⁶ One telling *mokkan* was found in 1969 along an old road of Heijou, Nara's capital. Dated to the early ninth century, the *mokkan* was stuck in the ground next to the road to serve as a public notice: there was a lost bay stallion roaming about the area. David Lurie notes that this sign is "not unlike lost pet signs fastened to telephone poles in

²²⁴ 100,000 tablets were discovered in late 1980s in Nara, at the site of early eighth-century mansion of the political figure named Prince Nagaya (684-729) (Lurie 2007, 99).

²²⁵ Lurie (2007), 96.

²²⁶ Lurie (2007), 97.

contemporary cities (though a ‘lost car’ sign, were there such a thing, would be a better parallel).”²²⁷ Lurie continues:

In addition to lost and found notices, a variety of doodles, memos, good luck charms, and so on, reveal a thriving written culture, full of interesting and often unexpectedly familiar objects and practices. But such artifacts are also a window on the functioning of writing itself in this society: clearly, that someone took the trouble to write and position by the side of a road sign like that quoted above evinces faith in the power of writing to communicate with significant numbers of anonymous passerby. Viewed in terms of the overall population, most of whom were subsistence farmers, the number of those who could have read such a sign must have been negligible. In the area around the capitals, however, with their concentration of government offices and centers of religious learning, the ability to read messages of this sort was clearly widespread enough for it to make sense to address signs to “the various people coming and going” on the road.

Lurie, 2007: 102-103.

Thus while Chinese might still have been used exclusively in realm of the aristocrats, daily doodling and hybrid form messages about lost horses had come into use by the some members of the general public.²²⁸

²²⁷ Lurie (2007), 102.

²²⁸ There is a debate surrounding the percentage of the population who could or could not read and write at any given time, see: Kornicki and Rubinger (2001); Rubinger (1990, 2000, 2007); and Seeley (1991). My estimation of some reading members in many wide-spread communities is as early as the seventh century (not every person, but that every community had a person who had this skill) has been influenced by Lurie’s work (Lurie 2007, 94-97).

Results of the Takai Reform: Changes and Stabilities

The administrative changes which rendered the reading of *mokkan* possible represent a monumental rupture in writing as it was, and the spread of literate people had a broad effect upon Japanese culture. The production of trade records, family registers, and *mokkan* required the spread of scribes, and these authors and their technical mediums were catalytic charges in Japanese society. The Takai Reform produced the name of *Nihon* 日本 as the Japanese state, a name which may mark the beginning of the growth of a national consciousness. Even while writing reform was explicitly concerned with the governing of *Nihon*, the continuing influence of the wider East Asian world in fertilizing Japanese literacy cannot be underplayed. For such seedlings this program was the first to emphasize reading and writing as a resource of a burgeoning polity.²²⁹ As Lurie describes, “In less than a century, government offices, court salons, great religious institutions, and the residences of high nobility became the setting of a vibrant world of libraries and scriptoria. Most of the books that made up this world were texts imported from Sui—and then Tang—China, and from the Three Kingdoms of Korea, or domestic copies thereof.”²³⁰ Chinese histories, poetry, medical texts, astrology, and Buddhist texts unfolded into the greater Japanese consciousness.²³¹

The influences of international connections are clear in Japan’s first major texts: history and poetry collections written during the seventh century. The two historical texts are the aforementioned *Kojiki*, and *Nihon Shoki* 日本書紀 (The Chronicles of Japan); and the two poetry

²²⁹ Lurie (2007), 92.

²³⁰ Lurie (2007), 93.

²³¹ The influence of general Chinese writing practices may be seen in the materiality of these texts in many ways. Most notably, the material used to create all these manuscripts was paper (rather than being composed on wood or bamboo strips) which had become popular in China for bound editions since the mid-second century C.E. (Seeley 1991, 9).

collections are *Kaifūsō* 懷風藻 (Fond Recollections of Poetry) and *Man'yōshū* 萬葉集 (Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves).²³² These manuscripts incorporate both old narrative convention and new expectations of (and from) readers.

While Ō no Yasumaro was concerned about the ability of his audience to reading the characters in the *Kojiki*, such concessions were not overt in the *Nihon Shoki*. The *Nihon Shoki* was written as a demonstration of Japan's cultural prowess. This message was primarily created through documenting Japanese achievements; accomplishments which have an eerie resemblance to exploits documented in China.²³³ While the *Nihon Shoki* meant to represent Japan's triumphs in history and mythology, much of the manuscript would have seemed familiar to Chinese scholars. Written primarily in Chinese with a few hybrid and Japanese orthography passages for local songs, the organization of the *Nihon Shoki* not only models Chinese histories. The *Nihon Shoki* also unabashedly reproduces two famous Chinese works: the *Yiwen leiju* (Categorical Collection of Literature)²³⁴ and *Wen xuan* (Literary Selections).²³⁵

Describing the meanings found in the practice of borrowing or adapting passages from earlier texts is not simple. The custom of using of older materials had a significant impact on literacy. Sources are arranged in a hierarchy of moral and cultural value, and so the recognition of lines from texts carries weight established within the borrowed source.²³⁶ Therefore both the

²³² Lurie (2007), 94.

²³³ Seeley (1991), 47-48.

²³⁴ A compilation completed by Tang dynasty calligrapher and scholar Ouyang Xun (557-638).

²³⁵ A collection of classical poetry and prose (Han and Jin Dynasties).

²³⁶ Evidence for this can be found in *Dairies of Court Ladies of Old Japan*, translated by Kochi Doi and Annie Shepley Omori. In Murasaki Shikibu's diary, 紫式部日記 (*Murasaki Shikibu Nikki*), Murasaki's describes the contents of her apartment towards the end her life. She embarks upon a small dialog on female reading practices when she describes her books. I have provided the excerpt here, and the brackets in this quote represent information provided by the translator for clarity.

A pair of big bookcases have in them all the books they can hold. In one of them are placed old poems and romances. They are the homes of worms which come frightening us when we turn the pages, so none ever wish to read them. [Perhaps her own writings, she speaks so slightly of them.] As to the other cabinet,

current context of use and the previous source create potential meaning for these instances of new readings. This social value combines with the literal meaning of the words, providing an interpretive stimulus for both the author and the audience.²³⁷

Conclusions for Borrowed Manuscripts

The adaptation and borrowing present in manuscripts provides an important foundation for considerations surrounding digital, multi-authored texts found on Internet communication platforms. The theme of borrowing material will be elaborated in the next section. It is interesting to note, that many of my informants loved to share circulating references; and student linked popular memes, videos, pictures, and stories on pages and in tweets. My informants also shared such illustrated texts by passing their device around a group of friends. Nobuko, introduced in Chapter I, was especially fond of the *bananaman owarai* バナナマンお笑い

since the person who places his own books [there] no hand has touched it [her husband was a scholar in Chinese literature. He died in 1001, it is now 1008]. When I am bored to death I take out one or two of them; then my maids gather around me and say: “your life will not be favored with old age if you do such a thing! Why do you read Chinese? Formerly even the reading of the sutras was not encouraged for women.” They rebuke me in the shade [i.e. behind my back]. I have heard of it and have wished to say, “it is far from certain that he who does no forbidden thing enjoys a long life,” but it would be a lack of reserve to say it [to the maids]. Our deeds vary with our age and with the individual. Some are proud [to read books], other look over old cast-away writings because they are bored with having nothing to do. It would not be becoming of such a one to chatter away about religious thoughts, noisily shaking the rosary. I feel this, and before my women keep myself from doing what otherwise I could easily do. But after all, when I was among the ladies of the Court I did not say what I wanted to say either, for it was useless to talk with those who do not understand one and troublesome to talk with those who criticize from a feeling of superiority. Doi, 1920[1008-1010]: 136-137

Here the concern was a woman reading Chinese, which was considered a vulgar practice. This eventually crossed over into speech, where court women avoided Chinese vocabulary, leading to the formation of a distinct “women’s speech” (Endo 2008). Value judgments on book choice have been explored in seventeenth century Japan by Kornicki (2005).

²³⁷ Kornicki notes that while the names of *waka* poets (men) were an important aspect of texts during the Heian period, the poetry written by women was often attached to only their family names. Kornicki interprets this as evidence that women’s writing reflected their enclosed existence behind screens and in carriages: it may have been presumed to be “private.” (Kornicki 2001, 226).

(Banana man comedy), and she and her friends would deliver lines—both in person and in text—to convey feelings about occurring events. She explained that it was fun to see who could make new jokes using *bananaman*. The authorship of the message is of little concern: it is the person who circulates the material with clever new twists, who garnishes the social credit.

Evaluating Early Practices of Literacy

While a growing collection of literacy brought about *Mokkan* tags and greater collections of histories, morality texts, and poetry, there are few surviving materials from early Japan. The practices which surround reading and writing thus can only first begin to come into detailed focus from the Heian period onward, where expanding materials alongside more enduring preservation techniques allow for a more accurate analysis. Keeping in mind the hierarchical feudal structure of the Japanese society during these earlier periods, the records demonstrate the creation the interactional spaces of communication in the rituals, authorship, and ownership surrounding texts. Written genres in poetry, deemed *shiteki* (public) and *kōteki* (private) by historians use to classify texts, are deployed differently depending on the social status and gender of the individual. Drawing from famous literary examples as well as an extensive collection of letters from a governing official, this section demonstrates literacy as desires to reflect moral status in letter writing to the ability to reflect rank and power by making requests using references to highly esoteric poems. Engagements with reading materials have very different conditions of expression and modes of practice. Yet while there are many forms of literacy, all remain influenced by variables discussed in the introduction and earlier historical times. Gender,

politics, religion, and the technical features of writing and signing documents all remain requirements of constructing a text that has meaning for the audience and the author.

Blurring Authorship, Circulating *Shiteki* and *Kōteki* Texts

An example of borrowing materials from the Heian period (794-1185) can be found in Sei Shōnagon's 清少納言 *Makura no Sōshi* 枕草子 (The Pillow Book, 1002). The *Makura no Sōshi* contains pieces written explicitly to entertain others (the various lists in this manuscript being the most notable in this respect), poetry, and personal experiences composed in a dairy-like narratives. In an entry which caught the attention of her critics both in her own and rival courts, Shōnagon describes an instance in which she recognized a Chinese poem. This entry begins with a short description of Sei Shōnagon and other ladies in waiting sitting with Empress Teishi around a brazier. The Empress asks, "Tell me, Shōnagon, how is the snow on Hsiang-lu Peak?" Shōnagon responds to the imagery by requesting a nearby maid to raise the blinds in the room. Shōnagon relates that the Empress smiled, happy that Shōnagon had recognized the line as well as its implicit corresponding request.²³⁸

The recognition of this poem acts as an index pointing to more than just an open window. This is an example of extralinguistic communication, a moment where the situation of an utterance places it within a complex dialogic relationship with other utterances, even those that are written.²³⁹ In other words, at this time the intention and meaning of the poem momentarily becomes submerged under the current social context. The Empress's choice in using poetry to make a request is, in fact, doing double work for her status. The more polite and

²³⁸ Sei Shōnagon, *The Pillow Book*. From passage 157 entitled; "One Day, When the Snow Lay Thick on the Ground," 241-242.

²³⁹ Bakhtin (1993).

high ranking a woman is, the more this status becomes marked in the language itself.²⁴⁰ In this case, the ability to soften a request for action in a perlocutionary statement is the epitome of refinement for this Japanese speaker.²⁴¹ The Empress is requesting an action in the most polite way possible through an indirect speech act encoded in a poem. Shōnagon's ability to understand Empress Teishi's illocutionary intent allows the ladies to enact gender, knowledge (as literary prowess), and moral values in their identities.²⁴² At this moment, the poem is neither Chinese nor authored by another person: the poem is by the Empress and by Shōnagon. The meaning is a mirror not only of events in the original story, but by Shōnagon's actions the poem's meaning is re-contextualized to fit around the Empresses' brazier. This interpretation is validated by Shōnagon's accusations of snobbery against Shōnagon by some of her contemporaries.

The reality that the holder of a text (i.e., the one who wields it in speech or form) overrides authorship can also be demonstrated in Ki no Tsurayuki's 紀貫之 *Tosa Nikki* (Tosa Diary), written around 934. The *Tosa Nikki* looms large in modern Japanese literary history not only as the progenitor of memoir literature in Japan, but also because although the author is a man, the work is written in *kana* (which was often associated with women's language at the time) rather than in Chinese characters.²⁴³ While there are many discussions of why this may be, the interpretation most resounding with our discussion of literacy can be found in a 2005 article by Gustav Heldt. Heldt argues that the diary, and the poetry contained within, reflects how a

²⁴⁰ This remains true in Japan today. For an example of class and the use of honorifics in Japan, see: Okamoto and Shibamoto-Smith (2008).

²⁴¹ Bachnik (1994b), 8-15.

²⁴² For writing on perlocutionary, locutionary, and illocutionary meanings in statements, see: Searle (1968). For the impact of these statements in writing, see: Bazerman (2004b).

²⁴³ Tomiko Yoda cautions against a strict correspondence of *kana* to female gender, demonstrating that both men and women wrote *waka* poetry in *kana* at this time. Instead, texts are inflected by gender in distinctive properties of female writing, making it possible to see gender markings of a narratorial agent in negative terms; what the author leaves out of the text (Yoda 2004, 94-95).

Heian audience would construct meaning from an entanglement of property rights, gender, and expectations in private and public discourse.

Contemporary literary historians often categorize written materials in terms of “private” *shiteki* and “public” *kōteki* forms of discourse in the Heian period, a point I will elaborate more on shortly. Focusing on the author-ownership aspects of texts, Heldt finds that gender and the social status of the writer shift the ownership of the text from the author to a household, making it difficult to concretely assign texts to these categories. Even if the diary was marked as a *shiki* 私記 (personal record) or *watakushi nikki* 私日記 (personal diary) and organized around the life of a particular individual, they were not deemed private in the contemporary sense of the word. The manuscripts were often held by the household under which the individual identified.²⁴⁴ These texts circulated among the members of house, becoming common historical documents to attest to the family’s past.²⁴⁵ The poetry in the *Tosa Nikki* further emphasizes that authorship is not the defining element for ownership. Many of the poems recorded in this diary are borrowed from anonymous sources. The poetic works are credited to the diary and its keeper, a process which “continually complicates the relationship between poet and poem.”²⁴⁶

When considering a male author possibly writing as a female narrator, various literary hermeneutics are required to understand the diary. The work is at once travel log and a social commentary. While men had the authority and administrative powers of household property,²⁴⁷ it was the women who were the chief producers of material goods, “especially in the form of robes

²⁴⁴ Kornicki and Rubinger point to an overlap in the assumed public nature of documents created by an individual during their life. In a particularly compelling question they seem to extend the debate surrounding to *Tosa Diary* in writing of the late Edo and Meiji period: “The tangled relationship between literacy and privacy in Japan also calls for exploration: did letter writing, diary keeping, and autobiographies for family consumption provide outlets for a literate private life, or do they, too, betray an intrusive consciousness of the state?” (Kornicki and Rubinger 2001, 390).

²⁴⁵ Heldt (2005), 12.

²⁴⁶ Heldt (2005), 26.

²⁴⁷ High ranking court women could also inherit property in Heian Japan.

and other textile goods used as gifts and currency by their husbands and male relatives.”²⁴⁸ As Carol Cavanaugh notes in her study of weaving as a reflection of power in Heian court life, ownership of wealth was primarily patrilineal, but the possession of the knowledge for producing it was matrilineal.²⁴⁹ Poems were like clothes. They were circulated, exchanged, and worn by different people whose relation to one another was defined through different roles within consumption and production. Like the circulation of a diary, the meaning of the text shifted according to the context within which it was used. As Heldt demonstrates, “[g]ender in the diary is thus a function of a commentary in critical ways on the fact that authorship of a text is determined by the identity of its owner, not its writers.”²⁵⁰

This system of reference-borrowing and adaption of texts continues to play an important role in Japanese literacy. Throughout time, even in later periods where writing practices become more aligned with conceptions of an author’s ownership of materials, meaning making through allusion to previous materials in a new context is an important aspect of literacy in Japan.²⁵¹

Outside Gilded Halls

Returning briefly to our historical narrative, it is noteworthy that both *Makura no Sōshi* and the *Tosa Nikki* are works created for and within ruling aristocratic families and the imperial court. What of literacy in the general public? Japan was changing at this point in time, both in

²⁴⁸ Heldt (2005), 30.

²⁴⁹ Cavanaugh (1996), 601. This study is well paired with Leacock’s *Myths of Male Dominance*.

²⁵⁰ Heldt (2005), 8.

²⁵¹ This is not to say that borrowing materials does not pose problems, especially in terms of identity. In a cultural climate where being “Japanese” was becoming defined by being different from those abroad, borrowing a writing system (rather than creating one’s own) could be conceived of as a cultural failing. It is interesting to note that there was a movement in the thirteenth century when the Shinto scholar Urabe Kanekata 卜部兼方 claimed that Japan had its own writing system, called the *Kamiyo no moji* 神代文字 (the script of the gods) before the scribes from Korea arrived. During the Edo era scholars in the nativist camp attempted to support these claims with forged samples of this system (Seeley 1991, 3-5; and Kornicki 2001, 269).

political rule and in religious fervor. After a series of revolts, uprisings, and military struggles for power resulted in the fall of Fujiwara clan (who controlled the imperial family), political power came to rest in regionally powerful families allied with warlords. Those who had previously held power—the emperor and the court—were reduced to performing ceremonies in the capital. This shift in political power did not hamper the spread of the written word. By the end of the twelfth century the warrior government established its headquarters in Kamakura, and a renewed desire to improve literacy among ordinary people acted as an enzyme for further development of Chinese Studies. Sino-Japanese vocabulary increased in everyday language and, alongside the ample use of smaller sized *kana furigana* alongside characters, texts became accessible to a greater number of readers.²⁵² These readers were disproportionately male; with the ruling class being dominated by men and a new form of Buddhism taking hold, women's status dropped considerably during the thirteenth century.²⁵³

Male or female, not much is known about the numbers of people who could read and write during the Kamakura era (1185-1333), and records which explicitly link the general population with reading and writing are virtually nonexistent. What evidence does exist are records of receipts and family registers, where individual signatures are gathered. The ability to read was an important aspect of social life: records, orders, and receipts were a regular feature of daily interaction. Even the widespread formation of temple schools (*terakoya* 寺子屋) at the start of the Edo era do not guarantee a population which can render writing legible: most of the schools taught writing with copybooks, and thus the ability to sign one's name does not indicate that an individual could read, or write at an administrators' level.²⁵⁴ While documents had long ago crept into daily life as important aspects of administration and features of the ruling class,

²⁵² Seeley (1991), 100-102; and Berry (2006), 15.

²⁵³ Endo (2008), 11.

²⁵⁴ Rubinger (1990), 602.

most people did not keep their own records. Instead they paid scribes, local offices and priests to conduct and preserve necessary administrative forms, stamping them with *inbanjō* 印判状 (familial seals). In other words, the circulation of official documents did not require the ability to write one's signature, let alone be able to read the document.

These historical conditions have an important place in my analysis of literacy: the examples provided here are skewed, leaning towards those who had economic and ruling power. It is only in later that texts and concerns over the widening availability of books which provide a framework for considering the particular and diverse forms of literacy practiced by disenfranchised groups.

Signature, Stamps, and Rules of Correspondence

Continuing the exploration of literacy within public identities in positions of social power, I turn to Kitanomandokoro Nei (1548-1624), the wife of ruler and unifier Toyoyomi Hideyoshi (1536/7-1598). All of Nei's correspondence is thought to have survived, and this wealth of materials represents standard types of letters and decrees, all of which follow the formats advised as communicative guidelines by books on *shosatsurei* 書札礼 (the rules of correspondence).²⁵⁵ Existing since the Muromachi period (1336-1603), the rules of correspondence were created to ease relationships between the status of different feudal lords (*Daimyō* 大名). Correspondence between these households needed to acknowledge the established hierarchies, and authors commonly used extreme politeness when addressing the recipient by name. The name could be substituted by the person's rank or occupation, and the use of suffixes like "-sama" or "-domo"

²⁵⁵ Kitagawa (2009), 1-9.

reflected relationships between sender and the recipient. Finally, the end of each letter required a formulaic, and often long, closing phrase.²⁵⁶

Nei undoubtedly had more power than other women authors at the time. Although Nei wrote using the feminine *hiragana*, her increased social standing is corroborated by Nei's rhetorical choices in her formal letters, which stylistically—in tone and vocabulary—match her male rather than female counterparts.²⁵⁷ Her masculine style suited her position: there are many instances where Nei Kitanomandokoro stamped the imperial seal in place of her husband. Her approval of documents, correspondence, and household ledgers substituted for Hideyoshi's own writing while he was away.²⁵⁸ Nei's actions are part of a ritual practice known as *migawari*, or identity surrogacy. Like *aisatsu*, *migawari* is a practice which enables social exchange to be conducted in a smooth manner. *Migawari* is slightly different, however, in that it marks the status of an individual. The higher the status, the greater the need for, and number of, surrogates discharging duties.²⁵⁹ The conventions represented in Nei's letters and diaries reflects a general etiquette in writing as well as the expectation of an authoritative substitute acting in the name of the household. In Tomoko Kitagawa's review of Nei's correspondence, Kitagawa categorizes Nei's letters into two kinds: those with signatures (*hanmotsu* 判物) and those with seals.²⁶⁰

While the rules of correspondence dictated proper titling of the recipient and opening and closing

²⁵⁶ Kitagawa (2009), 24.

²⁵⁷ Kitagawa (2009), 27.

²⁵⁸ Kitagawa (2009). There is evidence to suggest a longstanding consultation between Nei and Hideyoshi, especially in positions when Nei would act as his surrogate for official decrees. Carol Gluck interestingly pointed out that the removal of the emperor from contact with all but the highest social in the court through the use of surrogates for messages, speech, and audience was one element which helped create the mystique surrounding the position (Gluck 1985).

²⁵⁹ Lebra (2007), 127-142.

²⁶⁰ Kitagawa compiled and analyzed Nei's correspondence in an effort to balance the historical emphasis on a woman's position as a wife. She rightly points out that while compilations of women authors are rare in this period, there are substantive records of women as individual writers. There is, for example, a group of writing samples by women in many exhibition collections, including "Women in the Warring States" (*Sengoku no josei tachi* 戦国の女性たち).

phrases, analysis of Nei's letters demonstrates another condition of expression: Nei choose between *hanmotsu* and seals as delineations in levels of respect. The use of *hanmotsu* represented a different kind of respect in a letter, a respect which was not required by the rules of correspondence. "[W]ith the senders' own signatures, the letters were considered to be well-crafted, and as a result they were valued more by the recipients. The *inbanjō* was considered a simpler version of *hanmotsu*, because its form emerged in the late Muromachi period. Letters, which used to all be *hanmotsu*, were mostly changed into *inbanjō* during this time."²⁶¹ Historian Ishimoda Shō argues that the meaning of a seal or a signature developed out of the context of their use. The tendency to standardize official documents using *inbanjō* minimized the personality of the sender and legitimized the documents.²⁶² *Hanmotsu* became a mark of personal—and sometimes intimate—regard.

Conclusions for Conditions of Expression and Modes of Practice: Early Literacy

There are a number of analytic threads between the *Makura no Sōshi*, *Tosa Nikki*, and Nei's correspondence. Most apparent is the relationship of texts to the relationships of people. The person holding the text remains in the makeup of any social group in Japan, the written word thus dwells in the contingency logic of the Japanese individualized self which consists of the social components of the circumstance. In this fashion Nei was able to negotiate the devalued status of women during her time: her writing was coauthored, her voice was co-constructed and re-constructed with masculine authority. Nei stamps in place of her husband, just as Shōnagon orders the blind opened in the presence of the Empress. Shōnagon's work, too, is co-constructed

²⁶¹ Kitagawa (2009), 19-20.

²⁶² Ishimoda (1967). I am grateful for the editing and reading exchange of Nicki Kittermeth for guiding my reading of this text.

with the ladies of the court and re-constructed to give her voice airs: her writing is a reflection of the wit in the Empress and her selected Court. And the *Tosa Nikki* wears the household poetics as one bears the transmission of other important knowledge, such as weaving. Texts can never simply float by the side of a single individual in Japan; they are never an exclusive dialog between the author and the reader. Texts remain with their people in a nexus of an ever shifting network of relationships.

To construct literacy in a network of human relationships, authors and readers alike establish ground rules for writing and reading. In line with the bounds of civility discussed in Ikegami's work in Chapter I, such ground rules form public and private spheres in Japan. The vocabulary and grammar which mark the *shiteki* and *kōteki* forms of historical texts can provide further insight into historic literacy when placed alongside the implications of reference-borrowing and engendered writing forms, the praxis which surrounds the circulation of references to and the authorship of a text. In poetry, *shiteki* and *kōteki* is an aspect of word choice and genre. Shōnagon's poetry is a descendant from previous poets, both male and female. From both the Asuka (592-710) and Nara periods, poems contained forms and categories, relating to formal language for public recitals and informal language for private events. Such rules, however, were not set in stone: the position of the speaker, such as the social heights found in Empress Teishi's Court, can make formal speech an aspect of informal interactions. The slip between formal speech, as in the Empress's request to Shōnagon, and the experiences produced and recorded for the Court in Shōnagon's *Makura no Sōshi* (which contains both formal poetic genres as well as informal amusing lists) makes a borrowed poem stand as the position of the speaker, creating both *kōteki* and *shiteki* aspects within a single literary work.²⁶³

²⁶³ Rüttermann (2006), 69-72.

In order to understand how an audience was able to understand texts with multiple authors and roles, it is important to consider the practice and learning of how to write. An example from the eighteenth century depicts writing in *kōteki* and *shiteki* as the use of ritualized behaviors: there were sets of responses that were deemed morally appropriate to different forms of correspondence. The spread of elegant (which can be thought of as the language spoken during Empress Teishi's court) language and writing customs into common use was an important source for the rituals surrounding writing.²⁶⁴ Increasingly important to individuals of low social status who strove to mimic the morality associated with high rank, the need to write and respond to correspondence became an area of failure or success.²⁶⁵ The rules of correspondence included adaptations of semi-Sinographic masculine styles and opening and closing phrases. The use of these phrases and styles made letter writing easier for the general public to comprehend. To this end, a highly coveted set of rules and etiquette manuals were circulated. Townspeople of all classes and both sexes asked teachers for printed textbooks and letter-writing guides. The guides provided information that allowed authors to compose without the need to convey information other than their ability to properly reply.²⁶⁶

The same governing principles of ritual which continue to take place with *aisatsu* exchanges today were established for letter writing in etiquette manuals in the past. Contemporary texts, firmly grounded in a network of technical features and social connection, require their own *aisatsu*. As with the spread of written correspondence as letters in the eighteenth century, the spread of a new written correspondence in the twenty-first century is accompanied by etiquette manuals, demonstrated for Facebook in Illustration 1.1. Since the

²⁶⁴ Endo (2008), 9-14.

²⁶⁵ High rank could be due to success in economic, social, or religious circles. Rüttermann makes clear that letter writing was strongly associated with religious debates and the discourse of enlightenment at this time (Rüttermann 2006, 74-94).

²⁶⁶ Rüttermann (2006), 96.

platform is multifaceted, Facebook has garnered a manual for different people: mothers, businesses, clubs, and a generic “how to” all done the tables. It is customary to learn the rituals deemed appropriate for correspondence.

Knowledge of rituals and customs surrounding literacy, then, can be understood as a tool for success. In both the *Tosa Nikki* and Shōnagon’s recording of events, the author was a personage in relatively high ranked position. Both authors, by being aware of the circulation of their text and calling upon conventions, have the ability to blur *kōteki* and *shiteki* in one text. While the ability to construct texts in both styles has always been problematic, both texts include doubts and slights of the author’s character by readers within the household, it can be said that constructing contemporary correspondence contains the potential for even greater suspect material; the number of network connections have grown exponentially.

The Reading Public and Cultural Ideologies of Value

A general reading level in Japan is indicated by the Edo period (1600-1868) through the use of the phonetic scripts. *Katakana* and *hiragana* represent an alternative to difficult Chinese characters, and their use may depict a method of writing external to formal records. There were various ways to read and write in Edo Japan, and each method correlated strongly with gender, employment, prestige, and pleasure.²⁶⁷ As Richard Rubinger notes:

The widespread diffusion of popular literature in this phonetic script among men and women, both in town and in the countryside, suggests that *kana* literacy was widespread.

²⁶⁷ Kornicki and Rubinger (2001), 387.

The existence of the *kana* script suggests a broad range of intermediary between total illiteracy and full literacy, complicating the task of categorizing people at one end or the other of the spectrum.

Rubinger, 1990: 603.

No debate greater demonstrates the link between gender, employment, prestige and pleasure than the seventeenth century debates surrounding what was appropriate for women to read. The use of phonetic scripts created a publishing boom: alongside travel guides, maps, and memoirs were editions of fiction and collections of poetry.²⁶⁸ And with time some of these classic texts, such as Shikibu Murasaki's *Genji Monogatari* 源氏物語 (The Tale of Genji),²⁶⁹ came into the public realm in three ways: 1) complete reproduction through moveable woodblock texts, in which the meaning of some passages might require outside instruction; 2) illustrated woodblock editions, requiring readers to have acquired some schooling for reading and produced in large numbers; and 3) texts equipped not only with images but also with commentaries and digests.²⁷⁰ This last category has been described as “access[able] for the

²⁶⁸ Berry's *Japan in Print* uses the cartographic techniques in printing maps, travel guides and travel memoirs as guidelines to measure the growth of a national consciousness in Japan. She demonstrates that “[w]hen translating space into text... the cartographic technique can serve map makers only after they have constructed spatial classifications—or what I call spatial politics. And these classifications are not necessarily transferable from one space (such as a proprietary estate) to another (such as a city or a province or a country.) Hence mapmaking will not become generalized in a society until the ideological work of classifying many different kinds of space has been undertaken successfully” (Berry 2006, 59). There are many records which survive from this later period, making the reconstruction of history a combination of interviews and primary documents; see: Partner (2004).

²⁶⁹ Murasaki Shikibu wrote the *Genji Monogatari* as a Lady-in-Waiting for Imperial court in the eleventh century.

²⁷⁰ Peter Kornicki (2001) notes that Western expectations of a linear progression in the mechanics of writing—ink brush to moveable press to word processor—are unfounded. Japan had a printing press during the eight century, and it was used sporadically until the eleventh century, primarily for ritual purposes. Calligraphy and the woodblock press were the favored form of printing during this type, and continue to be held in special regard today. This may be because hand copying a text (*Shahon* 写本, hand-copied scriptures) was and is a form of devotion and a demonstration of loyalty and admiration to a lady or lord, and the woodblock press allowed the artistry of a calligrapher's hand to be placed within the frames of an image.

untrained.”²⁷¹ The greater accessibility of the *Genji Monogatari* posed a problem for moralists. The illustrated version was particularly troubling, for it provided shortened textual content, with the woodblock carver fitting parts of the narrative alongside the appropriate image. Such annotated illustrations were seen as lower form of reading, an amusement (*nagusami* 慰み), because they were thought to inaccurately depict the moral connotations of a particular scene.²⁷²

Commentaries were also problematic despite their inclusion of the full text. “Once printed commentaries on the text became available, complete with philological crutches for those who needed them, it was the first time possible to imagine reading *Genji* without a teacher.”²⁷³ The lack of a teacher meant the reader could choose their own terms in the text to focus on. Women, many scholars feared, would become accustomed to (or even desire) lewd behavior after reading the *Genji Monogatari*.²⁷⁴ Similar to the ways to read social position in the characters inscribed on the back of Bronze mirrors and the *aisatsu* opening and closing phrases of letters, placing a book in the hand had implications for one’s identity. Women wishing to represent strong moral character were encouraged to limit their reading to a new class of books, *jōsho/nyōsho* 女書 (Women’s books).²⁷⁵ These books, like the *Four Books for Women*,²⁷⁶ letter

²⁷¹ Kornicki (2005), 150-151.

²⁷² Kornicki (2005), 171.

²⁷³ Kornicki (2005), 149.

²⁷⁴ Kornicki (2005), 152 and 155. This was despite the author’s gender. Many opponents of these books critiqued Murasaki for “having the body of a woman” and therefore being possessed by *kōshoku* 好色 (lewd or erotic qualities): 160.

²⁷⁵ Kornicki (2005), 160.

²⁷⁶ The titles and contents of the four books for women are descriptive of gender roles at this time: *Women's Admonitions* (which includes the chapters “Humble Yielding,” “Husband and Wife,” and “Reverent Submission”), *Women's Analects* (which includes chapters on “Serving the Husband,” “Training Sons and Daughters,” “Managing the House,” “Waiting on Guests”), *Domestic Lessons* (which includes chapters “Virtuous Nature,” “Scrupulous Conduct,” “Dealing with In-Laws”), and *Sketch of a Model for Women* (“Models of Motherhood,” “Filial Actions,” and “Chastity Unto Death”).

writing manuals and etiquette guides, often occupied their own shelves in bookstores, separate from other materials.²⁷⁷

Morality and Parallel Publics

Moral debates about exactly what was proper to read were common during the Edo period.

Developed from the Japan's classical era with the emergence of *emaki-mono* 絵巻物, or illustrated narrative picture scrolls, the integration of visual and written texts are a longstanding trend in Japanese literature.²⁷⁸ Other forms of woodblock prints, like *ukiyō-e* 浮世絵 (Pictures of the Floating World), and small fliers discussing controversial events in the lives of elites, *Kawaraban*, were censored by Edo officials, leading to their development—and the development of other such undesirable texts and images—to take place behind the scenes.²⁷⁹ As described by Elizabeth Berry:

One public sphere—of normal politics in the village, dissent in the academy, information and instruction in the book market—operated within the stretching boundaries of the polity. [And a] parallel sphere—of drama, fiction, satiric painting, and poetry—explored the underside and outside of a world that did not reliably make sense. The chief subjects were sex, money, and honor, treated repeatedly in situations meant to disturb.

²⁷⁷ Kornicki (2005), 160.

²⁷⁸ Ekkehard (2005). It is interesting to note that Woodblock artists borrowed materials as often as poets did by utilizing intertextual references through depictions of famous places and passages from the literary canon, incorporating pictorial quotations from other visual media, and drawing on folklore and regional culture when creating their prints (Ehmcke 2005).

²⁷⁹ Nakane (1990), 5-6; and Akai (1990), 179. For a discussion of *kawaraban*, see: Linhart (2005). *Ukiyō-e* works are diverse, making it difficult to define the boundaries to this genre. Timothy Screech comments: “The types of literature circulating in the Floating World are collectively called *gesaku*. The term is difficult to translate, but it largely refers to a textuality of comedy where the humor springs from a jostling together of discrete and non-congruent concerns. It is the literature of ‘play’ (*asobi*)” (Screech 2002, 24).

Berry, 1998:154.

