

Uchi, Gender, and Part-Time Work

The discourse on male artisanal identities, seen as rhetorical assertions riven by ironies, inseparable from their historical, economic, narrative, and performative contexts, leads us, finally, to the place of women as part-time workers in the Satō company. Placing them at the end of my account is a deliberately ambiguous move. It simultaneously enacts the part-timers' central importance to the firm as the capstone of my narrative, just as it enacts their marginality, relegating them to the status of an afterthought. The positioning of my female part-time co-workers within the firm and the larger context of Japanese society provides the occasion for me to bring together the many threads of my argument, allowing us one last consideration of contests over the meaning of *uchi*, this time as an explicitly gendered domain.

Any supposedly feminist account of gender and women's status in Japan of necessity negotiates an insuperable paradox between, on the one hand, the dangers of Orientalism—reinforcing stereotypes of Western women as the most liberated, while our “poor Asian sisters” languish in submission, subjugated by their men—and on the other, the imperative to carry out a culturally specific feminist critique. The complexity and delicacy of this negotiation arose in Ohara-san's case. I argued that he is both dominating and dominated, a target for critique and a poignant figure. Undeniably, his performances of masculine prowess exclude women and younger men, but in turn, they must be seen as fragile constructions, assailed by political/economic changes and constant challenges from the shop floor. Part of his claim to legitimacy and dominance lies in cultural and labor market forces which largely reserve the domain of full-time work for males. And this dominance of men in the domain of work is celebrated and recreated in culturally specific narratives. In Ohara-san's case, his conventional, narrative production of self resonates with familiar, culturally elaborated notions of maturity and craftsmanship, even as a changing political/economic context undermines the legitimacy of those very conventions.

I will argue in this chapter that similar complexities and ironies are at work in my female co-workers' lives. They asserted their gendered identities in a highly effective, powerful way, claiming for themselves an informal space within the symbolic center of the factory. But their strategy to claim this central space and in so doing, challenge the masculine celebration of prowess and self-immolating endurance on the job, inevitably relied on the discourses at their disposal, discourses about women and their place in the *uchi*. Equally inevitably, this deployment of gendered identities possesses certain structural limits, even as it creates possibilities for fulfillment and a sense of strength. For in the larger context of Japanese culture, women's narrative productions of identity in work are not part of the central story. Their narratives are not the subjects of cultural celebration; indeed, their lives cannot be arranged into a teleological sequence of increasing mastery in work.¹ In creating gendered work identities on the shop floor, my female co-workers found themselves structurally excluded from the central masculine narrative of artisanal identity, marginalized by their position in the labor force and by multiple definitions of *uchi* as a discourse about gender, embodied in both informal practices and contests over meaning at the level of law and public policy. In turn, these exclusions cannot be understood without careful attention to their nuances and inflections through a class discourse, highlighting both the shared identities and the sharp differences among women. By performing their gendered identities on the shop floor, women marginalize themselves, on the one hand, and on the other hand strongly assert themselves, making themselves indispensable to the informal social relations at the factory and providing critical challenges to a masculine heroics that would celebrate 22-hour workdays. Their stories speak to the complex issues of possibilities for resistance to hegemonic ideologies, underlining the creative potential for multiple points of contestation, just as they underline the limits, tensions, and unintended consequences of those challenges. Because my co-workers, like all of us, must use the culturally available tools at their disposal, perhaps they—and we—will never be able completely to “dismantle the master's house.”² But resistance need not be seen as radical rupture or apocalyptic change in order to be effective. Through the stories of my female co-workers, perhaps we can begin to discern creative possibilities for subversion amidst the ironic twists of meaning that complicate the crafting of gendered selves within fields of power.

Stories of Work

Immediate and striking as I confront my fieldnotes and memories, constructing accounts of my co-workers' work histories, is the fragmentary, almost contingent nature of the women's stories and the circumstances of their telling. No commanding, masterful performance of a coherent, familiar story took place here. And I was not constructed as admiring audience for a bravura performance à la Ohara-san. Rather, my co-workers' narratives of work were really snatches of conversation caught as we wrapped, cleaned, filled, and decorated sweets. Their narrative productions of work identity—far from single, seamless performance delivered to a rapt audience—were pervaded by a sense of fragmentation, both in the circumstances of the telling and in the narrative line, as the women simply moved from one part-time job to another, without a teleology to satisfy desires for totalizing narrative closure, a ready sense of progress, or some easily discernible way to perceive continuity. Though their stories did not culminate in a linear scenario of the ever finer polishing of skills and maturity, the women I knew did speak with a sense of pride in work—but equally striking was a sense of urgency and economic necessity. The narrative conventions shaping their work histories seem contingent and noncumulative, a series of episodes that focus less on the joys of work itself than on the general value placed on adding a bit to the family income and doing something other than sitting at home.

For example, Sakada-san provided me with a long and impressive work history that appeared as almost fragmented episodes. As we stood together at one of the metal tables and wrapped sweets with gold paper, I asked her whether she had worked anywhere before she took this job with the Satōs, where she had been for three years. She laughed, and told me she had done all kinds of work both before and after she had married her husband. "When I was single," she said, animatedly, "I used to work in a garment factory in Iidabashi.³ It was close to Yasukuni Shrine, and about this time of year, we used to go there to see the cherry blossoms and have our flower-viewing parties." The factory, she further explained, was near K. Bunko, a famous publishing house, and she laughed as she described the lunchtime rendezvous the women at the factory would have with the young men from across the way. "The guys would hang something out their window as a signal," she said, "and then we would get our lunches, and go out and eat together on the grounds of the shrine. It was innocent, really." But apparently the *shachō* of the garment factory got wind of this, called up the head of the publishing house, and they

mutually put a stop to their employees' lunchtime fun. Sakada-san spent three years sewing in the garment factory before she got married.

After that, she moved to Asakusabashi, where her husband was apprenticing to a wholesaler. "I worked all over then," she continued, and I nodded in amazement as she began to recount her many places of employment: Yokoyama, Asakusabashi, Bakurochō, and two or three other spots in Shitamachi. It was dizzying to contemplate. The hardest, she told me, was a cloisonné factory near Uguisudani. She proudly described what skilled work it was, and how hard everyone found it. "I was the only *pāto* then," she said proudly, "and I stayed for a long time. Lots of people just couldn't get the hang of it."

Even with the birth of her children, Sakada-san took only a year or so off from doing some sort of wage work. At first, she did *naisboku*—piece-work at home, which had the advantage of flexibility, even though the wages were low. You did the work when your hands were free. And since her children had reached school age, she had resumed part-time work outside the home. She has been with the Satōs for two years. Sakada-san in particular loved to make things and work with her hands: sewing, knitting, and handicrafts were her favorite hobbies. When I left the Satō factory, she brought me a doll made from a soda bottle, covered with clothing she herself had sewn. Certainly her skills at handicrafts served her well in her work. Sakada-san put us all to shame—including the artisans—when it came to complicated feats of wrapping. Sakada-san's was a story of skill, but it is a story of fragmentary skills picked up in a variety of jobs. It is the dedication to wage work that impresses, no matter what its content.

Another narrative of ceaseless activity in wage work was related by Teramura-san. One of the most generous people I knew, she would invite me out for lavish *sushi* lunches I knew she couldn't possibly afford, and she would sometimes bring me small gifts—a doll made from paper, a top, little "mementos of Japan." I was always amazed at her stamina and energy. After a nine-to-five day literally slaving over a hot burner, tending the griddle where she baked the pastry shells for many of our sweets, she took off her uniform, walked about four city blocks down the street along the municipal railway line, and donned an apron at her second place of work, a *yakitoriya*.⁴ I talked to her about her long days. "Don't you get tired over there?" I asked her incredulously, my own aching feet uppermost in my mind. "Usually, I don't," she claimed. "It's only when we're not busy, and we have to just stand there that I feel really tired. Right at five

it's kind of empty, but things are busy from 5:30 to 7:30 or so, because people like to stop off after work to have a drink and a bite to eat. And then the place starts to empty out around eight. Anyway, I prefer working to just sitting around at home doing nothing" (*Uchi de jitto suru yori* . . .). In fact, it was her experience in restaurant work that emerged in her descriptions of her work history. Before she started the two jobs, about a year and a half ago, she had worked part-time at a large, fancy restaurant in a neighborhood down the road a mile or two, where she helped out during the parties and banquets. I visited Teramura-san at the *yakitoriya* a few times, and she seemed to enjoy an easy rapport with customers, engaging the regulars in teasing banter. I wondered whether the chance to talk to people was all the more appealing given the restrictions of her day job at the factory, where she was so busy at the grill she almost never had a chance to come and talk with the rest of us. And though I never was able to find out about people's income—a delicate subject in Japan—I strongly suspect that the two jobs were a financial necessity, just as they may have provided a way to "get out of the house."

Itakura-san's story differed slightly from the tales told by these women who were a good ten to twelve years her junior. Part-time work was a recent feature of her life. It was only six years ago, when her husband was very ill and in the hospital, that she knew she had to go out and earn some money. "I thought for a long time about what kind of work I should do," Itakura-san mused. "I used to be good at sewing and tailoring, but there isn't much demand for that kind of work these days, and besides, it's too hard to sew for other people. I like to knit, but you can't really make money that way. And I decided that wherever you go as a part-timer is about the same, so I came here, to the Satōs. It's clean work, and I didn't want to go to a place where there were sixty-something people. And I'm not qualified to do office jobs anymore, like I did before I was married. Anyway, working is better than sitting around the house, and moving around is good for you. It's good to work, too" (*Hataraku no mo ii deshō*). Again, the striking element here is the notion of part-time work as getting out of the house and earning some money. The content and the place of work are merely incidental.

Finally, an interesting contrast between owning a small firm and working in one animated Nomura-san's comments to me. She lived only a few blocks away from me, and we would usually walk home together at lunchtime, complaining about how our feet hurt and how we never felt

rested after only one day of vacation. She often told me about her daughter, who was about my age, and sometimes, secretly, she gave me little presents of food, worried that I was all alone in a foreign country without my family nearby. In many ways, Nomura-san seemed to enjoy her part-time work, even if it was physically taxing. She had been raised on a farm, and "even if the pay is low here, at least we have fixed hours. Plus on the farm, you can't ever say, 'the work is finished'" (*Kore de ii to iu koto wa nai shi* . . .). It was especially interesting to hear about the days when she and her husband used to run a sandal-making factory. "It's a lot easier to go out and get a job working for someone else," she stated emphatically. She went on at length about their problems with employees, mostly young women from the neighborhood, some from the country. All of them worked on the sewing machines. "But they were so young," she said as she shook her head. "They used to fight about whether the radio was too loud, or what program they should listen to. The older people were better; they understand more, and they compromise, but the young kids—well, they weren't like that." Over the years, the sandal-making business grew less and less lucrative, as large producers dominated the markets, and Mr. Nomura was apparently an easy-going type of manager—*nonki*, as his wife put it. They had no one to take over the enterprise, so one day they just decided to quit. Nomura-san came to the Satō factory, while her husband now works 18-hour shifts as a toll collector on the highways.