The parallel public sphere consisted of behaviors and topics which did not, then, follow the general prescribed rituals of communication. This consistence of this parallel public sphere is important to note: the next two chapters explore the contemporary parallel public sphere which, though not a carbon copy, is maintained by the same design.²⁸⁰

The emergence of illustrated texts did not limit the use of complex characters to the highly educated. The intellectual climate placed heavy emphasis on Chinese, and so Chinese words and characters continued to be assimilated into daily life. Works composed by Ihara Saikaku 井原西鶴 (1642-1693), for example, contain many complex characters with small *furigana* characters running alongside the *kanji*.²⁸¹ Saikaku's work is demonstrative of the normative structure of writing at this time. Texts composed during the Edo era do not reflect Japanese as it was spoken. With a cultural emphasis on Chinese and the use of *furigana*, most texts of this period are hybrids, each following guidelines of different literary conventions and requiring the reader to do some mental rearranging of word order.²⁸²

Thus despite discussions surrounding the moral applicability of some subjects and the governmental prohibitions for certain materials, other technical features of the time, such as the continual use of complex characters and the rise of the phonetic system alongside the use of

²⁸⁰ Berry is arguing that the Tokugawa solution to problems was to separate off a public sphere which attended to the excessive physical passion, powerful emotions, and libertine excess most commonly found in "the private" sphere, but available in the pleasure and merchant quarters. She describes these two as contrasting: "The public was the locus of interdependence and value. The 'private' was its opposite, not its compliment. The private signified the violation of the collectivity through selfishness. It was the partisan, the divisive, vicious, and anti-social" (Berry, 1998, 154). The definition of public and private for this exploration does not fit within her argument, and I am not attributing any lewd or egotistical elements to individuals who partake in the parallel public.

²⁸¹ Seeley (1991). 129-133.

²⁸² Seeley (1991), 134.

characters, meant more people became readers.²⁸³ This was particularly troublesome for the enforcement of government bans on texts, because there was, at some level, no way to definitively control printed works. The Edo government dealt with the sudden information boom by creating a classification system.

The increase in a general literacy shifted the relationships of authors and readers to texts and audiences, and Edo government officials divided texts between moral poles for the audience: those that were deemed suitable, and those unsuitable (but still around and read).²⁸⁴ Choosing a text to read became a matter of participating in broader morals or deviating into self-serving curiosities and entertainments.²⁸⁵

Reading and the Creation of Modern People

Commodore Perry's 1854 forceful opening of Japanese ports to merchants beyond a small group of Dutch and Chinese tradesmen dramatically changed Japan. The changes introduced by opening ports were not only fiscal, they were cultural as well. The general public had a long-standing thirst for the exoticism that Western learning represented (the West was exclusively Dutch before the arrival of the Black Ships). The late Edo period saw the formation

²⁸³ There is a correlation between a rising readership and an increase in publishers and authors assertion of rights (fiscal ownership) to printed matter on the market (Kornicki 2001, 229). Authors also began to need to situate themselves in relation to the reader in a Chinese-style formulaic preface containing information like the family name of the author, the person for whom the work was commissioned, and the date of composition (230).

²⁸⁴ Berry (1998), 154.

²⁸⁵ Elizabeth Berry argues that this tacit compromise between the ruling and the artistic community was coded into the subjects addressed by artists: "In exchange for official tolerance, artists confined their implicit politics to the domain of human folly and private confusion. They honored the public-private divide, relegating to a fictive, alternative world the upheaval of the spirit." (Berry 1998, 155). While this may have been the rule of thumb for Nō plays and works circulated in large markets, I doubt that there were none who took up politics or crossed into moral grounds. Utagawa Kuniyoshi's (1798-1861) depiction of the pleasure quarters—an unlawful subject as prints of geisha and courtesans were banned in 1842—in his work *Sato suzume negura no kariyado* 里すずめ寝ぐらの仮有 (Village Sparrows: Temporary Shelter in the Nest), for example, pushed boundaries by painting the courtesan and their clients as sparrows rather than people (Kuniyoshi Utagawa exhibit held in the winter of 2012 at the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo).

of *Rangaku*, or the study of Western works and science. *Rangaku* relied on more than just foreign texts: both curios and foreign people were examined.²⁸⁶ Whatever the antecedent factors, the arrival of Western trade ushered in an era concerned with modernization; that is, the technical features in American and European life which marked a nation as having obtained modernity.²⁸⁷ Modernist reformers appeared in Japan. In the past, even the small presence of Dutch and Chinese people trading at port Nagasaki helped shift Japanese conceptions of civilized and barbarian. Dutch tradesmen appeared to be closer to civilized—that is, with the appearance of less spitting and more inhibitions around relieving oneself in public, behaviors recognized as more civilized in Japan—than the Chinese tradesmen.²⁸⁸ With the influx of a broader set of foreigners and international texts, new borrowed words appeared within forms of media borrowed from other nations: the first Japanese daily newspaper covering foreign and domestic news began in 1871: the *Yokohama Mainichi Shinbun* 横浜毎日新聞 (The Yokohama Daily News).²⁸⁹ Much as the format of the *Nihon Shoki* lent itself to the credibility of the Emperor

²⁸⁶ Screech (2002); and Keene (1952).

²⁸⁷ One marker of this “modernity” is the shift of emphasis on Chinese as an identity marker for intellectuals being transferred to an emphasis on English, French, and German (Kornicki 2001, 263). Alongside the nativist movements and the authoritative Western linguistics devaluing characters, Japan also harbored anti-Chinese sentiments, making character reform—or the potential removal of all *kanji* in favor of another system of writing—a difficult debate (Ueda 2008).

²⁸⁸ “On-site observation in Nagasaki yielded startling results as the ‘primitive’ and the ‘civilised’ switched places. Satou Narihiro, a botanist and temporarily in the service of the daimyo of Satsuma (a *han* not far from Nagasaki), recorded that, thanks to the presence of Europeans in the town, the behavior of ‘the Nanking people’ had finally begun to improve. Far from trickling down westward, culture, like an inverted hourglass, was gentrifying in the opposite direction” (Screech 2002, 35).

²⁸⁹ There were printed handbills commemorating social gathering and events circulated in the seventeenth century, called *yomiuri* 読売、(literally to read and sell) or *kawaraban* 瓦版 (literally tile-block printing, after the way the handbill was made). Before the formation of the *Yokohama Mainichi Shinbun* there were two other newspapers geared for the foreign population living in Yokohama. Moving his operation from Nagasaki in 1861, the Englishman Hansard moved his Nagasaki *Shipping List and Advertiser* to Yokohama and renamed it as the *Japan Herald*. In 1862, the Tokugawa shogunate began publishing the *Kampan Batabiya Shimbun*, a translated edition of a widely distributed Dutch government newspaper (exhibit on Charles Wirgman, the composer of *The Japan Punch*, held in the summer of 2011 at the Yokohama Museum of Art. Also see: Rogala 2004). While the museum exhibit and the *Mainichi Yokohama Shinbun* both credit the newspaper’s beginning in 1871, Christopher Seeley’s 1991 monograph *A History of Writing in Japan* credits the newspaper’s start in 1873.

Tenmu's reign, the establishment of the *Yokohama Mainichi Shinbun* lent the credibility of modernity to Japan.

Reading and writing proved to be a trouble spot to modernist reformers. The multitude of technical features of the language, as well as the varied styles in which texts were printed in Japan (books were available in Chinese, hybrid and katakana) appeared as a disjointed writing system to Western scholars. This, in turn, was used as evidence against Japan's consideration as modern world power. A discussion emerged on what action the state could take to remedy the perception of the writing system as undeveloped, and the newspaper began to print debates on language reform.²⁹⁰ A movement for *genbun itchi* 言文一致 (the unification of written styles) began.²⁹¹ Some reformers recommended dropping all Chinese characters and rely only upon the *kana* syllabary.²⁹² While removing all characters from the writing system would have certain benefits—it was thought that the effort and time it took to learn them could be channeled to other ends—it would also have drawbacks: it would have displaced both an ease in reading and the practice of calligraphy.²⁹³

The Meiji state needed to prove itself on a world stage: “in the process of turning localized subjects into centralized citizens, the civilizing state needed to provide evidence of its superiority to older ways of living and structuring belief and thought while still being able to mine those old ways for imagery of a pure, identifiable Japanese essence.”²⁹⁴ Starting in the Edo period, *Kokugakusha* 国学者 (nativist scholars) urged scholars to return to stories from the past,

²⁹⁰ Seeley (1991), 136-139.

²⁹¹ Suzuki (2009), 584.

²⁹² Seeley (1991), 136-140; Holtom (1947), 221. Western scholars initially debated about exactly what Chinese characters represented: at first thought to be representational ideograms, this attitude would eventually be critiqued in favor of a pluralistic view combining reading characters for their syllabic content as well as semantically loaded components (commonly referred to as radicals). The debate on characters was important to Western scholars because Chinese and Japanese defied a preconceived linear order in the development of writing, and thus, civilization and modernity (Holtom 1947, 220-223; Lurie 2006; and Unger 2009).

²⁹³ Holtom (1947), 222.

²⁹⁴ Eubanks (2006), 2.

and that a “true Japanese heart” (*magokoro* 真心) was a moral characteristic derived from immersion in works from Japanese antiquity.²⁹⁵ During the Meiji the development boom and mass immigration to cities prompted a romantic nostalgia towards rural life. Politician turned ethnographer Yanagita Kunio 柳田國男 responded by collecting and publishing folk tales in his work *Tōno Monogatari* 遠野物語.

The value of a Japanese-ness reflected in reading and writing becoming established in various forms. Giving special credence to folk Japanese culture created boundaries of aesthetics for writing.²⁹⁶ The *Rangaku* movement, for example, contains explicit dismissals of Dutch painting: while the Dutch images had depth and dimension (the use of shading was not common in Japanese art) they were not examples of quality art:

[D]eclaration of the authoritative schools was that pictures should “copy ideas,” *shai*. “Ideas” were associated with renditions of sentiment in brushed ink. The removal of all traces of brushwork was a startling feature of the Western manner—a point that was repeated *ad nauseam*... a representative salvo offering that, “in distinction to Japanese and Chinese painting, *Ranga* does not have brush dharma (*hippou*), brush energy (*hissei*), or brush thought (*hitsui*).” This continued to be a truism of Japanese interpretations of Western picture making for decades. ...Ruling out the “brush mind”—those contours of aesthetic awareness which since antique times had been said to allow creative genius to flourish—was, but standards of the time, a rash move. The loss of the calligraphic

²⁹⁵ Eubanks (2006), 4.

²⁹⁶ Contemporary theorists of calligraphy demonstrate a link of posture, stroke order, and an artists rendition of the word using thin, thick, soft, or bleeding ink (Nakamura 2007a).

brushstroke in favour of the unaccented line of *Ranga* might mean the loss of all aesthetic claims, resulting in banality.

Screech, 2002: 53

The importance of being able to view brushstrokes is a keystone to understanding changes in reading and writing in a time of dramatic change. Although Yokohama, a port city just south of Tokyo, was willing to incorporate some markers of Western modernity, the city also had to fit into Japan: writing and reading practices had to maintain essential elements of ritual exchanges as well as a particular Japanese aesthetic. The public civility in Japan, rooted in the aesthetics of poetry exchange and other arts, would become modern, but it would not become Western: that would result in banality.

Conclusions: Ideologies for a Reading Public

The formation of the reading public in Japan has been shaped by the particular formation of its public sphere. Emerging from under the Shogun's rule, society became endowed with shared codes of manners and expressions which facilitated transactions among people. From sharing poetry to sending letters, the bond of civility is a public imbued with principled ideologies: rituals keep social exchanges smooth in the shifting network of relationships. Texts inhabit the same social life as their reader, and the material within is evaluated and gives a moral evaluation to the reader. If it deemed appropriate, the paper person joins the public sphere of the majority, deemed inappropriate, the paper person is recognized with quirks in their identity to reside in one of the a subset parallel publics.

The debates surrounding language reform and *Rangaku*'s rejection of Dutch painting ties the technical features of texts and images together in a set of ideological values. A united writing system contained the necessary qualities of a modern writing, yet modernity could not take precedent over ritual practice. To sit and construct calligraphy was substance, a brushstroke contained Japanese-ness. From woodblock printing to webpages, texts, strokes and images continue to be linked in meaning making. As we will see, the value associated with skills in handwriting has shift in time, but the hyper-value of brushstrokes survives today.

Considering these traits, parallel publics emerge as a realignment of relationships, a shift away from texts which reflect dominant moral prescriptions, *aisatsu* and stylized aesthetics which mark Japanese-ness in Japan. These parallel publics overlap and are linked as the circles of a kaleidoscopic Venn diagram: many points of realignment still rest within the general sphere of a Japanese identity. A person may be recognized as having a unique set of dominant and parallel public overlaps in much the same way that individuals recognize the contingencies of any social interaction to form responses and choose words appropriate to the relationship at hand. Recognizing the depth and complication of this seemingly flat reading public is, as my informant Takehiko-san described, one of "distinctions between individual [that] are more pronounced and discrete all at once." Ideological values are read as an individual's unique blur of *kōteki* and *shiteki* in one text: reading (an unmoral text), writing (*kana*, *hiragana* and characters), and remembering (Japan and one's position in the world).

Embodied Japanese Identity: Memory, Sound, Brushstrokes

As reading and writing increased, the method of teaching penmanship shifted during the Edo and Meiji periods. At first penmanship had a scholastic emphasis on slow, deliberately

ordered strokes create the correct width between characters and their components. The time it took to write a character with a pen was re-interpreted during modernization: Japan needed to keep up with the pace of the world, and to do this the next generation had to write faster. Writing became a center piece of the classroom center, not only to memorize the necessary characters, but to practice a correct posture associated with rapid strokes.²⁹⁷ As the *Monbukagakushō* 文部科学省 (Ministry of Education) continued its many legislative reforms of Japan's writing system throughout the twentieth century, schools would continue to stress two aspects of writing as moral: the ability to type rapidly in Japanese and the study of calligraphy.²⁹⁸

Decisions for changing the Japanese script, and the way in which it was taught, fell to the the Ministry of Education. Towards the end of the nineteenth century the Ministry began to restrict the number of characters taught in school by providing lists of characters supported for daily use. The Ministry also standardized the number of *kana* signs, and shifted from the Sino-Japanese historical system of *kana* towards one based primarily on pronunciation.²⁹⁹ This awareness of multiple literacies, dialects, and customs, is used by scholars to demonstrate the fruition of Japan as a nation-state. There was no easy changeover, and an investigative committee was assigned to the task of pinpointing problems.³⁰⁰

Some of the variations in writing styles were due to differences in regional dialect. For Japanese literature, region—and the depiction of characters' dress for illustrated narratives—was an important marker of origin and identity.³⁰¹ For the differing audiences of readers “[t]he evocation of region in modern Japanese literature is not merely the representation of a ‘center’

²⁹⁷ Nakamura (2008), 25-50; and Adal (2009), 233-247. The move to structure the student's bodies in order to speed their hands is a process long noted for its ability to train a population to “embody” nationalism through participation of behaviors which are correlated with moral aspects of citizenship. See: Connerton (1989); and Foucault (1977).

²⁹⁸ Adal (2009).

²⁹⁹ Seeley (1991), 142-143.

³⁰⁰ Seeley (1991), 143.

³⁰¹ Bohn and Yoshiko (2008), 56.

and ‘periphery’ with the undifferentiated periphery being caricatured by, say, unconvincing portrayals of dialect; rather, it is more often the incorporation of numerous regional literary traditions.”³⁰² In other words, people were traveling and recognizing diversity within Japan. Throughout the Edo and Meiji periods there was a high degree of mobility. Changing employment needs also led many youths to leave their rural villages and head to cities: with such a distinct link between reader choice and identity, the recognition of a geographic place for a writing style or specializations seems natural. There are poles between society and modernity, a regional-self and center-self which corresponds to an individual identity and modern-self.³⁰³ These are affects in speech and writing. For some places, like Izumo, the participating in local poetry contests carried two audiences: 1) one reflecting a local talent; and 2) one in which the product of that talent moved from the periphery into the center—poem winners were featured in broader print circulation.³⁰⁴

The initial solutions proposed by the Ministry of Education could not account for the variances between regions, and difficulties arose from the need of individuals. How they wrote and what they read reflected their position and identity in a greater Japan. When the Ministry of Education tried to standardize the *kana* syllabary it faltered: writers desired non-standard characters to reflect regional dialects. Like the reliance on speech as social interaction, the recognition of these dialects by authors allowed for writing to construct both individual autonomy and national ideology.³⁰⁵ To understand contemporary reading and writing, then, one

³⁰² Torrance (1996), 327.

³⁰³ Torrance (1996), 327.

³⁰⁴ Torrance (1996), 347-359.

³⁰⁵ Bhatia (1993).

must be prepared to account for the influence of speech genres upon writing. The meaning of a written phrase may be partially constructed through the use of genre, written or spoken.³⁰⁶

Writing Gender in Japanese as Marked and Unmarked Speech

The Ministry's move to standardize the written word was, in the end, adopted. Today standardized Japanese can be heard on news broadcasts and newspapers draw only from the approved character list.³⁰⁷ The reform movement for Kanji did not just shape the characters being used, it also shaped the way politeness in language was being taught and used. Many sociolinguists describe male Japanese speech and writing differs from female Japanese speech and writing. As the Meiji government pushed to be recognized as a modern state it used language education as a means to an end. Within the crosshairs of gender and national ideologies the linguistic standard relied heavily upon masculine language. Whether or not it was intentional, women's speech and writing became marked within a growing linguistic asymmetry.³⁰⁸

The modern state utilizes masculine speech. A new generation of students picked up the use of this language and modern Japanese women began utilizing masculine speech as well. Described by Miyako Inoue as the "acoustic presence" of modern schoolgirls,³⁰⁹ the use of male forms in female speech became a hallmark of the contemporary woman in *manga*, women's magazines, and novels.

The import of print language lies not so much in its symbolic dimension (symbolizing, for example, the unity of the community) nor in its iconic dimension (where a unified

³⁰⁶ Bakhtin (1986).

³⁰⁷ Seeley (1991), 153-158. Characters used in names are exceptions for this list.

³⁰⁸ For a more detailed account of this process, see Nakamura (2008).

³⁰⁹ Inoue (2006), 67 and 264.

form of language rationalizes a unified community), but in its *indexical* dimension—its mobility and modality, its traffic in “shifters.” Print language works as an archetype of tele-technology, which spatially and temporally displaces, transports, and circulates events and ideas in an expanding and socially colonizing market of print capitalism.... In this process, novels and newspapers exemplify a specific mode of narrative that structurally positions the narrator, as the agent of tele-technology, as a rational and objective observer and spokesperson describing what is narrated. This subject position...forges a specifically modern subjectivity inhabited by the citizen of the imagined national community that necessarily has its outsider or others, even when these are internal. The construction of modern subjectivity is constituted in relation to an alterity—the other is not an accidental by-product but is a necessary condition for the modern self.

Inoue, 2009: 48-49.

Traversing the blur between speech and “reported speech” in writing, Inoue articulately expresses the corollary symbols created by incorporating language shifts into written material. As developed in the discussion of Ong and Goody’s hierarchical linear evolutionary conception of writing in Chapter I, the above quotation demonstrates that the spoken word and the written word cannot be reliably separated.

Conclusions in Embodied Japanese

Japanese literacy is embodied. The ideological evaluations—whether as the appropriateness of a text for an audience or the personal caliber bestowed by calligraphy—shape

the individual through practice, social associations, and performance of self. The incorporation of an individual into public spheres is one which links ideological values to the individual, allowing a reflection of self to be observed in the reflection of a sphere. For digital subjects, awareness of this self-reflection is both a source of anxiety and creativity. As seen with the moral debate surrounding the shifting patterns in female speech, even when the social components of any given circumstance permit for casual conversation one may bump into another presence. The additional incorporation of the new schoolgirl forms of speech into *manga* and other publications demonstrates a close link between forms of speech and the composition of written messages: *aisatsu* speech exchanges and rituals of behavior have a place in writing, and seep into new technologies.

Conclusions for the Development of Literacy in Japan

As with Salsaca's incorporation of writing, Japan has its own historic process imported systems of writing, such as the newspaper and Facebook, are being modified by local practices. While there are broad themes in the debates surrounding written dialects, gender appropriate materials, and reading, the contentions raised are specific to Japanese culture.

The Ghost of Future's Past: Japan Literacy

Literacy studies provide a methodology in which links writing into our social world. Past practices do influence present writing techniques, but such details must be rooted in the unique

socio-historical background in order to identify important variables and grasp their culturally projected consequences.

The same governing principles of ritual which continue to take place within contemporary *aisatsu* exchange have a long history in reading and writing; etiquette manuals exemplify this trend. The existence of these manuals for new communication platforms, such as Facebook, reflects a continued engagement with historical contexts that ritually mark public and private interactions in contemporary texts. A public text is framed by interactional spaces of discursive or non-discursive communication emerging through the actions of shifting network connections. I have outlined the pertinent network connections as the following five items:

First, literacy is a contingency of Japanese identity, in which the performance of self is reliant upon the social components of a circumstance. This performance includes the range of individuals and appropriate social circumstances that marks private thoughts and feelings in Japan.

Second, texts may be both public and private at once. I will argue that the prospect of being able to observe both levels within a message requires a close relationship in Chapter IV and 5. Considering my data alongside both Shōnagon's exchange with the Empress and the mirroring of face-to-face relationships in communication platform use described in the network studies of Chapter I, I argue that sharing experience marks a close relationship in digital literacy.

Attentiveness to experiences, whether through sharing messages or face-to-face events, segue into our next point: Third, literacies are embodied. From writing in schoolgirl speech to the Japanese spirit present in calligraphy, choices in vocabulary, grammar, and writing technology reflect engagements with broader socio-historical ideologies. The denotation of moral character by different forms of literacy remains pertinent for writing online.

Traveling alongside their humans are devices. Fourth, contemporary literacy is cyborg. The ground rules which inform public and private writing leak back into the physical world: both message composition and retrieval are shaped by civility marking public and private spheres in Japan. Knowing how to compose a message is the knowledge of another human body carrying a device. Thus contemporary authors have made new *aisatsu* conventions—conventions which privilege written messages over oral ones—which fit both author and their machine into the landscape.

Fifth: new forms of literacy enforce digital memories. Digital memory relies on recognition of information but the memorization of machine functions. Traveling with a machine provided us with a new set of texts. The praxis which surrounds the circulation of digital references (both self-recorded and available through the internet), and the habit of reference-borrowing (from both experiences and shared local, national, and global narratives), impacts the way we remember, record information, and recall facts. The use of internet capable devices creates a cyborg literacy which deeply influences the use of machines as memory aides.

I have now narrowed the field, so to speak: I began with points important to literacy throughout the globe and contextualized them within the history of reading and writing in Japan. Texts, and the machines that carry them, represent paper people through a nexus of an ever shifting network of relationships. The realignment of writing practices from past technologies to future devices may be small and difficult to notice, yet they continue to maintain the potential for an author to perform practices which mark civil public society for a Japanese audience. Texts sink into society. Differences in such practices are parallel publics. Literacy in Japan is the recognition of such minute realignments, where the small differences in writing practices are

interpreted as a set of features unique to an individual. Recognizing these of features is the recognition and appropriate response in social relationships.

CHAPTER III

JAPANESE WRITING AND OTHERS' WRITING:

UNDERSTANDING TECHNOLOGY USE THROUGH IDENTITY

This sentence is made of lead (and a sentence of lead gives a reader an entirely different sensation from one made of magnesium). This sentence is made of yak wool. This sentence is made of sunlight and plums. This sentence is made of ice. This sentence is made from the blood of the poet. This sentence was made in Japan. This sentence glows in the dark. This sentence was born with a caul. This sentence has a crush on Norman Mailer. This sentence is a wino and doesn't care who knows it. *Like many italic sentences, this one has Mafia connections.* This sentence lost its mind searching for the perfect paragraph.

Tom Robbins, *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*. 1976: 24-25.

Sharing a City, Institution, and Writing Experiences

The written word spills from its letters. Writing describes the world and people, and through representation it can change the perception of both. Writing can propel people into action. Borrowing from Chinese poetry, like Sei Shōnagon and the Empress, or, like myself, from Tom Robbins's novel *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, we move others with written words. I chose the above epigraph in an attempt to affect my readers in order to illustrate the sensation of

declarations with weight, fuzzy and provocative words. The potential of writing to contain and create is awesome; there have been, and will be, illicit, moralistic, inspiring, and frightening texts. Contemporary users of digital technologies are inscribing themselves onto this rich social world through text messages, social network sites, and emails. This chapter draws both from oral practices and writing standards in Japan to interpret message meanings and reimagine how we write ourselves into respective societies.

Writing developed in Japan as a cosmopolitan affair. Scribes from Korea carried Chinese characters into the archipelago. Through Buddhism, which traveled from India to China before reaching the Korean peninsula and finally arriving in the Japanese archipelago, religious scholars developed *kana* and *hiragana* scripts as reading aids. People would later use these scripts to guide the emergence of a general and widespread literacy in Japan. Script reformation became an important move for recognition as a modern state, and, as will be discussed in Chapter IV, the development of new writing technologies is a conduit for international exchanges. For as long as the practice of writing has existed on the Japanese archipelago, it has always been in relation with practices beyond the islands on the Asian mainland. My work in Tokyo demonstrates one kind of these internationally-minded communities, and my informants were an internationally engaged populace with numerous precedents in Japan.

As in any nation-state, there are differences in writing norms among communities within Japan. It is futile to seek a unified Japanese-ness which can be attributed to the people who live on the archipelago. Yet there are cultural events which link people's experiences and provide social expectations. As I will demonstrate shortly, social suppositions surrounding the maintenance of public and private space are diverse, with different practices acting as markers of participation in particular communities. In Japan, public spheres are places where discursive

communication emerges through shifting network connections. The Japanese lifeway, a social map which delineates identity performance according to setting and the makeup of individuals present, demarcates the public sphere through *aisatsu* practices and through the boundary demarcation provided by the concepts of *uchi/soto*, or inside/outside.³¹⁰ Writing conventions are projections of social life; as such, literacy consists of multiple practices which allow authors to be identified with gender performances and nationalities. While there are differences in each case, I am examining the ontogeny of individually practiced literacy in order to recapitulate a general phylogeny of reading and writing.

Why an International University (or, isn't Tokyo as *passé* as Identity)?

Like throngs of other ethnographers, I conducted my fieldwork in Japan's capital, Tokyo. While the sheer number of Tokyo-centered studies occasionally makes the city appear to be in a constant state of analytical paralysis, there are few other sites which offered such a catalytic mix of people and technology for research. My respondents were primarily students, but I did have a handful of long-term informants working in companies, employed as translators or instructors, and attending other universities in the city. The majority of my participants were, in some way or another, linked to a broader international community through involvement in international business, international Universities, or by living in share houses.³¹¹

The international University at which I worked is a private university claiming to be a "microcosm of global society." Around 20 percent of the faculty are from countries outside of

³¹⁰ *Aisatsu* are ritual exchanges which occur in the public sphere in order to maintain interpersonal relationships in a smooth, non-problematic manner.

³¹¹ This is a kind of rent arrangement where a single kitchen, bath, and washer are shared by 8-12 people renting rooms in the same house. Their short-term leases and affordable rent makes the rooms desirable for many international travelers who can speak Japanese.

Japan, and the institution attracts a number of undergraduate and graduate students from overseas. The undergraduate population can be divided into three general categories: 1) foreign exchange persons; 2) Japanese, *jūnjapa*, who may or may not have left Japan. In either case, most have attended international schools for the majority of their scholastic career; and 3) self-declared international Japanese who have spent considerable time abroad. Domestic international schools have relatively high numbers of foreign students and often offer classes taught in European languages. The Ministry of Education maintains multiple opportunities for education outside of Japan for an entire period of schooling; through the years of grade school or high school a student could be immersed in a non-Japanese language environment.

It is difficult to assess the nationality of a student by physical appearance, but appearance does matter in that it is often used by others as a means for assuming a person's national/ethnicity origin. There are a number of obvious foreigners on campus; i.e. those immediately recognized as falling into the category of *gaijin* (literally outside person, or foreigner, especially from Western nations). However there are also students who have been born and raised within Japan but, none-the-less, appear to be from abroad. A fair number of students at the international University have a parent of a different nationality who married a Japanese citizen. Appearance has a strong impact on social interaction: despite their fluency in Japanese, these students often have their Japanese identity contested in daily life. They are constantly bombarded with insinuations of Otherness, such as restaurant staff providing English-language menus or conversations opening with "Hello! Where are you from?" This reflexive misunderstanding on the part of everyday Tokyoites compels students to assert their identity daily.³¹²

³¹² There is a pertinent line of criticism about the use of the term "identity" as a theoretical placeholder. Many critics are quick to demonstrate that the word is a catch-all for multiple kinds of phenomenon: self-identification,

With the caveat of implicit variation throughout Tokyo—and the whole of Japan—I describe my informants as they name themselves: Japanese or international Japanese.³¹³ I respect these emic distinctions for two reasons. First, having witnessed the fatigue which emerges from continual questioning of their ethnicity, I refuse to take part in questioning their identity. Second, the recognition of international Japanese is the acknowledgement of one of many parallel publics in Japan, one for which ways of writing and reading are an intricate part. One of my informants, Takehiko-san, discussed the existence of parallel publics when describing the differences between having a self-photograph or using an avatar for illustrating platforms:

The difference is how people portray themselves. Photos, and the people in them, mark who you are. Japanese use images, Europeans use pictures of themselves. I think that there is a lot of visible diversity in the States; there are lots of people with different colored hair, with different colored eyes. I bet we [Japanese students] all look the same because we use icons [non-self depicting photograph for a social network], maybe we look the same because Japanese all had dark hair and dark eyes, but you have to learn that distinctions between individual are more pronounced and discrete all at once. While it

categorization of oneself by others, identity politics, race, and nationalism (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Throughout this chapter I choose to use the word identity with a conscious effort to avoid using the term as a mysterious mystic thing that people have, denoting a consequential sameness among members. By paring the term with a focus on literacy, this research highlights people's agency in creating and maintaining their own conception of identity. These creations contain elements that do not make all members the same, but rather allow for self-and-other recognition. For more information on the debate and the critique surrounding identity as an analytical category please see the following works. For a semantic history of the term identity, see: Gleason (1983). For a critique of gender and identity, see: Butler (1990a); and Collins (1990). To see identity as a term describing a changing and fragmented self, see: Hall (1996).

³¹³ While I conducted initial questionnaires and one time interviews with any person who volunteered, I was selective in asking for in-depth, long-term interview partners. I did not ask foreign exchange persons for repeat interviews: all of my in-depth interviews have at least one Japanese parent, and identified themselves as Japanese or international Japanese. Whether or not they have spent time abroad depends upon the student. All of the ethnographic examples in this dissertation are drawn from the in-depth group. These are students which I interviewed three or more times, and interacted with on social networks, blogs, and in tweets, emails and text messages.

may appear [to a western audience] to be borrowing from a single genre, we recognize the tiny details in clothing, in the bows and details of the icon, which mark each look as individual and unique.

Takehiko-san, Recorded Interview

My informants had very clear ideas on whether or not they should place images of themselves online or use of avatars (an image related to them but not of themselves), and Takehiko's description contains a number of elements described in this chapter as literacy containing *aisatsu* practices and framed by *uchi/soto*.³¹⁴ Contemporary authors in Japan are aware of details, such as famous regional foods or places, which aid in identifying icons to individuals. This meaning making is reliant not only upon distinctions in previous experiences, but also recognitions of different expectations for online communication. Personhood can be displayed on social networks through photograph composition and as subject matter. The convergence of pictures into online texts and the politics of self-representation and personal photography have consequences, allowing individual composers not only to devise a reflection of the self to others, but to create stories about themselves which can include a focus on social issues or consumer goods.³¹⁵

Individuals living in cosmopolitan communities, such as an international University in Tokyo, live in communities with uncommon positioning within the broader reading and writing internet world. My informants are well aware of conversational parameters which occur in other languages and places, and they navigate these differences in order to communicate with their Japan-bound grade school friends, their American (or other) high school friends, and the broad

³¹⁴ Takehiko's discussion of "pronounced and discrete" fits with Kathrine Frank's (2006) discussion of agency, where each individual may have different methods of internalizing social concepts.

³¹⁵ Vivienne and Burgess (2013).

mix of individuals they have come to know in Tokyo. Whether writing in English or Japanese, differences in topic, time, frequency of writing, and choice of platform reify various distinctions and overlaps in social relationships. For this community, knowledge of a potential audience and the recognition of different habits in writing are key for interpreting messages; in other words, the majority of my informants recognized or participated in different literacies. I chose to work in Tokyo at an international school for this very reason. Through their involvement with members of different nationalities, individuals become particularly sensitive to the nuances of different expectations in literacy not only with different members of their community, but also with transnational communities.

The international University's diverse population is certainly not unique in Japan, but it also does not reflect the norm of school experiences. This chapter focuses in on the distinctions in individual use of digital communication platforms. I argue that individuals use reading and writing to deliberately align themselves with one community or another. Similar to an international-looking student using language skills to affirm their Japanese identity, individuals understand and associate different kinds of literacy with different kinds of identity performances.

Aimi-san's (Hidden) Love

I first met Aimi-san on a wet, rainy day. I was curious about her because of the delay between my initial email and her response; she wrote back about three weeks later—longer than any of the other students. Unsure if she was going to show up, I stood outside the library wiggling my legs back and forth in a pointless attempt to ward off the cold when she suddenly

materialized next to me. As we walked across campus Aimi apologized for her late email: she had been traveling.

During subsequent interviews I learned that Aimi had spent five years in the United States, and had attended high school in Washington State. Her departure to the US had not been an easy transition; Aimi fought with her parents before her family left Japan because she had been vigorously preparing for Japan's school entrance exams. She had made a pact with her friends to be accepted together into one of the most prestigious high schools.³¹⁶ In the end she and her mother left Japan, following her father's job position in the U.S.

Three weeks after our first meeting, and after four more interviews and countless emails, I met Aimi again. At the start of today's interview Aimi began our meeting with a surprise. Logging into one of the school's computers Aimi opens Facebook and quietly taps on the image of a boy from the United States and glances at me. "We are getting married soon." I can feel her caution and I smile, trying to give her space to tell me only what she wants to despite my sudden plethora of questions. Getting married is a momentous event, one which is rarely secret. Yet during all of our previous correspondence and meetings Aimi has said nothing about her upcoming nuptials. Today she tells me not only is she engaged, but that her husband will come to Japan and live with her after she graduates.

I manage to squawk "*Gōkekkon Omedetōgozaimasu!*" (Congratulations on your upcoming marriage). Aimi's cheeks flush pink, and she leans forward to peer at the screen, telling me about her fiancée. After my introduction to him through his homepage, Aimi clicks onto her own homepage and rolls down through the history of her newsfeed. She opens a post and makes a small gesture with an open hand towards all of the exposed comments.

³¹⁶ During our first interview Aimi opened the high school's website from a bookmark in her browser to show me the uniforms.

There are four different pictures next to English comments written from two week ago (three main participants besides Aimi), and the time between messages is minimal (they were all online at once: the result was that the comment section became, momentarily, an Instant Message, or IM). Near the end of the fourteen or so comments was a question directed to Aimi about her upcoming wedding. Aimi response was cryptic: she said she had to go to class, and all the messages stopped.

“I can’t invite everyone from the States,” she explains. “We are having the wedding in Hawai’i, so I won’t need to translate for my family, and so his family won’t need a translator either. He doesn’t speak Japanese. The wedding is hard to talk about.”

But she couldn’t avoid the topic completely; she and her friends are, after all, extremely excited about her marriage. Moving the cursor to her friend list, she opens the page of a smiling older woman. “That’s his mom.” Aimi is now friends with her fiancée’s two brothers, his sister, and the respective partners of these siblings. She names each one as she points to pictures on her soon to be mother-in-law’s page. Dragging the cursor back to her name, she mentions that her future in-laws comment on and like her pictures on a daily basis. “They want to know what I am doing,” she explains, beaming proudly. As she continues scrolling she pauses on her news feed, indicating a comment by a young girl and volunteers; “We aren’t friends anymore. We had a fight.”

“Why don’t you delete her?” Aimi stares at me blankly. “You’ve never deleted anyone before?” I venture.

“No,” she responds resolutely. “You don’t see the updates of a person, so they’ll know that they were deleted.”

“I have deleted people. I wonder if they noticed?”

Aimi's cool gaze holds steady. I begin to feel nervous, like it might have been wrong to delete people.

“Hey, how many friends do you have?” I chirp, deciding to changing the subject. Aimi-san opens Facebook and mixi side by side again in half-sized windows. She has 227 friends on Facebook. My jaw drops as I gesture at the figure.

“If you meet someone you friend them!” she cries playfully by way of explanation.

We open her mixi page in a window next to Facebook, which, in contrast, she has 88 people on her マイミク, *maimiku* (friend list). She describes the mixi group as her Japanese friends. Some she met in grade school, and most are members of clubs in which she is now participating.

“So, who do you write to the most? Your Facebook or your mixi?”

“Oh, my mixi, once a day or every other day. *Mixi wa Nihon shakai mitai janai ka?*” (Mixi feels like Japanese society, right?). Because of this perceived distinction she explains that she does not post in English on mixi, only Japanese. “When I speak in English it makes my identity vague. It changes the way I am, it makes me different. Especially if what I'm writing about what happened in Japanese. The translation doesn't work as well.”

“So you don't post much on Facebook? Is that because you often speak Japanese with friends from mixi, and English with your Facebook friends?”

Aimi's eyes dance as she thinks, narrowing at the corners and then widening as she looks to the ceiling. “Ah!” she exclaims, “No, because I have many friends here [on campus]. But look!” She clicks on a linked page in her mixi account and her friend list on Facebook, opening them side by side. She scrolls down the list on Facebook quickly, opening the page of a young lady who is wearing giant sunglasses. “*Ano ne, kono hito wa atashi no shinyū desu.*” (This is one

of my close friends). Aimi opens the woman's Friend List and clicks on the name next to a professional-looking young woman wearing a white blouse and blazer. The woman's page is open to the public. She points to the job description and a link. "This is the company I will join next spring. See?" She glides her finger from the Facebook page to her mixi profile, where the company page is linked. She taps through the company's link on mixi and stops on a picture of a pink, white, and blue Hydrangea. "This is her too." I take a moment, thinking through the implications while Aimi checks updates on the company site.

"So the company has this site for workers on both mixi and Facebook, and you've only joined through mixi?" I try to clarify.

Aimi claps her hands together, rotating her fingers down toward me while brightly smiling. "*Sō desu yo ne!*" (That's right!) She explains that companies routinely look through an employee's page after they join the company website. "So I keep my privacy..." I watch as she shuffles back to her own Facebook page and opens her settings. "*Eh? Kore wa... everyone?*" Aimi groans, "They've changed settings again." The interview pauses while she takes the time to carefully re-set her privacy settings, cautiously clicking through the questions to guarantee that only her friends can see her posts.

"Why don't you want the company looking at your Facebook page?"

Aimi lowers her voice to a whisper as she explains: "Being engaged is tricky. Japanese companies don't like it if you are engaged. You are supposed to work there for three years." As Aimi continues explaining, I learn that an engagement throws the three year timeline into question: there is the expectation that Aimi will stop working when she becomes pregnant with her first child. Aimi cannot hide her engagement on Facebook, as the site provides a desired stem

for connective tissue to her new family. So she posts pictures for her fiancée's family, but avoids talking about or linking her activities to her perspective job.

“So you write messages on mixi, and put pictures out on Facebook?”

Aimi nods in confirmation. “I take a lot of pictures on campus, and those are good for Facebook. I don't put them up on mixi. When my Japanese friends see me with my American friends they become a little distant. Many are *jūnjapa*, *jūnsui*.”

“*Jūnjapa te?*” I repeat, hinting that I don't know the term.

“Pure Japanese,” Aimi translates the word into English for me. “For me this means that they have trouble seeing a community member doing something different, being different.” She shrugs, scrolling through her Facebook page. Suddenly Aimi erupts in laughter.

“Look at this guy! Facebook is all about *kakkoi!*” (Leaving a cool impression; looking good.) She giggles, pointing at the picture of a boy whose long hair is being blown by the breeze. The edge of the surfboard partially frames the left side of the picture, and the ocean behind him is gilded fuchsia by the setting sun.

Dual Frames

“Pure Japanese,” as Aimi described, “means that they have trouble seeing a community member doing something different, being different.” Aimi taught me about the people in her life while we were on the computer. Together we friended one another on mixi and Facebook. Aimi had to explain a number of things about how she was using each one differently and how she was separating the information.

Aimi's practice entailed more than just separating information. At first glance Aimi appears to be following the basic conventions of two different communities when writing on different platforms: as noted in Chapter I, the use of photography, including self-portraits, on Facebook and constructing longer entries in her mixi diary page are basic communicative constructs for each website. These conventions match the target audience—one in the U.S. and one in Tokyo—for each writing platform. Her American in-laws “want to know” what she is doing, they are happy to see her pictures and to comment. She writes in Japanese on mixi, saying the platform seems like Japanese society; “*Nihon shakai mitai.*” Indeed, Aimi treats her mixi as Japanese society, keeping information about her engagement out of her employer's purview, whose website she has linked on mixi. While this may seem to only be in response to the possibility that her company would discriminate against her for being married, her response to the IM conversation on Facebook indicates more.³¹⁷ Aimi is very aware that the news of her wedding may make others, those who did not get invitations, feel poorly. She was carefully writing herself into different communities: in essence, Aimi constructed parallel publics, one for her American friends and soon-to-be relatives and one for her Japanese companions. Each of these publics contains a similar private—the news and discussion of her engagement. This shared private indicates the importance of overlaps in communicative participants among communication platforms: for Aimi's writing platforms, individuals who knew her mixi, Facebook, and Twitter accounts were her close friends living in Japan. Such overlaps are particularly important in considering the social spill from writing platforms into the face-to-face meetings of city streets. I will return to this point shortly.

³¹⁷ There are other negotiations of women in the workplace besides childbirth. For examples of the “shoulder tap,” where women employees are tapped as a way to be asked to leave a company because of age, see: Ogasawara (1998); and Kondo (1990). For an example of the same phenomenon of the ‘office flower’ (which withers and needs to be replaced) in overseas conditions, see: Habu (2000).

Furthermore, in considering Aimi's background a pattern appears. Although Aimi has adapted to write in ways which help her relationship with her in-laws, she still maintains the "me with you" common to writing on mixi on both platforms. Her concern over other's feelings not only dictates her rules for discussing her wedding, but also her ideas on deleting people from her page. While she is writing herself into different communities, she submerges them within the boundaries of only one of the two: she follows Japanese speech conventions and *aisatsu*. Indeed, near the very end of my time in Japan I asked Aimi in our final interview what her relationship with nationality was, she repeated the identity assertion given on her *anketo* (questionnaire): "*Nihonjin desu. Ima kara itsumo*" (I am Japanese. From now until forever).

Groundwork:

A University within Tokyo, A City within the World

My observations on Aimi's sensitivity surrounding the potential broadcast of her nuptials places writing technologies in geographic as well as social space. In Japan, she was concerned with her company affiliate, pictured as the multicolored Hydrangea. Aimi modified her writing practices on Facebook for the United States, including images of her face so that her in-laws could view her in the States. Online and face-to-face interactions are not easily separated. Writing platforms and the city coexist. Some researchers even suggest that to know a city is to know the city's internet: the metro system's app, restaurant blogs, and music venue websites all project the metropolitan onto the web.³¹⁸ The next chapter will demonstrate the importance of the cityscape in the traversing of digital subjects with device-carrying bodies.

³¹⁸ Reed (2008).

For the moment, however, to fetter out further implications from Aimi and Takehiko's narratives, this analysis need to establish *aisatsu* practices common among my informants. To do this, one needs to understand the *uchi/soto* (inside/outside) and *ura/omote* (front/back) as cultural tenets in Japan. *Uchi/soto* is a cultural construct which defines the appropriateness of displaying either features of public speech or private thoughts and feelings. *Aisatsu* practices, as we shall see, provide openings for such exchanges in speech, during events... and online. In order to understand *uchi/soto*, one first needs to understand how they are lived and inhabited within Tokyo.

Tokyo Lately

Since the burst of the economic bubble in the 1990s, people have reshaped life in Tokyo. The visible reemergence of poverty dramatically shook the city's class lines.³¹⁹ Tokyo, the once international icon of progress, still struggles to support itself.³²⁰ Despite Japan's loss of global esteem in respect to cutting-edge technologies, digital technologies reemerged as important local consumer markets.³²¹ Cellular phones are particularly important technologies, and business people, officials and youth recognize phone types as a status symbol.³²² During the economic downturn the consumer power of a new demographic, that of young women, helped to propel the cellular industry. Some of the few individuals with a modicum of disposable income were

³¹⁹ Roberts (2005).

³²⁰ Cybriwsky (1998), 2-6.

³²¹ Kelly (1986).

³²² Cybriwsky (1998), 113. Cellular phones began to be recognized for price and coolness in the 1980s.

unmarried office ladies still living in their parent's home.³²³ The female demographic also provided the impetus for innovations in technology use.³²⁴

Technology provides room for both old and new forms of documentation to blossom within Japan's landscape. One of Tokyo's recent architectural features are technological documents: billboards in tourist districts now have bar codes which, when photographed by a phone, link the phone owner to on-line information about the area. While you can now find these picture-scan advertisements across Europe, the rest of Asia, and the United States, when I first began my research these picture-scan advertisements were only in Japan. Global consumer technologies travel, and are influenced by the cultural geography of the place in which they arrive. I find an analogy of technological exchanges in the spread of other industries: a burger from McDonalds is very different in Tokyo, Chicago, or Shanghai.³²⁵ Communication technologies operate similarly. Technologies are mapped for the place and people use them differently.

Tokyo's architectural geography is superimposed with social cartography, and both impact the use of technology. There are places in the city where one is expected to use writing platforms rather than take phone calls and vice versa. Female students often use phone calls as a method of escort on their walk home at night.³²⁶ City sidewalks are talking spaces. Making phone calls on trains, on the other hand, is generally considered to be extremely rude. There are multiple signs in stations and railcars requesting that people refrain from talking and that phones be switched to *manā mōdo* manner mode (silent) (“マナーモード” written across the phone).

Trains are writing spaces.

³²³ The economic bubble in Japan occurred through inflation of real estate and stock prices from 1986 to 1991. When the bubble popped, Japan's stock prices bottomed in 2003 (Yoda 2006; and Yoda and Harootunian 2006).

³²⁴ Some emoticons used in text messages were created out of daily practices of women (Miller 2004).

³²⁵ Wilk (2006).

³²⁶ Twenty-one interviewees discussed using their *keitai* in this manner.

The social cartography of Tokyo is strongly associated with the rail system. General guidelines to this orientation were described by Geography and Urban Studies specialist Roman Cybriwsky. Graphing the city through socio-linguistic relationships, Cybriwsky begins with the broad Japanese terms *omote* (Outside/front) and *ura* (inside/back).³²⁷ He relates these terms to the makeup of Japanese clothes: the *Omote ji* (clothing on the outside of Kimono) and the *Ura ji* (clothing inside the Kimono, closest to skin). The eastern side of the city—the side with my apartment (I resided slightly outside Tokyo in the port city of *Yokohama*) and the University at which I worked—resembles *Omote ji*; it is *Omote-nippon*. This was the city shown to outsiders, while the western side of the city—considered more traditional and secluded from international interactions—flutters intimately upon the body as an *Ura ji*, or *Ura Nippon*.

Considering the impact personal appearance created for student social interactions, where a person's living quarters and work sit in Tokyo's geography defines an aspect of the self in the city. In much the same way that preceding writing practices influence the use of new technologies, Tokyoites apply pre-existing social conventions of space and place to communication technologies. Platform choices building shared information as a provision of *uchi/soto* dynamics in interpersonal relations. Furthermore, the genres used in message composition reflect *ura/omote* constructs. Since conceptual *uchi/soto* boundaries delineate both the range of individuals and place appropriate for sharing private thoughts and feelings as well as times and locations befitting ritualized interactions, *uchi/soto* is a foundation for *aisatsu* used in literacy.

³²⁷ Cybriwsky (1998), 10. The associations of *omote/ura*, alongside *uchi/soto*, in architecture were also extensively discussed by Bachnik (1994a).

Inside-Outside:

The Making of Contemporary *Aisatsu* for Social Networking

The terms *uchi/soto* (inside/outside) are linked to a number of cultural concepts. They specify relationships, reflecting frames of self and society.³²⁸ *Ura/Omote* have a similar set of representations, including back and front, or hidden and surface appearance.³²⁹ The dynamics of *uchi/soto* as a groundwork of Japanese social life has long been explored—and explained for westerners—by Japanese scholars. The works of Chie Nakane and Takie Lebra exemplify this line of analysis. For Nakane and Lebra, the nature of relationships to other people is the basic principle on which Japanese social life is constructed.³³⁰ Lebra models such relationship as self and self-other, telescoping outward from the existence of the smallest lens between two people (the two individuals will likely be of similar age, gender, and will have spent a long period of time together). Building outward with siblings, family, institutions, nations, Lebra’s widest lens allows Japan to view itself against other nations.³³¹ The shifting composition of any group becomes elaborated as a “contingency logic...involv[ing] fortuitousness, uncertainly, unpredictability.”³³² This “social map” is one in which the *omote* (front zone) is contrasted with *ura* (back zone), and *uchi* (interior zone) with *soto* (exterior zone). In her definition, *omote* is the epitome of social norms and expectations, qualities which provide for civil behavior toward an outsider; while *soto*, being outside of normative expectations of behavior, contains hostility and disorderly behavior toward an outsider. The concept of *uchi*, then, is the combination of closeness and conformity to rules; while *ura* grants license for close relations in hidden

³²⁸ Quinn (1994), 62.

³²⁹ Bachnik (1994b), 6; and Quinn (1994), 62.

³³⁰ Lebra (1976, 2007), 4; and Nakane (1970).

³³¹ Lebra (2004), 3-11.

³³² Lebra (2004), 9.

environments.³³³ Lebra's findings provide greater depth to the description of Tokyo as a social geography: there places and times where *omote* transitions into *soto*, which I will demonstrate in the *Ura* Tweeting section below and in Chapter IV's discussion of the first and last train.

Nakane similarly describes the importance of relationships, but does so as a frame. Nakane's frame consists of a vertical hierarchy and a horizontal plane of similar social standing. Nakane's 1970 work, *Japanese Society*, focuses on shifting nature of this frame, detailing how knowledge of age, gender, family associations, and institutional associations are necessary dimensions for social interaction.³³⁴ As people move in and out of interactions the frame fluctuates accordingly, those who are present automatically shift their speech and gestures (drawing from a range of formal and informal vocabulary and physical movements) to fit these different frames.³³⁵ Thus, when only family members are present, parents are placed on the vertical pole in relation to their children. When interaction with non-family is required, however, this hierarchy dissolves slightly, making members of a family a single, horizontal, unit. According to Nakane, the familial unit is the basic form of the close, or *uchi*, grouping.³³⁶

Contemporary scholarship continues to demonstrate the importance of these inside-outside dynamic ideology for identity and meaning making in Japan. *Uchi/soto* are often considered as inside-outside positionalities; or ways of understanding instances of meaning-making brought about by intercultural interactions which engage with global and local rhetorics.³³⁷ Japanese Christmas cake, for example, gains significance from both its foreign origin and from less overt citations of older Japanese traditions. Here, the inside-outside position

³³³ Lebra (2004), 39.

³³⁴ Nakane (1970).

³³⁵ Nakane (1970), 30.

³³⁶ Nakane (1970), 23-26.

³³⁷ Ashby (2013a).

allows for a kind of invented tradition by tying both foreign and local together.³³⁸ The familiar notions of *uchi/soto* as inside-outside positionalities permits rethinking the construction of cultural identity, exploring how innermost ideals of a culture or group draw from culture influences from within and from the broader world.³³⁹

I, too, am attempting to examine and reconsider identity, knowledge, and social exchange using the semiotic complex of *uchi/soto*. In contemporary literacy the awareness of *uchi/soto* mark the performance of *aisatsu*. *Aisatsu* on digital platforms have developed from prior ritual exchanges. Open friending, restricted topics, and monolingualism are all *aisatsu* for platforms that are presumed to be public. The appearance of *aisatsu* as a feature of compositions complete a “lifeway,” “contingency logic,” or “frame,” in Japan through a process that is reverse from those described by Nakane and Lebra. Instead of the dynamics of a group and place forming identity and social interactions, it is the individual’s method of writing in stylized content which frames the author’s acknowledged group as a readership. As with Empress Teishi and Shōnagon, the text is co-constructed by the audience’s recognition of an author’s illocutionary intent in self-expression.

Friending as a *Meishi*: Informational *Aisatsu*

Framed by the contingency logic of *uchi/soto*, the most important elements for expressing illocutionary intent are the presence of *aisatsu*. Returning to Nakane’s work enables us to frame the *aisatsu* in contemporary literacy through previously established practices. For example,

³³⁸ Ashby (2013b).

³³⁹ Ashby (2013a); see esp. Chapter II.

Nakane elaborates on the connective nature of establishing a horizontal or hierarchical framework with the exchange of small written introductions:

The ranking order within a given institution affects not only the members of that institution but through them it affects the establishment or relations between persons from different institutions when they meet for the first time. On such occasions the first thing that the Japanese do is exchange name cards. This act has crucial social implications. Not only do name cards give information about the name (and the characters with which it is written) and the address; their more important function is to make clear the title, the position and the institution of the person who dispenses them. It is considered proper etiquette for a man to read carefully what is printed on the card, and to adjust his behavior, mode of address and so on in accordance with the information it gives him. By exchanging cards, both parties can gauge the relationship between them in terms of relative rank, locating each other within the known order of their society. Only after this is done are they able to speak with assurance, since, before they can do so, they must be sure of the degree of honorific content and politeness they must put into their words.

Nakane, 1970: 30.

Aimi's explanation of her friend count, "If you meet someone you friend them!" was echoed by many other students: Osamu-san, who will be introduced shortly, described his numbers of friends "hey friends," or individuals "you don't necessarily hang out with or are not willing to talk frequently to, but you run into them." Hanako described her large friend count on *mixi* as individuals she had known through clubs in grade school and high school, people she did

not spend time with outside the organization. Hanako claimed that she liked to check their pages occasionally, particularly since many were in the region. “*Hyottoshite atashi wa karera o mikakemasen desu,*” (I might happen to see them).

The use of information found on *meishi* 名刺 (business cards) as lubricant for smooth social exchanges has been adapted by contemporary youth. While *meishi* remain vital in the business world, students rarely have a need to carry them until they become working adults. However, the need for frictionless face-to-face interactions makes a small exchange of updated information desirable. The desire for social lubricant has in turn influenced writing and exchanging social networking sites. My informants described this practice as a variation on a theme: from middle school onward, schools tend to have their own page on social networking sites. Individuals choose not only to join these pages as members of the institution, but they also link their personal pages to the pages of the clubs in which they are participating. Finding club links through the school’s networking site helps distinguish *senpai-kōhai* (senior-junior) relationships. During my interviews many students demonstrated the use of linked resources on social networks to learn about other members of the school, or to learn about someone they had met. Friending acquaintances and colleagues on social networking platforms is an *aisatsu* ritual exchange.

Social networking sites differ from business cards in one essential way: they lack telephone numbers, *keitai* mail addresses, and home addresses. Individuals rarely include contact information. When asked why, most students explained that supplying channels for direct association was dangerous. In light of norms of social interaction in Tokyo, providing contact information was tenuous in two ways. Telephone number and *keitai* addresses represent an *ura* layer to interaction with an individual. They are inappropriate to include in the *omote* sense of

social networks: one does not use the network to acquire information which is expected to be intentionally given to an individual from the other. Students generally exchange phone numbers in gradations of intimacy.³⁴⁰ I will return to gradations of intimacy in the final section of this chapter, but for now it is important to note that *aisatsu* are made to function in writing platforms that are generally viewed as public situations: networking sites contain the most ritualized correspondence.

The trading of social networking sites as a literary form of *aisatsu* can be demonstrated by an exchange I witnessed between Osamu-san, a well-dressed young man with black-rimmed glasses, and one of his classmates. Osamu and I had met in two previous interviews, and one afternoon I was in a campus computer lab with a new interviewee when I noticed Osamu also working in the room. A couple of seats down from him, closer to me, sat a young lady with her head down. Osamu got up and went to her, asking if she was feeling alright. He addressed her by her last name. I could not hear her response, but Osamu left the room and returned with a warm drink from a vending machine. When Osamu presented her with the drink they talked for around 10 minutes. Three weeks later I met Osamu for an interview. As we were paging through Osamu's Facebook page I noticed that the young lady had found and friended him, writing on his page, in Japanese, *arigatō*. "How did she know you, Osamu?" I queried. "Oh, ah, she asked for my full name, *ano*, when I gave it [the drink] to her, and wanted to know what my mixi picture [is]. I told her I use Facebook more, with the same name." In this exchange, friending was accompanied by an established *aisatsu*: the use of the word *arigatō*.³⁴¹

³⁴⁰ Intimacy is not limited to romantic relationships. Joint membership in a classroom or club often fosters sharing phone numbers.

³⁴¹ Ide (1998); Ohashi (2008); and Suzuki (1981).

Appropriate Topics: Writing with Everyone

Japanese students tend to exchange digital writing platforms after introductions; thus information provided on networks often maintains conventions of speech that would be appropriate for a range of vertical and horizontal relationships.³⁴² The second *aisatsu* for communication platforms is built from the practice of broad friending and draws from established patterns expected in speech.³⁴³ Topics appropriate to new acquaintances and those of high social standing best for social networking sites and blogs are comments about the weather, foods, talk of holidays, and *kawaii* (cute things, a category which includes children, animals, and baubles). During my time in the field I noticed a high percentage of the above topics in posts. Such posts are similar to the general topics of discussion often used when people first meet, and the exchange of comments surrounding this information follow *aisatsu* greetings.³⁴⁴

My evidence suggests that the lack of greeting adjacency pairs on social network platforms has led to the topic itself becoming the *aisatsu* for smooth social interaction online: people write about items everyone can relate or comment upon, “me with you.” This becomes particularly salient for seasons, holidays, and annual events in Japan. The New Year’s holiday produced a plethora of posts surrounding the rituals of the New Year. Many images and posts illustrated participation in the annual New Year’s Day trip to a shrine (*hatsumode*). Here an

³⁴² McVeigh (2002). Not all users of social networks maintain a strict general topics rule of posting, especially with those who actively maintained their mixi diaries. While visiting the northern island of Hokkaido, I found students with mixi accounts commonly maintained the ‘diary’ function in their account. It should be noted, however, even the students in Hokkaido suggested that this function had fallen out of favor for the similar reasons which affected Tokyo students’ use of *mixi* accounts (discussed in Chapter V). My discussion here is focused upon students in Tokyo, many of whom have foreign friends, experience in other countries, Facebook accounts, or some combination of the above. There are different communities of writers and readers for new technology platforms. For a discussion in which a discursive, constructivist understanding of politeness is incompatible with a simplistic understanding of social norms as “rules” as social constraints decided upon by outsiders upon the self, see: Watts (2003), 114-117.

³⁴³ Expected public exchanges in speech are guided by *uchi/soto* (Takanashi 2004).

³⁴⁴ Elwood (2009).

omikuji, or fortune, about the upcoming year, was posted: the author had received *daikichi* 大吉, or excellent luck. Other topic that surrounded the New Year's were pictures of the New Year's Day sunrise, *hitsuhi*. One could attribute the predominance of generalized status updates as a method to avoid shame by keeping face with readers who have a higher social status than the writer.³⁴⁵

Posts lying outside participation in culturally important events tend to fall into the category of *kawaii*, or cute.³⁴⁶ *Kawaii* is gendered feminine; at the extreme *kawaii* has even been argued to be the feminine in Japan.³⁴⁷ During this research *kawaii* in online interactions as cute topics appeared more often on women's pages and comments. While *kawaii* tend to focus on images of animals in particular, the *purikura* プリクラ pictures of both groups of women and couples also fell into this category.³⁴⁸

Posting of food was also common, and the images and discussions are both regionally coded and illustrate participation in local events. Foods from a *matsuri*, or local festival, are often posted in pictures. There are three students in this image, close friends who went to the *matsuri* together. Local specialty foods, such as candies, dried fishes, or mountain vegetables have a long tradition in Japan: the Edo and Meiji travel journals mentioned in Chapter II recorded regional specialty dishes, just as online tourism sites in Japan do now.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁵ For a discussion of *haji* 恥, or shame, see: Doi (1977); Chapter I of Benedict (1946). It is of interest that while Benedict's work has received much criticism, it continues to be well read and cited in scholarly work in Japan. It has been translated and reprinted by the publishers of the *Gakujitsu Kodansha* series, as well as a version in *manga*.

³⁴⁶ Researchers have long noted the importance of 'cuteness,' or *kawaii*, for Japanese consumer culture and female identity. For more on this topic, see: Allison (2003, 2006, 2009), Hosokawa (2005), McVeigh (1996, 2000), Miller (2004, 2011).

³⁴⁷ Miller (2004), McVeigh (1996).

³⁴⁸ *Purikura* booths are picture booths which allow the individual to edit the image of the people, add text, and give the image a backdrop. Pictures can be printed as small stickers or emailed to an address.

³⁴⁹ For an example of a tourism page which boasts about specialized regional foods, see <http://www.jalan.net/kankou/140000/140200/> for Yokohama's Western foods, and <http://www.hakonavi.ne.jp/site/> for Hakodate's *Ika Odori* (squid dance) festival.

The tropes of common subject are in contrast to the writing of “me and you” writing common for western identity construction, which tends to use social network platforms as a way to front one aspect of an individual’s identity, such as being a comic or a partier.³⁵⁰ These presentations are recognized as a break with the *uchi/soto* system by focusing upon personal thoughts and feelings. Both individuals of Japanese background and foreign background recognize these differences in writing: foreigners working in Japan will often soothe mistakes in social conventions by making jokes surrounding their *gaijin*-ness (foreigner, outsider).³⁵¹

Writing Everyone Understands

General topic posting has a number of implications for how and why students posted online. First and foremost, the way one writes deeply reflects (or rejects) expected Japanese social norms. Expectations for interactions are often shaped by region and group membership, matching Gershon’s college groups and her concept of media ideologies.³⁵² Overall, the *aisatsu* of contemporary writing technologies draw from the basic principles of *aisatsu* in public space: Japanese digital literacy relies upon statements and interactions which keep social interactions frictionless. Aimi’s dislike of deleting former friends reflects this value: if they notice, they may become upset.³⁵³

³⁵⁰ Birnbaum (2013). Matthew Birnbaum found six common identity fronts with his American undergraduate informants: The six fronts were the partier, the socialite, the risk-taker, the comic, the institutional citizen, and the eccentric.

³⁵¹ Moody (2014).

³⁵² Gershon (2010).

³⁵³ There are, of course, moments in online writing which do not fit these patterns. Although I never encountered online bullying, nor did any of my informants provide examples of this genre, aggressive statements and acts written on online platforms is a common trope in television programs, particularly those aimed at youth. For examples of bullying using computer technologies, see the following: Fuji TV’s 2007 drama adaption of Suenobu Keiko’s manga *raifu* ライフ (life); and the 2005 *Joō no kyōshitsu* 女王の教室 (The Queens Classroom).

The importance of untroubled written exchanges as a mode of flowing social relationships made code switching, or using multiple languages on a single platform, undesirable for students following *aisatsu* guidelines in message composition. Multiple students, even those who regularly wrote in two or three languages, described code switching as impolite.

Chihaya-san, introduced below, described this process to me during in an email:

わたしの mixi のマイミクはほとんどがサークルと小学校、中学校の友達です。ほとんどの人は英語がわかりません。もし、わたしが英語で何かを書いたり、アメリカの写真をアップロードしたら、彼らは少し疎外感を感じるでしょう。わたしが彼らの理解できない部分を彼らと共有するコミュニティで見せることは、心理的に距離を置くことだと思います。わたしは彼らに「外人っぽい自分」をあまり見せたくありません。それは、私自身の日本人として表現しているアイデンティティーをあいまいなものにし、コミュニティの中で孤独感を感じるのを避けたいからです。

Most of my friends from mixi are my friends from elementary school and middle school, or my circle of friends who barely can speak English. If I upload something in English or pics with me and my non-Japanese friends, they'd feel left out, like I was excluding them from my community. Showing the part of my life with which they have no connection would make an emotional gap or distance between us. I don't like showing my non-Japanese-ness to my Japanese friends because that makes my identity as a Japanese very vague. I'm living in a country in which the differences aren't necessarily good. I'd avoid

such expressions to avoid feeling lonely or emotionally excluded from the community I belong to.³⁵⁴

Chihaya-san, email to Author

Similar to Aimi's concerns with her friends on mixi, Chihaya prefers monolingual message composition for different platforms, according to her audience. Osamu also followed these guidelines, explaining that he did not use anything but English on Facebook, ensuring that people could understand. When I pointed out that he had multiple languages on his page, Korean, Chinese, and the "*arigatō*" from his classmate, he retorted "That is why she asked for my mixi, she only speaks Japanese. And Korean and Chinese people, they tend to speak in their language even if somebody around them doesn't understand. While people can google their posts to see what they are speaking about...*chotto*...(it's a little...)," his voice trailing off. Osamu is aware that different places have different parameters of public speech, and that the action of using Google as a translation engine for individual's post in Japan is not a desired action. The process of searching for information not provided by an individual resists the public and private boundaries maintained in the *uchi/soto* ideology.

Gradations of Intimacy

There were occasions, however, when a student had additional information on a digital platform. For Japanese speakers, such information fell into accidental eaves dropping, and few

³⁵⁴ Because students at the international speak both English and Japanese, I often showed the student what I transcribed from interview recordings, and my suggested translations. In this case, Chihaya approved this transcription and translation.

took action to use the additional data. There were instances, however, where foreign exchange students did. One young lady, Nana-san, described when she had her phone number up on mixi:

“It happened to me before—a man I didn’t know, when I was a freshman, an international student, wanted to hang out. He messaged me [to her phone]. It was creepy.” I asked if it because he was just lonely, or if there was a reason that she felt it was creepy.

“I didn’t write back. So he called me... his Japanese was good. He eventually asked me to have sex.” I agreed that the approach was creepy. Over the next week Nana changed her phone number, began a new mixi account and emailed the event and her new information to friends.

The “social map” of *omote*, the rule of social norms and expectations, and *ura*, the latitude for close relations in hidden environments, are applicable to more than just information presented. Authors following guidelines for Japanese framed digital literacy also rely on Japanese expectations that *ura* and *uchi* can only be established in relationships which have extended for a long period of time.³⁵⁵ Thus, the majority profile pictures of self-identified Japanese users do not show a clear image of one’s face; the bulk of the profile images are *purikura* or objects close to the person.³⁵⁶ Moreover, the owner of a page often chooses a nickname or pseudonym. It can be difficult to locate friends online without being told what online name to search for, and when looking through friend list of this kind it becomes difficult to determine who is running what page. The requirement of current or prior direct face-to-face contact is a necessary condition for social network affiliations in Japan: this trend is important enough that Osamu was asked to give both his name and his corresponding mixi image.

³⁵⁵ Plath (1980).

³⁵⁶ For a discussion of photography and the multiplicity of female identity in Japan, see: Miller (2005b).

The majority of both Japanese and international Japanese students use social networks only with hidden-identity. I often had to ask students to walk me through their Friend List in person. Chihaya, a sophomore working to become a teacher in Japan, was kind enough to teach me about her friends on mixi in multiple meetings.³⁵⁷ “You don’t really put your face on mixi,” Chihaya would repeat when I would ask who was the *sakanakushon* band album or the toothless baby. Every name and image became a code to the person, and to decipher it one needed to have intimate knowledge of that individual as well as their hometown. One of her school mates from Kyoto, for example, had an image of a wrapper from a Japanese sweet as his image. One day I asked the identity of the candy wrapper. Chihaya smiled, explaining that even the name on the page was a nickname given to him in middle school. The wrapper was from a sweet called *yatsunashi*, a famous confection from Kyoto. While I had traveled in Kyoto I did not know the sweet, so, still smiling, Chihaya opened Wikipedia, and typed in the word. A flat brown toffee-ish block appeared. “That’s a very traditional *yatsunashi*” commented Chihaya-san, tapping her finger on the screen. “But often you fill them and cut them [into triangles]. While the label [in his picture] says *yatsunashi*, the famous place for the food is called *Nishio*. That is the traditional place to get *yatsunashi*,” Chihaya-san paused while she closed the Wikipedia entry, “and *Nishio* is his last name.”

For individuals composing messages under *uchi/soto* and *ura/omote* guidelines, the coordination of grade-school nicknames and local knowledge become essential for making connections between writing on social network pages and the person typing. Even when there are physical images of people a backstory is often necessary: while you can see faces in *purikura* images, the young women use the Photoshop options to enlarge their eyes, add eyelashes, change

³⁵⁷ Chihaya-san had never traveled abroad, and her undergraduate career was her first experience in an international school.

their eye color, whiten their faces, and broaden their lips. Many youths—males included—believe that it is very difficult to identify someone from a *purikura* photos because of these changes to the digital image. In addition to the use of photoshop there is a social component as well: a person rarely takes *purikura* images alone. With up to five people in an image it can be difficult to assess which of the individuals in the owner of a page.

There is, however, one kind of picture that is routinely posted by young women which depicts their face: pictures of them in expensive *kimono* for their *seijinseki* 成人式 (coming of age ceremony). Falling into “me with them,” the *seijinseki* is an event where both men and women aged 20 years celebrate becoming an adult. The use of *kimono* in this ceremony may also account for the presence of these clear depictions of the women.³⁵⁸ Many of my informants used these images as illustrations of a photo practice unique to Japan, mirroring academic arguments that traditional female dress is a repository of nationality, morals, and Japanese culture.³⁵⁹ These images, even though bending the expected boundaries of identification, mark a Japanese identity.