In these stories, told on the run between tasks, narrated episodically as we walked home, begun and then cut off by the necessity to start up some new task somewhere else in our work space, we may see pattern, but the patterns do not reinscribe familiar conventions associated with maturational scenarios of increasing prowess and self-fulfillment. Ohara-san's romantic self-production through hardship and poetic connection to the seasons could not be invoked as the structuring narrative convention for these stories. But that said, how do we make sense of these tales of work? And what do the stories say about the ways these women and the other part-timers at the Satō factory performed their gendered work identities on the shop floor?

In attempting to sketch out a response that takes into account some of the complexities at work in these vignettes, I begin with the larger historical discursive field within which women's work histories are produced. And this requires, first, an examination of the production of gender in the realms of national policy, law, and the changing labor market. These dis-

courses provide both the limits and the creative possibilities for play and change. Individual identities, I will argue, are performed, but the possible forms and elements and tropes of those performances are always created within the terms of this larger narrative field.

The Discursive Field

The context for the stories begins with the Meiji period, when the projects of modernization and Westernization—or in contemporary terms, civilization and enlightenment—arose as terms of crisis in the face of Western economic, political, and military might and the internal tensions and contradictions of the feudal regime. With the overthrow of the Tokugawa shogunate, the reinstatement of the emperor, and the creation of a *rikkensei*, constitutional system (Gluck 1985), Japanese political leaders energetically embraced the task of fundamentally recreating the Japanese state. The abolishing of the four-class feudal system—including the bestowing of surnames on commoners, the repeal of sumptuary regulations; tax reform; and the adoption of the constitution, among other epochal changes—dismantled the structures of the *bakufu*. In this atmosphere of change and ferment, the Meiji bureaucrats and politicians dedicated themselves to the forging of national unity and a national identity. It is to this image of the Meiji leaders that Itakura-san referred when she invoked the selfless politicians of the Meiji golden age.

The slogan *fukoku kyōhei*, a prosperous country and a strong military, may have embodied the new national leaders' primary goals, but social change—*burmei kaika*, civilization and enlightenment—also assumed a critical importance. Civilization and enlightenment often meant a revision of customs and mores so that Japan might more closely resemble the Western powers, for as Sievers (1983) argues, the Meiji leaders “hoped to undermine one of the arguments supporting the unequal treaty system: the Japanese were not yet sufficiently civilized to join the West on any sort of equal contractual basis. . . . as some Japanese correctly perceived, the definition Westerners gave the word was based on extremely parochial attitudes. To the extent that Japan began to look like the nineteenth-century West, it might be considered civilized” (Sievers 1983, 8). Among the Meiji leaders' concerns were far-reaching changes in institutions like the family and a reconsideration, within that context, of the place of women in society.

A variety of proclamations and regulations sought to effect changes in women's status. In 1870, concubines were given the same legal rights as

wives (*ibid.*, 13); in 1872 prostitutes' contracts and debts were canceled (*ibid.*), and women were freed from indentured servitude (Hamabata forthcoming, 79). Compulsory education for both sexes was legislated (R. J. Smith 1983a), though in practice many people chose to invest in their sons rather than in their daughters. On the basis of these reforms, one might be tempted to make a case for the higher position of women in the new Meiji state. But other changes undercut these reforms, and in the end, created a system in which women's subordinate position was enshrined in law. Sievers points toward a seemingly minor proclamation forbidding women to cut their hair, as emblematic of the Meiji government's policy on the question of women's role in the new state. Short hair for men (*zangiri atama*) was a symbol of progress, signaling their willing participation in the project of modernization and Westernization. “To the extent that women cutting their hair can be viewed as a real, if spontaneous, attempt to join the progressive forces trying to create a new Japan, the government's denial of their right to do so was also a denial of their right to participate and contribute actively to that change” (Sievers 1983, 15). Many present-day Japanese, like Itakura-san, see the Meiji leaders as ardent, pragmatic yet driven by high ideals, and working selflessly for the good of the country. Still, as products of their histories and culture, they did not always work for the good of women.

Perhaps the most far-reaching of the reforms affecting women's status were various attempts to restructure the family. The first of these new laws was the Household Registry Law of 1871, which reformed the old registration law that had been based on the feudal class system. The new registration was based on place of residence rather than class, and it used the *ie* as its basic unit (Hirota 1982, 4). As Hirota succinctly argues, the Household Registration Law created and buttressed patriarchal authority precisely by designating a single head of household: the man. All rights and responsibilities fell on his shoulders, including rights to property. The document's effect was to valorize ancestors, lineal relatives, and men over descendants, collateral relatives, and women (*ibid.*).

Perhaps even more far-reaching was the Meiji Civil Code of 1898. It was, even at the time, a retrograde document, standing in opposition to attempts by liberals and feminists to lobby for a more progressive vision of society and family life. As Ikeda tersely puts it, in the Civil Code as in the Household Registration Law, the head of the household = *ie* (Ikeda 1982, 76). It was an attempt to resuscitate older, elite models of family and gender roles. “Women who had hoped it would contain language redressing their lowly status in the family were stunned to find instead

that it sanctioned that status" (Sievers 1983, 111). Again, the male household head was invested with all property rights, which passed from one household head to another, not to the spouse. Smith states: "The code is virtually silent with regard to the position of women in the household, thereby guaranteeing the primacy of its male head and his successor in each generation" (R. J. Smith 1983a). Women were not full legal persons according to the Code; the permission of the household head was necessary in order for them to undertake legal action (Sievers, 1983; R. J. Smith 1983a). Adultery was grounds for divorce only in the wife's case. As Smith notes, wives could divorce husbands, but only in cases where the husbands had actually been legally punished for the offense (R. J. Smith 1983a). In short, the Meiji Civil Code raised to the level of national law a subordinate status for women, and it legitimated a male-centered household.

In chapter 4, I argued that the code was an attempt to revive an already anachronistic family form characteristic of the elite samurai class. Part of this samurai legacy was a Confucian ideology of women's position: for example, the classic Confucian injunctions that women follow their fathers, then their husbands, and finally their sons. But other factors interlaced with these Confucian strands of thought. Hirota traces the sources of the lawmakers' attitudes both to feudal conceptions of women's roles, on the one hand, and to the Meiji statesmen's appropriation of Western models, on the other. The framers of the Civil Code apparently searched for precedents in documents such as the Napoleonic Code and took their cues from the Napoleonic dictum that a husband's duty is to protect his wife, a wife's duty to obey her husband (Hirota 1982, 7). The role of women, however, was not simply to serve their husbands or fathers or sons, but to serve the state. "Women, described by one of the authors of the code as 'excelling even Japanese men in patriotism,' were now to be tied to a family system designed to leave them few options other than to do the state's bidding" (Sievers 1983, 111–12).

Of all the injunctions for women to do precisely that, surely none was so resonant or influential as the Education Ministry's embrace and dissemination of the notion "good wives, wise mothers"—*ryōsai kenbo*. Japanese feminist scholars such as Takamura Itsue, as well as American scholars (Sievers 1983; R. J. Smith 1983a) trace the origins of the term to Meiji intellectual and member of the Meiji Six⁵ group, Nakamura Masanao. A Christian, Nakamura reportedly found his inspiration in the nineteenth-century Western cult of domesticity, adapting it to the needs and goals of the new Japanese nation. According to Nakamura, "the

family was a woman's proper sphere and . . . a woman's natural vocation was the education of her children. Given the recent Tokugawa experience, the suggestion that a woman should play a major role in the home, should be educated, and (within limits) demonstrate her intelligence and competence, was revolutionary" (Sievers 1981, 604). Uno (1988) sees another point of origin for the term *ryōsai kenbo*, in the writings of Miwata Masako, a female educator and frequent contributor to the magazine *Onna Kagami*, or *Mirror for Women*. Uno speculates that *Mirror for Women* was embracing and promulgating the notion of good wives, wise mothers long before it was taken up by the Education Ministry. She cites, in particular, the statement of purpose from the journal's premier issue in 1891: "The aim of *Mirror for Women* is to develop the special nature of chaste, true Japanese girls and to nurture the world's 'good wives, wise mothers'" (Uno, 1988, 9).

Whatever the source of the slogan, the message was clear. Women were to remain in the *ie* and to faithfully execute their duties as household managers and especially as educators who instilled proper Japanese values in their children. Thus, women, in fulfilling their appropriate gender roles, placed themselves in loyal service to the state. Uno argues that this vision of women's place marked a dramatic change from the Tokugawa period, citing numerous Tokugawa primers and manuals which emphasized mothers' *incompetence* in matters of child-rearing. Mothers were not strict enough to teach their children moral virtue; rather, this should be the duty of responsible males in the family, particularly the father. Mothers could engage only in "womb education": taking care of their diets while they were pregnant, and regulating their actions and states of mind in order to produce healthy babies (ibid., 5). Consequently, as both Uno and Sievers argue, the Meiji emphasis on wise mothers gave women a role as potentially competent educators of children, even after birth—a dramatic change from the Tokugawa past. Uno draws attention to the fact that this new role did not require the complete devotion to children and children's education said to be so characteristic of Japanese (middle-class) mothers in the postwar period: "average mothers' efforts to mold children into good subjects of the emperor sufficed." (ibid., 3)

Visions of women as good wives, wise mothers, animated so-called women's education. Education ministers, after about 1895, frequently mention good wives, wise mothers in their addresses (ibid., 10). Indeed, in 1899, "the government, as it instituted regulations requiring each prefecture to support at least one high school for young women, served

notice that women's education would be standardized and be aimed at creating 'good wives; wise mothers' (Sievers 1983, 112). Nagahara cites examples of several Ministers of Education, who invoke biological differences between men and women as justification for two forms of education, each appropriate to its object. Women's education should be the equivalent of our home economics or domestic science (Nagahara 1982, 152). Consequently, both higher education and vocational education (except for traditionally feminine occupations: sewing, weaving, the arts, painting, and making artificial flowers, among other activities) were largely ignored by Education Ministry officials (Hirota, 1982, 155). Instead, women's education should foster virtues such as diligence, frugality, discipline, perseverance, and cooperation, as long as those virtues were exhibited in the service of the *ie* and of the state. Women's education, therefore, was not designed to help women contribute to the state *outside* the household context, for women's proper duty—*shokubun*—was to serve the *ie* (*ibid.*).