While there are differing idiosyncrasies naming and direct facial images among mixi and Facebook users, there is a correlation to the use of equivalent given names and identifiable images to identity: the more an individual writer correlates self-photographs and given name to platform icons and user names, the more likely that person is an exchange student. There are, of course, gradations and exceptions for this rule: Aimi, writing to her American family, often posted pictures of herself, though she used a nickname on Facebook. Osamu’s Facebook uses his given name, but his profile image is of Lady Gaga having a man lick her leather-clad leg. Osamu noticed that I was startled by the image, which did not seem to fit the quiet man I was

³⁵⁸ Young men at the Coming of Age ceremony wear business suits. While students never described these photos in terms of matchmaking, I am intrigued by the parallels between sharing these images online and the historical origin of sharing these images with strangers during *omai* お見合い, or arranged marriages (Takeji 1999).

³⁵⁹ Hendry (1993), 361; and Goldstein-Gidoni (1999).

interviewing. He chuckled at my bewilderment, commenting: “I don’t wanna show my face. If you’re not careful, your privacy will be up on the internet. Besides, girls—though boys can too—have the potential to be stalked.”

Writing on these pages is a recognized categorization of self by others and is correspondent to a self-identity an author would like to perform in the community. Consequently writing on social network sites also indicates in which community students are aiming to remain long term members. Just as new writing technologies often incorporate former writing practices,³⁶⁰ current social practices influence social correspondence on new writing platforms.³⁶¹ While these are difficult to assess—there is, after all, no universal guidebook listing “true” Japanese reactions to all scenarios—they can be broadly described through the use of *uchi/soto* and *omote/ura* concepts. The online writing platforms and different technologies are associated with different levels of *omote/ura* positioning. These concepts provide the guidelines for *aisatsu* in online written exchanges for networking sites: acquaintance friending, shared topics, shared language, and hidden identity become gradations of features which create parallel publics in Japan.

Transitions: from *Omote* Posting to *Ura* Tweeting

The above discussion has focused upon social networks as a frame of *aisatsu* rituals common in Japanese public spaces. Different platforms, such as email and text message, contain different associations of *uchi/soto* and *ura/omote*. The transition from *omote* posts to *uchi* mediums, or platforms that are deemed as closer to the individual, which therefore contain the

³⁶⁰ Bazerman (2004a); Gershon (2010); Littau (2006); and Van Dijck (2007).

³⁶¹ Boellstorff (2008); and Bazerman (2004b).

possibilities of *ura* disclosures, is often long and difficult. Aimi's association of *jūnjapa* identity as one which has trouble accepting aberrant behaviors with community members has some grounds: when *ura* behaviors appear on *omote* platforms, there are members of the community who respond with the *soto* hostility commonly directed at outsiders.

As mentioned above, including personal contact information online which does not require the intent of the author to share such information is perceived as dangerous by students in a number of ways: it is recognized different communities, and different practices help to establish different forms of identity. I was told an urban myth by three separate young men where other men—not my interviewees—were directly intervening to keep appropriate behavior online. All three “knew people” who enjoyed posing as a pretty high school girl on mixi. The image of the girl was always borrowed, either from someone or somewhere online. The mixi page would contain dairy entries from the platforms of multiple women. The constructed veneer of a high school girl would affect loneliness. The men behind the image would wait for a stranger to offer a date. If this occurred, the person was instructed to carry a specific kind of flower—for identification—and travel to meet the false lady in a remote train station. The group of young men would then jump the flower bearer, calling out his depravity for daring to meet a high school girl online.

While these stories, and others like them, are in common circulation I never met any student who claimed direct experience with these kinds of narratives (my witnessing the occasionally snide or mean comment online aside). Such narratives reflect the difficulty, and the weight of the meaning given, in transitioning between *omote* meeting places and conversations and moving towards *uchi* platforms, especially given the *aisatsu* characteristics of literacy which advance “me with everyone” topics and language.

Ellen Basso's concept of Ordeals of Language is useful in this respect. Drawing from cross-cultural data which focuses on how individuals choose to suppress their own voices, she notes that:

in each set of examples are culturally and linguistically shaped "sensitivities" or "anticipations", expected, perhaps inevitable kinds of interpersonal situations in which the gulf between feelings and civilities become particularly foregrounded. During such ordeals of language, self-inflicted suppression of voices may not necessarily have to do directly with fear of the power of another. We might say, for example, that I have "chosen to silence my own voice" when I have inadvertently violated some form of coded sociality. And the suppression of a voice is often one consequence of mutually perceived inequalities of power. But for most, this is an important choice that goes along with values about appropriate interaction. ... Here we have an inherent rhetorical emphasis not only on perpetual occurrence of the unsaid but on context or perspective. Pertinent here are allusions to the more spatialized contrast pertaining to human affairs: the contrast between *soto* (outside) and *uchi* (inside). What makes these culturally different ordeals of language one from another is how the individual interprets locally relevant epistemologies of personhood, emotional styles, and how shame is experienced as a kind of intersubjective, public and embodied affective regulator of interpersonal conduct in these places.

Basso, 2009: 134-135.

Urban myths of policing online dating practices as inappropriate lines of behavior for authors and audience members incorporates social tensions between *jibun*, or self-focused desires and feelings, and *watashi*, the self which conducts public ritual interactions constructed under *uchi/soto* principles. In this cultural construction, the common way of meeting and socializing with others requires time as well as face-to-face interaction.³⁶² It is during this period that the individuals can shift relationships from one commonly considered *soto*, and acquaintance, to one considered *uchi*, a confidant, friend, or lover. In light of romantic relationships, this interpretation is particularly salient. As in the historical instances where Japanese-ness and gender shape unsuitable reading, the associations of mixi with Japan and the use of a woman protagonist are important variables for defining inappropriate behavior in reading and writing. What is key here is the use of a female figure as an enticement to meet face-to-face after initiating online conversations. In general, women are associated with an *uchi* orientation, facilitating solidarity between people (men, on the other hand, are associated with authority and *soto*).³⁶³ This urban myth indicates that there is a strong correlation between the face-to-face communicative norms and the interactional guidelines for shifting intimacy between digital subjects. The gradual learning of personal information, through shared experiences and the slow acquisition of more intimate lines of contact (phone emails, texts, and calls) symbolizes this process. Students at the international University are very much aware that this social dynamic exists among an abundance of others, and their choices in writing style, language, and frequency mark them as participants, or not, in this epistemology.

Communication platforms relate to different aspects of *omote/ura*. The use of general topic updates on social networks mark these writing spaces as *omote*: these are places which are

³⁶² Plath (1980).

³⁶³ Rosenberger (1994a), 89; and Rosenberger (1994b).

outer and revealed, and require care and awareness when composing on them. Not all wide-audience communication platforms are *omote*, however. Within the material possibilities of use for Twitter, and its corresponding tweets, lies the ability for a group of close companions to create a network only among themselves. This allows the authors to shift their writing genre to include more *ura* sentiments. In interviews both Japanese and international Japanese students revealed that Twitter accounts are rarely linked into other social networks. Instead, Japanese Twitter users lock their accounts from public view and only share their account names—a nickname or phrase—with three or four other Twitter users. In this way tweets occur behind the scene, creating an appropriate space for communicating personal feelings and thoughts. The writing on tweeting is *ura*, close and personal, and messages include insider jokes, music references, and images of famous figures in Japan. The recognition of tweets as *ura* was demonstrated in other ways: during interviews two of my male informants attested to the existence of a second twitter account, one which none of their friends knew about. These accounts were also locked from the public, and were used to vent emotions and thoughts that they felt could not be shared. Another a male respondent wrote on his *anketo* that he too had a unshared and locked twitter account, writing tersely that the account was for *sakebigoe o ageru* “叫び声をあげる,” (raising a ruckus). The major difference between *omote* and *ura* writing platforms, then, is not just the number of readers available to a particular message: writing an email involves a more *uchi* platform, but if the email was to a professor or a supervisor, someone of higher status, the social parameters of the face-to-face relationship shape the message form.

Conclusion:

Acclimatizing *Aisatsu* Identity across Platforms

When Takashi-san returned from the United States, he helped his mother, aunt, and grandmother set up accounts with the newest burgeoning network in Japan: Facebook. Once online, the women repeatedly asserted that Takashi “smiled differently” in the pictures he had taken in America for his Facebook page. Takashi had no idea what they meant, and we spent quite a bit of time going through images taken in the two different places. At first I too saw no difference between the smiles, but in the end we both decided that Takashi routinely smiled wider in the U.S., a gesture which was most noticeable in the first few pictures taken with his grade school friends upon his return to Japan. Takashi’s family preferred his American smile, but he didn’t think he could produce it anymore. When I asked why, Takashi said “*tenkeitekina nihonjin da* ([I am a] typical Japanese person), and I want people to know me in this way.” The recognition of being Japanese—Japanese within the parallel publics of the accommodations in message composition common with international experiences and friends overseas—is particularly important for students in Tokyo. Extended periods of time among and different experiences with foreign friends has fostered the ability to recognize multiple literacy, each resounding in subtle ways with behaviors which fits an individual into a given community.

Individual identity in Japan is created through an interdependent view of the self. The relationship between an individual and others shapes how a person will speak and interact with others at a given time.³⁶⁴ The western essentialist concept of individuality as being relatively free of any current social-context is not readily applicable in Japan.³⁶⁵ To write using communication

³⁶⁴ Bachnik (1994a).

³⁶⁵ Long (1999).

technologies, the different gradations of accommodation to outside writing norms and the display of *aisatsu* among bilingual speakers are markers of an author's intended identity. These nuances exist in parallel publics, permitting students to follow the social frame appropriate for message construction for audience and platform type. The recognition of *uchi/soto* parameters in friending and posting topic should be thought of as divergent forms of a “durably installed principal of generative improvisations” which surround the development of multiple literacy in Japan.³⁶⁶ Japanese social life is oriented between poles intimate and distant relationships.³⁶⁷ I have argued that new communication technologies follow the *uchi/soto-omote/ura* continuums. The boundaries set between *uchi* and *soto* writing trace the tenuous lines of public and private. In the examples of *soto* writing, like the general topic status updates, authors are detached from personal feelings, and focus on the self in relation to other groups. In *ura* writing, like tweets, a small number of message recipients allows a private situation to emerge. The longer you are friends with someone in Japan—with grade school friends becoming especially important if relationships are maintained through life³⁶⁸—the more one can express feelings and emotions with them. While this is also true with family members, they are slightly different. Japanese children learn to recognize the impact they have on other family members, and so they sometimes choose to keep problems to themselves so as not to worry or burden other members of the family.³⁶⁹ Overall, it takes a long time to become a friend and confidant in Japan.³⁷⁰

Individuals who define themselves as Japanese understand the potential meanings of any message by gauging the self in the relation to others. To speak and write in a Japanese community is to reflect that community back to itself. As Jane Backnik describes in her research

³⁶⁶ The quote is from Bourdieu (1977), 78; the extension of its implications to literacy is my own.

³⁶⁷ Rosenberger (1989); and Rosenberg (1994a), 91.

³⁶⁸ Plath (1980).

³⁶⁹ Rosenberger (1994b).

³⁷⁰ Plath (1980).

on the *uchi/soto* concepts, the framework for appropriate messaging and interpretation is “...the approach to order... embedded in social context, and includes the process by which participants constitute social situations, *and thereby participate in a dynamic that includes the mutual process of their constituting and being constituted by social order.*”³⁷¹

In this section I have traced key identity markers found in relation to writing. To help understand how different communication technologies are conceived by the students I have contextualized features of different platforms in daily use. Within this landscape many Japanese cultural values, like politeness differences according to a speaker’s social status, have been maintained alongside new social practices, like the appearance of a recognizable youth culture and an associated set of distinct speech practices.³⁷² From email addresses to blogs, the decision to write on one platform versus another relies upon message content as well as the ability to limit the audience. Awareness of potential audience members is essential for Sophia students when writing to one another: the relationship between speaker and listener is marked in Japanese speech and writing, and, by following such conventions, is an active way to maintain a Japanese identity.

The elements of the above discussion demonstrate the connection of new writing technologies to Lebra’s descriptions of the situationalism present in Japanese social life. This frames new possibilities of audience and message frequency as part of lived schema, a schema that is used to interpret message meaning and an author’s personal traits. In essence, the connection of writing to the *uchi/soto omote/ura* continuum roots it in the creation of “a *lifeway*, a socially learned way of construing, approaching, and movement through one’s world, in

³⁷¹ Backnik (1994b), 5. Italics in original.

³⁷² Gange (2008).

domains of experience as different as perception and interpersonal relations.”³⁷³ The recognition of different literacy, and the gradations of difference among writing practices, are one way in which individuals wield different literacy in the performance of their identity.

³⁷³ Quinn (1994), 39.

CHAPTER IV
TECHNO-MATERIALITY: AUDIENCE BOUNDARIES,
TEMPORAL CONDENSEMENT, AND THE CITY

My copy of *Between the City and the City* was old and bruised, intact but with the cover folded back and its pages stained and annotated by at least two hands. I had paid an outrageous price for it despite these deficits because of its illegality in Beszel. It was not much of a risk, having my name on the dealer's list. It had been easy for me to ascertain that the book's status was, in Beszel at least, a mildly embarrassing throwback rather than due to any ongoing sense of sedition. The majority of illegal books in the city were only vaguely so: sanctions were rarely applied, even the censors rarely cared.

It was published by a long-gone anarcho-hippy press, though judging by the tone of the opening pages it was far drier than its florid, druggy cover would suggest. The print wobbled rather up and down the pages. There was no index, which made me sigh. China Miéville, 2009: 414-415.

Introduction: Techno-materialist Identities

Miéville's novel, *The City and the City*, reads like an extension of Tim Ingold's conception of knowledge: "What each generation contributes to the next...is an *education of*

attention.”³⁷⁴ In the novel, two different cities exist in overlapping physical space, and members of each population keep their separate identities by learning to “un-see,” or to be unable to perceive the movements and language of the other group. Humans are taught to perceive the environment through the fine-tuning of “perceptual skills.”³⁷⁵ The skill of identifying which communication platform to use is part of learning how to perceive messages: using a broad-audience platform or a single message recipient for sharing information has interpretive implications.

Framing the social map imperative to Japanese identity as *aisatsu* rituals in public space and in writing, I have demonstrated ways in which parallel publics are recognizable in Tokyo. With the adaption of historic *aisatsu* patterns for *meishi* exchange into social network platforms, current friending patterns create large audiences. Prior knowledge of the cultural constructs *uchi/soto* (inside/outside) and *ura/omote* (back/front) thus allow an author to create Japanese identity in reverse: authors write themselves into the group they desire to reside in by mirroring practices which occur in face-to-face public interactions. It is this tacit exchange which constitutes the hermeneutical arc of reading and writing in Japan.³⁷⁶ The use of either *aisatsu* rituals or references to *jibun* (one’s own) thoughts and feelings also create public and private spheres for writing platforms: the use of general topics mark social networking sites as public spheres, and presence of emotions and thoughts which could not otherwise be shared, “raising a ruckus” or venting on Twitter marks the platform as a private sphere.

³⁷⁴ Ingold (2000), 22. Italics in original.

³⁷⁵ Ingold (2000). I find the term “skill” itself to have a value judgment, and prefer to describe these actions as practices. Ingold also differentiates technology from tool use, arguing that technology separates the tool from the social context of surrounding the skill. By deskilling the person, the logic and use of technology lies outside the human body. While I recognize that Ingold is primarily focused on the replacement of handcrafts with machine craft in the workplace, treating the workman as a mere operator, my definition of a cyborg emphasizes the recognition of human bodies, a skill/practice with its own values. I do not believe all technologies prevent learning social knowledge, practices, and skills.

³⁷⁶ Ricoeur (1995); and Foucault (1987).

While *uchi/soto* and *ura/omote* are the primary guides for Japanese contemporary literacy, they also inspire the appearance and use of the devices which access writing platforms. To understand *uchi/soto* and *ura/omote* as cultural constructs, I described them through two means: as social relationships and as the architecture of the city. This chapter extends this analysis: while social network platforms mirror the public self of Tokyo, the city imposes privacy, through containment and appropriate use, upon a device.³⁷⁷ The containment and appropriateness of social relationships shapes the use and properties of Internet-capable technologies as a medium for writing.

I began this chapter with an excerpt from Miéville because it provides a vatic metaphor for contemporary literacy: there is a city in the city, a digital network and a face-to-face complex which influence one another. Like the novel, the users of computer-mediated communication devices have, on the one hand, trained their attention to recognize portrayals of Japanese identity as a style of writing. On the other hand, users also gain a refined perception of the influence that devices exert as elements of the city. The silencing *manā mōdo* and the screen-blocking covers of the train keep digital subjects quiet and invisible. Thus during the daily commute an awareness of other digital subjects is nearly impossible: while traveling side-by-side, one cannot see or hear conversations and posts being conducted on internet platforms. Just the body, politely silent in public, remains. For the majority of face-to-face passings, Tokyo's digital subjects are difficult to match to their flesh. By considering the material properties of digital platforms and Internet-capable devices, this chapter develops a mode of thinking about the self-digitalization of people and social interactions by considering device users as individuals traveling through the city.

³⁷⁷ The method of reversing place-object, object-place in an analysis approach that was brought to my attention by Bruno Latour's description of Actor Network Theory (Latour 2005).

What do we become when we are Cyborgs?

I had a lunch date with Hanako one afternoon when she appeared breathless at our meeting spot. “*Taihen gofujiyū o okake shite, hontō ni mōshiwake arimasen. Kesa keitai wasureta! Kaeri nakerebanaranai!*” (I am really sorry to have caused you such inconvenience. This morning I forgot my cell! I must return home!) She began to fade toward the train station as soon as was polite, shifting to a gallop, and leaving me to wander uselessly in an attempt to select a good place to eat in an unexplored corner of the city.

The figure of the cyborg is prominently associated with the work of Donna Haraway, where she defines people as a “...cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction.”³⁷⁸ Haraway developed the concept as a site of hybridity and border crossings. These crossings, Haraway argues, are engagements with identity, sex, and conceptions of the body. Hybridity works as a point where relations between self and other are renegotiated.³⁷⁹ In a similar theoretical engagement, Drucilla Cornell uses the figure of the cyborg to identify and expose the limits of the binary opposition between machines and humans.³⁸⁰ It is this separation of man and machine, “un-seen” hybridity, from which I draw for the conclusions of this dissertation.

Part of cyborg ordeals is the presence of both love of and fear of new writing technologies. Internet-capable machines mark progressive modernity, representing connectivity with others and a wealth of information. Yet their beeps and buzzers require a response—uncontrollable in the need for immediate response, at times—to stimulus. Does the user control

³⁷⁸ Haraway (1991a), 149.

³⁷⁹ Haraway (1991b).

³⁸⁰ Cornell (1992).

the device, or does the device control the user? Hanako's use of "nakerebanaranai," a phrase used for something that must be done, is telling alongside her use of a longer, more honorific apology—it is stressful to break a date with me, she feels bad about doing so. But she must retrieve her phone. Both in my subjects as well as with the interviewees of other research project continually demonstrate the importance of a *keitai* as a prosthetic: Hanako cannot be without her phone, without it she is lost to her friends and companions (she couldn't even call me to break the interview. She had not memorized my number, and had to run to our meeting spot to cancel in person so that she had time to return home before class).³⁸¹ The appearance of cyborgs thus marks "precisely where the boundary between animal and human is transgressed."³⁸²

Setting aside the opposition between human-machine and transgression of human into stimulus-response animal categories for the moment, I would like to focus on the kind of cyborg being evoked in this dissertation. Unlike Haraway, the subject of this research is not the scientific-medical construction of sex or birth.³⁸³ This research is considering literate cyborgs. Connecting through personalized mobile machines and choosing from an array of different communication platforms, the digital subject *keitaisha* (mobile persons) at the heart of this research is a writing and reading flesh avatar. Human-machine relations created through computers require different considerations from Haraway's cyborgs created from IV tubes and speculums.

So how do we negotiate a tangle of bodies in the environment and machine assisted sociality? To answer this question one must gaze at the enclosed messages within the machine,

³⁸¹ On the importance of lost *keitai* as a blow to personhood, see: Matsuda (2005); and Terrades and Yann (2007), 152.

³⁸² Haraway (1991a), 152.

³⁸³ Haraway (1991b, 1997).

and enclose the machines within the environment.³⁸⁴ Posting images and writing messages not only reproduces individual gendered identities, it reifies broader social structures.³⁸⁵ The word choice and information presented on different platforms are one level of this interaction.

Individual choices in the content and place of digital writing create the fabric of media ideologies shared by friend groups.³⁸⁶ Thus how one writes reproduces identity and relationships to others, and how one reads performs both the receiver's and author's identity for a broader community.

The body carrying a message receiving device is also important: the user may be on a train, at the office, or at home. The reactions to technology in each of these spaces stitch the fabrics of machine and human together in a geographic quilt: the same concerns which shape the perceptions of public information and private notes in platform choice and online compositions are echoed in the use of mobile machines within the architecture of Tokyo. Public space, occupied both by Internet avatars and *keitaisha*, are guided by the principals of *uchi/soto* in social relationships: without knowing the age, occupation, and today's events of other individuals occupying trains and offices, it is best to refrain from broadcasting *uchi* practices. I demonstrate that the construction of public and private on Internet platforms is reversed in the social use of machines in the cityscape: messages and phone conversations are deemed too *uchi* to conduct in public space.

Sherry Turkle's exploration of the word "window" as a metaphor for computer interfaces is useful here. Working with computer users who routinely open more than one Internet site, Turkle demonstrates that:

³⁸⁴ On the use of literature and written material in technological networks as one of the intermediaries between humans, artifacts (like scientific instruments or, in this case, phones and computers) and money, see: Callon (1991).

³⁸⁵ Bruno Latour has a similar analysis, except his focus is not writing but the creation of computer software (Latour 1991).

³⁸⁶ Media ideologies are the diverse sets of beliefs surrounding and perceptions of communication technologies that different groups create while participating in computer-mediated communication (Gershon 2010).

... in practice, windows seem to have become a potent metaphor for thinking about the self as a multiple and distributed system. The self is no longer simply playing different roles in different settings, something that people experience when, for example, one wakes up as a lover, makes breakfast as a mother, and drives to work as a lawyer. The life practice of windows is of distributed self that exists in many worlds and plays many roles at the same time.

Turkle, 1999: 547.

In other words, *keitasha* are very aware of multiplicity in identity. Both phone calls and texts are received by a single machine in close proximity to the individual: these are private platforms for contact. Yet the body of the receiver maybe in a public forum. How one writes reproduces their identity and their relationship to another, and how one reads reproduces both the receiver's as well as the author's identity to a broader community. Describing the reproduction of art, Walter Benjamin notes that a perfect reproduction lacks one element that the original has: a unique existence at the place where it happens to be.³⁸⁷ For *keitasha*, writing the self in digital platforms is an art but not replication: the presence in time and space is the limit of human-machine divide. Both the author and the receiver have bodies that are situated in a particular location at a particular time.

The development of literary cyborgs is thus an awareness of three things: the technical capabilities of different machines, the properties of the communication platforms they are using, and an awareness of their own and their audience's bodies. It is the corporeal aspect of cyborgs which makes the properties of different platforms, and the style of use, of computer-mediated communication platforms so important. *Keitasha*, aware of the immediate delivery of their text

³⁸⁷ Benjamin (1968).

message, phone call, or *keitai* mail can move the body of the recipient. The unseen aspect of being a cyborg is an awareness of the proximity of a cellular device—and their corresponding communication platform—to the owner’s body of the recipient.

Material Properties of Writing Online: Characters, Printing, and Computer Practices

Writing is a technology, and paper-based writing technologies represent texts which are temporally and spatially removed from their authors. The information contained in texts was passed to the reader at a later time and in a different place. By virtue of this discontinuity, interpretation of the written word is only possible if readers are aware of historic symbols and gendered identity, and it is this awareness which makes symbolic play in texts possible.³⁸⁸

Computer technologies have modified the historic properties of texts; both the temporal gap and spatial cartography are transformed in digital writing. The advent of computers dictated reprogramming technology and rethinking the social meanings of writing. Yet getting to the point of “no temporal divide” was a long and arduous process in Japan. Resembling the struggle with the adaption of Chinese characters for Japanese pronunciations, the number and complexity of technical features in written Japanese posed problems for feeble processors contained in newly birthed personal computers.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁸ The phenomenon of identity in writing has been explored in print media by Laura Miller, who finds models of “Japanese-ness” (*nihonjinron*) in books and magazines. Women in particular are an important topic for new books and magazines, either as a huge consumer group (fashion magazines) or in self-help books. Miller focuses on the self-help books generated for “parasite singles,” young women who work and yet still live at home with their parents (Miller 2005c). The concept of “Japanese-ness” studied as *nihonjinron* presents a conundrum for Western scholars; to replicate such dialogs without critique represents a form of orientalism, yet the *nihonjinron* discussions are present in Japanese culture and thus need to be addressed (Moeran 1990; Sugimoto 2003).

³⁸⁹ A primary predictor of the incorporation of a new technology is its affordability and its compatibility with previous generations of technologies (Cortada 2013).

When computing technologies intersected typeset in Japan, two sets of socio-historical values violently collided. There was conflict between the strokes of a calligrapher's pen and the algorithms needed for digital printing. As aforementioned, calligraphy and handwritten characters in Japan are imbued with a number of attributes: within the appearance of a brushstroke is a locus of learned appreciation, appreciation which is associated with a sense of the "Japanese spirit."³⁹⁰ The beauty found in brushstrokes, intentionally mimicked in woodblock prints, reflect the growth of state-sponsored education programs and their focus on clarity and speed in writing. Alongside such modern texts are calligraphy skills which, with the ability to see the textured drag of a brush across the paper, became associated with assertions of Japanese identity in its connection to art.³⁹¹ It is no surprise that adopting movable type had considerable cultural implications.

There had been attempts to adopt the type press before; however the difficulties of movable type (*katsuji*) left printing presses hampered. The first newspapers, appearing in multiple regions in the early 1870s, utilized only *kana* script.³⁹² Only large-scale printers could manage to store and maintain the character sets necessary to include *kanji* (Chinese characters) and, when needed, their *furigana* (the small *kana* script run next to *kanji* providing pronunciation). When a press did have characters, there were other difficulties. Publications through the 1970s contain horizontal characters accidentally inserted into a vertical column in academic and vernacular books; an error which could only be made through the use of movable type.³⁹³ Woodblock printing, with its ease of character inclusion, ease of illustration, and its

³⁹⁰ Adal (2009).

³⁹¹ Screech (2002).

³⁹² Lurie (2011), 139. It is interesting that movable type was available in China and Korea as early as the fifteenth century, but was not widely adopted in Japan.

³⁹³ Johns (2012). There is an interesting correspondence to error types found in the transition from scribes to typeset in Europe. As McKitterick found in his research: "...some forms of misprint were inconceivable in manuscript. Letters might be transposed, but a scribe was hardly likely to write upside-down. Nor would a scribe be in a position

reproduction of brushstrokes, would remain a crucial part of Japan's textual production through the introduction of moveable typeset.³⁹⁴

From 1960 until the beginning of 1980, computer programs only used English. Analogous to the battle of newspaper printings and galumphing typewriters, the personal computer in Japan had to contend with the writing system. The exertion necessary for a processor to handle not only a huge character set, but also *hiragana*, *katakana*, and *romaji*, made it impossible for early PC users to enter *kanji*. The difficulty for moveable type designers to provide manuscripts with correct character orientation spilled into aspects of computing technologies: display terminals and printers struggled to exhibit *kanji* characters. A Japanese text can be arranged horizontally or vertically, a technical detail which further confused the dot printers and required two character sets within the computer's memory.³⁹⁵ As a result, the first word-processor which could accurately and conveniently reproduce *kanji* appeared on the market relatively late, in 1978. These early computers adopted a uniform standard for encoding a large number of *kanji* characters. The code was the Japan Industrial Standard, a cipher which divided *kanji* into two sets: the first was comprised of 1,965 commonly used characters, and the second containing 3,384 uncommon but required characters.³⁹⁶

As Adrian Johns explains, computers and printers therefore needed to develop:

“more than just an immense character set... [they] would need to transfer to the digital realm an elaborate and arcane cornucopia of practical conventions—effectively, and entire printing/compositorial/authorial culture—that had evolved over more than a

to mistake letters of very different shapes, as would happen in effect if the compositor mistook a character...” (McKitterick 2003, 115).

³⁹⁴ Moriya (1990); Seeley (1991), 185-187.

³⁹⁵ Johns (2012), 886.

³⁹⁶ Seeley (1991).

millennium. Technologically, it would require at least the need to rotate and resize characters at will, at speed, and with high resolution.”

Johns, 2012: 865.

A new algorithm had to be invented to achieve this goal and make computer generated print possible.³⁹⁷ It was thus 1984 before a personal word processor with Japanese language capabilities became widely available on the market. These PCs could handle 6349 characters, their variants, *kana*, *hiragana*, and *romaji*.³⁹⁸

The process of writing with computer technology was not only beset by the technological difficulties of accommodating the established writing forms, it was also complicated by the moral and social meanings for text as an object. The first printing company to actively take a stake in accessible and wide-spread printing was the Nihon Information Center (NIC). The company could not locate a font for the set of already-released characters: fonts, with their particular slants and angles (reminiscent of recognizable styles in handwriting, strokes replicated in woodblock printing) were held as intellectual property. NIC was also unable to locate anyone in-country who would design new digital characters; they settled on hiring a calligrapher from Taiwan to meet the task. The calligrapher, however, modeled the Japanese *kanji* after an older form of type called *Morisawa*; NIC was subsequently sued for piracy. While eventually the Japanese government ruled that characters could not be copyrightable because “they instantiated the literary culture of the nation itself,” this declaration came too late for the company, which went bankrupt when other print companies emerged while NIC awaited the legal go-ahead to use their press.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁷ Johns (2012).

³⁹⁸ Seeley (1991), 185-187.

³⁹⁹ Johns (2012), 866.

The incorporation of computing technologies into social life entails problems similar to those encountered in the printing industry. Choosing a medium for written communication requires negotiating old values taught and held by previous generations with new media ideologies created by community groups. The best examples of conflicting values in incorporating current media with prior practices reside in instances where old and new writing forms overlap. Handwritten letters, once the only option for long distance correspondence, still exist within the continuum of communication technologies. Handwriting generally takes longer to compose and longer for the recipient to receive. Values associated with handwriting still effect students who write digitally, carrying their stylishly-cased laptops and strap-laden cellphones. To examine the materiality of communication technologies, we need to examine humans with mechanical appendages.

With the advent of computer-mediate communication devices, the temporal divide can be nearly non-existent. In the extreme, instant messaging and chatting allows the reader to receive a message as soon as the author finishes its composition. In addition, there are often small icons indicating that the other person is in the process of writing; a wagging pencil (which flips and erases when the writer deletes a phrase), a series of dots, or a pulsing 書 character (the first character of the verb “to write” 書く *kaku* minus its *hiragana* ending; the character also disappears from the final last stroke to first when words are deleted). These digital stimuli make a reader aware of the act of composition, and—in an unconventional sense—present during writing. This mutual cognizance of the writer and reader is important to the understanding of how the materiality of contemporary technology affects literacy practices: many digital writing platforms rely upon brief message content, creating a need for emotional clarity within messages.

While digital writing technologies have changed the temporal-spatial relationship between the author and the audience, as with their typeset predecessors, they exist alongside former writing technologies. Like the brushstroke, hand written correspondence contains special meaning for the recipient. On the *anketo* (questionnaire) handed out to students there was an overwhelming response to the questions dealing with hand written letters: “I send someone a handwritten letter when it’s either their birthday or some kind of a special occasion. I think it is a show of respect;” “handwritten letter→to show the respect;” “It carries more ‘weight’ than a phone call or message;” and “letters are more special.” One particularly articulate informant expressed the difference between communication styles in this manner:

I write letters to show appreciation, feeling sorry for a loss of a beloved person and occasional events, or a person’s birthday especially when a receiver is in a special relationship with myself. I think it’s different from sending emails/calling randomly, it takes time but your heart can be sent.

Unnamed Survey Participant, Survey in Author’s possession.

Handwritten letters are recognized as heartfelt just as calligraphy is recognized as an aspect of the Japanese spirit. Similar to the combination of illustrations and annotations appearing in later editions of *Genji Monogatari*, handwriting appears on Internet communication platforms. And, akin to *Genji*, there are a number of concerns which emerge with the incorporation of technologies.

Nobuko's Correspondence

I met Nobuko during my first week of interviews on campus. Nobuko is a lively young woman who enjoys travel. She spent her grade-school years in the U.S. and won a scholarship after finishing high school in Japan to participate in the Ship for World Youth, a summer study program in which young scholars from around the world travel to different countries while discussing politics, the environment, and participating in activities that, as the non-profit puts it: “involves multi-cultural and multi-national exchange opportunities.”⁴⁰⁰ Since her participation with the Ship for World Youth program Nobuko has aimed for an international career and has continued to travel abroad.

Nobuko maintains an extensive network of correspondence ranging from emails to handwritten letters. Today we meet off campus at a restaurant of her choice. The establishment caters mostly to salary men, and so the meals are quick and mostly fried, though it boasts a fabulous rendition of an Okinawan *Goya* (bitter melon) dish, a shared affinity Nobuko and I divined in one another in a previous interview. I arrive with my recorder and camera while Nobuko arrives with a giant cloth bag containing two shoe boxes, three photo albums, and her iPad.

We drift through her letters and photo albums before the food arrives. She has saved numerous handwritten birthday notes and Christmas letters as well as most of the letters she has received from friends overseas. “Why is it important to handwrite letters for holidays and birthdays?” I ask.

⁴⁰⁰ Description from Ship for World Youth website: <http://www.shipforworldyouth.org/main.htm>. (Accessed April 22, 2012).

“There is something about how you do it. You have to sit down, and your hand touches the paper. Then you can see their [the correspondent’s] handwriting too. You can learn a lot from how carefully they wrote to you. Did you know that employers look at the quality of the handwriting when you are applying for jobs here? They do it on purpose, I think, and that is why they give paper applications.” Nobuko laughs: “I am like a boy, I needed to ask one of my friends to help me fill some out. My handwriting is terrible!”

“Wait,” I respond, while quickly but carefully refolding Nobuko’s letters and placing them out of the way so the waitress could put our *Goya chanpuru* (Goya stir fry) on the table. “Young men ask someone else to fill out those forms? But they’re so long!”

Nobuko smiles. “Yes, they take a long time to finish. Therefore some girls with excellent handwriting charge money.”

“Why were you like a boy?”

“Most boy students can get away with writing sloppier. I think Japanese teachers were more strict with the girl students. But I was in the U.S. for grade-school.” While we are eating, Nobuko remembers something. She chews rapidly, smiling. “I have something to show you.”

After lunch, Nobuko pulls out her smartphone to open her email inbox. “I became close to Marco, he was on the Ship for World Youth. I wanted to write him paper letters. But I wanted him to have them right away, so I took pictures of them and email them to him. He was just beginning to learn Japanese, so it was nice because he could email me about words he did not understand.”

Nobuko exchanged letters with the young man for about a year, towards the end of that period his comprehension of Japanese developed. The handwritten letters are in many different

colors of ink. Some of the pictures of the original note are blurry. I smile and point at the end of one of Marco's responses (example of email and letter figure 4.1 and 4.2).

"You never signed your letters with x's and o's."

Nobuko glances at the message, inhaling through her teeth. "Saa..." ("I wonder").

Rewriting Meanings: Old Habitus, New Technology

Nobuko's shoeboxes are filled with paper letters. There is a strong correspondence between the letters that she has saved and responses on the *anketo* describing when it is appropriate for handwriting. Respondents commonly listed both birthdays and major holidays as appropriate times to give handwritten letters. They also denoted the type of relationship necessary for handwritten letters: intimates, close friends, and family.⁴⁰¹ Furthermore, the quality of handwriting was also a way to demonstrate respect. This can be clearly seen in the association of handwriting with New Year's holiday rituals. Companies and clubs often ask two or three employees or members to handle this process. As the New Year approached I often came across a pair sitting at a café table, flipping through large binders which contained descriptions of employees and their families.⁴⁰² Among tea or coffee cups were stacks of blank company paper, cramped hands, and piles of finished letters. The wrapping of New Year's greetings is as semiotic as the case for a cellular phone: there is a correlation between high status and wealth and the kind of paper used for these messages. One of the most admired papers is called *washi* 和紙, a handmade paper which can include exquisite layered patterns or light woodblock printing on one side. This paper is also used during weddings as an insert in the invitations, as

⁴⁰¹ There were also a minority of students, approximately 16%, who claimed to never write anything by hand.

⁴⁰² I witnessed these pairs consisting of two men, two women, and a man and a women. I could not ascertain a preference of women as composers for these letters.

well as with notes accompanying monetary gifts to the bride and groom in *shūgi-bukuro* 祝儀袋 (decorated envelopes for weddings).⁴⁰³ On New Year's day money is also given as a gift in decorated envelopes called *pochibukuro* ポチ袋, but on this occasion parents give money to their children; an event called *otoshidama* お年玉.⁴⁰⁴ Children, on the other hand, are expected to write New Year's greetings to grandparents and, on occasion, uncles and aunts. The respondents on my *anketo* predominately indicated that a handwritten letter is preferred, especially when addressed to older relatives. If the intended recipient has poor eyesight or an ailment which makes it hard for them to collect mail, a longer phone call is appropriate. Some respondents also indicated that their families preferred phone calls with, or instead of, letters. The doubling of communication media most often occurred when relatives lived further away and thus did not often receive face-to-face visits.

Friends also send messages to one another on holidays, but the type of message varied. Nobuko, as with many *anketo* respondents, chose to handwrite letters to intimate friends, but sent text messages to other friends. Other students indicated on in their *anketo* answers that they also received handwritten letters from intimate companions. Many students I met with saved both handwritten and digital texts relating to holiday greetings and birthdays. While I did not have the chance to see many collections of saved paper correspondence, the overwhelming presence of saved digital messages, discussed shortly, suggests that “more special” paper correspondence would also be preserved.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰³ Dunn (2008). Unpublished paper: copy in possession of the author.

⁴⁰⁴ For a discussion on the meanings of wrapping gifts, see: Carrier (1998); and Hendry (1993). Joy Hendry's work has received biting criticism from Japanese scholars as being overly simplistic and orientalist. If the reader does not take Hendry's work as a model for Japanese society, but rather as a study of space and meaning, the work remains relevant.

⁴⁰⁵ I had two other informants share with me their archived paper letters.

In Figures 4.1 and 4.2, both Nobuko's letter and Marco's response include a number of interesting facets. Nobuko's handwriting has been digitally transferred into an email.

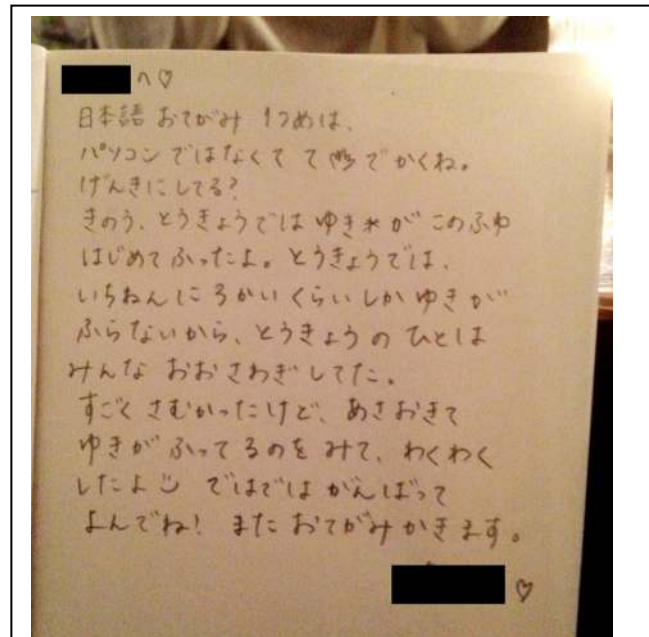


Figure 4.1 Email-Letter

Nobuko's letter emailed Marco. Names have been removed.

waku thank youuu!!!
 these are the words i learned, tell me if its ok:
 なくて: without 手: hand
 かく: write ゆき: snow
 ふゆ: winter じめて: first??
 ふったよ: fall
 一年: 1 year? first year? year?
 くらい: about? しか: only
 大騒ぎ: fuss して: and? soshite?

so I guess i got most of the meaning.. you're
 so cutie, thank you :) :)
 im excited for the next one!
 xoxoxo

Figure 4.2 Email-Response

Email response to letter, with vocabulary. I
 have formatted the letter for a better fit
 removed the contact information and the
 informant's name.

Because she is writing to a language learner she does not include characters, writing instead in the alphabetical *hiragana*. Marco's response indicates that he typed words he did not know into an electronic dictionary: in his vocabulary list he includes characters for words that were not in the original letter and are considered too complex for a first-year Japanese student.

While Nobuko chose to handwrite the letter, the topics of most of her correspondence matches the genre of posts on Facebook by Japanese individuals: she talks about cute kittens, foods she ate, and—exemplified in the provided example in the description of snow in Tokyo—the weather. On the other hand, Marco's responses contain intimate vocabulary: either in signing x's and o's, kisses (he wrote *kisu* キー ス in later letters) and calling Nobuko by pet names in greetings, such as “cutie” and “sexy,” rather than by her name proper. This discrepancy would eventually lead Nobuko to end their correspondence: two interviews later, Nobuko would confide that she felt Marco wanted to be her boyfriend, while she had decided that she wanted to be friends.

Emoji and the Emotional Context

Writing using digital platforms has not only decreased the time between correspondences, it has also decreased the overall length of correspondence. This shift was readily noted by student responses on the *anketo* to the question: “Is there anything you are careful of when sending text message?” Overall, answers linked message shortness and the use of *emoji* (emoticons); such as the example “I usually use pictogram to convey the feeling/emotion. I do not write long in text message to make the respond easier.”

Nobuko includes drawn hearts in many of her letters. Marco, perhaps, misread the inclusion of these hearts, rainbows, and daisies. Nobuko was, after all, handwriting him letters, a sign of intimacy that both international exchange students and Japanese students recognized and wrote about on the questionnaire. Nobuko's choice of topic and her use of email, however, indicate that while she may have been interested, she was not ready to become closer to Marco. In short, there was a discrepancy between the kinds of topic and familiarity between Nobuko and Marco.

In research on emoticon use in digital messages, there are four hearts in the top twenty most used emoticons.⁴⁰⁶ Hearts are most frequently used by women; men, while using fewer emoticons altogether, tend to employ a more diverse set of images.⁴⁰⁷ When women send hearts, most often they are indicating the emotions of delight and happiness, not romantic love.⁴⁰⁸ There are hearts which represent romance: those associated with other date-items, like a heart-shaped box of chocolates or the inclusion of a red rose icon within the same message.⁴⁰⁹ There were a number of respondents on the *anketo* who were aware of the slight differences in emoticon meaning: "I try to put *emoji* lots because in text, it is hard to express emotion and it can lead misunderstanding. Especially Japan is like 本音とたてまえ [real and official stance, public face] culture, I try not to confuse reader who may read hidden meaning ex. 大丈夫 [*daijōbu*]."⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁶ Narwar (2012).

⁴⁰⁷ Tossell et al. (2012).

⁴⁰⁸ Yang et al. (2007).

⁴⁰⁹ Narwar (2012).

⁴¹⁰ *Daijōbu* means "it's okay, it's safe," but it can be used in many different situations with multiple underlying tones. Both *daijōbu* and a word with even an even greater range of connotations, *dōmo* (thank you), were frequently mentioned as problematic words for text messages.

For Japanese youth, emoticons have become a safety valve: they let the reader know the emotional background of the message, protecting the author from emotional misinterpretation.⁴¹¹

Considering the confusion within Nobuko's correspondence alongside other writing practices raises interesting questions. In Figure 4.3 is an *ema* 絵馬, a small wooden plaque purchased at Shinto shrines on which prayers are written. The *ema* pictured features a request to get into high school alongside good health for family members. The author included two older cell-phone style *kao-emoji* (a horizontally drawn facial expression)—just to clear up the emotional meaning of the message for the gods. The small plaque provides little room for longer messages, and the meaning and hopeful expression of the writer is clarified by the use of emoticons.

⁴¹¹ Miyake argues that emoticons have raised importance for Japanese authors because of concerns regarding offense and face-saving (Miyake 2007). Answers on my questionnaire indicate most youths have a concern with “sounding angry” and the offence that may cause.

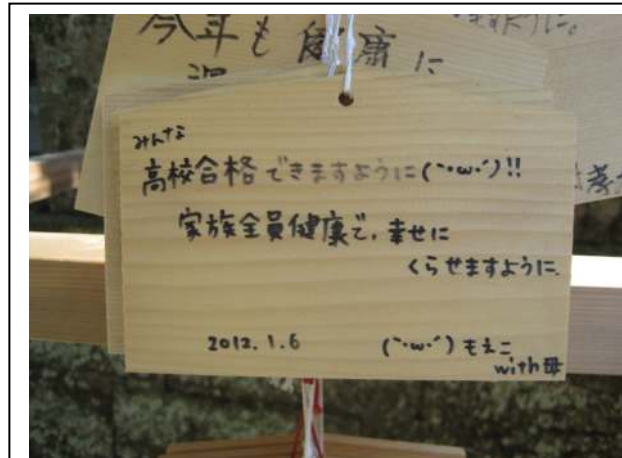


Figure 4.3 *Ema*

An *ema* including the use of emoticons common to older-style phones: from the *Shirohama jinja* 白濱神社, located on the Itō 伊藤 peninsula

The recognition of handwritten letters as intimate and respectful, the use of *emoji*, and the muddled level of intimacy in Nobuko's letters all prompt an important question: How do students choose which writing medium to use? Both friendly and familial correspondence requires fluctuations from computers and phones to pens and kinds of paper. Every student I interviewed had access to the Internet. This meant that students had, at any given time, a variety of options for communicating with one another alongside handwriting: blogs, mixi, Facebook, Twitter, email, and text messages are all available. How do people decide where, and how, to write?

The answer to this question resides not only in the size of the message and the relationship between the people. The explanation is also in the reason why Nobuko emailed her handwritten letters as photographs: the shrinking of temporal distance between composition and reading. It is this which shifts digital subjects into the literary cyborgs traveling within Tokyo.

Choosing Platforms: Weighing Access and Proximity

There are two main factors used to delineate which kind of platform is appropriate for message types: access and proximity. Access describes how broad an audience may possibly read a message. Proximity, on the other hand, describes the variable closeness to the body of the recipient's message receiving device.

Looking at access first, many platforms contain multiple levels of access. Users establish different privacy settings, or levels of access, available for each writing platform. One can, for example, create greater access to a twitter account by linking it to a social networking site or by providing a search hash tag. Without these links tweets can be relatively private, with only a few

friends who are following an individual's account receiving them (as discussed in Chapter III, private is the preferred for Japanese students). The more other people can read your writing the more a platform is perceived to have open access.⁴¹² Closed access, on the other hand, would be a message received by a small and relatively controlled number of recipients. Such circumspection can be achieved through settings or a limited number of recipient addresses, as in a text message for a single phone or a handwritten letter addressed an individual (rather than an entire family). The number of recipients is also impacted by the device receiving it. Both *keitai* email addresses and text messages are viewable by a single device: the intended recipient's phone. The limited number of participants and the limit of a single device creates closed access in *keitai* specific documents.⁴¹³

The action of choosing a set of message recipients, rather than just one, delineates levels of open access. Sites in which the writing default contains no delineated recipients, like Facebook and mixi updates (though it is possible under current privacy setting on both sites or through private messages), make the use of these networks appear to be aimed toward a general audience. Any platform without automatic audience limitations prompts uneasiness in users, and many students believe that these texts are viewable by outsiders despite privacy settings. Both Facebook and mixi fall into this category, alongside blogs and question and answer forums. On the other hand, responses to my survey indicated that anonymous question and answer sites are not considered insecure, and there were a fair number of youths (41%) who believed they could anonymously write questions on these sites which would otherwise be embarrassing.⁴¹⁴ Despite both mixi and Facebook containing privacy controls allowing a user to set their personal page to

⁴¹² Mitzutani et al. (2004).

⁴¹³ Ito et al. (2005).

⁴¹⁴ Questions that were deemed embarrassing typically surrounded menstrual and genital appearance, vaginal health, pregnancy, and intercourse.

friends only, few students believed that these settings were completely secure. Whenever this insecurity arose students wrote accordingly: few students kept or composed incriminating or embarrassing posts on either of these websites.

This finding resonates with Kiyoshi Abe's research, in which the experience of using different forms of media is divided not only by the belief in the possibility of outside surveillance, but also by the place from which the Internet was accessed.⁴¹⁵ Demonstrated in the ethnography below, students are aware when other people may have the opportunity to look at their screens. The ability to read the content of a composition relates not only to levels of access and proximity involved in platforms and devices, but also what environment is surrounding any given device at any given time. I witnessed ample considerations of the environment during my fieldwork: I had taken to peeking at commuter's electronic devices to assess what kind of document they were reading or writing, yet repeatedly found my efforts thwarted: many individuals install covers upon their devices which prohibit the text from being viewable from any angle. The probability of entering a congested environment provides reason for the owners of these devices to coat them with an extra precautionary layer of screen-block materiality.⁴¹⁶

The second factor important in choosing a communication platform was the relative proximity of the receiving device to an individual. Because *keitai* are carried with the person throughout the day, texts or *keitai* mail provides a method to consistently deliver a message closer to the individual than those through which require opening an online platform. Smartphones add complexity to these decisions: with the ability to access the Internet there is the potential to open the University email inbox anywhere. Although university email and mixi

⁴¹⁵ Abe (2009).

⁴¹⁶ My analysis of the use of screen-block decals in relation to negotiating public and private space within the architecture of Tokyo is confirmed by Terrades and Yann (2007).

messages being available through smartphones, the necessity of second online platform creates the sensation that these messages are further from the user.

Despite the ability to access the web, most students made consistent delineations between *keitai* email accounts and other email accounts, with the former maintaining a shorter expected wait time for a reply. Most *keitai* do not automatically ring or vibrate when a message on other platforms are received (although the user may choose to change these settings). Messages on social networks, and work or university emails, have less physical proximity to the user, because these do not cause a *keitai* to stir when received.⁴¹⁷ Thus *keitai* email addresses are used differently than the email addresses provided by the university.

The use of platforms with open or closed access directly corresponds to categories of intimacy in Japan: the closer the individuals are, the more likely they will choose to use a closed platform. Texting a single person, or sending handwritten letters, often occurs between *ki no okenai kankei* (very intimate relationship). Texting is private and intimate because it arrives to a phone, which is assumed to be close to the person's body. Emailing falls into the relationship of *nakama* (friend, colleague, associate). While the message can be received by a single individual, the association of email addresses with institutional ties makes them appropriate for work relationships. Finally, the relationship of *najimi* (familiarity with no familial or institutional link) but not *nakama* moves writing to more open access platforms.⁴¹⁸

Even after one commits to a writing platform, how one composes a message still requires additional material considerations. As James Katz and Mark Aakus describe in the conclusion of

⁴¹⁷ It should be noted that my research group was primarily students. This analysis has different results, however, if I focus only on my small number of older, employed informants for whom work emails were *keitai* emails. The dynamic with work emails change when the company provides employees with *keitai* for work. Often company employees carry two cell phones, one for work calls—which gives alerts for work emails—and a personal one which maintains the settings described above.

⁴¹⁸ The categories of relationships were drawn from Matsumura (1984), who analyzed types of communication in public and private environments in Japan. I am indebted to Nicki Kittermeth for her aide in reading this article.

their 2002 manuscript *Perpetual Contact*: “social actors are self-aware of at least the lower levels of the operational principles of their immediate locales.”⁴¹⁹ Users are aware of the technical capabilities of their mobile devices. Individuals alter their writing patterns according to this knowledge; users of mobile devices are constantly reinventing their use of technology.⁴²⁰ First, there are inconsistencies between phone brands: the emoticons on iPhones do not transfer to older phones or some Japan based smartphones. Additionally, for transnational conversations interviewees were aware of the brands of phones and computers that their close friends carried. Different users have downloaded different language packages. Related technological considerations surface from the structure of communication platforms. Twitter, for example, has a limited set of characters (the 140 limit is a count of alphabetic letters and spaces, and *kanji*). Bilingual speakers consistently wrote more in Japanese, for a single *kanji* can contain two or more syllabic pairings. Authors writing in Japanese could thus write more.

Overall, all of my interviewees wrote to their friends more than calling. Like many other communities, students preferred sending text messages over making phone calls to conduct daily phatic levels of communication. Keeping in mind the spread of emoticons from digital messages to *ema* prayers and handwritten letters to jpegs in emails, the increase in text messaging relates strongly both to the blurred boundaries between writing and orality as well as the decreased time between message composition and reception. Alongside the discussion of access and proximity in communication platforms, digital documents take new significance when contextualized in the social geography of the city. Writers and readers, with their prosthetic *keitai* selves, inhabit a second city space.

⁴¹⁹ Katz and Mark Aakhus (2002), 304.

⁴²⁰ Katz and Mark Aakhus (2002).

Train Space as Sacred Space

I tease Ryan as we meet at the Yotsuya train station, asking why he kept responding to my lunch invitations with four AM emails.⁴²¹ He laughs, tossing back his long hair. “You know, my teacher noticed too. But this work schedule fits into my lifestyle. I tend to go to sleep after classes in the afternoon, and sleep for almost four hours, and then wake in the evening, and work all night, napping shortly before classes begin.”

As we sit on the packed train—we were lucky to get seats—we both pull out something to read: I extract an academic article and Ryan produces his cellphone to answer school-related emails. We quietly sit for fifteen minutes until our stop.

As we get off the train I reflect, “Why is there so much reading on trains?” Ryan thinks for a moment, and then explains that it is necessary to do something on the trains.

“People can read a book, read the overhead advertisements, or play with their phones. People could also sleep, too. But that’s still doing something.” I ask if you can look out the window, and he says: “Yes, but you have to be facing the window, so it happens most by those who are standing in front of the doors on the train.” Ryan continues casually: “I always do something, it lets you sink into society.”

I am startled by this description: “Reading allows you to sink into society?”

“Even if someone glances over your shoulder,” Ryan explains, “they will be unable to read word-to-word what you are reading. But if you are watching a video, a bystander can see

⁴²¹ Ryan is a student who appears to be from abroad. He is fluent in Japanese. His mother is Japanese and his father British, leaving him with dual citizenship. He has spent his entire scholastic career in international schools in Japan, but travels with his father frequently to Britain. During vacations his family also spends long periods of time in Britain.

the image at the exact moment that you are seeing it. Book covers help too. For magazines it's harder, the lack of a cover helps to describe you to others, that you are that kind of person.”

Later than evening I stumble across Ryan online, and again mention that I'd been thinking about sinking into society. Ryan's pencil emoticons starts, erases, starts again and erases again. He asks if he can try to explain in Japanese. I agree. He writes:

社会に溶け込む為には多くのプロセスがあると思われる。その中でも興味深いのが一人で公共の場において何もしていない時である。良い例としては電車の中での行動である。そこでの行動は大きく分けて5つに分類される。1. 携帯をいじる、2. 本、マンガ、新聞、電車内の広告などを読む、3. 寝る、または寝るふりをする、4. 音楽を聴く、5. 外の景色を見る。

逆に言えばほとんど上記以外の行動を見る事が出来ない。先も言った様に電車等の不特定多数の人間が集まる公共の場では『暗黙のルール』があり、それらの実態の無いルールに従わなければ「浮いてしまう」。ただ、その反面浮かない為には「行動」を取らなければならない。

ここで興味深いのが何もしないと言う行動がそのルールにそぐわないと言う事だ。何もしていない時は上記の行動を通して「私は何もしていない」と言う消極的アピールをしなければならない。

「行動」を更に掘り下げて見るともう一つ興味深い事が分かる。「本を読む」と言った様な個人で行う行動は自分と社会とを一時遮断しているとも言える

が、それと同時に社会の一部と溶け込んでもいる。つまり行動を通して自分の存在を程よく消していると言える。

In order to sink into society (and not stand out) one needs to follow a few processes. Especially interesting are the actions individuals take when alone in public space. Let's look to the train as an example. There are mainly 5 actions one should follow: 1. Play with your mobile phone, 2. Read a book, magazine, newspaper, or an advertisement on the train, 3. Sleep, or pretend to sleep, 4. Listen to your i-pod, 5. Enjoy the scenery.

To put it bluntly, one hardly encounters action that goes against this list. In such a way there are certain invisible rules that one must follow in public space in order to not stand out and be deemed weird. Yet, what is unique here, is that in order to not stand out an individual must engage oneself in action.

Thus, one realizes that when in public he/she cannot be doing nothing. That is, in order for one to signify that he/she is not doing anything one must engage in the certain actions listed above. We see that one is doing nothing by doing something, i.e. by following the socially correct actions.

One other interesting factor could be witnessed through such action. By indulging one's self in a personal activity such as reading, he is creating personal space and thus disengaging himself from society. Yet, at the same time he is sinking into society by joining the ebb and flow of its rules. Through socially correct action he/she is sinking into society.

Ryan, Email to Author

In a later interview I return to this theme, affirming that it is impolite to simply sit and watch people come and go on the train. It is better to avert your eyes and to choose an activity which will not disturb others.

Negotiating Writing Without Time Delay

Within *Perpetual Contact* the researchers note: “Whenever the mobile phone chirps, it alters the traditional nature of public space and the traditional dynamic of private relationships.”⁴²² Trains and stations were often listed as architectural locations which required *keitai* use to adapt to different social expectations regarding technology. As Takashi (introduced in Chapter III) describes:

Train space is train space; train space becomes a sacred space. You can tell because there is no eating and little talking on the train, there are so many rules to respect. It is similar to special events, like funerals, priests speaking at temples, or weddings. But different times [of day], and trains have different rules. The first and last trains are exception.

Takashi, Recorded Interview

While speaking on a cell phone within the greater Tokyo metro system is typically regarded as rude, taking a call in the bullet train to the airport is not as inappropriate. Often this space is considered a work space, a place to make appointments, check departure times, and address scheduling. People accept flexibility in phone use on the first and last trains of any given day; though sometimes work related, the students attributed this relaxed atmosphere to the

⁴²² Katz and Aakhus (2002): 301.

presence of intoxicated people on these trains. *Keitai* are not only seen, they are heard. Their beeps, buzzes, and rings extend their presence beyond their covers.

Trains are not the only place where use of technology falls under special social rules in Japan. Most individuals will get up and leave the table, especially if they are out with a group at a restaurant, if their *keitai* rings. This is similar to Osamu and Aimi's concerns in language choice on mixi and Facebook. Having a conversation not only extends the self beyond the body and into the hearing of others, it also leaves the surrounding people out. Only half the conversation is heard, and it would be impolite for them to participate with talk. Politeness and etiquette for phone conversations also occurs in corporations; if a phone rings in the office, one is apt to cover their mouth, lean downward, and speak lowly. During a meeting people excuse themselves from the room.

The negotiation of human bodies, communication devices, and social places blurs the mechanisms of writing or talking and the material of each practice: in order to respond to the ringing of a *keitai* one must find a place to speak privately. If no such space is available, the ability to speak is removed: thus most individuals change their phone to the manner mode while riding on a train.

The social requirement of politeness stands at odds with the media's apprehension of how often youth use their phones to text. Similar to concern in other nations, there is a general worry that youth are losing the "fundamental" ability to verbally communicate: the younger generation appears to prefer writing to one another over spoken conversations. The tendency to favor of text communications over verbal interactions has been labeled "telecooning."⁴²³ I believe that such debates fail to incorporate the use of technology into the movement through different spaces in

⁴²³ Habuchi argues that this preference is due to the strength between *keitai* and its pervasive link to the production of social identity within the networks (Habuchi 2005, 178).

social life. Understanding communication technologies from the perspective of literacy requires us to break with “the assumption that there is an absolute difference between the immaterial and the material constitution of culture and society.”⁴²⁴ Dismantling this dualist paradigm is best approached through a metaphor discussed in at the beginning of this chapter: that we *keitaisha* can be interpreted as literate cyborgs.

Conclusions: Technical Materiality and Physical Bodies Revisited

The direction of the analytic gaze was reversed in this chapter: instead of following an individual on message boards and chatrooms through the digital tunnel, we have captured the shadow of the cityscape on inboxes, shoe boxes, and text bubbles. Emplacing technology within its human environment thickens their present use: the city itself is textually and materially inhabited by social device-wielding cyborgs.

Seeing the un-seen cyborg and the “sacred space” of trains links technology use into the architecture of the city. Both cyborgs and trains are framed through an understanding of public and private.⁴²⁵ Tokyo is a city which is socially mapped: each place in the city has a different level of *uchi/soto* (inside/outside), and the perception of these changes the use of technology. The train is a liminal space—they are transitory spaces where the guiding knowledge of age, status, and institutional affiliations are missing among the mix of the day’s commuters.⁴²⁶ Onboard are *keitaisha* who are traveling through two cities; the different geographic areas of *omote/ura* in the city, and the *omote/ura* found within different platforms available on their

⁴²⁴ Kuchler (2008,103),.

⁴²⁵ Goffman’s concept of personhood as being established through expression games is relevant here, in which “one general human capacity in terms of the conceptions we have of its physical and social limits: the individual’s capacity to acquire, reveal, and conceal information.” (Goffman 1969, 8).

⁴²⁶ For a discussion of liminality and its importance in traversing social categories, see: Van Gennep (1960).

Internet capable device.⁴²⁷ The overlap of these two publics creates two privates: closed access platforms on the device are subsumed under the open platform of the train. Cyborgs learn to read appropriately: reading on the train helps you sink into public society, hiding your screen and covering your book keeps information about the self, private. In essence, *keitaisha* send more text messages because they are literate: they understand that reading and writing are occurring in multiple places within the city, and that different forms of communication have different obligations on the body of the receiver. This presence in time and space is the limit of human/machine divides: both the author and the receiver have bodies that are situated in a particular location at a particular time.⁴²⁸ One doesn't know where the other body is: to respect other cyborgs, one must consider the corporeal form existing in the social world. Answering a call on the train is rude. Writing, however, is neutral: sending an email to a person's *keitai* provides both closed access and proximity to the individual.

The choice to write more represents one of the contradictions present in contemporary technology. Fears that the younger generation is losing the ability to communicate effectively resonate with concerns that technological devices are alienating people. Sherry Turkle argues that giving children robotic toys to play with has aided this alienation; being "tethered" to the Internet through a device creates a state of the self that is absent from surrounding social interactions:

In fact, being alone can start to seem like a precondition for being together because it is easier to communicate if you can focus, without interruption, on your screen. In this new

⁴²⁷ *Keitaisha* are mobile persons; *omote/ura* is front/back.

⁴²⁸ Many researchers have noticed that knowledge is linked to the body by place and time: e.g., Harris and Rapport (2007).

regime, a train station (like an airport, a café, or a park) is no longer a communal space but a place of social collection: people come together but do not speak to each other.

Turkle, 2011: 155.

While there may be some cause for concern, Turkle is assuming that “public” space is “communal:” i.e., that it is a place in which individuals exchange information about one another. This is a flat misconception of the environment; as seen with Tokyo, there are different levels of inside and outside, each with different forms of interaction. In Japan, sharing an affiliation through a club permits the *aisatsu* exchange marking public space, but sharing a train does not. There are likely to be similar analogies in many countries: a jetsetter sipping a coffee while working in a café is not the same as a jetsetter sipping a beer while working in a pub. Just because a woman is in a public space does not provide the right to approach her. Believing that all “communal” space has the same kinds of person-to-person approachability leads to the confusion of symbolic meanings, like emailing handwritten letters. The awareness that telephone calls create the need of the receiver to extend themselves into the surrounding environment—either through overheard speech and the need to leave a room for politeness—not only makes writing more attractive, it makes sense in a world where everyone always carries their prosthetic device.

While reading and writing are developing an increased importance within cyborg cities, the performance of relationships and emotions through a mobile device is deeply contingent on the particular medium being used to express oneself. Paper and handwriting remain associated with intimacy and respect, and have an important aspect of holiday rituals in Japan. Likewise, the

anonymity of online blog interactions, for example, can create an explorative arena for different versions of the self, places where questions that are difficult to approach can be asked.⁴²⁹

Because the use of mobile devices is constantly changing, research on these technologies must consider the same factors developed by other theorists of social interaction.⁴³⁰ To understand the impact of mobile technology it is necessary to connect users to the intra-web grid from the ground up: individuals make sense of online interactions based on lived experiences and prior uses of writing and language.⁴³¹

Lived experiences of reading and writing are fundamental to another aspect of being a cyborg: like the negotiation condensed time in receiving messages, contemporary literacy has also negotiates the vast amounts of data in relation to access for an individual. In the past, much information could only be instantaneously accessed through memorization. The addition of our Internet capable prostheses, however, has changed the need to memorize important facts. Tremendous quantities of information are now available at any time, provided there is Internet access. Chapter V focuses upon this phenomenon, examining the effects of new technology upon knowledge and memory.

⁴²⁹ Turkle (1999).

⁴³⁰ Goffman (1959); Giddens (1984).

⁴³¹ On the impact of social interaction on machine use, see: Suchman (2007). In Suchman's research participants misunderstood instructions given by copy machines precisely because the instructions did not follow the norms for conversation and adjacency pairs. Even when acting with just a machine, people drew from their life interactions to make meaning in messages. On the impact of memory on machine use, see: Van Dijck (2007), which not only demonstrates the link between previous writing practices, such as diaries and day planners, and new communication technologies, but also of life experiences with meanings for images and posts.

CHAPTER V
 MAKING MEMORIES:
 LITERAL CAMOUFLAGE AND SKILLED RECOGNITION

Saburō began to ghostwrite letters for two or three of the students who studied under Kōson. His specialty was writing parents to ask for money. He would begin with a brief description of the weather and scenery, express an innocent hope that all was well with the beloved and respected parent, then delve right into the matter at hand. Nothing, to Saburō's mind, could be more ineffective than to begin with long, drawn-out passages full of groveling flattery and end with a plea for money. The plea only made the flattery all the more transparent and gave the whole letter an air of sordid insincerity. Better to pluck up one's courage and get to the heart of the matter as quickly as possible. It was also advisable to keep things short and succinct. Like this:

We are about to begin our study of the Book of Songs. If purchased from the local bookseller, the text costs twenty-two yen. Professor Kōson, however, having kindly taken into consideration the financial status of his students, has decided to order the books directly from China. The cost comes to fifteen yen, eighty sen per volume. Since passing up this opportunity would mean suffering a substantial loss, I should like to order one of the books from him as soon as possible. Please send fifteen yen, eighty sen posthaste... After getting the request for money out of the way, one should then describe some trifling everyday occurrence. For example: *Yesterday, looking out my window, I*

watched a single hawk doing battle with any number of crows—truly a valiant, soul-stirring sight. Or: The day before yesterday, as I was taking a walk along the banks of the Sumida River, I found the most peculiar little flower. It had small petals, like those of a morning glory, or, rather, quite large petals, you might say, like a sweet pea, and was white, but on the reddish side—such a rare find that I dug it up, roots and all, and replanted it in a pot in my room...

And so on, rambling leisurely along as if one had forgotten all about money, or anything else. The beloved father, reading this letter, would reflect upon the tranquility in his son's heart and, ashamed of the worldly cares that plagued his own, send off the cash with a smile. Saburō's letters really did have such an effect.

Osamu Dazai, "Saburō the Liar." 1945: 124-125. Italics in original.

Memory, Skill, Knowledge

The focus of this chapter is the effect of new writing technologies upon people's knowledge and ability to know one another. As the requests to Saburō to be a ghostwriter demonstrate, there is an importance and an art in depicting the self to others in writing. Saburō's letters are those which describe the experience of being a student, in which a tranquil heart can be shared among lovers, family members, and friends. They contain facts to which parents can refer: how much a textbook costs and the placing of its order. The author of this story, Osamu Dazai, is depicting the impact of literacy on memory and knowledge: the ability to convey and store information as well as being a medium in which to share experiences and emotions. A question arises, however, about the validity of those shared experiences: are the students, being depicted in the letters by their surrogate writer showing their true identity? Was it Saburō that the

parents were reflecting on, or their sons? The title of short story, “Saburō the Liar,” indicates Dazai’s own answer.⁴³²

The issues surrounding Saburō’s ghostwriting are still thriving within computer-mediated literacy. Contemporary debates are variations on the above two themes. The first of which is the polemic surrounding knowledge as information and remembrances. Do search engines, the Internet, and computer memory help or hinder knowledge practices? The second theme is a dispute which surrounds identity for online correspondence. Is the person writing who they say they are, and, if so, is what they are writing true?

Considering the impact of writing technologies on social organization is an academic staple.⁴³³ Studies of the impact of multimedia technology on human knowledge grew in number during the 1970s. The primary focus of this body of research was on radio and television.⁴³⁴ Continuing with the tone set in Marshall McLuhan’s work, studies on multimedia technologies focused on negative effects of radio and television shows upon knowledge and social interaction through the 1980s.⁴³⁵ Eventually, computers and the Internet were also implicated as harmful to social life. The ability to access information virtually at our fingertips has become one of the primary points of discussion. Nicholas Carr, for example, has declared: “google makes us stupid.”⁴³⁶ This dumbing is theorized to occur in a number of ways. In one psycho-biological approach, using a search engine to browse the Internet bombards the brain with multiple stimuli. The human brain learns to process such stimuli by re-programming neural connections to fit

⁴³² Dazai (1934), 122-132.