In short, though feminists, socialists, and other progressive groups had engaged in lively debate and attempts at reform in the early two decades of the Meiji period, the 1890s ushered in an era of relative conservatism and patriotism, partially as a result of the successful war with China. For women, the decade saw the promulgation of a series of conservative documents which worked to legitimate women's lower status and keep them solidly within the *uchi*, the household. In 1890, women were officially barred from engaging in political activity until 1922, and an unsuccessful attempt was made to prohibit women from attending Diet sessions (Sievers 1983, 52–53). The conservative Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890 celebrated the Confucian virtues of loyalty and filial piety, and the family as the servant of the state. Again, women's place was said to be within the family. The Civil Code of 1898 enshrined a conservative, patriarchal form of samurai family as the law of the land, a tradition quite alien to the more fluid and egalitarian family lives of most Japanese. (Cf. R. J. Smith 1983a; Smith and Wiswell, 1982). And though endowing women with new powers to educate their children, powers that may have signaled an important change from the neo-Confucian ideology of the Tokugawa period, the Meiji leaders' choices still defined women in terms of their place in the *uchi* world.

Women Workers and Japan's Industrialization

The government's emphasis on female domesticity is especially ironic in light of women's prominent role in the industrialization of Japan. Spur-

red by a determination to catch up to levels of technological development and economic prosperity in the West, and to thereby equalize power relationships (whose skewed nature was symbolized in the unequal treaties with Western nations) the Meiji government threw itself into the task of rapid industrialization. Heavy industry, the first priority, was almost entirely government sponsored in the early Meiji period, and the workers in these plants were men (Tsurumi 1984, 4; Gordon 1985). During the 1870s the state established manufacturing plants in light industry as well—primarily materials, machine tools, and, especially, textiles: cottons and silks (Tsurumi, *ibid.*). Since the 1870s, the government encouraged women to work in these new factories, either in government supported private mills—most of the textile factories were in fact privately owned—or in government-owned plants.

Women workers were essential to the success of this industrialization program. Indeed, Sievers (1983, 55) points out that between 1894 and 1912, women formed an average of 60 percent of the industrial work force in Japan. Tsurumi further breaks down these statistics: "In 1900 female workers made up 62 percent of the labour force in private factories, and ten years later women and girls were 71 percent of the workers in private plants" (Tsurumi 1984, 5). Sievers points out that in 1868, the first year of the Meiji period, silk constituted two-thirds of the nation's exports. By 1912, the last year of Meiji, Japan led the world in the export of silk. From these economic indicators, it is not difficult to discern the central importance of women workers to the Meiji state's efforts to achieve economic growth. Yet, as Sievers wryly comments, "Working in a textile mill was patriotic; short hair and involvement in politics were not" (1983, 56).

The movement of young women into the labor force in these mills shows the elasticity of the boundaries of the household, and indicates that women's *motivations* were important determinants of what might be considered women's proper place. Wage work outside the home was not incompatible with devotion to the *uchi*, for it became a demonstration of filial piety. Most of these women were young and from backgrounds of rural poverty; consequently, the money earned in mill work proved an attractive proposition to many rural families. And not only would the daughter be able to provide some income for her family, there would be one less mouth to feed.

Yet the conditions which greeted many of the young women must have seemed little better than the straitened existences they had left. Indeed, conditions in the mills are now notorious, calling up "the sad history of

factory women" (*Jokō Aishi*) and images of Nomugi Pass⁶, where young girls endured bitter cold and a long trek through a treacherous mountain range in order to reach their new workplace. Once arrived, the women were forced to confront brutal working conditions: long hours—officially 12 or 13 hours a day in spinning, for example (Tsurumi 1984, 6), low pay on what was essentially a piecework system, inadequate nutrition, dangerous machinery, and sexual harassment from supervisors. Tuberculosis and beriberi often awaited the overworked mill girls (*ibid.*, 9).

Even in view of these grueling working conditions, management often invoked metaphors of *in loco parentis* care, attempting to at least sporadically set up the company as family. Women did not simply accept these definitions of their situation, but responded in a variety of ways. Escape was an extreme, but often used mode of resisting intolerable work lives. Workers were hired on the contract system, but even so many chose to renege on those contracts and escape the factory. As in heavy industry, rates of turnover were high.

Few workers lasted more than a year on the job, irrespective of what the contract stipulated; most stayed only six months or slightly longer. The runaway or "escaped" worker became a symbol of the industry's preference for recruiting new labor and using it up, rather than investing in improved working conditions and higher wages. An annual turnover rate of 50 percent was typical of Meiji textile mills, and some owners seemed to have gotten into the habit of replacing virtually their entire female work force each year (Sievers 1983, 65).

In the face of this unstable labor force, Tsurumi describes management strategies to supposedly protect the women's morals as part of their *in loco parentis* role. Though morals may have been part of management's concern, their strategies were obviously designed to keep the workers from running away:

"Usually dormitories were either surrounded by eight-foot fences or connected to the plant by a bridge eight feet above the ground. On top of fences and walls were broken glass, sharpened bamboo spears, barbed wire, and other forbidding objects. To be on the safe side, management locked the boarding labourers in the dormitories when they were not working" (1984, 7).

Sharon Sievers (1983) tells us about collective forms of resistance, in which Meiji women workers in textile mills initiated strikes and slow-

downs. Indeed, the first labor strike, in 1886, was held by women at the Amamiya silk mill, in response to management attempts to step up the work pace and lower wages. Through their collective actions, the women were able to wrest some concessions from management, and they thereby prevented owners from instituting even more exploitative work practices (pp. 81–82). Other strikes occurred sporadically in the decades before 1890, including the Osaka strike of 1889, where 300 workers in a cotton spinning mill were able to wrest concessions from management, resulting in higher wages for workers. Sievers calls it "one of the most successful strikes staged by women anywhere in the world before 1890" (p. 83).

Tsurumi highlights yet another form of women workers' resistance: song. To those who would argue that women workers were docile, submissive, and accepting of management paternalism, she offers searing examples of women's protests:

In Hide geisha get thirty-five sen.
Common prostitutes get fifteen sen.
Spinning maids get one potato.
(In Tsurumi 1984, 13.)

Desires to escape, hopes for the future, and ambivalent, often nostalgic memories of parents and home animate the poignant lyrics (see Tsurumi 1984, 25).

Song of the Living Corpses
My family was poor,
At the tender age of twelve,
I was sold to a factory.
Yet though I work for cheap wages,
My soul is not soiled.
Like the lotus flower in the midst of mud,
My heart too,
Will one day blossom forth. . . .
When I return to my room,
The supervisor finds all manner of fault with me,
And I feel like I'll never get on in this world.
When next I'm paid
I'll trick the doorkeeper and slip off to the station,
Board the first train
For my dear parents' home.
Both will cry when I tell them
How fate made me learn warping,
Leaving nothing but skin and bone on my soul. . . .

Prison Lament

Factory work is prison work,
All it lacks are metal chains. . . .

How I wish the dormitory would be washed away, the factory
burn down,
And the gatekeeper die of cholera!

I want wings to escape from here,
To fly as far as those distant shores. . . .

(Cited in Tsurumi 1984, 13–15.)

In view of these moving songs of resistance, the high rates of labor turnover, the outbreaks of strikes and slowdowns, and the ultimate form of protest—suicide (cf. Sievers 1983, 78)—management attempts to impart a sense of “company as family” seem at best a mockery.

What did women’s entry into the paid labor force mean in terms of women’s place in the *uchi*? How did such a situation articulate with doctrines like *ryōsai kenbo*? First, women in merchant households and in agriculture had always worked as part of their familial roles. In the case of the young factory workers, it was assumed that the women were working for the sake of their families, for by and large they came from rural households where their extra income was more than welcome. Young women were not abandoning their households when they left for the mills; rather, they were demonstrating their filial piety by going to work in the textile mills. Their commitments to the company were assumed to be temporary: a few years at most. More than one analyst has suggested that the doctrines of *ryōsai kenbo* and a celebration of women’s primary duties to the household served the interests of an industrializing economy by providing a rationale for low wages and minimally acceptable working conditions. Without necessarily accepting the functionalist implications of such a view and its attribution of a kind of omniscience to capitalist managers, minimally one could still make a case for an ideology associating women with home life as incompatible with women’s attempts to be treated as full-fledged members of a company.⁷ Moreover, management attempts to set themselves up in the in loco parentis role as guardians of young girls’ moral virtue—however cynical or sporadic those attempts—still associated women with home and with their proper domestic, feminine roles. In sum, then, the weight of Meiji law, prevailing familial ideologies, and rationales for women’s work, all combined to keep women within the *uchi* sphere, despite women’s protest and resistance.

The Occupation and Postwar Legal Changes

As I briefly discussed in chapter 4, the Occupation forces completely dismantled the legal strictures on family embodied on the Meiji Civil Code. Pharr (1980) shows in detail how these changes were contested and effected during the seven year period of the Occupation, from 1945 to 1952. By the end of this period, Japan had acquired a new, progressive constitution which, ironically, includes an Equal Rights clause that still eludes us in the United States.

Pharr traces the debate within the Occupation forces themselves, showing us the influence of a number of women in the Civil Information and Education Section who drafted measures dealing with women’s rights, including sections of the 1947 Constitution. The initial measures proposed, according to Pharr, were far more radical than those which eventually found their way into the Constitution. The higher-ranking males in the Occupation forces could agree with the CI & E women about issues such as extending suffrage to Japanese women, but other measures met with considerable resistance. Citing the reactions of Hussey, a high-ranking official in the Occupation, to more far-reaching initiatives, Pharr notes, “Hussey, as a top level official, is opposing the pressure from the women’s policy subsystem to implement a measure that would place other Occupation objectives in jeopardy. . . . Since there were many areas of Occupation reform where these leaders did not hesitate to incur such risks, it may be concluded that they assigned women’s rights policies a relatively low priority in the overall scheme of things” (1980, 32).

Despite the debates within the Occupation about the place of women in the new Japan, and despite male revisions and resistances to the most progressive proposals, by the end of this seven-year period, an astonishing transformation—at least legally—had occurred for Japanese women. They were extended suffrage and the right to run for political office. The Labor Standards Law, containing protective legislation, was passed and went into effect in the same year. Article 14 of the 1947 Constitution endows men and women with equal legal rights, and discrimination on the basis of sex is deemed unlawful. Article 24 gives both men and women equal rights in marriage (Itō 1982, 298). The Constitution also made compulsory education and coeducation the law in 1947, repealing separate male and female education and altering the admissions policies of those universities which had not accepted women students (ibid.). Revisions of the Civil Code made equal inheritance the law and dismantled

the structures of the *ie* system—though, as we have seen, these provisions have had limited impact for the people I knew. Within the Labor Ministry, the Occupation created a Women and Minors' Bureau, which exists to this day, to "help assure the implementation of the various legal guarantees extended to women" (Pharr 1980, 25).

Of course, law and everyday practice do not necessarily mirror one another, and these thoroughgoing and dramatic changes did not, and have not, produced equally dramatic changes in everyday life. Still, the promulgation of these measures undercuts the legitimacy of the patriarchal practices within the household, at least at the level of law. It provides a changed setting within which the people at the Satō factory live their lives. My co-workers were reflective about those changes. More than once, the part-timers claimed that before the War, *Onna wa uchi ni iru mon da* (Women had to stay at home). However exploitative or unpleasant they might find part-time work, it is a possible option they could never have exercised had the postwar reforms and economic changes not occurred.

Women and Work

Indeed, for Itakura-san, Iida-san, Hamada-san, Teramura-san, Nomura-san and my other female co-workers, perhaps the most significant factors shaping their choices in life have to do with the labor market and the increasing entry of *married* women into the paid labor force, usually as part-time workers.

Since the end of World War II, the growth in the numbers of female part-time workers has been remarkable. In a study of female labor force participation from 1960 to 1975, Karen Holden delineates the large trends in women's employment, demonstrating the shift away from agricultural work and unpaid work in family businesses to paid work. Older women are a critically important segment of this growth in non-agricultural employment. In terms of women's probable work histories, Holden persuasively argues that "women at every age are more likely to work. . . . Declining rates of withdrawal for each younger cohort suggest that it is increasingly common for women to have continuous labor market careers or to experience only short interruptions in their work, if they do withdraw at all" (1983, 45). Many of the older women who enter or re-enter the labor force do so as so-called part-time workers.⁸

Economist Nakamura relates the trends in the Japanese economy during the postwar period to the growth in part-time work. He begins by

arguing that conditions of labor shortage arose around 1960 after an initial postwar labor surplus. This labor shortage produced a number of far-reaching effects. Smaller firms were forced to offer more advantageous wage scales and working conditions in order to attract employees. Most important for our interests, the male temporary and day laborers had to be accorded greater benefits. Companies sometimes promoted them to permanent worker status in efforts to secure for themselves a more stable labor force (1981, 169). Apparently, even these measures did not produce the desired results, for "the number of temporary workers went on declining, to the point where this labor force could no longer be expected to function as a cushion against business fluctuations" (*ibid.*). Enter married women as part-time workers and pieceworkers. Between 1965 and 1974, over 95% of "workers for whom the job is secondary" have been women (*ibid.*, 170). Indeed, of women employees, the proportion of part-timers was 8.9% in 1961 (Rōdōshō 1980, 12), and "increased from 12.2% in 1970 to 19.3% in 1980, the numbers almost doubling from 1.3 million to 2.56 million" (Steven 1983, 192). The growth in part-time work is especially visible in the retail and service sectors, which in 1983 employed 35.6% and 27.8%, respectively, of female part-time/temporary employees, while 22.2% found employment in the manufacturing sector (Rōdōshō 1984, 6). Predictably enough, the part-timers are the first to feel the effects of any economic downturn. The oil shock of the early to mid-1970s put a temporary stop to the growth of the part-time labor force, as the part-timers were the proverbial "first fired" (Nakamura 1981, 171).

From the employer's point of view, part-time workers are desirable for a number of reasons. According to a 1980 survey by the Ministry of Labor, employers cited as the primary advantage the savings in wages paid to employees, as well as the flexibility of a part-time labor force in responding to fluctuations in work pace and in demand for the product or service. A second major reason for hiring part-time workers was the labor shortage, a difficulty in finding permanent workers to fill the positions. Certainly the Satō company was perpetually searching for new recruits, and the grueling hours the artisans kept during the busy seasons were testimony to the *shachō's* difficulties in finding full-time employees. The wives of owners of small businesses, however, often invoked another reason. With part-time workers, you didn't have to *ki o tsukau* (worry about someone—and in this context, also, watch the way you act) the way you did toward full-time employees. For Ogura-san, for instance, who owned a shoe store, the ability to hire part-timers was a blessing.

"We used to have to cook for the workers, and we always had to watch what we said, how we acted. Now the part-timers come, we pay them their wages, and that's that."

Part-time workers can be an economic blessing to managers, but what about the workers themselves? A 1983 Labor Ministry survey explored women's attitudes toward home and work. Among their respondents, 55.2% said their ideal scenario was to find a job, stop working temporarily to marry and bear children, and then resume work a few years later. A further 19.5% said they would use marriage and children as the reason to stay home permanently; 16.6% planned to remain on the job, while only 2.2% had no desire to seek employment (Rōdōshō 1984, 40). A survey asked married women about the kind of work they would prefer, and over half (53.2%) cited part-time work, while 25.4% preferred *naishoku*, or piecework they could do at home. In other words, the married women who responded to the survey desired flexible or shorter hours and/or work they could do at home, so that their household duties would not be compromised. A 1980 Labor Ministry survey asked women about their motives for seeking part-time work. Of those surveyed, 43.8% cited a desire to add to the family's income, while 38.5% said they preferred working to staying at home (Rōdōshō 1980, 15).

In examining the overall picture of part-time work, it is clear that part-time workers tend to be older, married women, and most of them work fewer years and in smaller enterprises than does the average full-time worker. In 1983, more than half of part-time female employees (52.9%) worked in enterprises with 1–29 workers, and in fact there is a negative correlation between the size of an enterprise and the proportion of part-time or temporary workers it is likely to employ. Of 1,270,000 part-time female workers, a good three-quarters were above the age of 35. The average age of part-timers is 41.7 years, while for regular, full-time employees it was 35.2 years. Of the part-timers, 85.9% were married. Part-timers had worked 3.6 years; the length of service is increasing from year to year, but it is still considerably less than the 6.3 years worked by the average full-time female employee (Rōdōshō 1984, 54).

As we will see, my part-time co-workers seemed in many ways to welcome this opportunity to work on a part-time basis, for their primary loyalty, they felt, lay in their responsibility to their families. Part-time work gave them the flexibility they needed in order to execute these duties, and none of my co-workers seemed to yearn for opportunities to become full-time employees. Employers generally often point to these attitudes as justification for hiring part-time workers and keeping wom-

en in low-paying jobs with little hope for promotion. But, as *Agora*, a Japanese feminist journal, asked, why is it that women do *not* ask for greater employment opportunities and greater responsibilities? Might it not reflect the lack of real opportunities presented to them in the labor market and the discrimination that exists once they are on the job? In 1977, for instance, women were earning 55.8% of men's wages. Then, as now, employers in large firms tend to hire young women out of junior college, who work until marriage⁹ (the preferred age of marriage—*teki reiki*—is between 24 and 26) or until the age of 30, if they do not marry. If women seem unlikely to take the hint that their time is up, managers may use the famous *kata tataki*—tap on the shoulder—suggesting that the women leave the company (cf. MacLendon 1983). This enables the company to hire younger, cheaper recruits. Given the difficulties women face when they do seek full-time employment, perhaps it is simple recognition of these realities that at least partially accounts for the attitudes of women like my co-workers.

These economic, political, and historical trends delineate the parameters within which my part-time co-workers at the Satō company lived out their lives. Women's gendered work identities are in part created at the levels of national law, public policy, economic trends, and cultural ideologies, particularly the familial ideologies linking women to the *uchi*, the home. But the meanings of women's work identities are both flexible and enmeshed in relations of power. The story I have related thus far sets forth the limits of the discourse shaping my co-workers' lives, but it cannot account for the multiple, layered, ambivalent meanings of work as it is lived out in the creation of gendered work identities on the shop floor. In order to begin to trace these complex interrelationships, let us return to the neighborhood and to the Satō factory, to the meanings that the people around me gave to their work.

Work and Its Meanings

Work, for the people I knew, possessed theme and pattern; it provided a means of participatory belonging in a meaningful organization and constituted a method of creative self-realization. Work, for the owners of the Satō confectionery, enabled them to fulfill their duties to the *ie*-line and to derive a sense of their own competence and worth. For the male artisans, work was a central aspect of their masculinity and of their maturity; for the younger artisans, in particular, identification with the Satō firm, though riddled with ambivalence, provided a significant axis

around which their identities could be constructed. For the women I knew, we shall see that work was an essential aspect of their definitions of self, controverting stereotypes and expectations about the fragility of part-timers' commitments to their work. All these discourses must be set, however, within the context of the artisanal/industrial/mercantile ward where the Satō factory was situated, for the forms that the participatory belonging and self-realization could legitimately take were highly circumscribed.

Watanabe-san, a taxi driver who lived in the house in back of my landlords, the Hatanakas, neatly summarized the prevailing attitudes of the *mawari no bito*, the people around you, in the ward where I lived. When talking about his neighbors, he explained, "*Karada o ugokashite imai to, nani mo shite imai to omowarechau,*" that is, to translate literally, if you aren't moving your body, people will think you're not doing anything.¹⁰ Nakane (personal communication) argues that the value placed upon serene contemplation that she so noticed in India, for example, does not exist in this Shitamachi area of Tokyo. Consequently, the emphasis on physical activity is at least partially inflected through class and economic status, for if my neighbors and co-workers were *not* physically moving, they in fact might not be able to make ends meet. In this ward where work meant physical movement in shops and factories, constant, sometimes frantic activity was a feature of everyday life, a feature I attempted to evoke at the outset, through the setting trope. Though my neighbors' work can be construed as evidence of human resilience and vitality, work for many of my neighbors was also grueling, tough, and consuming of one's life. A teacher who instructed many of the neighborhood children in his after-school cram school (*juku*), told me that the people in this ward were *shigoto no aima ni ikite iru*, living their lives in the intervals between work, in the interstices of work. "It's not that they like working so much—they are suffering, but they put up with it because they have to." The emphasis on physically visible movement was apparent even in people's choices of favorite leisure activities. The same teacher, Itō-sensei, told me that the mothers of his pupils all yearned to do sports of some kind. "That, you see, is the ultimate luxury—expending energy in leisure rather than work."