⁴³³ On “reading fever,” see: Littau (2006); on debates on *Genji Monogatari* (The Tale of Genji), see: Kornicki (2005); on the ill-fitted correspondence to the written word to advancement, Chapter I.

⁴³⁴ For examples which focus on the negative impact of multimedia in the home, see: McLuhan (1962).

⁴³⁵ On the demise of reading from the invention of the telegraph as well as the development of mindless isolation from television, see: Postman (1985, 1990).

⁴³⁶ Carr (2008); see also Bauerlein (2008).

skimming material. This kind of neural work is believed to fragment concentration.⁴³⁷ Similarly, such neural organization is hypothesized to prohibit “deep-deep” styles of learning, where a reader analytically engages a text.⁴³⁸ The ability to make meaningful connections are reduced when efficiency and immediacy are prioritized above other thought functions.⁴³⁹ As described by Carr, one of the proponents of this analysis:

When we go on line we enter an environment that promotes cursory reading, hurried and distracted thinking, and superficial learning. It’s possible to think deeply while surfing the Net, just as it’s possible to think shallowly while reading a book, but that’s not the type of thinking [the Internet] encourages and rewards.

Carr, 2010: 115-116.

This zealous view of accessing information online has been described as a return to the qualities of life similar to those in Europe’s “Dark Ages,” in which some theorists correlate a shortened attention span to the display of apathy towards people in the community.⁴⁴⁰ Similar in didactic ardor are the claims opposite to those warning of brain malfunctions: there are philosophers who

⁴³⁷ For a review of synaptic formation in journalism, see: Carr (2008, 2010). On an analysis of synaptic formation stemming from the field of neuropsychology, see: Small and Vorgan (2008); Wolf (2008).

⁴³⁸ Carr (2010).

⁴³⁹ Wolf (2008). Placed alongside previous discussions of illnesses attributed to literacy, such as “reading fever” and the “licentious” *Genji* readers, it is interesting to note that Maryanne Wolf is a psychologist whose work primarily focuses upon dyslexic and autistic individuals.

⁴⁴⁰ Brabazon (2012); Jackson (2008). Tara Brabazon describes the self-centered basis of googling as: “Google, and its naturalized mode of searching, encourages bad behavior. When confronted by an open search engine, most of us will enact the ultimate of vain acts: inserting our own name into the blinking cursor. This process now has a name: googling. This is self-absorbed action, rather than an outward and reflexive process. It is not a search of the World Wide Web, but the construction of an Individual Narrow Portal.” (Brabazon 2012, 16). Brabazon’s conclusion is amusing, as the words written in both testing both pen and quills as writing materials have a similar result: throughout the years, people are observed most often to write their own name. For an online discussion of testing writing instruments, see: Scatmania, “Pen Testing,” November 13, 2012, <http://www.scatmania.org/2013/11/13/pens/>.

proselytize a soon-to-be enlightenment. Human consciousness is preparing to be interlinked through the intellectual corridors of the World Wide Web.⁴⁴¹

The negative attributes narrated onto Internet technologies strike a particular chord with recent research: there is a growing body of research that suggests that Japan is, in a way, falling apart. For example, one of the basic units of identity—the family—has long been subject for researchers and mass media reporting. Declining birthrates and a move towards “modernization” have left many of the elderly without clear ties for care in old age.⁴⁴² Coping with such dramatic changes has left many Japanese families no longer representing “traditional” roles in behavior or the family unit.⁴⁴³ These changes in roles and a tendency for a pessimistic outlook have lead to new social practices: if the elderly can not be taken care of, then who is around to tend to graves? The answer has been to begin to scatter the ashes of the deceased, leaving no burden on younger generations to return and tend to family shrines during yearly holidays.⁴⁴⁴

After the disasters of March 2011, researchers found that many individuals felt an increased level of uncertainty about the future. Such feelings had developed from the prolonged economic stagnation, where existing in Japan not only meant living with the knowledge that one’s career might be an endless shifting of temporary positions which do not pay well, but also living in the range of radioactive fallout. Indeed, as finances have become stretched a number of young people have found they have few places to go. Many become “Net Café Refugees,” groups of youth who can rent a small room in cafés which are catering to manga reading or online interactions as a place to sleep.⁴⁴⁵ Japan, and the communities within it, are increasingly

⁴⁴¹ Kurzweil (2005).

⁴⁴² Long (1999); Kiefer (1999).

⁴⁴³ White (2002).

⁴⁴⁴ Kawano (2012).

⁴⁴⁵ Allison (2013).

being depicted as unstable, unattached to rituals that had, in the past, grounded social life. Japan may well indeed be precarious.

While there is a great deal of rapid change occurring in the county, I found the sense that youth are complete distancing themselves from historic values to be erroneous. As demonstrated in Chapter III, much of the protocol and politeness for social networks draws from long established methods of communication. Likewise, with knowledge and memory, students draw on earlier, and similar, forms of writing in order to inform both their decisions in composition and their ability to interpret others' writing online. In line with the debates which at once condemn and praise Internet technologies, the students I worked with are innovative with themes and memes drawn from the past.

These debates accentuate the perception of what I have been referring to as cyborg ordeals, the competing negative and positive aspects perceived in Internet-capable technologies. Yet not all findings are so polarized. Most scholars highlight both the positive and negative aspects of knowledge and computer use. Device users often, for example, search the Internet while alone in order to locate the places where literary, artistic, and poetic groups perform and socialize.⁴⁴⁶ Internet searches are particular for geographic regions and interests, making them an invaluable component for learning to navigate new places.⁴⁴⁷

Searching on the web has changed the way people are primed to think about computers, and many individuals have developed a tendency to externally store information. Internet users have lower rates of information recall and enhanced rates of recalling where to access facts on the web.⁴⁴⁸ One such way of recalling is the bookmark, where users place a webpage on a saved

⁴⁴⁶ Guy (2005).

⁴⁴⁷ Schuurman (2013).

⁴⁴⁸ Sparrow et al. (2011).

list of favorite or useful Internet sites. Bookmarking has been associated with “re-finding,” where past movements ease the future collection of information.⁴⁴⁹

When search engines are problematized in balanced models, information present on the web is often seen as a catalyst for learning while the programs and algorithms of search platforms are discussed in terms of their biases and infringements: the search engine is not a neutral medium for looking up information.⁴⁵⁰ Infringements by Internet platforms are increasingly described by researchers and laypeople as the loss of the ability to “forget,” or delete. Once information is made available, many platforms allow the material on a page to be moved. Even if an individual deletes a post, therefore, the web is unforgiving and unforgetting.⁴⁵¹ Drawing on the early discussions of McLuhan and Postman, Yoni Von Den Eede demonstrates that while computer memory and Internet storage is an extension of human memory, it is not an imitation of it.⁴⁵² With the inability for a user to control deletion and information transference, technology still contains a form of Postman’s “Faustian Bargain:” we gain remembering and we lose forgetting.⁴⁵³

How we remember one another, or, how we identify ourselves to others, is also a source of debate. Without the reader’s ability to interpret the body, using digital writing platforms provides a space for individuals to explore their identity. Gender switching, the reassignment of age, and the loss or gain of a physical handicap are commonly explored tropes.⁴⁵⁴ Many individuals maintain a personalized social network platform as well as utilizing anonymous blogs/question-answer forums. The different self-presentation styles for each of these mediums have led users to speak of a “real” person (that of the inescapable body), an “almost” real person

⁴⁴⁹ Halavais (2013).

⁴⁵⁰ Vaidhyanathan (2012).

⁴⁵¹ Mayer-Schönberger (2011).

⁴⁵² Eede (2011).

⁴⁵³ Eede (2011), 13-24.

⁴⁵⁴ Allucquere (1991); Boellstorff (2008); Okuyama and Iwai (2011); and Turkle (1997, 1999a, 1999b).

(the presentation of self on a social network, often slightly aggrandized or muted for polite public speech), and the “anonymous” person (the use of writing to present yourself however you need to, or wish).⁴⁵⁵ The presentations of self-online are thus remediated.⁴⁵⁶

Parallel to discussions of what is “true” and “real” about online presentations of identity are moments when writing reaffirms and creates embodied selves. In Japan writing by disenfranchised groups, like Okinawans, has become a powerful medium to represent distinct social practices and ways of speaking.⁴⁵⁷ On a different scale, posting to communal sites can affirm presence and coordinate on-the-ground movements, as seen after the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami in Japan. Writing on platforms after the disaster not only took on an ethereal form—for some it was the only assurance that a loved one had survived—but also a shared identity of mourning, solidarity, and support.⁴⁵⁸

While there are benefits to portraying identity in computer-mediated communication platforms, there are also risks. As described by the paradox of the machine controlling the user, the importance of Internet communication in contemporary relationships requires that youths must dedicate a portion of their time and energy online. Additionally, the written self runs the risk of being misinterpreted, leading to anxiety and an increased level of online surveillance by the author.⁴⁵⁹ This phenomenon has led to two philosophical positions: the “you are not the machine” (turn it off), and the “digital maximalism” (the more you connect, the better person you are).⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁵ Grant (2013); and Onda (2013).

⁴⁵⁶ Batchen (2001); Bolter and Grusin (1999); and Couldry (2012).

⁴⁵⁷ Bhowmik (2008).

⁴⁵⁸ Gao et al. (2011); Kingston (2012); and Tucker (2011).

⁴⁵⁹ Mazalin and Moore (2004).

⁴⁶⁰ For an example of the turn off devices philosophy, see: Lanier (2010). For digital maximalism, see: Powers (2010).

To explore these contradictory meditations on computer mediated communication and digitally stored information, this chapter approaches memory and knowledge practices through literacy. Writing is an embodiment of self and values, and Internet capable devices are technologies embedded within the architecture of place and the geography of time. This approach resonates with prior research on memory: people keep objects which are connected to events around them as placeholders for recollection.⁴⁶¹ The cultural practice of inscribing the environment with memories has led some researchers to suggest that people are primed to become cyborgs, keeping devices with information stored in them at hand is only a natural extension of the transmission of cultural knowledge.⁴⁶²

Each time a memory is invoked, it is influenced by the present. Memories are not static; they change as a person ages and gains further experiences.⁴⁶³ Keeping in mind that cyborg literacy is co-authored, this chapter explores knowledge and memory as experience in order to develop insights into the paradoxes of contemporary literacy. I argue that the form of memory associated with recognition is not a simplified process: it involves an understanding of machine capability, periods of human-machine-human interaction, and the ability to recognize digital subjects as elements within a broader social life.

Electronic Memory:

Reference Tools, Address Books, Day Planners

Stitching together an electronic library requires a coagulation of innumerable brief actions over time. I watch Keiko as she saves a name and number of a new tennis club member;

⁴⁶¹ Ingold (2000); Sahlins (1985, 2000); and Van Dijck (2007).

⁴⁶² Clark (2001, 2004); Fortunati (2003); and Ingold (2000), 21, 64-69.

⁴⁶³ Van Dijck (2007).

they hold their flip-style phones close to one another. The phones do the work for them, recognizing one another and saving the contact information under a name provided by the phone's owner. When Atsushi gives me his number, however, I need to say the numbers aloud to him. He has an iPhone and, today, I am using my DoCoMo phone. Atsushi sends me a text message shortly thereafter, allowing me to save his number manually, without hearing it read. "Meghan-san, keitai no bango ga oboeru? Mezurashi na," he comments absently (he's looking at a text message he's just received). Atsushi is right: it is unusual that I should have my phone number memorized. Most of the students I encounter need to use their phone to look up contact numbers, including their own. The exception to this rule were the older students who, as the fall approached, began to fill job applications and thus had recently been required to write their number on many pieces of paper.

My interviewees remembered when they memorized their phone numbers, however. Memorizing cellular numbers is part of childhood. Knowing their mother's cell and, perhaps, a work number for a parent is a common of a rite of passage into grade school status (often a prerequisite for allowing youth to play outdoors on their own). One of the first pieces of self-information students in Japan learn is to write the characters for their name and recall phone numbers.

Machine Memory as Infrastructure

Cell phone capabilities change rapidly, and students indicated that they purchase a new phone at least once every two years.⁴⁶⁴ During initial interviews I asked about brand loyalty. My

⁴⁶⁴ There is a body of literature which is dedicated to the environmental impact of discarded electronic devices. As much as I advocate the positive elements of digital prosthesis, I recognize the detrimental impact the creation of

informants were willing to switch phone brands, and carriers, in accordance with their spending power and the current fashion. Switching phone types and brands entails a commitment. As I learned by fumbling with my DoCoMo phone, machine functions are not intuitive.⁴⁶⁵ Japanese phones use different categories to group user options than the American based iPhone. The bundled options often contain seemingly incongruous elements. For example, many of the categories subsumed under iPhone settings are not considered to be phone system structures for the DoCoMo phone. The photos and camera is one example; each is given their own categories in DoCoMo programming. This may have occurred because Japanese phones have contained an elaborated photo system for over ten years, including options that the iPhone is now just beginning to make standard; a fade (darkening around the edges of the image), the ability to add small icons or words to the image, and different color filters have long been options in Japanese phones. Categories for machine functions are cultural links which group the pre-programmed functions of machine into conceptual components.⁴⁶⁶ In short, memorizing locations and buttons for new machines is always a time commitment. It was this commitment which most aggrieved my interviewees when an oft-used internet platform changed. Osamu cursed when he discovered changes to the Facebook platform: “*Kuso! Kore o suru hima ga nai!*” (Shit! I don’t have time for this!)

To use different styles of phones, similar to learning the different key commands between Apple computers and Dells, users need to re-learn and memorize a different set of categories.

these machines has on the environment in mining for their computer components and in disposing of their toxic parts. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation for an extensive discussion of these impacts. For a list of studies on the environmental impacts of cellular phones and computer components, see: Ogunseitan (2011); for real-time updates on environmental hazards, legal and illegal disposals, and legislative initiatives, see the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, <http://svtc.org>.

⁴⁶⁵ To see a description of a model similar to my phone: <http://www.nttDoCoMo.co.jp/>. For basic phone functions list in English, see: <http://www.nttDoCoMo.co.jp/english/>.

⁴⁶⁶ Riles (2006).

Using one phone or another embeds an individual within an infrastructure.⁴⁶⁷ Infrastructural elements connect individuals to larger skill repositories, ones which coordinate the body and the knowledge of machine use. Picking up a DoCoMo phone and successfully accessing its data requires not only a familiarity with cellular phones but knowledge of that style of machine in particular. Thus users of new technology need to remember how to position the phone with the body: turning a phone horizontal to type with two thumbs is very different than the drag-‘n’-drop of touch screen *hiragana* selection. This machine-memory links users through shared experience.

For example, Amaya and Chihaya both recognized my awkward search for how to save phone numbers in my Japanese phone after I first acquired it. Both Amaya and Chihaya gave me brief lessons on how to efficiently use my new *keitai*. Likewise, when working with Chihaya, I was able to teach her how to scan for changes in the basic Facebook page which often indicate an undisclosed unlock of security settings. These are small movements of information retrieval and storage, and while they are essential to operating in a device filled world, they are often undervalued as a form of knowledge and a knowledge practice in and of themselves. Chihaya and Amaya’s facility with these largely tacit conventions marks them as embedded within a

⁴⁶⁷ Bowker and Star (1999), 35-36. Bowker and Star list nine elements characterizing infrastructure. Negotiations require: 1) embeddedness (infrastructure is sunk into other structures, e.g. other kinds of phones requiring specialized emoji inputs and levels of intimacy in relationships); 2) transparency (tasks in one machine do not require learning new methods each time); 3) reach or scope (spatial or temporal, beyond a single event, e.g. messaging occurs within group constructed media ideologies); 4) learning as part of membership (membership/practice denotes kinds of identity for Sophia students); 5) links with conventions of practice (communal practices, e.g. Japanese twitter users only link tweets with close friends); 6) embodiment of standards (these are often rendered transparent because they are plugged into other infrastructures and tools in standardized fashion, e.g. thus the merits of using text messages instead of making a phone call are difficult to ascertain); 7) building upon an installed base (works with inertia and limitations/strengths of previous systems, e.g. differences in phone connectivity per region); 8) Visibility upon breakdown (new telephones require learning new classifications and commands); and 9) they are fixed in modular increments, not all at once or globally (never changed from above, changes take time and negotiation, and adjustment with other aspects of the systems involved). While these infrastructural elements reflect many of the topics already covered within this dissertation, they play an incredible role in the second half of this section focusing on recognition memory. While beyond the scope of this research, the observation that individuals are already embedded in infrastructure is of great interest to branding: the advertisement and look of products is, in essence, embodied through key clicks and social recognition of machine capabilities.

Japanese technology infrastructure, one which has developed conceptual categories of machine functions with cultural expectations of use.

Despite the time it takes to reorient and learn to efficiently use a new machine, the newest models of communication devices are alluring in stylish expense, and they often boast additional technological abilities. Better screen resolution, shorter download time, and ease of Internet access all make new models seductive.⁴⁶⁸ This is also true of computers. Although the replacement rate appears to be slower, my interviewees indicated that most students attempt to obtain a new computer every two to four years. New machines offer the same benefits of new phones: greater memory capacity, clearer images, and quick online interactions.⁴⁶⁹

New phones typically come with new numbers, particularly when an individual switches carrier companies. In one sense, the quick replacement of phones makes the impetus to memorize phone numbers a relic of from a bygone era; while home telephones or business telephones may remain relatively stable, the numbers for friends and family are not. Furthermore, functions like speed dial have been expanded by the ability for a cell to store many phone numbers in its contact list, where the number is subsumed behind an individuals' name. The people in the contact list can be indexed into institutional themes, allowing messages or emails to be sent to pre-made groups with a single click, without reviewing who is a member of the organization.⁴⁷⁰

Most of my informants indicated that children in Japan are often given their own personal phone around the time they enter elementary school (albeit a cheaper, and more durable, flip style phone). As Aimi described: "I was really excited about my first phone. My dad programed

⁴⁶⁸ Cybriwsky (1998), 113; Horst and Miller (2006), 20, 26, 59-60, 72, 84-85, 108-112; Katz (2003), 41, 120-123; and Lloyd (2007), 72.

⁴⁶⁹ Katz (2003), 120.

⁴⁷⁰ Horst and Miller (2006), 65, 106, 130; and Katz (2003) 194.

all the family numbers in it for me, but I really was excited to put in my best friends!” The trends for rapid phone replacement and the early age acquisition of a calling device which stores the numbers of others makes the memorization of phone contacts seem a waste of effort, especially—as both students and scholars attest—given the difficulty and work required for students to get into the high school of their choice and college.⁴⁷¹

This is not to say, however, that students did not lament not memorizing numbers. Hanako, when she forgot her phone at home, could not borrow a phone to call and cancel our interview. She had not memorized my number, and had to run to our meeting spot before taking the train to collect her device. Furthermore, I found one instance where students emphasize the importance of memorization: birthdays. Eight interviewees described changing their birthdate on social networks to prevent the platform from sending out birthday reminders. “I hate that,” explained Aimi. “My friends know my birthday. I don’t want everyone writing on my page just because it [the platform] told them to.”

Getting any new machine prompts an elaborate ritual: carefully backing up their most recent data, students attentively transfer old saved information to new machines.⁴⁷² My first meeting with Hanako at the beginning of the semester entailed some of this information transfer. When I appeared in the student cafeteria she waved to me with her pink smartphone in her hand, a recent gift from her grandparents. When I asked her to tell me more about a friend from her mixi account, she fumbled around the empty corridors of her smartphone’s memory card

⁴⁷¹ Students in Japan may attend any school that they can test into and afford through aid or parental income. There are comprehensive tests (*juken*) for private schools, and attendance at these schools is seen as a potential boost in upward economic and social mobility (Slater 2010). For a teaching perspective on these exams, see: McConnell and Bailey (1999). For a general history of the educational system in Japan, see: “Educational Development in Japan in the 20th century; Papers.”

⁴⁷² Often, if the student is remaining with the same brand, the store will complete transferring contact lists at time of purchase. Transferring important information from old technologies to new machines is part of caring for these machines which has been argued to reflect the intimate relationships to which they are connections: see Lloyd (2007), 70; and Terrades and Yann (2007), 154.

momentarily, and then reached into her bag to retrieve her old cell phone to show me a picture of the two together at theme park (the old phone had a scuffed pink cover, trimmed in gold, but I recognized it as a high end flip-style popular a couple years ago). I was surprised to see the replaced phone with her, and asked:

“Hanako-san, mada furui keitai wa kaban ni irete mochi hakoberu? Dōshite?” (Hanako, you are still carrying your old cell in your bag? How come?)

“Kono koto wa desu kara ima made no tanjōbi memo wo iranaishi, anō, yappari shashin ga taisetsu mono da na.” (That’s because I haven’t entered my birthday memos, and, after all these pictures are important).

When I asked on the *anketo* if there was an undeletable message in their phone, eighty-eight percent of the respondents had an answer similar to this one: “Yes. From my old friends before they left to go to America for college. I don’t want to delete them because I look at it when I feel down and it helps me remember the good times.” Students described various text messages, pictures, or emails that they would not delete, declaring the material to be a memory devices or an emotional pick me up. “Yes! My friend sent it to me when I was sad, and I read it to make myself feel happy!” Hanako’s picture was the same: when I asked about her friend, whom I learned had moved to a city south of Kyoto, Hanako used the picture as an aid to her description their last day together.

Hanako carrying around her older phone emphasizes that until the transfer of all relevant information is complete a new machine is, in a way, ineffective. What good is a cellular phone if one has no phone numbers of friends and family? And while email is accessible through any on-line capable device, what makes a personal computer or tablet tenable are the archived documents, photographs, and bookmarks of webpages. Part of the importance of transferring

information can be exemplified in the anxiety aroused when a device is left behind or lost.⁴⁷³ The contacts lists, the self-reflective decorations, and the ability to communicate have made cellular technology the essential accessory for contemporary identity.⁴⁷⁴

The creation and modification of contacts is an important marker of social relationships. Previous studies have also noted that youth intentionally delete people they no longer want to have contact with—in many cases, an ex.⁴⁷⁵ Within my interviewee group, I found two individuals who had endured terrible ends to a long-term relationship. In both cases each woman deleted more than just the contact number. The most extreme was Rika-san. Rika is a young woman with short, dark hair. Her parents are both Japanese, and, like her, were educated in international schools and spent time abroad during their academic careers. Rika completed high school in the United States. Speaking English and Japanese flawlessly and testing into third year French at the International University, Rika has won numerous scholarships.

When she and her boyfriend of four years broke up, she not only deleted his number, she bought a new phone and discarded two email addresses, dumping the contents of their inboxes into a digital incinerator. “I am sorry about losing those emails, now. There were messages in there from my friends I miss, now.” Rika smiled. “But I just couldn’t go through it and remember all the things he wrote me.” In a way similar to Ian Hacking’s description of scientific discourse creating categories of people, our personal communication devices create categories of contact.⁴⁷⁶ Hacking’s dynamic nominalism—the way in which names interact with the named—is important here for many reasons. Communication devices, whether computers or phones, are acting as two kinds of archives: first, they become repositories of personal information. Internet

⁴⁷³ Gershon (2010); and Horst and Miller (2006), 90.

⁴⁷⁴ To review literature which correlates phone technology and identity, see: Lievens et al. (2007); Turkle (1997, 1999b); Weight (2007); and Wilson and Peterson (2002).

⁴⁷⁵ Gershon (2010), 160-162.

⁴⁷⁶ Hacking (1999), 165.

devices contain diaries, calendars, photo albums, day planners, and address books.⁴⁷⁷ Devices are also points of access for a larger repository of general information: business addresses, book titles, album names, historic dates, and a plethora of other immediately needed argument-solving data (though not always accurate) is available through the Internet. Second, the daily use of a device's information repository lends the user to incorporate elements which aid remembering events and important people. The contents within a digital memory card both name and reflect surrounding social relationships. It could be argued that a device includes an individual within a broader world of facts; bookmarks, apps, and phone numbers name others, and in doing so, name their relation to the device owner.

Framing Socio-Materiality: Deleting Documents, Editing Memory

Similar to the spread of *aisatsu* rituals from public exchanges to Internet platforms, the act of airing complaints in Japanese culture coincides with conceptions of an appropriate time, space, and people present for the action. Complaining is an important aspect of cultural knowledge: perspectives of the self are indexed along situational dimensions, a socially acceptable space to complain and receive support for grievances is one in which the listener does not feel the need to act on the speaker's behalf.⁴⁷⁸ The speech preference of airing complaints and troubles is to do so when within a group of friends. This preference has influenced the way students write on Facebook and mixi. Kanna-san, a soon-to-be Japanese language instructor in the States, explained to me: “mixi ni monku wo itte yaru, shikashi, Facebook ni kakkō ga tsuku”

⁴⁷⁷ For discussions of diaries, see: Terrades and Bona (2007), 155; Van Dijck (2007), 154-175; and White (2003). For discussions of photo albums, see: Lloyd (2007), 72; Van Dijck (2007) 99-118; and Weight (2007), 204-205; for discussions of contact information, see: Pettman (2009), 202-203.

⁴⁷⁸ Bachnik (1994), 222, 229-232; and Hayashi (1988).

(mixi is for complaining, however, facebook is for bragging). Initially, mixi's diary function was a place for people to complain, share worries, and to seek support. Overall, mixi's tenor is as an acceptable place to announce common troubles, and many diary entries are focused on tough moments with children, partners, or jobs.

Both mixi and Facebook have basic registers: mixi is a place for complaints and hardships; Facebook is a place for accomplishments and happy moments. While the registers remain, shifting technological infrastructure can cause the ideological framing of a communication platform to no longer meet cultural expectations. This distinction is exceptionally important in the way individuals use writing to share and store information: infrastructure and the social milieu move as a unit, with each responding to the other's conditions.

With Facebook's growing popularity in Japan, the homegrown mixi site made changes in order to compete.⁴⁷⁹ These changes mostly affected one section of the communication platform: mixi's diary page. For Kanna, the diary page was what initially made her slow her mixi use, claiming "*mixi tsukare*," or mixi fatigue. As friending trends expanded to include more acquaintances, Kanna found it wearing to constantly check her friend's pages and give encouragement after their entries, and eventually she deleted her page—the safety of a larger crowd, which can prevent feelings of obligation in friend groups, now presented a sizeable amount of time as Kanna tried her best at giving *ganbarō* (try your best) responses.

Kanna rejoined mixi, however, when the website changed the *ashi*, or footprint function, in July of 2012. The *ashi* previously recorded how other mixi users viewed a person's home page; the number of times opened and what was viewed, such as the diary or photos. Kanna claimed that because the function now only lists who has recently gone to the homepage, the use of the diary portion of the site has declined. There was a general consensus among many students

⁴⁷⁹ Einhorn and Yamaguchi (2012).

that mixi's diary was now *passé*. Interviewees attributed the decline of mixi's diary to reasons similar to Kanna's perception; friending practices are increasing the number of people linked to an individual's mixi page. Few students now felt a desire to write in the diary: five students had deleted all their previous diary entries, and a total of thirty two other students claimed to have gone back and modified their entries to contain less information. Similar to Rika's deletion of email accounts, the modification of mixi diary entries reforms a person in relation to changes in their lives.

The changing use of the diary on mixi is not true of all mixi users. While giving a lecture in the northern island of Hokkaido, I found students with mixi accounts were maintaining the diary function on the communication platform.⁴⁸⁰ However, even these students suggested that this function had fallen out of favor (or was being used with greater caution, with diary writers providing much less personal information and/or editing prior entries) for the same reasons which affected the students in Tokyo. Two students in Hokkaido described the ill favor in terms of mixi no longer requiring an invite from someone within the network in order to join.⁴⁸¹ The continued use of the diary is interesting in terms of the demographics and outside platform use in the school: few Hokkaido students had Facebook accounts, and few maintained relationships with foreign students.

The modification of the diary entries on mixi, similar to all our digital documents, does not make them invalid sources of memory and history. When the human brain remembers, it re-

⁴⁸⁰ The students were learning at a non-international University.

⁴⁸¹ When I began research it was impossible to open a mixi account without already having a friend on the network to extend an invitation to join. This made it challenging for me to first join the site, and I had to ask a student of a common processor for an invitation during my first trip to Japan for language study in 2009. This was not the common procedure for most members of the communication network. The invitation policy kept invite groups bound, and I found few non-Japanese initially using the site. The removing the invitation requirement may also, like the footprint function, be attributed to the growing popularity of Facebook in Japan as mixi's system administrators try keep the platform competitive.

creates the past each time a memory is invoked.⁴⁸² As Van Dijck quipped, “the brain is less a reservoir than a telephone system.”⁴⁸³ Like the debates surrounding literacy and orality, the conception of memory as a static entity impacts the way we view technology for knowledge repositories. Digital documents are not less reliable because they change. People use material objects to reassign meaning, to alter meaning, store, and annihilate memories.⁴⁸⁴

Understanding the broad trend found in the deletion and editing of diaries on mixi requires knowledge of how the infrastructure of the platform changed. Adjustments to prior diary entries were due to a multitude of factors: the loss of the requirement of an invitation to join, a decreased ability for page owners to monitor their audience, and the shift in social expectations of friending reconfigured the socio-materiality of the medium. Situated within a dialogic interrelation with other utterances, writing enacts semantic meaning for identity: one records things for the self (I-for-me), writes things for others to view (I-for-the-Other), and reads other’s writing (Other-for-me).⁴⁸⁵ The importance of situationalism for Japanese identity and group make-up means that these levels of representation in writing have a great deal of force.⁴⁸⁶ Erasure in digital documents reflects aging, self-reflection, meeting new people, and having new experiences. One could argue, then, that a more a document is re-written, the more likely it is to represent the truth.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸² Van Dijck (2007), 30.

⁴⁸³ Van Dijck (2007), 30.

⁴⁸⁴ Van Dijck (2007), 31.

⁴⁸⁵ Bakhtin (1993); and Harrigan and Wardrip-Fruin (2004, 2007, 2009).

⁴⁸⁶ Situationalism is the term developed by Lebra to describe the creation of Japanese identity as the makeup of any social group as a map which denotes the proper use of linguistic terms, the approach of topics, and thus the very performance of self (1976). The individualized Japanese self consists of the social components of any given circumstance.

⁴⁸⁷ Representing true or real documents often require unaltered, officially static forms: one example can be seen during the governmental restructuring in Peru. Because scribes were often bored workers, official documents often include doodles or snipe remarks about the employer. These later doodles edits sometimes called into question the authenticity of the important documents, like land titles (Burns 2010).

Using an Electronic Repository:
Memory as Recognition

I watched the students in Nakamura-san's class fill out my *anketo* as I slowly moved around the sides of the room. Most everyone wrote quietly, with their heads down, uninterrupted. Every once in a while a face would rise, as if coming up for air, in thought or in boredom. And periodically a phone would rise from a pocket or handbag; when behind the student I would peek at the screen. Many checked their electronic messages. Others checked information related to my questionnaire, such as the number of friends linked to Twitter and who they sent text messages to that day. When Nakamura's phone emerged, however, it was to check the strokes of a *kanji* character. In other classes I witnessed this electronic crutch as well. "You are not a Japanese speaker," Nakamura would later explain when I asked her what character she had looked up. "It is harder for you to recognize characters, like it is hard for us to recognize misspelled English." Tangential to the storage of contact information is the use of a communication device as prosthetic memory. Instead of information about how, or when (e.g. birthdays), to contact other people, machines also store information previously found in dictionaries, encyclopedias, transit schedules, and such. With the addition of on-line capabilities, more information is carried in our pockets, organized through a search engine, than ever before.

The trick, however, is how the correct information being sought (in an Internet universe full of possibilities) is recognized. This act of recognition, whether it be for finding individual, finding information, identifying types of individuals, or identifying the value of information, is an endemic skill for contemporary literacy. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, recognition is often described in terms of a lesser form of knowledge: memorization is viewed as

the superior practice. This chapter does not rank memorization or recognition. Instead, following the embodied practices of my informants, I attempt to elaborate upon recognition as a practice by demonstrating its multiplicity and difficulty. In contemporary literacy recognition is an important set of diverse skills.

Recognizing Self-composed Records

I met Nikki at the share house where I have rented a room for the summer. Like the students at the international University, she has one Japanese parent, and speaks Japanese and English fluently (with minor aspirations for Spanish). A politically engaged *freeter* who combines piecework translation of corporate documents with modeling jobs, Nikki and I immediately hit it off.⁴⁸⁸ When I mention that I have a book to bring to the Irregular Rhythm Asylum bookstore, or IRA, she asks me to wait until her day off so that we might go together.⁴⁸⁹ I happily agree: the conversation at IRA, with its various personages, often employs an unfamiliar range of vocabulary, and as much as Nikki enjoys quietly explaining things I might be missing I enjoy observing her facility as a cultural go-between.

On her day off Nikki and I end up wandering about Shinjuku. I am holding up a small paper sheet from the store with directions... directions which are extremely unhelpful. There are at least six Lawson *konbini* stores to turn left at on the indicated street. Nikki laughs at my piece of paper. “That’s a funny rendition of *Pipō*.”

⁴⁸⁸ A *freeter* in Japan is a self-employed individual; they often work for various industries without benefits or company contracts. For more on social perceptions of *freeter*, see: Slater (2010).

⁴⁸⁹ To learn more about this shop, visit: <http://irregular.sanpal.co.jp>.

“*Pipō?*”

“That outline of mouse-ish guy there. The horns and the cigarette aren’t normal. That’s the police mascot, it’s named after the sound of the car sirens—*piiiiipō, piiiipō,*” she mocks.⁴⁹⁰ We walk a bit further before she stops, sighs, and takes the paper from my hands. She pulls out her phone (the screen is cracked), and gently urges it to open maps. She holds up her phone, directing us to the turn, replacing the paper with a digital screen.

At the bookstore Nikki takes pictures of the books she finds interesting. At the moment she only has enough money to purchase one item. She uses her phone to check the pronunciation of a Japanese author’s name. The people at the IRA are talking about the protests surrounding the development of a local park, which will be turned into a Nike skate park.⁴⁹¹ Nikki types the name of the meeting place for a march in her phone carefully, placing the phone down so the two people she is talking to can see her screen, and writing the place under the name of friend who lives adjacent to the spot, and writing the heading as “靴買い物,” *kutsu kaimono* or shoe shopping (an ironic title for Nikki’s character).

Two months later, reviewing my notes, I ask which books Nikki was interested in. Whipping out her phone, she squints as she peers at the hundreds of small images in the camera’s memory. “Let’s see, we went after *Tanabata*, ah, here’s some *hanabi*... and before the protest... Here they are.”⁴⁹² She opens the images and hands me her phone.

⁴⁹⁰ IRA is an anarchist bookstore, and the temporary use the Pipō-ish “mascot” is thus a cultural commentary.

⁴⁹¹ For information on these protests, see: Kageyama (2010).

⁴⁹² Tanabata is a large summer festival in Japan, complete with *hanabi* (fireworks).