Given such a grim economic scenario, lack of physical activity would mean a breach of commitment to the family, a blemish on one's moral character. A person who is not moving must be lazy and unproductive, not doing his or her part to contribute to the family budget. Physically visible movement thus becomes an index of involvement with, and proof

of commitment to, company and family. And this proof of loyalty is required of both men and women. Iida-san, one of my part-time co-workers, used to say that her working meant the difference between putting fruit or dessert on the table every night or only once a week. After a visit with her and her two daughters in their small, dark apartment, I could well imagine that her contribution to the family coffers was welcome indeed. The income brought in by Mr. Iida could not have been terribly substantial, judging from the paucity of customers at his small neighborhood shop which sold inexpensive slippers.

In such a milieu, the pressure to work if you are physically capable of doing so was sometimes overwhelming. My landlady, Mrs. Hatanaka, whose husband was quite a well-to-do white-collar executive in a medium-sized trading company, was a part-time teacher of flower arranging, at that time more of an avocation for her than a way to make money. She used to complain to me about the relentless pressure on her to take some kind of job. Every time a sales person came by, she was subjected to all sorts of thinly veiled sarcasm. "You mean you're not working—even if all your children are in school?" an insurance agent exclaimed. The surprise was even greater if they found out that her son was enrolled in an expensive private high school linked to one of Japan's top private universities. But hardest to take were the comments from her mother-in-law's friends.¹¹ If Hatanaka-san happened to be sitting down, reading a book on flower arranging, for instance, the elderly widows might comment, "Oh, so you're reading a book." "It's as though I shouldn't be reading when I could be working!" she would say to me with great irritation. Or sometimes they asked, "What are you doing?" or "What do you do all day?" as though housework just didn't count. "People make the most incredible remarks," she continued. "One of my mother-in-law's friends always comments about the expense of sending Kazuo to high school. But last time I really got her. When she said, 'Your husband must bring home a large salary (*kōkyūtori deshō, ne*),' I just agreed with her—'Yes, thanks (*Hai, okagesama de*),' I said. We Japanese always downplay things like that, especially income, but I just couldn't stand it anymore." In fact, though, her protests notwithstanding, Mrs. Hatanaka did end up working, as receptionist and right-hand woman to her good friend from grade school, Yokoyama-sensei, the hairdresser. Hatanaka-san's letters to me are now filled with energy and enthusiasm for her job and for her new "career woman" persona. Recently, she has realized her dream of opening up her own flower arranging school, using a room in their newly remodeled house to conduct classes.

Certainly the part-timers I knew fully embraced this imperative to work for wages. The seemingly indefatigable Teramura-san, with her two jobs, or Sakada-san, who returned to work when her children were still young, come to mind. So does Hamada-san, who did piecework at home while she raised her children. The job she had for years was assembling and making parts for a subcontractor to one of Japan's most famous manufacturers of cameras. She, too, claimed she hated to stay at home and do nothing but watch television. Financial necessity was especially acute in the cases of Itakura-san, whose husband died soon after he entered the hospital, and Akimoto-san, another widow who had been with the company for about two years. Her daughters were working as secretaries and "office ladies" in small companies in Shitamachi. Her job enabled her to get by, and judicious saving and payments on credit helped her buy her twenty-year-old daughter a lavish kimono for her coming-of-age.¹² For all these women, it appeared that part-time work was a financial necessity; it either provided the sole support of the family or critically important supplemental income.

Part-time Work and *Uchi* as a Gendered Domain

As my neighbors and co-workers showed me, work in this ward of Tokyo meant physically visible activity, especially in the form of wage labor. For the female part-timers I knew, this prevailing definition of work intersected in complicated ways with gender identity and ideologies of women's work. State-sponsored ideologies of domesticity such as *ryōsai kenbo* and more narrowly disseminated ideological precepts as embodied in, for example, the doctrines of the ethics retreat, define women in the interwar and postwar periods through their association with *uchi*, the domestic domain. This view of feminine identity prevails in the Western literature on Japanese women, and it has living significance as the image against which my co-workers, the part-timers, defined themselves. Women as a group share their commitments to the *uchi*, but these meanings are filtered through contextually specific, localized meanings of work, so that, paradoxically, for the women I knew, wage labor *outside* the home became an index of their commitment to the inside, the *uchi*.

The purest expression of devotion to the *uchi* and a recurrent image in the literature on postwar Japanese society (cf. E. F. Vogel 1963; S. H. Vogel 1978; Lebra 1984) is the middle-class Professional Housewife, who commits herself wholeheartedly to the betterment of her *uchi*, "a

lifetime career requiring training, special skills, and endless devotion" (S. H. Vogel 1978, 16). This career is comparable to the all-consuming career of the white-collar executive, or *sarariman* (cf. E. F. Vogel 1963). "The middle class, educated housewife also has a job" (S. H. Vogel 1978), the job of maintaining and promoting her *uchi*. Descriptions of "the middle-class housewife" emphasize themes familiar to those who have spent any time in Japan, including numerous tasks considered men's work in the United States middle class: for example, household repairs and household finances. Financial duties include the keeping of household accounts as well as real estate transactions (buying and selling houses, looking for apartments, dealing with landlords) and playing the stock market. Many men refer to their wives as the "Finance Minister" (Ökura Daijin), for in addition to these financial responsibilities, the wives dole out their husbands' allowances, and many are the times one can see a man trying to cajole his wife to give him a little extra money. As in the United States, "emotion work"—providing a nurturant, warm emotional environment—and "the work of kinship"¹³—keeping track of the *uchi's* links to other *uchi*—are the province of women. And middle-class women should ideally possess certain culturally constituted attributes of femininity: gentility, politesse, skill at cooking, and skill at arts such as playing the *koto*, flower arranging, tea ceremony, or in more recent years, English conversation. These are not merely idle pastimes. For the good of the *uchi*, women can find fulfillment in attempts to be the best housewife possible, and this can involve active participation in lessons and study. In short, the Professional Housewife¹⁴ should embody certain values emblematic of a middle-class lifestyle: clear separation of *uchi* and *soto* spheres, and a devotion to *uchi* in the form of graciousness, competence in practical affairs, a sense of the aesthetic, and cosmopolitanism.

Above all, women in general are said to be devoted to their children. In Lebra's interviews, women invoked their children as their reason for living (*ikigai*), a theme emerging as equally central in Suzanne Vogel's account of the Professional Housewife. Indeed, Lebra cites cases of mothers who spoke of their children as "part of my flesh" (Lebra 1984, 163). For middle-class housewives, this devotion to children stereotypically assumes the well-known form of the *kyōiku mama*, education mother, who dedicates herself to her children's educational success, especially their success at the college entrance exams (cf. E. F. Vogel 1963). Certainly this is a weighty obligation in a society where success is often measured by one's educational credentials, for entering the right univer-

sity virtually assures men a prestigious career and a secure future, though the situation is somewhat more problematic for women. The “education mama” stereotype is of a mother who does everything in her power to ensure her children’s educational success, including sending her children to tutors and cram schools (*juku*), creating a quiet environment conducive to study, providing snacks for the hard-working student, consulting with teachers, and in general, acting as enthusiastic coach to her offspring in training for the Big Event.

Not surprisingly, these hegemonic images have relatively little salience among my part-time co-workers. The women I knew at the Satō factory were obviously devoted to their *uchi*, but their economic status and the local definitions of work inflected through this precarious economic status created quite a different scenario of femininity and work. Like middle-class housewives who stayed at home, the women I knew took responsibility for the household finances, household repairs, and real estate transactions. I remember in particular the keen interest that surrounded Iida-san’s negotiations with her landlord, about the new apartment she had finally found for her family. Given these responsibilities, and adding to them an essentially 9-to-5 commitment to their jobs, few had time, money, or leisure to do much besides work in the factory, perform their domestic chores, and perhaps occasionally engage in leisure pursuits (Nomura-san was a particularly avid wrestling fan, while Sakada-san made dolls in her spare time). Housework had to be taken care of before or after their hours on the shop floor; usually the women did their laundry and aired the bedding before they arrived. “Sometimes,” said Sakada-san, “something has to go. On Sundays, when the kids are home and I have to work, I just don’t cook. My kids think that’s what Sundays are.” In fact, we all constantly complained about the hard work and the fact that the one day off—Tuesday—barely gave us a chance to renew our energy. “In one day,” said Itakura-san, “we can’t recover.” (*Ichinichi ja tsukare ga torenai.*) “We don’t even have time to rest,” Nomura-san chimed in. “We always have errands to do.” I remember, in particular, one Wednesday when Nomura-san came in looking tired and dispirited. “I had relatives from the country who came to visit—and on Tuesday, of all days!”

Many of the part-time workers defined themselves as occupying quite a different social location from that of the middle-class housewife. Time and again, when I asked them about their lives and their experiences at work, they would complain, but they would check themselves with the comment that *Jīto shiteru yori ii deshō* or *terebi o jīto miru yori, ii deshō*;

that is, it’s better than just sitting around the house, doing nothing or watching TV. Itakura-san’s warm smile and her comment, “It’s good to work, too,” reverberates in memory. Teramura-san’s frenetic activity working two jobs and her energetic denial of her fatigue were also paired with comments about getting out of the house. And Hamada-san made a disparaging remark to me about one of my neighbors, a housewife who did not work for wages outside the home. “You see, women like that don’t know what the world is like; they’re just in the house all the time. They’re narrow.”

In this context, wifely accomplishments such as tea ceremony or flower arranging had little place. They were a luxury. “Oh, that’s so *yūga*, elegant,” said Sakada-san. “We here in Shitamachi don’t do things like that. We’d rather have a good time (*asobu no ga suki*.)” Hamada-san recounted an anecdote of her bewilderment at attending a tea ceremony. “When they served me the sweet, I just gobbled it up, and I drank the whole bowl of tea in one gulp,” she laughed. In tea ceremony, the emphasis on etiquette is paramount, and guests are supposed to delicately nibble at the sweet and then drain the bowl in small sips, pausing after the first taste to appreciate the rich, astringent flavors. Hamada-san, in her refreshing way, pointed out the class bias of these pastimes when she called the tea ceremony *kidotteru*, snobbish.¹⁵ My landlady, Hatanaka-san, corroborated their stories from the opposite point of view. “If I ever mention that I’m taking tea ceremony or teaching flower arranging, people around here always tell me how *yūga* I am. When I think of *yūga*, I think of someone who owns a villa in Karuizawa!”¹⁶

Nor was devotion to children in the form of encouraging educational excellence accorded much value. Conversations over the work tables revealed attitudes about human potential startlingly different from the *yareba dekiru* (you can do it if you try) ethos of the ethics center, an ethos often said to be indicative of Japanese attitudes toward achievement. Academic excellence was, according to Okamoto-san, a matter of *umare-tsuki*, innate abilities. “Yeah, pushing the kid to study doesn’t do any good,” Itakura-san concurred. “My kids were just born stupid!” “It’s better,” continued Teramura-san, “to help the family out so they have a little something special to eat every day.” The differences between the statements of my co-workers and representations of Japanese mothers prevalent in the Western literature are stunning.

My interviews with schoolteachers and talks with middle-class housewives in the ward confirmed these impressions of difference. For one thing, mothers who had to work outside the home for financial reasons

had little time or energy left to give to their children's education, even if they wanted to. And living conditions in many families did nothing to facilitate academic pursuits. Kaneko-san, a young schoolteacher in the ward, used to tell me about her "home visits." "So often, the shop or the machines are in the front of the house, and it's so noisy. No wonder the kids can't study," she lamented. People in my neighborhood were often unable to supply their children with the proper study atmosphere available in a more affluent home. In view of these straitened circumstances, most people chose to leave (*makaseru*) the task of education to the schools. This irritated housewives like Hatanaka-san no end. "At PTA meetings, they ask the teacher, 'What can we do? Our child just sits in front of the TV at night,'" she said shaking her head, "as if it were only the teacher's responsibility." Her own attitude could not be more sharply opposed to theirs. "My parents used to always say that even a pebble from the side of the road would shine if you polished it hard enough. They said it so often, I even had a complex—thinking I was nothing but a piece of gravel from the road!"

The class inflections are unmistakable. For middle-class executives' wives like Hatanaka-san, for whom social mobility is a goal and for whom mainstream success is in any case more probable, the notion of merit, limitless human potential, and hard work legitimates their class position. Supplied with the proper environment, the proper coaching, and passionate dedication from both mother and student, children may indeed succeed in gaining admission to the right university and thus achieve mainstream success.¹⁷ The part-timers, and my co-workers generally, had quite a different view. They seemed resigned in many ways to their place in life as people who work with their hands, not with "paper and pencil," in the words of one young artisan. Their children were simply "stupid," and as parents, there was nothing they could do to compensate for this basic lack of ability. Their emphasis on innate ability and their correspondingly less optimistic stance on human capacities for self-improvement, both reflect and help to reproduce their lower position in Japanese society.

The discourse on gender identity is thus crosscut by class structure. Japanese women could be said to share an identity as women—those who are defined by and dedicate themselves to the *uchi* world. But economic and social differences mean that this defining devotion to *uchi* will be expressed in very different ways. Indeed, when one is delineating the various cleavages among women, class differences are replayed in a powerful, distilled form. For the part-time workers, middle-class house-

wives embodied middle-class wealth and leisure—the ability to completely dedicate themselves to the *uchi* as inside, to engage in elegant pursuits, and to throw themselves into the task of coaching their children for academic success. If these mothers do participate in activities outside the home, they justify those activities by arguing that the increased experience and knowledge will allow them the opportunity to develop themselves as persons and as better housewives.¹⁸

The women I knew were also defined in terms of their commitment and loyalty to their *uchi*, but for them, this devotion had to assume the paradoxical form of stepping into the *soto* world of wage labor. Contributions to the *uchi* through money earned outside, in the *soto* sphere, was expected as an expression of their commitment to their families. This was permissible, even desirable, so long as the women's expressed motivations were guided by culturally shaped definitions of domesticity. In one sense, part-timers thereby expand the definition of women's proper place, and they are acutely aware of postwar changes for women who want to work. In a discussion of politics with the young artisans, the part-timers in the Western sweets division argued that the development of part-time work, though exploitative, was momentous and basically a good thing. "It used to be," said Iida-san, "that women had to stay at home—*josei wa uchi ni iru mon da*. It's a lot better now." Yet it is still true that all my co-workers justified their decision to go to work in terms of commitment to the *uchi*, filtered through a high local value placed on physical activity and wage labor.¹⁹

Commitment to *Uchi*: Company or Family?

The part-timers' commitment to *uchi* as family is, in the workplace, justification for their tenuous status in the company. Because their primary loyalties belong to *uchi* as family, they cannot be counted on, the story goes, and hence are not full-fledged, committed members of the company. Managers, then, are provided with legitimate justification for the paltry wages, lack of benefits, and other exploitative conditions accompanying part-time work. Glenda Roberts cites the case of managers at the lingerie factory where she conducted fieldwork, who both rail against the putative impaired productivity of married women with children, on the one hand, and extol the virtues of female domesticity and motherhood, on the other. In managers' eyes, women should quit work before retirement. Although these practices are economically rational, costing the company less in wages for workers with seniority, their rationality

resonates with cultural convention. Roberts relates managerial practices directly to culturally shaped gender ideologies associating women with child care and the home; managers at the lingerie factory appeared to sincerely believe in women's role in socializing the younger generation, expressing their fears that Japanese society would disintegrate should too many women enter the work force (1986, 19–21).

These sentiments are startlingly similar to the situation Beechey and Perkins describe on the basis of their extensive study of part-time work in Coventry, England.

Part-time women workers were always seen in terms of their domestic and family responsibilities. Although the assumption was commonly made that part-time workers were married, it was not primarily marriage per se (i.e. responsibility for a house and a husband) but responsibilities for children (or occasionally some other dependent) which were proposed as an explanation as to why it was women who worked part-time . . . (1987, 112).

Interestingly, Beechey and Perkins found that only *part-time* women workers are thus defined by their domesticity. Gender ideology and organizational structure intersect, so that managers never seem to worry about the plight of full-time women workers. A part-timer, especially, is defined in terms of her image as a woman with young children who demand most of her time. Her job is to get her out of the house and to give her some pin money, and part-time work suits her needs for flexible hours: "When part-timers were employed during the day they were seen as needing hours which fitted in with school times. When they were employed in the evenings or at weekends they were thought to need hours which enabled their husbands to look after the children. And the employers often implied that they were doing women a favour by giving them part-time work" (1987, 117–18).

Part-timers in both Britain and in Japan are defined by their presumed overriding loyalties to their domestic roles. Their tenuous commitment to work is often taken as axiomatic—at least by managers and by the writers of the literature on industrial work. But what about the part-timers themselves? How did the women I knew construe their loyalties to the company and what was their commitment to performance on the job? I will argue for my part-time co-workers' key position as the performers of the unrecognized, time-consuming labor so essential to the everyday task of supplying the shop with attractively packaged, high quality products. They assumed responsibility for critically important functions such

as quality control; they felt a strong commitment to the company and took great pride in their work.

To examine the issue of part-time work more closely, we should return to the shop floor and to a day on the job, to explore the ways labor is organized at the factory.

A Day at Work

In both the Western *pâtisserie* and the Japanese sweets divisions, daily and seasonal work rhythms were primarily dictated by the need to produce fresh goods.

Consequently, the mornings in both divisions were spent largely making up and getting out the day's supply of fresh confections. For instance, by the time the part-timers arrived at the factory around nine, the baking of the day's cakes—"shortcake," decoration cakes of various sorts—would be at least partially finished, and we could spend our time doing *shiage*—finishing—of these products. Often this meant wrapping and packaging, a not inconsequential task in a society which prizes aesthetics and is well-known for its artistic creativity in wrapping everyday goods, especially popular gift items like confections. The primary morning task was to wrap individual slices of cake with cellophane. Though seemingly simple, this task was hard to do without disturbing the frosting decorations, difficult to accomplish in one smooth, deft movement. My first day on the job, I remember the division chief, Akita-san, coming out from his room after I'd been wrapping for a half hour or so. "Relax your shoulders!" he said, with a concerned look on his face. "Don't worry—you'll get the hang of it before long." But it took a month before he could tell me, "Looks like you've gotten used to it. You're quicker, and you don't seem to get as tired as you did before."

Other aspects of packaging required substantial attention. They might include placing pastries like *éclairs* or *petits fours* in their cups of silvered paper, or glazing a cake with apricot jam, or cutting the stems from strawberries and placing each one on its mound of white frosting atop the shortcake. Of an afternoon, we would fold up tiny boxes, decorated with scalloped edges and printed flowers, and then fill each with its rounded pastry, wrapped in gold paper—the wrapping, again, done by hand. Afternoons were also the time for cutting "Baum Kuchen," a log-shaped cake, into sections and placing them in their individual round cellophane wrappers. Sakada-san was usually the one who operated the

small stamping machine, a device that sealed a wrapper shut when you pressed the pedal with your foot. Every so often, much to my dismay, we had to wrap a long, cylindrical sweet called a "ferry boat." Its distinctive paper, thick and recalcitrant to attempts at wrapping, had to be carefully folded in accordion pleats and then twisted so the ends resembled the prow and rudder of a ship. This (supposedly) accomplished, the folded and twisted ends were tied with slender yellow ribbons. Again, Sakadasan was the expert at this task, which befuddled even some of the full-time male artisans. I remember trying to disguise my smile of amusement and empathy/sympathy when Kitano-san, a young man in his twenties who was in his second year with Satōs, came over to help us when his "hands were free." Try as he might, he was no better—indeed, even worse—than I was at making crisp pleats in the stiff paper and twisting them at just the right angle. Matsumoto-san, the chief of the baking division, stepped over to look over our handiwork. "*Omae, zenzen kiyō ja nai, ne,*" he observed. "You (highly informal form) just aren't any good with your hands, are you." Red-faced, the abashed Kitano-san could only gaze at his sadly rumpled approximations of a ferry boat and mumble: "*Sō desu, ne.*"

In *wagasbi*, Japanese sweets, the routine was similar. The male artisans would arrive around 7:30 to begin pounding the rice for *mochi* (glutinous rice cakes) and making the *anko* (sweetened bean paste), the two staples of Japanese confections. By the time we part-timers arrived around 9:00 or 9:30, work was already well underway. Our first task was usually to make *anmitsu*, a common Japanese dessert composed of cubes of *kanten* (agar-agar), balls of *anko*, various fruits, and honey. But most of the morning and often a good deal of the afternoon we spent in filling and packaging the *monaka*, baked pastry shells filled with various types of *anko*. We would dip our flat, wooden spatulas into large tubs of *anko*, fill the shells, place each *monaka* in its proper paper wrapper, and then take a sticker, labeled with the Satō factory's logo, to seal the small packet. In short, we did all of this by hand.