Nikki's Recall

The most striking element of the above ethnography is the sheer number of phone functions Nikki uses in order to access information and store material for later recall. The phone itself, with its damaged screen, reflects her position in Tokyo. She could save the money to fix it, but since the phone was still functional she worked around the damage; her politics and her concern for the environment make a cracked iPhone acceptable for the peers in her scene.⁴⁹³ To navigate the city, Nikki uses GPS and map features on her phone.⁴⁹⁴ Using the photograph capability of her phone, Nikki records the titles and authors of interesting books she cannot purchase at the time.⁴⁹⁵ She takes the time to write down the time and place of a protest in the calendar of her phone, making sure that other protesters have a chance to read her note and understand that only she will be able to recognize what the information means. Like family phone numbers and the ability to correctly draw *kanji* characters, features of communication technologies are substituted for memorization outright. As Clare Lloyd poignantly describes:

How users make use of the features of a mobile phone is revealing on two levels: first, it makes a personal statement that relates to the formation and validation of identity on a *personal* level; and second, it demonstrates how complex discursive exchange contributes to the generation of a new, emerging discourse on a *cultural* level.

Lloyd (2007), 72.

⁴⁹³ Similar phenomenon have been noted for peer groups in Japan: see Allison (2009).

⁴⁹⁴ This technology has become increasingly common for navigation in Japan. The standard for most motor vehicles in Japan is that they are equipped with a screen in the dashboard which provides map and GPS function—the screen also has search functions, enabling the driver to ask for restaurants, shops, or scenic routes.

⁴⁹⁵ This action could have been contested in many bookstores, especially with periodical magazines: retailers were increasingly concerned that shoppers were simply photographing sections they desired from magazines rather than purchasing them.

The use of communication technologies as a substitute for memorization and an aid to recollection coincides with historic shifts in learning due to the increased use of paper. In early modern England notebooks had a large impact on the organization of knowledge. While notebooks began as memory prompts they eventually became external sources where information could be retrieved when needed.⁴⁹⁶ Originally regarded as tools for training memory in the Renaissance, notebooks were used by students to collect and organize choice passages according to themes. Recording the passages did not, however, permit students to ignore the obligation of memorizing the prose.⁴⁹⁷ These notes were reminders, reflections of the potential to develop a strong memory. This relationship between memorization and paper reminders shifted with John Locke's 1686 publication of an essay entitled "Methode Nouvelle de dresser des Recueils. Communiquée par l'Auteur" (A New Method of a Commonplace Book: A missive by the Author).⁴⁹⁸ Locke advocated a new framework for student notebooks based upon his own note taking methods: books were to have an index in the front of the book, listed in alphabetic order. The index would not aid in memorization, but assist the ability to recall where to find information.⁴⁹⁹

Japan also experienced shifts in the relationship between memorization and information due to changes in documentation practices. With the advent of widespread woodblock printing, narratives like the *Genji Monogatari* became accessible to the general public due to the inclusion of images and explanatory commentary within a text. Advances in printing technology meant an audience need not have memorized outside teachings and complex characters before accessing

⁴⁹⁶ Yeo (2008), 116-117.

⁴⁹⁷ Yeo (2008), 125-126. As Yeo notes, these "common place books," were essential to the education in the Renaissance; and the notebooks did not include the date of the entry made or personal reflections upon the entry. Themes could be based on any number of elements, including the seasons, love, or death.

⁴⁹⁸ Yeo (2008), 127.

⁴⁹⁹ Yeo (2008), 128.

the material, as the books themselves supplied the necessary information.⁵⁰⁰ There were also early reference systems following Locke's format available in Japan as well, such as the *nichiyōruishō* 日曜類書 (*Encyclopedias for Daily Use*), which, like encyclopedia sets worldwide, would eventually be supplanted with the ease and breadth of information available through online search engines.⁵⁰¹

Communication technologies follow the trend of greater reliance upon retrieving information: the photo function has circumvented the need to write (or type) notes on inscribed objects in the world. Saving the information in images creates simple retrieval. Unlike calendar entries, which are placed according to date and event title, these pictorial memories are organized through the same epistemology which favors text messages over phone calls: the person's experience in the world. When looking for a relevant photo entry, individuals remember not the desired information itself, but the experiences—correlating the self in time and space through other images—that bracketed them before and after the picture being sought. While not recorded by the individual, the use of technology's Internet capability for maps and to recognize the correct form of a character is also based primarily in experience. Identifying the correct map relies on the individual's ability to correlate the physical body to the information in the digital display. Likewise, when typing a character, the author often must recognize the correct character based on prior experience from a diverse set.

Sharing Events and Writing the Self

The privileging of recognition over memorization has occurred in tandem with a series of changes in writing methods. The method used to organize recollection, experience, is a

⁵⁰⁰ Kornicki (2005), 150-152.

⁵⁰¹ The encyclopedic form was from China and circulated in Japan (Wei 2003).

delineating factor for the interpretation of writing. Experience also allows for the recognition of meaningful possibilities for interpretations. The favoring of recognition has created a particular trajectory in experience-with-technology: in the construction of new messages, speech patterns become an important genre in writing (and vice versa), and prior written material can become a genre for other texts.⁵⁰² Authoring new meaningful messages follows the pattern of recognition and re-contextualization: this form of knowledge relies upon experience.

An example of crossing speech registers and writing methods can be seen in the spacing of text messages. In Japanese speech, a brief separation between the consonant-vowel pairings (only *n* can exist without a vowel) is used to add emotion to the content of the dialog. Depending upon the context, the separation can imply a range of emotions including intimacy or annoyance. Some words are more associated with intimacy; such as *himitsu*, the word for secret. In many Japanese dramas and *anime* the word *himitsu* is used to indicate an intimate pact, especially when spoken by a woman.⁵⁰³ In the course of my research I found the word *himitsu* was used in text messages, and I encountered two interesting examples of the word. In both instances the message was between life-long male-male friendships, and appeared on a smart phone. The sender had listed only the first constant-vowel pair before hitting send in both cases: thus “*hi*” “*mi*” “*tsu*”, “ひ”, “み”, “つ,” and “ひ”, “み”, “つ” respectively, appeared in successive bubbles

⁵⁰² Bakhtin (1986) exemplifies my line of analysis by arguing that the utterance, as a unit of spoken/written communication is equivalent to “the extraverbal context of reality (situation, setting, prehistory) with the utterances of other speakers.” Furthermore, Bazerman’s (2004a) description of genre demonstrates that social contexts, whether they are classrooms or science articles, has a different intertextuality, or relationship to other phrases and texts. Arguing that form this relationship takes is itself a genre, he continues, adding that any quote is thus a re-contextualization of given the phrase in the new way, according to the new social context it emerges in. Likewise, Leaner and Prior (2004) demonstrates that spoken social discourse cannot be collapsed into a single time and space: all utterances are bundles of linguistic features from across time, and drawn from both spoken and written materials. For other materials which draw correlates between writing and speech, see: Besnier (2000); Collins and Blot (2003); Webster (2006).

⁵⁰³ Examples from *anime* can be found in: both Nami and Niko Robin for *On pi-su* ワンピース (*One Piece*), with the character Nana from *Nana* ナナ (*Nana*); and from the dramas *Bachi Baka* ガチバカ (*Stupid Bachi*), *Osen* おせん (*Osen*), and *Mr. Brain* (the title is in English). Intimate pacts (for desire or coercion) are also signaled when an individual separates the consonant-vowel pairs of another’s name.

and on separate lines, forcing the reader to separate each sound. When I asked my interviewees about this, Atsushi explained best, blushing after I myself said the word using separate syllables: “Kare ga boku wo karekatteiru no kadō ka tashikamete!” (It’s as if he’s teasing me!) Within the same parameters of genre exchange, experience is a filter for interpretation and meaning.⁵⁰⁴ Atsushi’s friend is drawing from a speech genre which indicates an intimate pact to give their dialog—a discussion about where they were going to eat that evening—an element of humor.

The use of shared experiences in the creation message meaning and the correspondence of experience as an index to finding stored information impacts literacy in a very important way: these features enhance the means for authors to create messages with double meanings. Authors can create a public meaning, accessible to everyone, and a secondary, embedded private meaning, accessible only to those who have a shared experiential sense.⁵⁰⁵ Platforms marked as public by the use of *aisatsu* rituals can be used to simultaneously display private messages. Co-authorship creates texts which are both public and private, containing both *ura/omote* (back/front), a private face and a public face. In order to understand how communication technology is impacting our memory, we must follow the shared symbolic complexes as they the texts evoke memory and meaning.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁴ Clifford Geertz argues that while an anthropology of experience is unsatisfactory, ethnography which does not include experience seems to “float several feet above the ground.” Experience, for Geertz, is never ‘mere’ experience, but AN experience: an act of “interpretive play [of an event] as we recollect it to ourselves and recount it to others.” (Geertz 1986, 374: emphasis in original). As William Hanks’ explorations of the literacy theory demonstrates, every text is an inter-text. In order to have a meaning, one needs to be able to recognize the prior contexts of the utterance (Hanks 2000, 12).

⁵⁰⁵ McCarthy and Wright have an entire text devoted to the study of the use of technology as an experience in and of itself. *Technology as Experience* includes an analytical link with an analysis focusing on memory. The text takes pains to demonstrate how the self is made in everyday actions, and that—alongside a number of other prominent authors on technology such as Star (1999) and Suchman (2007)—cognitive models of human interaction are not the most appropriate models for human-computer-human interaction. “By excluding or separating off people’s felt experiences with technology in order to concentrate on the logic of practice, people’s concerns, enthusiasms, and ambivalence about participation are abstracted away or averaged out” (McCarthy and Wright 2004, 49).

⁵⁰⁶ I am indebted to José Van Dijck’s (2007) work, *Mediated Memories*, for insights in how to follow the material memory and their technological appendages.

Schooling the Anthropologist: Filling in Local Time and Missing Experiences

While none of my informants practiced writing secret codes to one another, many mentioned that they had, at one point or another, used embedded messages to pass a private communiqué within a message available to everyone. These embedded messages are often derived from contextualization cues: postures, words, or images which have a special association with an event, and the meaning associated with such an event, because of a shared experience.

Such experiences do not necessarily require a small in-group. Ryan and I are headed back towards our respective apartments after a group interview. I treated Ryan to lunch afterward, and, because we were headed in the same general direction, we end up on the train together for our ride home. I nudge him, pointing at one of the televisions which play advertisements on the train. The screen is showing a Snickers commercial. In the ad there is a soccer match, and when someone steals the ball from one player he turns into a girl with a fantastic flip, a large tulle skirt flying up as he spins. When his/her teammates question the poor playing, the now-girl player dons a haughty look on her face, and answers only “nani?” (“What?”) Her teammates give the girl a Snickers, and she turns back into the boy player... who rejoins the game with fancy footwork. The last scene is of the goalie, who has also turned into a girl (same girl from the previous pout, but now she is wearing fluffy wig of red hair and a hat), standing and pouting by the side of the goal as a ball rolls slowly in.

Since there are few people on the mid-day train, I whisper quietly: “You know, I see ads of that woman up in the subway, she’s always pouting. And I’ve seen people text the image of a Snickers bar to friends on smartphones. Two days ago I also saw some students on campus put that candy bar down in front of a sleeping friend, and then they took a picture. I don’t get it.”

Ryan smiles and describes in hushed tones: “Yeah, you have to be here to get it. That girl’s a very famous actress in Japan, and during the fall, oh, a year ago, I think, she had an interview. She was really rude and snotty to the interviewee’s questions. This inflamed the Japanese pop media, and for a month afterward every afternoon talk show featured her image with a snarled lip and red tired eyes behind the hosts while they talked over and over again about why she might have been that way. These ads are clever.”

The cultural references of both a smoking *Pipō* in IRA’s literature and the actress in the Snickers advertisement demonstrate the use of shared narratives as a reference point for cultural innovation. Narratives like the police mascot—introduced in school safety forums—and an unfeminine display of annoyance by a famous women—function to bring the past into present awareness. In a sense, these shared experiences provide an extension between an individual and society. Elinor Ochs describes the co-construction of narratives:

In a conversational narrative, a concern for the present and future may crop up at any point in the telling. Co-narrators wander over the temporal map, focusing on the past then relating it to the present and future and then returning to another piece of the past.⁵⁰⁷

When that narrative concerns a lived experience, co-authors impact the understanding of that experience.

Ochs, 1997: 201.

There are many instances of culturally shared narratives: many Japanese safe-for-everyone status updates on Facebook revolve around shared events: weather, common celebrations, and food. While the innocuous *omikujī* is a widely understood narrative (almost

⁵⁰⁷ Ochs (1997), 191.

everyone has participated in the fortune telling at a shrine), there are other events in which only a very few number of people participate. For Japanese students, the transition from experiencing widespread events (like club meetings) to events in which only one or two other people participate marks a special kind of intimate relationship: recognizing an *ura* (back, private face) in an *omote* (front, public face) shares more than a hidden meaning. The act of recognition permits the reader to experience their bonds with the author.

Nikki and I are sitting in the common room of the share house. I am watching her scan through three social networking platforms and two blogs, open on multiple windows. I stop her when she laughs at an image one of her friends has posted. I cannot perceive what is notable about it, so I ask: “Why is that so funny?”

Nikki and her two closest friends first encountered Sir Francis Xavier in their history textbooks. Nikki, assuring me repeatedly that all the history textbooks in Japan had the same image of the sixteenth century Catholic missionary, describes the picture of Sir Francis Xavier as “an of old bearded white man with his hands crossed on his chest, and he was staring up.” Nikki does the pose for me as she describes what she remembers. I glance back at her computer. Side-by-side, except for the tiny tongue nub poking from the corner of her mouth, Nikki looks exactly like the pose her friend has struck for the posted picture. Nikki’s friend is posing in front of an entrance to a large indoor room, outside which a poster on an easel has been set; the young woman is about to attend three days of job training.

“So... why is she evoking a school book image of a dead missionary?” I slowly ask, and Nikki laughs.

“We post like this. We only talk a couple times a year anymore, but if we see one another in the back of picture doing this...”—Nikki does the pose again—“then we know what’s going

on. Here, look at this one.” Nikki shuffles through pages with swipes of her finger on the inset mouse, flipping open the second friend’s page, then the photo album. The young woman had her friend take her picture with the same pose in a café. The center of the picture is occupied by four coffee cups with chocolate hearts drawn on their milky foam. On upper right side of the image are the posing woman and a man—he’s looking down at a magazine. Nikki smiles and taps the gentleman’s head with her fingernail. “That’s now her ex-boyfriend.” I look puzzled. “You had to be in school with us. In history the teacher was incredibly strict. It was horrible. Everyday was horrible, he’d call everyone and yell at them if they didn’t know. Then we came to Xavier in the textbook: *sensei* looks just like him!” Nikki and her friends began referring to the history teacher by use of the pose, which eventually became a catch-all gesture for an overbearing, strict rule-oriented and toiling situations.

Nikki and her friends do not include any descriptions with these Xavier pose images. The inclusion of the common topics—food and the experience of job training—provide the *omote* face of the image. The pictures are cute, and it could be easy to think they are just enacting Japanese-girls-posing in pictures. The saintly cross of their arms has come to represent a dogmatic fixation on morals, regulations, and rules. These young women tell one another how they feel about work, men, and life through a shared reference to the past. This is the *ura*, or private face, of the image. Hidden within the first message is a second, where the three women convey the private *jibun* (self-oriented) feelings about the events and people at hand: an illocutionary intent of which only a select audience can grasp the hidden, perlocutionary interpretation.⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁸ For writing on perlocutionary, locutionary, and illocutionary meanings in statements, see: Searle (1968). For the impact of these statements in writing, see: Bazerman (2004b).

The Xavier pose messages by Nikki and her friends compliments linguistic research on semantic elements in utterances. Focusing on the occurrence of hidden semantic elements in speech, Mikhail Bakhtin argues for a broader conception of linguistic units. While sentences were the core assemblage of traditional analysis, Bakhtin argues that this is only one of many possible contexts for the speaking and writing subject. In much the same way that Nikki and her friends send one another messages in front of friends and co-workers, Bakhtin placed the purport of communication within the extra-verbal context of an utterance.⁵⁰⁹ The ways in which a current situation resonates with social linguistic history becomes a link which binds the immediate statement into a long chain of communication, one where meaning can be hidden from some participants and given to others within the utterance.⁵¹⁰ In other words, Nikki and her friends have created a private space embedded within a public message through recognition.

Framing Writing Experiences:

Private Communication Platforms

The myriad of writing choices afforded by technology can create misconceptions as well as clarity. In creating digital subjectivity users are attentive, developing particular tricks to evaluate the practices and messages of others. These are important aspects of identity performance and, sometimes, contestation. The next two examples highlight the difficulties in writing the self-for-others. This section draws from the narration of self on a web platform geared for arranging face-to-face meetings, Couchsurfer, and a beach event posted on an online *kōken nikki* (exchange diary) and on mixi.

⁵⁰⁹ Bakhtin (1986), 62-69.

⁵¹⁰ Bakhtin (1986), 5.

Couchsurfing: Recognizing “Real” Selves in Written Presentations

“Have you seen Couchsurfing?” Rika asked excitedly as we seated ourselves in front of her computer.

“Not yet,” I replied. Rika beamed.

“This is how I found places to stay when I went to France last summer.”

“Couchsurfing is a community of travelers.” Rika opens the website to her home page. In the corner of the page Rika has a beautiful portrait of herself. “It’s like Facebook. On Couchsurfing everyone creates their own profile. There are no fill-in-the-blanks, so you need to write everything in by hand. The more you write about yourself, the more reliable you appear.” Rika rolled the curser over text-filled boxes as she spoke.

Couchsurfing is an on-line community in which home-town individuals can host travelers. There are many languages on the website, but the majority of today’s posts were in English. There are different degrees of interaction, indicated through a set of icons placed near the person’s profile picture: a host may offer a couch or drink, for example. This means travelers could contact a host and ask to for a place to sleep—the couch—or a traveler and a host could meet at a local restaurant, where they would eat together and discuss things to do and places to stay in the area. These icons changed in relation to the current position of the individual: an airplane meant someone was traveling, a couch meant that they were the host for the other person, and a white-surfed wave meant that the traveling person was staying on someone’s couch. Rika joined the Couchsurfing community because of her love of travel and meeting new people.

Couchsurfing provides an economical alternative to nights in hotels or youth hostels and provides a way to have a contact, and eventually even a friend, in new destinations.

“Rika, you look nice in that picture. How come you have a picture of your face here but not on mixi?” I ask.

“No face, no couch,” she replies flatly. “On this website you need to let people see who you are if you were going to be trusted.” The cursor sweeps across the screen, circling an option at the bottom of the person’s profile; the site also incorporates a place for feedback, or references, for the people who previously met a host or traveler. “Here, I’ll show you.” she offers, indicating the feedback section as she scrolls down the page. “You see this guy?” Rika scoffs. “He uses a nickname, too.” The name was E. Famous, his profile image showed a bookshelf. Rika had met with him while she was traveling last summer, but the reviews convinced her to only meet him at the Couchsurfer meeting, held in a public place and with many members. “He is just looking to get with girls. You know, this sounds weird, but I have to be careful. There are a lot of men who... who fantasize about Japanese girls.” She clicked on his reviews: “Watch out girls!” “If you are a woman don’t stay here!” are the first two lines.

Rika began to shuffle through the site, showing me all of the functions and links available for use. When looking for someone to stay with Rika uses the age filters, looking primarily through individuals who were around twenty-two to thirty years old. If she could not find anyone in this bracket in the area she was staying in then she would go up to thirty-five. Opening a profile of a person she had stayed with in France, she pointed at the screen, counting the strongpoints of the person’s self-description on her fingers. “This must have taken days to write. Look, they describe their schooling, and their favorite books. She’s even put quotes up from those books. And here’s a story about her trying to learn to dance. It’s almost eight pages long.”

Pausing, Rika took a deep breath and turned to face me. She warns me in a serious tone that if I were to use Couchsurfing I had to take the time to read through profiles carefully. “You need to get a sense of who they are before you stay with them.” I indicate my understanding with a series of enthusiastic nods.

“You’ve stayed with people in France and Italy. Have you ever let anyone stay with you here in Tokyo, Rika?” I ask. Rika hesitates and laughs. She explains in Japanese that I will understand because I live in Yokohama: her apartment is extremely small. The room with her “couch” is her bedroom. This space constraint has made it difficult for Rika to invite people to stay over, so instead she often meets travelers from abroad for lunch to help them find their way around the city.

“There was someone I let stay with me,” Rika starts suggestively. She opens a block of messages from a German photographer named Michael. Rika explained that, at the time of his request, Michael did not have any reviews; he said he had just joined and it was the first time he had used the site. “But,” Rika explains, leaning toward the screen to tap her Couchsurfing messages, “see how personalized his messages are?” She pointed to a tag line where he mentions being a photographer, and said it would be nice to hang out with her because she had an interest in photography too. Over the course of two months Rika and Michael wrote one another many times before he visited, a process which helped Rika determine that he was safe to allow into her home.⁵¹¹ Rika opens a second window, brings up Facebook, and clicks on Michael’s page. His homepage is filled with exquisite photography—including images that Michael took while visiting Rika. She recalls where they were for each picture. She remembers standing near him here at this sunset, and how during the time-lapse picture of the Ginza streets he taught her to use

⁵¹¹ Rika and Michael are still friends. Later she would show me his Facebook page from her account, with their shared pictures. They still write correspond on Couchsurfer as well.

some of the more complex functions and lenses on a camera. Another picture shows a hitchhiking sign at the feet of four Japanese policemen who were standing in a circle looking at papers and a passport. She laughed, saying: “This was ridiculous, four policemen for Michael.” Rika becomes quiet, flipping through the photos. After a moment I ask her what criteria she uses to determine if someone is safe.

Rika responds by closing Facebook and opening a different message on Couchsurfer. “See, this one is bad. It’s so easy to copy and paste many times.” Rika noted that this person was sending a template message to multiple Couchsurfing members. The message was only three lines long, and simple compared to Michael’s long descriptions of his family, school, and favorite foods. Rika tells me she rarely, if ever, replies to such transparently cut-and-paste template messages.

Rika is a skilled judge in character, and her ability to search out “real” bodies and personalities by reading and writing on a web platform are suggestive to the identity issues discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Her primary evaluation of character is based upon length of messages and individuality in the composition. Similar to Osamu’s complaint that he did not have time to re-learn Facebook’s settings, Rika uses the time invested in composition as a gauge of honesty for a Couchsurfer’s character. Providing details, like narratives about learning to dance, simulates spending time with the person, allowing other community members on Couchsurfer to estimate the “real” body of individual intent.

It is not always; however, appropriate to place so much personal information on the Internet. When platform constraints restrict the amount of text, there can be misunderstandings of character and author intent. Part of this misunderstanding is due to a process called erasure,

where an ideology can render a person or activity difficult to see.⁵¹² For platforms commonly marked with public tropes of speech, the very public-ness of the post lends itself to the fallacies of public space as an ideology. Events and messages appearing in publics are assumed to be transparent.⁵¹³

Misrepresentation: Erasure in Recognition

Nakamura-san will be graduating from the University in Tokyo at the end of the term. She has gained a position in a company, and is enjoying her last year of school while working a part time job. She is thin, wears *neituāto* (fake nails done at the salon), *tsekematuge* (fake eyelashes), eye color changing contacts, and dresses in the newest fashions.⁵¹⁴

Nakamura keeps a “private blog,” shared among three other of her closest friends from high school. The address for this blog was not linked to any of the women’s other social networking platforms.⁵¹⁵ By sharing an administrator code among the four of them, they used the blog platform to replicate their *kōken nikki*, or the exchange diary they kept in high school. In Japan, an exchange diary is a notebook which is shared between close friends, or between a teacher and a student.⁵¹⁶ The diary is passed between participants, and each individual is expected to read the other’s entry and add comments. Within two or three days they should also compose a new personal entry and then pass the book to the next person.

Since graduating, two of the diary participants have gone to college: Nakamura and another. The third participant became a flight attendant, and the final young woman has a family.

⁵¹² Kroskirty (2000).

⁵¹³ Cody (2011), 44.

⁵¹⁴ The names for these cosmetics have become iconic through pop star’s video:

⁵¹⁵ The informant requested that I not include the name of the blog communication platform in this paper.

⁵¹⁶ Some anthropologists have taken advantage of this practice, encouraging students to share diaries with them, see: White (2003).

The women are now spread out in Honshu, but they still exchange diary entries with one another through the use of a blog. People browsing the web can find their *kōken nikki* blog through a keyword search, yet outsiders have only looked at the blog twice (the blog cite also incorporates a footprint function, like mixi). Nakamura and her friends alone have the blog address and administrator code, making them the only people who can write entries on the site. While all of the girls have mixi accounts with many friends, the young women choose to blog because they enjoy writing to one another; the long-term friendship allows them to write more frankly than they could otherwise. Because of the candor of their entries, the young women use nicknames to refer to themselves and people they write about on the blog. Nakamura explained that the group feels safe. Even if others do read their accounts, the anonymous Internet-location means their identities are protected. This has allowed them to keep writing one another despite being physically distant.⁵¹⁷

I asked Nakamura to write in the diary and ask permission for me to read some of the entries over her shoulder. A month later, Nakamura contacted me and said everyone had agreed. Sitting by her side, I noticed a reference to an event of which Nakamura had posted a picture on mixi: a beach scene (it had stood out in my mind because, while sharing the oft participated in summer-beach outing on mixi was common, girls photographed in bathing suits are rare). In the *kōken nikki*, Nakamura was explaining the events surrounding the trip to her distant friends and worrying about how everyone was now viewing her.

Nakamura and four other young women had gone to the beach. Choosing a secluded spot, the girls had donned their (modest) swimsuits, eaten melon, swam, and lit sparklers in the evening. The group took many pictures, though there were few without the ladies wearing cover-

⁵¹⁷ Their choice to use a blog rather than the diary function of mixi can be considered a “modern” written presence, much like Inoue’s findings of modern acoustic presences in verbal speech and magazine ads: it has allowed them to keep the register and include details that would otherwise have been impossible (Inoue 2006).

ups or t-shirts. Nakamura took the train ride home with one of the other girls, and the two of them began going over the pictures.⁵¹⁸ Discovering that the only picture containing just the two of them was one in which they were sitting in their swimsuits, a discussion began. Both friends wanted a picture of the just the two of them to share on their respective Internet platforms, but the other young lady was uncomfortable with being in her suit. In the end the picture went up, with an after-the-fact cover-up placed on Nakamura's friend for modesty.

In the *kōken nikki*, Nakamura explains the event in more detail: they reviewed the pictures together, deciding together which ones to put up on mixi and the *kōken nikki*. The picture of both girls in their swimsuits was used. Both girls thought they looked pretty in the image, and they are laughing together. The other girl also has a giant panda head sticker covering her waist. "She made me do that," she explained to her friends in the *kōken nikki* entry. Her friend was self-conscious about her weight, yet since both wanted the picture up, the other girl decided that they could just cover her midriff. They choose the panda head sticker together.

The community on mixi, however, interpreted the sticker in quite a different manner, sending Nakamura messages: "*Hidoi!*" ("You're awful!") and "*Saitei!*" ("That's the worst/lowest!"). Interpreting the sticker as Nakamura's own incentive, not one which was imposed by the young woman, the image made Nakamura look as if she believed her friend to be fat or ugly. Instead of outing her friend on mixi, however, Nakamura vigilantly watched her mixi page, deleting all of the negative messages as soon as possible and then writing separate private messages, explaining that she had been following her friend's request and asking for discretion.

None of this story is visible on mixi: only the contested picture remains. Reading between-the-platforms is the only way to truly understand, and remember, the events which

⁵¹⁸ This is not a normal city line commuter train: the girls were on sightseeing train. These trains have a different set-up than commuter trains: the seats face forward rather than one another, and there are often small fold out tables; individuals are expected to eat, drink, and talk aboard these trains.

surround a cartoon panda head cover-up. Nakamura's deletions and private messages reify her feelings and relationship for her friend. She respects a confidential request upon a public platform. Within all of Nakamura's documents—the private messages, the broader mixi platform, and the shared *kōken nikki*—lies multiple forms of Nakamura's identity, all which correspond to different genres of writing, and thus, audience recall and memory. Described by José Van Dijck: “Mediated memory objects provide clues to their social and cultural *function*, thus divulging how people use technologies to produce their own material and representational deposits; these deposits, in turn, betray sociocultural practices.”⁵¹⁹

Mistaken Identity

Nakamura's mixi post fell prey to one of the contradictions of public space: the assumption that anything in a public post is also transparent.⁵²⁰ There is a process of erasure which occurs when many users join the same writing platform. Erasure is a process “in which ideology, renders some persons or activities (sociolinguistic phenomena) invisible.”⁵²¹ Through the inclusion friended individuals, as page readers, feel commonalities with the writer. This can cause them to set aside their own editorial censoring in the process of reading.⁵²² In this case, the cultural elements of complaining has produced divergent writing practices upon different

⁵¹⁹ Van Dijck (2007), 40.

⁵²⁰ Cody (2011), 44.

⁵²¹ Kroskrity (2000), 23.

⁵²² Similar to appropriate “places” for identity exploration online are constraints emerging from the region in which a person lives. Different geographic spaces contain different expectations for self-presentation. This is particularly salient for businesses. Depictions of identity and skill—e.g., Korean beauticians often demonstrate their ability to create exceptionally difficult hairstyles in online videos—on social networks are mediated by expectations of modesty. There is an expectation by the audience of the Daum, a social network in Korea aimed at creating connections between businesses and as a means to inform potential customers of services, portal that hairdressers will follow guidelines which demonstrate modesty. In this case, if the video is left up too long—approximately longer than a week—the individual posting it is perceived as conceited (Faulkner and Melican 2007, 54-58).

platforms, and these practices are indices of group membership. For Nakamura, airing complaints about her picture composition was a public criticism of her as a person. Unable to fully share her experience with those who were not at the beach, the interpretation of Nakamura's post was made within the context of her other posts: she has an album filled with images of each new salon design on her nails, her hands in different poses to show of the various charms and sparkles, as well as links to women's fashion sites. While the inclusion of these elements on her mixi platform are not a prerequisite for interpreting the panda sticker negatively, there are hints from gendered performance on the platform—group pictures, and few pictures in bathing suits—which suggest there were contextual elements which could lead to this conclusion.

In another sense, Nakamura's photo and experience are situated within different dialogic interrelationships with other utterances: she is writing for others to know and remember her, and is thus simultaneously writing to enact two semantic meanings for the I-for-the-Other portion of identity. The *ura* (private) intimate one—shared in the details of the *kōken nikki*—was the experience between Nakamura and her panda-wearing friend. The *omote* (public) identity was one which simply viewed the beach picture. The mixi audience could not perceive that they were lacking the hidden *ura* of the message, which led to misinterpretations of Nakamura's intentions.

Nakamura did not want to remove the photo. To remove the photo is likely to have hurt her friend's feelings; after all, both young women wanted a photo themselves together in a public space. A record of I-for-me, or recording memories for the self, the women want to store the image, to use their digital memory as a repository for the fun and enjoyment they had together on that day. In essence, Nakamura faced an incredible breach between technology's normative functions: facing the erasure incited by platform infrastructure, both Nakamura and her friend's

preference for recalling memories collided with the interpretive reading (and remembering) of the event by others.

Conclusion: Machine Repositories, Experiencing Prosthesis

Communication technologies embody memory in a variety of ways. Each machine requires the user to engage with the epistemological infrastructure particular to a brand and place. Swiping with two fingers, keyboard arrangement, as well as the categorizing of system functions into folder all require a user to learn and know their machine. As with the differing shovel length used by the French and English to dig a trench, the use of Apple iPhones or DoCoMo phones embodies a habitus and a corpus of actions.⁵²³ New phone requires re-learning, and through repeated use, re-memorizing the location of phone functions and the corporeal negotiations to get to these functions. This embodiment is important: without knowledge of the system the user has little ability to engage the machine and the environment.

Information stored in Internet capable devices privileges recognition over memorization. Recalling where the desired information is within memory cards, hard drives, and Internet sites requires situating the request into a series of personal experiences. In line with Mark Harris and Nigel Rapport's findings on knowledge, one remembers in time. Knowledge which is invested in social structures (like phone use) is embodied, carried as one of the many habits we use to negotiate the physical world.⁵²⁴ Recognition is an incredibly detailed skill. Contemporary literacy requires the negotiation of textual content through co-authorship and experience. These

⁵²³ Mauss (1973), "Techniques of the Body" 70-88.

⁵²⁴ Harris and Rapport (2007).

elements allow for readers to see beyond an *ura* façade and identify the *omote* meaning present in some messages. Messages are simultaneously public and private.

As the composition of a group changes the way Japanese is spoken, so does the composition of message recipients. The experiences of speech overlap into writing. As Miyako Inoue notes with women's magazines during the twentieth century:

[I]t is equally important to recognize the textuality of the readers' column as a genre, which simulates face-to-face communication and produces real effects on the readers' participation—imagined through it may be—in the magazine community. Text does not necessarily owe itself to “reality.” It is the genre and the textuality that the genre produces that create the effect of reality.

Inoue, 2006: 84.

The “effect of reality” that contemporary writing creates will be discussed further in the final chapter. For the moment, however, it is important to note the relationship between the infrastructure of a networking site and editing of information. Students followed expectations set by the speech community as baselines to measure if their posts were appropriate. When deletions appear as broadly shared behavioral trends within social network, they do not mark a falseness of the information in the document. Rather, these are indicators that the structure of the communication platform no longer fits with social norms. I believe that deletions and edits are important clues for where new technologies are likely to emerge as relevant, or how older platforms will be adapted for different purposes.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION:

SOCIAL TRAJECTORIES IN READING AND WRITING TECHNOLOGIES

Weird, weird, weird, the way a computer's mind works. It writes data to the hard disk in small chunks wherever it can find bits of unused space, or overwrites sectors that have been flagged as "deleted." This means that a file which one thinks of as a whole actually exists in dozens of bits scattered all over one's disk. The machine keeps a list of where it has squirrelled away each bit of the file. But all sorts of things happen to hard disks and sometimes fragments of dozens of different files get muddled up together in clusters which aren't listed and don't officially exist, hence "low clusters." A sort of digital nervous breakdown.

Indra Sinha, *The Cybergypsies*. 1999: 184

A breach between conventions for digital conversation and face-to-face communication is, in the end, part of the core findings of this research. Cyborg ordeals emerge when the fragments of contradictory perceptions on devices and Internet use get muddled. Writing technologies provide connections with other people while simultaneously appearing to isolate the user. Young writers understand their participation on Internet platforms as important aspect of identity performance, but to write online presents risks for mistaken identity and misinterpretation.

Devices allow almost instant access to information, but the time required in the upkeep of communication platforms can be interpreted as the machine controlling the person. Cyborg literacy require skilled negotiations of social codes, experience, and recognition, and yet device use is frequently described as a deskilling of users. Writing technologies threaten established social order; previously valued practices appear to be replaced or lost within a plethora of new communication options. To understand self-digitalization requires developing new modes of thinking about people, knowledge, social exchange and interaction. I have engaged reading and writing as cyborg literacy, which is embodied and emplaced within the environment, relying heavily upon the both the single experiences of user and shared experiences present in co-authorship.