Afternoons in *wagasbi* were sometimes more of the same, depending on the day's orders, but more often than not we would have to package the bulk gift items. When I began working in *wagasbi*, the company had recently added a new sweet to its repertoire: a small type of *manjū* (a baked bean-paste sweet) molded in the shape of a chestnut, glazed a deep, shiny brown, and filled with a single chestnut and white bean paste. We were to gather five of these into a cellophane package, seal the package with the stamping machine, and fold the top of the package into

pleats, gathering them into neat folds with pink and blue bows. The slippery stiffness of the cellophane made the bows slip off easily, and the pleats often refused to stay in properly. These "clusters of chestnuts," as they were poetically called, were the bane of the afternoons, at least for us part-timers. The task demanding the most relentless pace and concentration, though, was the "assembly line": placing batches of *manjū* on the conveyor belt to be encased in plastic. Summers were the busy period for this kind of work, for they were slack seasons when we could stock up the freezers with hearty frozen confections ready for the fall and winter. An hour or two feeding *manjū* two by two to the conveyor belt, attending carefully to see that I placed them exactly two spaces apart, was quite enough to make me dizzy and disconnected. My discomfort must have seemed obvious, for each time I finished the task, the chief artisan, Ohara-san, would say, with considerable amusement, "*Gokurōsan deshita*" (Thanks for your trouble).

But perhaps the part-timers' most important duty was quality control. If the *anko* were too old, crusted over with sugar, or, in extreme cases, if they sported a coating of mold, it was the part-timers who noticed. If the decorations were lopsided, they would tell the artisans. Because we were the last to handle the sweets before they were carried off in trays to the shop, we had charge of the final, perfect presentation of the product, and it was a duty my co-workers took deadly seriously. My own slightly more casual attitude earned me a severe reprimand from Itakura-san, the oldest part-timer who was known for her critical eye. I placed a small packet of *monaka* into the tray, a packet with the tiniest, barely discernible smudge of bean paste on the back corner. "Look at that!" she told me sharply. "What will the customers think? It will reflect badly on the company." Carelessness on the part of any worker, including the part-timers, thus affected the reputation of the company as a whole. We were thus fully part of the firm in terms of our responsibilities to our co-workers and to the company's reputation, despite our structural marginality. In this way, part-timers did identify with the company, did assume substantial responsibility, and did feel committed to the company and to their jobs.

Moreover, as in other parts of Japan and elsewhere, part-time meant close to eight hours of work a day. The women came at 9:00 or 9:30 and left at 5:00 at the earliest, more often at 6:00 or later. Still, it is true that they could not work on the astounding overtime shifts required of the full-time male artisans during the busy periods of the New Year and during March, when several holidays converged, or when there were un-

usual numbers of special orders. Many times, we part-timers would arrive to find that the artisans had been up since 4:00 or 5:00, on *bayade*, coming out early. And sometimes, as I have noted, the artisans worked until midnight or after, though those occasions were rare. Regular hours for the male artisans were from about 7:00 in the morning until about 7:00 at night.

The part-timers were also aware that their more tenuous status in the firm and their lower rates of pay were linked to greater freedom and flexibility, at least when their duties were compared to the stringent demands made on the male artisans. For example, Itakura-san moved away from our neighborhood a few months before I left Japan. She had finally been selected in a housing lottery for an inexpensive apartment complex on the far outskirts of Tokyo, a good thirty-minute subway ride from where the Satō factory stood. Having at one point lived on the same subway line, and remembering the crushing crowds during rush hours, I asked her whether she had asked the *shachō* for some sort of compensation for her troubles, like a commuting allowance or at least a small subsidy. She replied, "I could, but I won't. If I get more money, that means I'll be obligated to come in without fail. This way, I can take off a few days if I want, quit if I want."

Flexibility was limited by social pressure and expectation, but what flexibility existed seemed to take on considerable significance for the part-timers. When I asked about wages, I named a figure of ¥90,000 as a possible monthly salary for them. Of course, no one responded directly with a figure, but Nomura-san just laughed. "To make that much, you'd have to come everyday from nine until five, without a lunch break and without ever being late!" "Yeah, it's just not worth it," concurred Teramura-san. "Today, for instance, I was ready to leave, even had my purse in my hand, but I wanted to finish watching my favorite TV show. So I just plopped myself down in front of the TV until it was over. Our pay is lousy, and we don't get our three o'clock tea like the artisans do. If you can't take time to sit and finish watching your program once in awhile, it's just not worth working."

Commitment to the company and to our co-workers did make it necessary for us to consider the impact of our absence on others, but vacations and time off were quite easily taken; this was unlike, for example, Roberts' experience (1986) in a much larger firm, where people had to publicly apologize to the others for being absent. Usually for us, a word to the division chief was sufficient. The visits of relatives, children's illness, graduations, and my erratic schedule of interviews at other com-

panies, did not seem to daunt the supervisors, who almost always were ready to let us go. Only rarely—during the busiest times—would there be a plea to stay. "*Tasukarimasu*" (it would help us out), Akita-san or Ohara-san would say. Still, it was hard to request leaves for Saturdays and Sundays, because these were the busiest days, when everyone could use the help. And busy seasons were equally difficult. Near the New Year, when I took a trip to Kanazawa with the Sakamotos to visit a Zen priest, I took my vacation early. Mrs. Satō insisted that I come by to receive my New Year's supply of *omochi*, glutinous rice cakes, which are auspicious New Year's symbols and the base for *ozōni*, the traditional New Year's breakfast. I popped my head into the factory, where everyone—including a couple of the Satō daughters and two high school girls hired for the holidays—was hard at work. Fatigue pervaded the room. The scene haunts me still: the weary faces of my co-workers as they glanced up at me, their cheerful greetings, the trays and boxes of confections stacked high around them, occupying every inch of counter space.

Sakada-san must have experienced similar feelings of guilt when she took an extended leave of absence. She had had a fight the night before with Akimoto-san and Iida-san, when they walked home together from work. They stopped at a counter selling *yakitori*, skewered chicken, and Sakada-san bought two large bags worth to bring home with her. "Are you going to eat all that?" Akimoto-san reportedly asked. Apparently Sakada-san found this to be an offensive question, for she snapped back, "If we weren't going to eat it, I wouldn't buy it!" And after that, she didn't come to work for a month or more. As each day passed, one or another of us would comment on her absence. "Every day she's gone, it must get harder to come back," observed Akimoto-san. But one morning, Sakada-san appeared, smiling, apologized to all of us for her long absence (a standard greeting in Japanese) and resumed work. She told us that she had been having problems with high blood pressure. "I'll bet," said Iida-san slyly to me. "With a temper like that, no wonder." In short, there is no doubt that the part-timers indeed had a more flexible work schedule than did the full-time male artisans, and that they therefore did not—nor did they wish to—assume the same degree of responsibility or the same number of hours as did their full-time counterparts. But it is equally true that social pressures—most important, obligations to one's co-workers—limited the flexibility we could actually enjoy.

Our shared exploitation sometimes provided the basis for commonality and sympathy. The paltry pay was often a subject of discussion, as I have described in chapter 6. My co-workers and I were especially

aware, however, of the toll our jobs took on our bodies. We constantly complained of our sore feet, especially sore heels from standing on the concrete floors. And a company-sponsored trip to the seashore revealed even more occupational hazards. At one point, as we all sat down with our rice balls and our box lunches, the part-timers pulled up the legs of their trousers to compare their varicose veins. In our informal contest, Hamada-san and Iida-san tied for first prize. The demanding pace and the lack of assured work breaks formed another subject of discussion. At most of the factories in the neighborhood where I conducted extensive interviews, work stopped at ten in the morning and at three in the afternoon, so workers could have a cup of tea and perhaps some crackers. Nothing of the sort occurred at the Satō factory, although the artisans were, if the pace of work slackened, able to escape the workroom, sit on their haunches, and have a smoke, or grab a snack if they were out doing deliveries or running up and down the stairs to the other divisions. Informal restrictions on the part-timers' movement and time seemed much greater. Rarely, if ever, was there an appropriate slack period where all of us could take a break. Yet our energy, predictably, slumped in the afternoon. After my first few months in *wagasbi*, Hamada-san began to bring in small containers of fruit juice, so we could take turns having a five-minute break to drink the juice and eat some seconds from the factory. Informal, mutual support enabled us to keep up our energies, as we each began to bring in juice or snacks for our tea breaks.

The company itself did nothing formally in this regard, but informal gestures of thoughtfulness and friendliness among co-workers surely redounded to the company's benefit, for they fostered our sense of intimacy and obligation to our fellow workers. The tea breaks are one example, but so are the many times we part-timers would stop off at Iris, our favorite coffee house, to sip banana juice or melon juice and trade gossip. We talked about other people in the company, about family, about things to do in the neighborhood. On one memorable occasion, I was sitting with the Western division part-timers in a booth near the window. A car honked as it went by, and Sakada-san grimaced and shouted loudly, "*Shitsurei yarō*—rude bastard!" The offender turned out to be her husband. In subsequent weeks, Sakada-san would delight in recounting this tale again and again, pronouncing *shitsurei yarō* with ever greater relish, and somehow, we never failed to dissolve in helpless laughter. Though most Japanese people do not often do much entertaining in their homes, especially of co-workers they do not know well, Iida-san would occasionally invite us over for tea. Her unpretentious rooms in a row

house made for a relaxed atmosphere, and we had a wonderful time as we laughed and joked with her and her two daughters.

In this light, we must reassess the significance of part-timers' presumed tenuous commitments to work. In one sense, considering that they worked from virtually nine until six, with an hour's break for lunch, they could hardly be considered part-time. On the other hand, the efforts expected of them by the company and their own expectations of themselves did not obligate them to spend the astonishing number of hours on the shop floor required of the men. And a certain degree of flexibility was indeed important to the women I knew. Yet in no way does this necessarily mean that the part-timers' commitments to their work or to the company were tenuous. They took pride in a job well done, and they assumed full responsibility for quality control. Furthermore, they felt a keen sense of obligation and commitment to fellow workers, for the absence of a single person meant just that much more work for the others. Thus, for the part-timers, as for the full-time artisans, the theme of work as participatory belonging emerges strongly. But wage labor in the factory links them to two groups: they are linked to the company, as structurally marginal but functionally essential members and as co-workers engaged in relations of friendship and obligation, and to their families, as women demonstrating their loyalties to *uchi* by adding to the family treasury. Indeed, for the women I knew, work outside the *uchi* was far from a tenuous commitment. Rather, work meant dual loyalties, a double burden, and dual commitment to both *uchi* as family and *uchi no kaisha*.