As in all lines of ethnographic inquiry, the subjects of contemporary literacy circuitously intersect multiple variables of social life. Surveying messages sent from phones, webpages, and computers reveals a convoluted tangle of multifarious forms. Most importantly, these machines travel. One can write texts in the home, on the train, or in a private room. Writing on a social networks opens the message not only to readers living in the neighborhood, but also to childhood companions now far flung throughout Japanese archipelago and foreign lands. The ability for these machines to make reading and writing omnipresent makes communication devices relevant to the cultural performance of public and private. As I will elaborate shortly, public and private are the keystones to understanding the use of communication technologies, for digital subjects negotiate identity, gender, nationality, and memory in overlapping public and private arenas at once. A brief overview of the arguments presented in this research is useful for understanding the multiplicity and layers of public and private spheres.

Chapter I began with a literature review which considered the last twenty-five years of research on computer-mediated communication (CMC) and research on literacy. The literature review also provided a foundation for the concepts of public and private as they relate to cultural life in Japan: privacy is the range of individuals, and the appropriate social circumstances, in which and to whom a *jibun* (the private self) information, thoughts, and feelings can be revealed. Public spaces are marked by rituals which guide interactions within shifting networks of social relationships. The rituals marking public spheres are called *aisatsu*, and include adjacency pairs, exchanges of information, and limited topics of conversation.

Chapter I also drew from research comparing and contrasting Internet use in Japan and in western nations, describing the impact of computer technologies on writing and reading in cross-cultural examples. The conjunctions between these bodies of research provided the framework for evaluating reading and writing used within this dissertation. Convergent points in CMC, literacy studies, and Internet research are found in the following topics: the socio-historic context of literacy, identity, gender, the material forms of technologies, and, lastly, memory—the impact of literacy on learned habits for remembering information.

In Chapter II I addressed the socio-historic context of literacy in Japan, providing the background necessary for identifying topics specific to writing in the archipelago. Writing began in the Japanese archipelago with Korean scribes and Chinese characters. Following the initial importation of characters through the development of *hiragana* and *katakana* scripts and attempts at writing reform led to the deduction of an imposed moral implication of literacy: literacy is gendered and embodied. Consequently, there is substantial interplay between reading and speech. The examination of important written works, such as the *Genji Monogatari*, led to the conclusion that writing in Japan continues to be co-authored and can contain both public and private content.

Set alongside a long history of Japan's elite borrowing signs of advancement from other powerful rulers through the incorporation of Buddhist morality narratives (which traveled into China from abroad), Confucian legal codes (elements of which were originally drawn from the Tang dynasty legal codes), and Chinese poems, it is clear that the written word has transnational foundation in Japan, and that this trend continues today.

Merging historical data on literacy with transference between speech and writing, Chapter III explored gender and identity in contemporary technologically mediated messages. The *uchi/soto* (inside/outside), *ura/omote* (back/front) Japanese lifeway deeply shapes writing on communication platforms, creating a place for gendered identity performance in writing. Drawing from Japanese scholars, I described the process in which authors in Japan create and maintain identities relevant for different groups and levels of intimacy. The performance of self is reliant upon a contingent logic where the self is individualized, but consists of the social components of any given circumstance. The makeup of any social group creates shifting dynamics of hierarchical and horizontal relationships and shifting dynamics of group inclusion. Termed *situationalism* by Takie Lebra, the formation of Japanese identity can be thought of as a social map which denotes the appropriate use of linguistic terms, the approach of topics, and the use of *aisatsu* rituals.⁵²⁵ *Aisatsu* are cultural grammars which facilitate a sense of public space by providing the behavioral guidelines and speech expectations necessary for conducting smooth interactions in situations where the social positions of those involved are unknown.⁵²⁶

The inclusion of many individuals on social networking sites developed from an *aisatsu* exchange similar to the exchange of *meishi*, or business cards, in professional life. Contemporary youth exchange contact information for their personal social networking platforms with

⁵²⁵ On situationalism, see: Lebra (2004).

⁵²⁶ Ide (1998), 510; Ohashi (2008); and Suzuki (1981).

associates. Thus the make-up of the readership on social networks is an environment similar to a public, where the current make-up of the audience is unknown. For the students at the international University, the requirement of long-term interaction for learning and sharing personal information endows social networks with a kind of genre. Social network posts reflect *aisatsu* patterns in speech: common topics, such as national festivals and food, are most often used for general status updates. Likewise, the incorporation of childhood-based pseudonyms and non-portrait profile pictures are elements which emphasize long-term interaction, thus social networks in Japan tend to require prior interaction before friend requests can occur. Following such parameters in writing thus reflects a Japanese identity. Those who share different kinds of information—birth names, self-portraits, or personal opinions—are writers who are breaching normative aspects of Japanese verbal communication, and thus are often identified by readers in Tokyo as someone who has an international or a foreign identity.

Slight variations within these codes are perceived by Japanese writers. I argued that the perception of these variations is a skill which marks competency for a given individual's literacy. Furthermore, the slight differences in composition are recognized as parallel publics in writing. The comprehension of different message forms allows students to enact identity choices in these media in ways which reproduce national identity and duplicate standard patterns of gendered interaction in Japan.

The performance of self is not just cast by a person's agency: machines and platforms contain character limits, uploading formats, and incompatibilities which shape choices in writing and in reading content. Chapter IV was devoted to the importance of the materiality of the device and platform in machine-human interaction. Focusing on different levels of access and the ease in which different machines are carried through our human built environment, I depicted the

decisions for real-time message composition. Contrasts between intimacy, formal relationships, acquaintances, and family members were paired with the restrictions and freedoms that each digital platform represents in audience participation.

During my investigation of open and closed access I discovered that message composition does not only rely upon the ability to control the number of recipients. The proximity of a machine to its human counterpart, and whether that machine would give a signal to the user, also plays an important role in writing and reading. Contemporary literacy practices require authors to be aware of the body of their recipient. The awareness of machine-carrying humans and digital platform characteristics configures contemporary writers as cyborgs. Authors are aware that the recipients of their compositions are traveling through social space. Cognizance of a device-carrying body is thus an element of contemporary literacy. Through experience, authors become familiar with places where machine functions are deemed inappropriate, such as phone calls on trains and at meals. Any communication which could require the recipient to excuse themselves from their current situation is thus reserved for important and immediate communication. Phatic communication, however, which tends to be more frequent, can be delivered with less interruption in written form, leaving individuals more disposed to be authors than speakers. In this fashion text messages are more prevalent than phone calls because writing is a less interruptive form of communication with another human-machine pair. Writing, rather than calling, allows individuals to “sink into society,” a social network of technological appendages. Contemporary literacy creates the cyborgs described by John Law; people are “a technical and social assemblage whose form consists in the constantly changing relations amongst humans and nonhumans.”⁵²⁷

⁵²⁷ Law (1991), 4.

Finally, Chapter V addressed the ways in which new technologies have impacted memory. The way we perceive the world—whether we choose to commit information to memory or to store information in a place for later retrieval—are learned behaviors which correspond to the abilities of cultural artifacts. Internet-capable communication devices have made encyclopedic information, phone directories, and maps all available at a touch of a button. Similarly, instead of committing written information to memory, the photographic capabilities of devices are being employed as a form of personal notes. While the increased use of electronic memory is often depicted by the media as a lesser form of memory, I found the process of recognition to be an elaborated mechanism. To find this information later a device user sorts through images and entries based upon their relation to personal experiences. Experiences allow a user to account for different device programming, past encounters, and cultural conventions in style. These aspects are interwoven whenever digital information is encountered.

This conclusion explores the nature of multiple overlaps in public and private. I argue that the paradoxes of contemporary literacy, moments where individuals become aware of the polarized meanings of device and Internet use, exist in part because of the multiplicity of public and private in any given message form. Throughout this discussion I include what I call pivot points for future technology. A pivot point is the intersection of two or more variables around which forthcoming research should expect contention or innovation. Emerging from the real-time use of rapid messaging systems for writing, I provide a framework for calculating conflicts and applications which emerge alongside writing technologies be they old or new. The contested areas of reading texts and writing information are likely to occur at three points: the cross between the perceived morality of gendered writing practices and broader, national identities; the generational divide in perceptions of correct and important elements of social interaction; and

wherever the continued use and increased importance of a technological device obscures the rule of humans over their machines.

Juggling Public and Private Spheres

Writing on Internet capable technologies is an activity which engages multiple conceptions of public and private at once. Students wrote on social networking sites—platforms conceived of as public—while occasionally including a private message understood by only a few. They wrote while in different physical spaces. While writing and reading on the public subway trains, the sight of a device’s screen is often guarded and the notifications are silenced. Such precautions were unnecessary when writing occurs in private rooms, where beeps and buzzes sometimes keep a phone’s person from sleep.⁵²⁸ The proximity of the platform to the individual also overlapped public and private, with messages directed to an individual’s omnipresent device deemed more *ura*, privacy in this respect emerged to mark exchanges containing the potential for close relationships. Likewise, the use of handwriting versus typing are choices which reflect *uchi/soto* relationships: handwriting, with its greater investment in time and the sympathetic relation of physical touch and visualizing strokes through character shape, is *uchi*, and intimate. Typing is *soto*, or outside the body.

The implications of public and private give contemporary literacy its form. Every engagement with a communication device is a double negotiation of public spheres inlaid in private and of private spheres inlaid in public places. The constructions of contemporary literacy are the methods in which users create and maintain the social categories which profoundly shape interactions, knowledge practices, and identity.

⁵²⁸ Lievens et al. (2007); Matsuda (2005); and Turkle (2011).

The Making of an Internet Public

While a target readership influences message construction to contain public *aisatsu* elements or private *jibun* thoughts and feelings, there are other factors at play. First, messages which appear or travel to recipients via the Internet are often not categorized as texts. Their speed of exchange and ability to be rapidly edited create the perception that they are more like oral transmissions than written dispatches. This perception is bolstered by the preconceived divide between speech and writing.

For contemporary youth, friending has become a form of *aisatsu*. Less personal than a phone number, the action is one way to acknowledge the possibility that two people may need to contact one another in the future. Friending demonstrates shared institutional links: students attending the same university, youth working part-time for the same company, and people sharing similar political, music, or artistic interests are all expected to become social network friends. The hundreds of names listed within a social network friend list are not a reflection of close companionship: these are also co-workers, classmates, and acquaintances. In other words, mixi, Facebook, and a plethora of other online social mediums have been incorporated into social life. There can be no divide between speech and writing, no clear divide between vocalized (face-to-face) interactions and exchanging messages (CMC). Digital writing has become a cybernetic reflection of daily face-to-face interaction. Writing online is a continuation of daily life, students organize connections into email lists and separate close friends from the general populace of our life.

Writing in digital form does double duty: the individual's perception of their own identity and self is, more often than not, mirrored by word, image, and content choices posted on social networks. Authors are attentive to the impact their compositions may have on the way others in the world view them. In some ways, this is a public performance of private parts. The performance of identity can be tenuous, especially for women.⁵²⁹ Both Rika's concerns about experiences of inappropriate solicitations and the urban legend of vigilante men pretending to be accessible high school girls strongly demonstrate this point. For individuals immersed in multiple speech communities, such as those in international schools, writing becomes an important way to align the I-for-the-other with the I-for-me. Presentation choices in writing are one of the ways which individuals can reliably portray a self-conceived identity to an audience.

When the I-for-the-other implicates gender with national and religious identity, a pivot point for contested space in technology use emerges. The breach of no-portrait posting in *seijin seki* (coming of age ceremony) *kimono* clad women on social networks, the European women's novel reading disease, and generational fears surrounding the loss of polite speech or conversational skills are convergences of the first pivot point. These are moments where gendered, national, or religious identities (which can also be described as a moral national identity) intersect. As gender theorists have noted, "culture is made body" in the context of ideal female forms, and such forms follow the public-private dichotomy without problematizing the dichotomy.⁵³⁰ While there are many areas where people debate correct and honorable behavior, it becomes particularly salient to writing when depictions of gender are involved. The placement of emotional aspects of life within the private sphere in public venues is troublesome for a strong

⁵²⁹ Blair (1993), 212.

⁵³⁰ Bordo (1989), 14.

leading lady in film, on stage, or online.⁵³¹ Should Japanese women endeavor to meet people face-to-face after they have communicated through online writing? The vigilante anecdote suggests not, that such behavior is so inappropriate that members of one gender will police themselves. Yet Rika's ability to evaluate a person's identity on Couchsurfer suggests a transfer from online writing to face-to-face meeting as a possibility. What is read depicts a kind of person, and what is written depicts a preference for one form of identity over another: the performance of reading and writing places private parts of individuals in public view, and thus contain elements that can be important for the development of a nationalist or religious rhetoric.

The Making of an Internet Private

The combination of identity performance, the incorporation of digital communication platforms into social life, and the awareness of audience makes composition an incredibly nuanced act. The social requirement to participate in digital communication sometimes leads individuals to separate their accounts, keeping sets for different social group. Individuals may create a fan page independent from their personal profile when involved in theater, or they may keep separate mixi and Facebook accounts for different language or cultural groups. Analogous with co-existing public and private spheres, contemporary literacy includes the ability to keep some publics private. In Aimi's case, she keeps her Facebook public, associated with her increasing ties to her American in-laws, out of view from her mixi public. This is partially to mitigate the corporate culture of Japan: the business world still expects women to leave the workforce after marriage—for marriage is valued as a prerequisite to pregnancy—which would interrupt the number of years Aimi was expected to work.

⁵³¹ Blair (1993).

While access to information is a longstanding gauge for privacy, access can also provide a public screen, keeping the writers intentions private. Replicating an older form of private writing, Nakamura and her friends share a blog password to replicate the *kōken nikki* (exchange diary) they shared while attending school together. This blog contains personal details and feelings, and the young women refer to one another with pseudonyms. While accessible through web searches, the *kōken nikki* is constructed as private. Fronting their feelings, the authors of the blog mask their identities, institutional ties, and geographic region in which they are living.

The creation of an internet private can occur in the opposite way as well: the fronting of normative topics can pose as the message content while small, extra-linguistic experiential cues lie dormant for the majority of a readership. The ability of Nikki and her friends to strike the Xavier pose, to cross their arms and roll their eyes up, contains a double meaning: that of an overbearing rule-oriented situation. Nikki and her friends have hidden private messages in plain sight.

Creating an internet private consists of fronting one type of information while strategically submerging others. For the Nikki, personal thoughts and feelings were submerged within a posture. For Nakamura, identification information was submerged within pseudonyms and a shared administrator code. While different in form, each of these Internet privates are accomplished by drawing from the experiential gap between the reader's experience and the author's intended message. Authors are aware of precise interpretations which can only occur within a shared symbolic complex.

My discussion of sharing symbolic complexes provides an interesting counterpoint to Goody's description of a text as "enable[ing] us to retrieve past information as well as to distribute it outside the face-to-face situation." Writers thus deploy different levels in messages

to provide an *omote*, or front, to their writing, as well as an *ura*, a back which only a select few will be able to read. Contemporary literacy for communication platforms relies not only upon writing skills and denotative signs; messages also rely upon experiences among an author and a few select audience members.

There is always a small element of “privacy,” or personal thought and emotions, present in any written exchange. Digital messages can create a model of double jeopardy: the author’s emotional identity and intended meaning of oft-edited and co-constructed works is conceptually fragile, especially when platforms which capture digital messages are accessible to many people. Similar to the inclusion of a gesture to portray a private meaning, the tone of digital writing is inherently private: without physical clues, co-constructed documents are reliant upon second-order ephemera to keep their meaning straight: emoticons (many which are associated with gender and age) keep the private intention behind written statements clear for the reader.

The Making of a Public-Private Internet

The maintenance of privacy in digital texts continually falls to the individual. At its inception, mixi’s dairy page reflected private expectations: the diary page mimicked the social organization in which friends could air their troubles to one another. The presence of multiple friends during trouble speak allows a speaker to mention problems without causing the listener to feel the need to intervene. When the membership in the mixi network was restricted by invite and monitored by footprints, the diary page initially mimicked the private group structure necessary for discussing personal thoughts and feelings in Japan. As friending practices became

more prolific, the composition of the network changed. Students deleted or modified their previous diary posts, and in doing so, began to re-write the privacy of mixi.

How can a message constructed for a wide array of social relationships have meaning for a small, private audience, all while portraying details of personal identity and gender in a public performance? Do lines of public and private exist?

The answer is yes. Rather than viewing the medium of a message as public or private, one must view the form and presentation of information. Emails, even to a single individual, may be composed for the entire institution: the corporation's terminology and service goals, the professor's University rank and subject of expertise; all of these single-receipt letters are composed with the possibility that a larger community may read them.⁵³² Similarly, digital messages placed in the context of a larger community may contain a front and a back, with the back message only accessible to a few people. In contemporary literacy authors compose lines of public and private not only based upon platform choice and machine capability, they draw from the experiential field to send information to select individuals. The action of editing an entry is the clearest moment of delineating changing aspects of public and private, moments where misinterpretation or self-reflection have led the author to rewrite the post.

Current assumptions of public and private are biased towards physical materials and are supported by other elements of cultural epistemological devices. The assumption of the Internet as a public sphere only takes into account the standardization of platform design, not the idiosyncrasy of an authors' usage: "Networks which encompass both standards and multiple selves are difficult to see or understand except in terms of deviance of 'other' as long as they are seen in terms of executive mode of power relations."⁵³³ Paired with all the ways that my

⁵³² Bakhtin (1986).

⁵³³ Star (1991), 48.

informants attempted to protect themselves— nicknames, object icons, requiring passwords to be entered each time a phone or account was accessed, decals to block screen-viewing, attentiveness to posts and editing of previous data—I believe that the overwhelming desire for protection signals an awareness of the sensitive and dual public-private nature of writing using digital mediums.

The Paradoxes of Digital Literacy

Being aware of the public-private in mediums is a habit for contemporary writers in which the perception self is continually pitted against the perception of others. It is along these similar lines that users engage mass media narratives as interpretive devices for their behaviors. Often, this self-other reflection creates a love-hate relationship of person to machine. The positive and negative views on technology compete, constructing a schizophrenic relationship to writing, reading, and storing information online. The discussion of addiction is pitted against the value of engaging device properties and functions, skill atrophy (whether in memorization or with lack of practice) battles the difficult experiential development of recognition, and the screen of a device can simultaneously be alienating to those around the body or social connecting to those who are not present. Young writers are required to face a number of paradoxes in their use of Internet capable devices.

Generational divides—whether due to historical events or technological changes—have always been noted as places of contention and angst. This is also true with contemporary literacy and technology. This pivot point, however, is not as broad as it first appears. There are a number of point in this research which narrow it. The development of teaching calligraphy in schools is

one: the process of writing calligraphy in *kanji* requires that the author has memorized the proper direction and order of strokes. To make a beautiful character a writer must take care in the grip of the brush, hold a straight posture, be attentive to word meaning and form all alongside the quality of the ink and paper. The posture and knowledge involved in calligraphy has come to represent a Japanese practice, a moral character of national identity. The fear that youth are forgoing memorizing character composition in favor of recognition is a slightly different variation on this theme: there is a correct way to write, and it is not reliant upon a phone's *denshi jishō*. Like the need to send handwritten letters to older family members for New Year's, these are writing practices which have become associated with ethics by a previous generation. As youth begin to write differently, such as thumb typing on a touch sensitive screen more than holding a pen, the different skill set can appear to threaten values that the older generation has come to associate with previous practices. It is likely that the differences in typing may come to represent values for the present generation, and will be lamented when their children's writing practice shifts away from such devices.

While there are moments when a negative trait given to a technology is an accurate reflection of practice, more often than not I found people confronting the competing dialogs in their actual multiplicity, leaving matters unresolved and the writer in a state of cyborg ordeals. A cyborg ordeal is an emotional state associated with using technology. Cyborg ordeals develop when antagonism exists between the predominant perception of technology use and an individual, and commonly manifests as self-assessed animadversions. Many of these moments of reflection on writing practices are contradictions; for example, an individual may describe their behaviors as isolating—they are addicted to using their phone, most often a one person activity—while they continually stay in touch with friends and family who are geographically distant. People

hate their beloved machines for crippling them, for interrupting sleep, or blocking a potential conversation.⁵³⁴

To peel back some of the emotional layers; I would like to begin with the discourse surrounding addiction. When the concept of addiction to writing technologies is set alongside historical fears which surrounded new groups reading, or an increase in available materials to the public, a pattern emerges: when it comes to texts, we have always been reading addicts. Whether it is the nineteenth century European reading fever or the *Genji Monogatari* frenzying seventeenth century Japanese women into licentious fervors, reading and writing have continually been described in terms of social disruption.⁵³⁵ This observation appears, in coinciding with my aforementioned pivot point, particular for women. In seventeenth century Japan a literate woman was feared: she might begin to desire to move above her social station. A century later, a literate woman was believed to be more likely to disobey her father or husband, and in the nineteenth century her very female-ness was at risk as women's speech and writing took on features that were perceived as masculine—a less polite (*keigo* word forms), more direct form of communication—aspects.⁵³⁶ Reading and writing represents a potential loss of a behavioral-set that defines femininity in Japan.

When mobile technologies are seen through the lens of writing technologies there is nothing modern or new about contemporary concerns of addiction. Literacy is a socially dangerous technology, and for ages it has had the potential to distract people from their socially prescribed roles and to change the way we speak and act. I do not deny that there is a population with a genuine addiction to computer technologies. While it is very important to learn about this group and its causes, I find this narrative not only excludes the majority of users who maintain

⁵³⁴ Turkle (2011), 16-17, 160-162.

⁵³⁵ Littau (2006), 4-11; and Kornicki (2005), 160.

⁵³⁶ Kornicki et al. (2010), and Gramlich-Oka (2010).

face-to-face relationships while writing and reading digital texts, it also excludes the individual agency which shapes the use of technology.

Cyborg Dreams

The use of technology as a source of communication, phatic and professional, blurs the divide between humans and technology. Similar to the worries of addiction, there are concerns that contemporary technologies are imposing themselves upon, or in extreme controlling the user. This debate is one which questions the assumption of human hierarchy over the environment. The fear of humanity becoming a technological puppet is a piece of our epistemological modernity: that culture, and its tools, can overcome and control nature. The need to maintain the divide between humans and their machines—with humans presumed to be in control—returns to cultural distinctions of public and private.

To formulate public and private in contemporary literacy practices it is necessary address the present day relationship between authors and writing technologies. For many students, the bonds between writers and their devices are so strong that the two can no longer be separated. To be without one's phone or computer creates feelings of being lost, the sensation that suddenly one is less of a person. The desire, and perhaps need, to have a personalized digital prosthesis nearby is described by scholars and laypeople alike in terms of knowledge loss. Almost inevitably, when I described the topic of my research to parents and grandparents they would immediately remark on the way machines obstructed communal life. The is generation of computer users are forgetting how to verbally communicate, or they have lost the arts of grammar and spelling (evident, many pointed out, in the character and grammatical errors in the

paper publications of *keitai shōsetsu*, or novels which were originally composed and read on cell phones).⁵³⁷ The “dumbing” discourse regards technology as a displacer of essential modes of human interaction, such as conversation, substituting isolating forms interactions which through human-machine-human exchanges.⁵³⁸ Such displacement is not just a preference for text messages over phone calls; online confessional sites take the place of sharing troubles and worries with friends and family, marriage and sex occurs within interactive on-line games.⁵³⁹

Carrying technological prosthetics has impacted the way we interact in other ways. Smartphones have shifted, and are continuing to shift our approach to memory. Photographs now common placeholders for writing information, online searches are performed for important non-memorized information, and the composition of the correct written *kanji* character is recognized within a list of potential options. Contemporary literacy requires that individuals commit to memory how machines work and how to access digital sources, not to memorize facts, dates, and schedules. I have demonstrated that the current preferred form of knowledge is not to “know by heart,” it is “know by recognition.” Knowing by recognition fits well with the how contemporary writers use *uchi* and *soto* levels within messages: like the need to have a shared experience in order to interpret message meaning. Cyborgs organize information through experience, searching through hundreds of pictures for information and grouping in orders of occurrence.⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁷ One of my informants was a fan cell phone novels, and wanted to demonstrate the typical content of them. She went through the plot of her favorite, *Koizora* (Love Sky), with great zest and no self-censorship during the violent scenes, including a prolonged rape scene. Many *keitai shōsetsu* contain numerous spelling and grammatical errors—my informant attributed these to having to type on the small keyboard of a phone—which are retained upon publication in bound paper form.

⁵³⁸ For a theoretical discussion of the crossing of culture, technology and nature, such as human-machine-human, see: Michael (2000).

⁵³⁹ Turkle (2011), 176, 214-218, 229-236.

⁵⁴⁰ This conclusion is mirrored by other anthropological studies on knowing. Knowledge, argues Harris and Rapport, must be known in time because the site of knowing, one’s body, exists in time. There is thus a dualism for knowledge: an implicit habitus, deep structures and implicit discourses surrounding comprehension, and an explicit, socially invested form of knowledge which is structured into institutions (Harris and Rapport, 2007, 327-329).

The immensity of roles delegated to technological prosthesis is nonetheless a source of tension. Returning to the question at the beginning of this section: do people control their electronic devices, or do the machines control us? This question is particularly important in light of the way communication technologies are used. Much of the information about the world is now stored within the mind of a human device user are the methods to access data; how to input commands for search engines, and save information into computer memory. We memorize machine functions, whether as a conscious effort or in tacit embodiment. Internalizing computer programming allows the storage of other kinds of information, such as schedules, information found on museum plaques, or interesting books, outside of the body, in machines.

The discussion of knowledge, then, hits close to home for most people's experience with technology, making it an applicable interpretation for people to explain anxieties stemming from life with writing machines. My observations of distress and moral self-censoring correspond to a central theme in science and technology studies: the artificial division between people and machines. Following the insights of John Law: "here we are dealing with a form of distribution built deep into sociology—the distribution between people on the one hand, and machines on the other. Or between 'social relations' or 'social structure' on the one hand, and the 'merely technical' on the other... I do not believe that it is a happy distinction."⁵⁴¹ Nor do I. I also believe that the dichotomy between people and machines runs deeper than sociological theory. This dichotomy is a piece of a larger divide between people and the natural world, it helps maintain culture as opposed to nature. Human progress, often derived by a communication device in the hand, has long been measured as the domination of nature.⁵⁴²

⁵⁴¹ Law (1991), 8.

⁵⁴² For discussions of progress as human control of nature, see: Jordanova (1980). For discussions of culture as dominance over nature relating specifically to technology see: Haraway (1991b), 9-12; Lock (2002), 33-34. For

The Japanese sense of nature is slightly different than the western counterpoint. Instead of nature as places that are untouched by people, nature in Japan is the natural world manicured. Japanese gardens, city parks, as well as prepared foods all represent nature in Japan.⁵⁴³ The western conception of nature as the pristine and unmolested places and feral animals is not nature; in Japan these are “wild” places, unkempt and containing uncontrollable elements. In Japan, then, culture creates nature by dominating the wild and unpredictable. Despite the differences between western and Japanese considerations of nature, both views imply a relationship between human culture and the control and manicuring of the environment.

When we perceive our machines as desiring actions, or as demanding human actions, the taming of uncontrollable wilds with technology is reversed.⁵⁴⁴ People feel troubled by writing technologies when they experience an inability to function without their devices, the inability to turn them off or leave them in the other room while they sleep. As the information and identity performance consigned to communication devices crashes against a human-machine, culture-nature divide, we lose the clear line of mastery over technology.⁵⁴⁵ In light of the habitus in current literacy for awareness of multiplicity in public-privates spheres in messages and the reflections of I-for-self and Self-for-other, the loss of a clear dominion over our technological objects creates a cyborg ordeal.

When technology becomes not only uncontrollable, but controlling, the line between human and machine blurs. Being cyborg is, at last, our final pivot point. The awareness of the need for our cybernetic prosthesis is one of the pivot points for future innovations. New

discussions relating gender as a hierarchy (male are dominant because they are further from nature), see: Ortner (1974), 5–31.

⁵⁴³ Allison (1997); Martinez (2005).

⁵⁴⁴ Woolgar uses a similar discussion of a gun wishing to be fired. Woolgar (1991), 62-64; Woolgar (2002).

⁵⁴⁵ This interpretation of the Japanese perception of nature and culture as taming wilds is supported by multiple explorations into technology by anime, manga, and fiction. For an example of similar interpretations of the loss of “control” in cyborg technology found in *Ghost in the Shell*, see: Chipman (2010); Napier (2001); and Silvio (1999). For a loss of “control” over technology in *Otaku* culture, see also Azuma (2009).

technologies combine the writer and the pen. Contemporary authors use writing to as a performance of self, they dress and decorate their writing devices to reflect personal tastes. Machine users commit technological functions to memory so that they can store information about themselves, close friends, and the world in their digital brain. Humans and machines become conversational partners: contemporary literacy draws from machine capabilities, platform accessibility and message content for interpretation.⁵⁴⁶ Technology continually muddles the mechanism and the material.⁵⁴⁷ As the discourse of addiction indicates, this is problematic: our understanding of the world relies heavily upon a human culture to control the natural world. When machines become people this divide is no longer clear, and will continue to be a source of anxiety.

⁵⁴⁶ Suchman (2007).

⁵⁴⁷ Küchler (2008), 112.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

年齢(Age): 21	専攻(Major): Ant/Soc
性別(Gender): female	職業(Occupation): Sales person, English teacher, model
兄弟の有無(Siblings): one older brother	国籍(Nationality): Japan/US
ネットにつながっているPCは持っていますか? (Do you have a computer with internet access in your apartment?) Yes	どこの国の人ですか? 住んだことのある国はどこですか? (What Countries have you lived in? What nationality do you identify with?) Japan for most of my life, 2 yrs in California
どのような携帯電話は持っていますか? (What kind of mobile phone do you have?) iPhone	どのような本や雑誌を読みますか? (What kinds of books or magazines do you read?) Fashion magazines, fiction
Mixi を使っていますか? (Do you use Mixi?) Yes	Facebook を使っていますか? (Do you use Facebook?) Yes
ブログを使っていますか? (Do you blog?) Yes	Twitter を使っていますか? (Do you use Twitter?) Yes

1. メール(携帯)を送る時、何か心掛けていることはありますか? (絵文字、時間帯、長さ、など) Is there anything you are being careful of when sending text messages? (Use of pictogram, time, length etc.)

相手に合わせ、顔文字の有無を決め、必ず「こんにちは」「こんばんは」を始める。ずっと関係をつなげてい人には一週間後連絡するのを忘れないように、iPhoneのReminderアプリを使う自分にしませます。

2. メール(携帯)を送るのではなく、Eメールを送るのはどのような時ですか? 何が違うと思いますか? (When do you choose to write an e-mail rather than to send text message? What do you think is the difference between these?)

長い文章を打つとき、アカデミックに使うときにパソコンのEメールアドレスを使います。iPhoneでも見れるので、そのように使い分けています。

3. 電話やメールではなく、手書きの手紙を送るのはどのような時ですか? 何が違うと思いますか? When do you send someone a handwritten letter rather than calling on the phone or sending messages? What do you think is the difference between these?

その相手が「メールアドレスがない時 (grandparents, for e.g.)
相手に何か伝えたいとき、特別な時 (誕生日、お別れ, etc.)

4. どのような時に電話をかけるのではなく、手紙を書きますか? また、それはなぜですか? When do you send someone a letter rather than calling them on the phone? Why?

あまり書かずに必要な時は電話をします。

5. Twitter を使っていますか? どのようなことをつぶやきますか? Do you use Twitter? If yes, what kind of things you tweet?

使っています。主に自分の考えていること、何か嫌なことをつぶやきます。

6. メールと twitter の使い方に違いがあると思いますか? 違いについてどう考えますか? Are text messages and twitter used differently? What do you think about these differences?

メールは決まった相手に、twitterは不特定多数の人に相手をしてほしいとき。

WOULD YOU LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW? IF SO, PLEASE WRITE YOUR EMAIL BELOW:

アンケート Questionnaire

1
michelle.bett@me.com

Appendix B

年齢(Age): 21	専攻(Major): Ant/Soc
性別(Gender): female	職業(Occupation): Sales person, English teacher, model
兄弟の有無(Siblings): one older brother	国籍(Nationality): Japan/US
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Mixi を使っていますか? (Do you use Mixi?) Yes	Facebook を使っていますか? (Do you use Facebook?) Yes
ブログを使っていますか? (Do you blog?) Yes	Twitter を使っていますか? (Do you use Twitter?) Yes

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その相手が「メールアドレスがない時」(grandparents, for e.g.)
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あまり書かずに必要な時は電話をします。

5. Twitter を使っていますか? どのようなことをつぶやきますか? Do you use Twitter? If yes, what kind of things you tweet?

使っています。主に自分の考えていること、何か嫌なことをつぶやきます。

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メールは決まった相手に、twitterは不特定多数の人に相手をしてほしいとき。

WOULD YOU LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW? IF SO, PLEASE WRITE YOUR EMAIL BELOW:

アンケート Questionnaire

1
michelle.bett@me.com

Appendix C

Questionnaire Summary Grid

189 total Surveys

Preliminary Stats analysis: positively skewed bimodal data, will need random draw to compare youth/college population to salary workers/full job holders. Income is not statistically significant for cost of phone. Gender is not statistically significant for time spent with social networking materials.

Key: F = Facebook M = Mixi B = Blog T = Twitter

1. Sophia Students : 160

a. AGE: 18-25

b. GENDER: 94 female, 34 Male

Email	Text	F	M	T	F/M	F/B	F/T	F/M/B	F/M/T	M/B/T	F/M/T/B	None
90	90	20	4	1	28	7	5	6	10	2	6	1

Never Handwrite	Holiday/bday/NY/Seasonal	Letters	Thank you	Travel	Anniversary
8	78	1	7	2	1

2. Office Ladies and Salary Men: 13

a. AGE: 25-43

b. GENDER: 7 Female, 6 Male

c.

Email	Text	F	M	T	F/M	F/B	F/T	F/M/B	F/M/T	M/B/T	F/M/T/B	None
7	7	3	1		2			1				

Never Handwrite	Holiday/bday/NY/Seasonal	Letters	Thank you	Travel	Anniversary
	7		2		5

3. Friends and associates [contacts previous visits]: 16

a. AGE: 27-52:

b. GENDER: 9 Female, 7 Male

Email	Text	F	M	T	F/M	F/B	F/T	F/M/B	F/M/T	M/B/T	F/M/T/B	None
16	16	3	1		9		1	2				

Never Handwrite	Holiday/bday/NY/Seasonal	Letters	Thank you	Travel	Anniversary
	15	1	4	5	3

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Paper People and Digital Memory: Recreating the Public and Private in Japan

Major Professor: David E. Sutton

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Eds. Balkansky, Corruccini, Harrison. Iowa, Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.
- 2007 The Human Experience: A Recitation Manual for Anthropology. First Edition.
Eds. Balkansky, Corruccini, Harrison. Iowa, Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.