Gendered Identities and the Workings of Power

We have seen some of the ways women are defined by their commitments to *uchi* and how they are also connected to the company through their important position in the labor process. At this point, let me widen my discussion to the ways people enact gender in the company, both on the shop floor and in more informal settings. Here, wider cultural meanings of gender and identity reinforce the distinction between full-time and part-time workers in the Satō company. When women strongly assert their gendered identities on the shop floor, they constitute themselves and are constituted in ways that simultaneously reinforce their marginality as workers and paradoxically make them critically important creators of a certain work atmosphere.

First, women were instrumental in defining the tone of what DiLeonardo (1984) calls the "work culture" at the factory: the informal social relations on the job. They did so primarily vis-à-vis the younger artisans, in their roles as surrogate mothers. Most of the younger male artisans were in their late teens or early twenties, while the part-timers tended to be women in their forties and fifties. In the Western sweets division, in particular, there was much cheerful banter among the part-timers and the young artisans, with one or two part-timers developing special relationships with some of the young men. An artisan might visit the part-timer's family at home and get a hot meal, ask her for a loan, or ask her to go to the bank on days when the men had to work through the lunch hour. On occasion, one of the women would feel sorry for the fellows, who always complained vociferously about the institutional food, and I remember a few times when Sakada-san would bring in a huge pot of *oden*, fish cake and vegetables in a salty, soy-based sauce—a very satisfying taste when all you have available to munch on are pastries. Iida-san, especially, was known for her care of the younger artisans, and some of them used to make it a practice to stop by her family's apartment of an evening to have a snack and chat. When a new artisan entered, they brought him around to her house to introduce him, asking her to treat him well in the future, the standard Japanese phrase of introduction. Ogawa, a young craftsman in the Japanese sweets division, beamed as he summed up these attitudes when, on the company trip, he invited me to sit with him and his "Tokyo mother," my co-worker Hamada-san.

Moreover, the young men seemed to depend on the women as informal sources of support and companionship. Who the *pāto* were seemed to matter as much as who the other artisans might be. When Yamada-san, the subchief of Western pâtisserie, learned of this imminent transfer to *wagashi* to finish his apprenticeship, his anxiety was palpable. "*Mazu, pāto ga okkanai*" (First of all, the part-timers are scary), he said with enormous trepidation. But in even more subtle ways the young men seemed to depend on the women as sources of companionship and support. A brief incident serves by way of illustration. One morning, Iida-san came in late, whereupon Suzuki-san, one of the youngest craftsmen, began to vilify her: "How come you're so late? Where have you been? Look at what time it is!" She patiently allowed him to finish his tirade, whereupon she simply smiled sweetly and replied, "*Omachidōsama*" (Sorry to keep you waiting). We all hooted at this, roaring even more loudly when we saw the blood rush to Suzuki-san's cheeks. Eyes downcast, he sheepishly admitted, "Well, if you see someone every day, you kind of miss

them when they're gone." By creating themselves as mothers on the shop floor, women like Iida-san made themselves socially central personages at the workplace.

Women could act as companions and maternal figures for the young men, but sometimes they were cast in the culturally specific form of eroticized mother. In Japan, relationships with mothers are considered to be especially close, and they are highly celebrated and enshrined in popular songs, cartoons, films, television shows, novels, and so on.²⁰ Mother-son incest, though I have never run across what I would consider accurate statistics on the matter, certainly far outweighs father-daughter incest as a subject of cultural preoccupation. Breasts, too, are eroticized maternal symbols, with more maternal connotations than would be the case in the United States.

The relationship between young men and older women was not always eroticized, but one case was especially clear. Iida-san, in her early forties, had a very close relationship with Yamada-san, the twenty-one-year old handsome subchief of the Western sweets division. Often one could find them whispering softly to one another, sometimes in poses that seemed almost lover-like: his arm around her shoulders, taking her hand, for instance. Or she might, with great care and solicitude, help him fix the collar on his uniform or fluff up his permanented hair, inevitably flattened under the white hairnets we all had to wear in the workroom. Most interestingly, however, in their physical "play," I occasionally saw young Yamada try to crawl or jump on Iida-san's back: the place where mothers carry their babies in a specific posture called *onbu* in Japanese.

Women act as surrogate mothers, either eroticized or non-eroticized, as the case may be. They provide the young men with a humanized work atmosphere, a source of support and care. They do much, then, to foster a feeling of togetherness, of "company as family," where the work group, like the household, becomes a locus of emotional attachment. This position is a contradictory one, for it replays on the shop floor the notion that women are emotional workers, care-givers, and creators of an *uchi* feeling. Consequently, women strengthen their symbolic link to the household by recreating this role in the company and continually set themselves apart from the central story of maturity through apprenticeship and masculine toughness and skill.

At the same time, however, their position as mothers gives them some position of power over the male artisans and serves to make them important, though formally marginal, members of the company. In Japan, the position of care-giver or the one who indulges the selfish

whims of another (the *amayakasu* position) is actually a superordinate one, often associated with parents or bosses. By asking favors of the part-timers or by acting childish, the young artisans are placing themselves in the *amaeru* position of a child or a subordinate seeking indulgence. Because the part-timers were clearly so important to the informal tone of the work environment, one could hardly call them marginal. By casting themselves as mothers, women claim power over the younger men and stake out a central space for themselves within the informal structures of the workplace.

Women's gender was constituted in yet another way. The older men, in particular, would create women as erotic objects and receptive audiences. Our company's end-of-the-year bash—where we got together at a local drinking establishment for food and staggering quantities of *sake*, beer, and whiskey—offered one such opportunity. Ohara-san, the head of the factory, came to sit down right next to me—almost right on top of me, had I not moved out of the way—and proceeded to regale us part-timers (all women) with stories about his taste for erotica and pornography, making jokes about his sexual prowess. "My wife is no good any more," he said. "I'm just so vigorous, you know. Besides, it's no good with your wife. She thinks she has to come to you when you tell her to." Hamada-san then asked him coyly, "Which do you like better, women or *sake*?" And, pausing not an instant, Ohara-san replied, "I like *sake*, but I love women!" And he repeated, "I love women," as he made his way down the row, clapping each of us on the shoulders. Needless to say, tastes for women and *sake* are defining features of masculinity. And just as I was an appreciative audience for Ohara-san's artisanal/masculine prowess on the shop floor, all of us women at the party could serve as an appreciative or at least a captive audience for his tales of supposed sexual/masculine prowess.

Sometimes, the tales of masculine sexuality served only to make the teller look ridiculous, laughable, and pathetic, especially when the teller was the *ojisan* (old man), the only male part-timer. His job was to trundle the finished trays of sweets on his cart from the factory to the shop. One morning, as he stood waiting for the trays to be filled, he launched into his tale. "I went to a Turkish bath the other day," he said, grinning from ear to ear. "It was really something."

"Did you have the 'special service'?" asked Ohara-san, suggestively.

"Mmm," was the answer. "One day of it was great, but after two, you get awfully dizzy!" The Japanese expression for dizziness, your eyes roll around, is wonderfully evocative.

At this, the women snorted, and we all started to laugh and tease him. "What a story," said Nomura-san, sarcastically.

"How pathetic," sniffed Itakura-san.

"Yuck, can you imagine—with the *ojisan*?" Teramura-san queried, her voice dripping with distaste and revulsion.

We continued in our barbed comments for some time, breaking down every so often to chuckle over the comical vision of the *ojisan*, eyes rolling around in his head from dizziness and pleasure.²¹

Men certainly constituted women as erotic objects, but sometimes, the part-timers seemed to enjoy and facilitate this construction. One day, Iida-san was walking down the outside stairs, skirts billowing in the wind. Aoki-san, a young artisan in charge of the *anko* maker, glanced up at her, smiled, and hid his face. "I'm embarrassed," he said, coyly. "You can see."

"*Iya, ne*. Isn't it terrible, boys are always thinking about things like that," said Iida-san, obviously thinking it wasn't terrible at all.

On another occasion, Iida-san brought in photographs from a trip she and her husband had taken to the seashore about fifteen years ago. One photo of her in a swimsuit, apparently braless, attracted much attention. Suzuki-san, dramatizing his reaction, widened his eyes and exclaimed loudly, "*Dekkē, na!*" (Humongous!). Again, Iida-san smiled and reddened, in what seemed to be a combination of embarrassment and pride.

This sexual banter enacted our appropriate gendered identities. For men, it reinforced a sense of masculinity as embodied in the sexual appropriation of women and performing for women. Women were expected to be appreciative audiences and erotic objects. We women all knew how to play our appropriate identities, and thus we participated in the construction of our gender. In so doing, we inevitably facilitated our own subordination. Hamada-san, for instance, egged on Ohara-san in his transparently exaggerated tales of sexual athleticism, and Iida-san quite actively facilitated her own construction as erotic object. No one seemed to think it inappropriate that all of us were defined in these ways. We acted as the supportive backdrop for the central masculine story of artisanal/sexual/masculine prowess, all of which contributed symbolically to the centrality of male artisans in the Satō company. Yet, again ironically, without our presence, without the background, the significance and power of the masculine story would be much attenuated. Masculinity was defined in opposition to us women, and it was performed for us women. Without us as the "other" against whom a masculine self could be created, male artisanal identity in the Satō factory would undoubtedly

have taken on rather different contours. Conversely, women need men as the audience for their performances of gender identity. Women, in enacting their genders and in being crafted by men as the receptive audience, the eroticized mother, and the undifferentiated erotic object, are marginalized and poignantly, paradoxically marginalize themselves from the central narrative of masculine work identity. Yet in so doing they also make themselves virtually indispensable to the felicitous recital of that narrative. And through marshalling these ideologies and enacting them positively, they can also create a sense of self-fulfillment and power.

Women's assertions of their gendered identities at the workplace also possess a critical edge. Acting as mothers who have links to the home provides an implicit challenge to male heroics and the masculine work ethic that would extol the virtues of 22-hour endurance marathons at the workplace. Part-time work mobilizes the women's sense of pride in a job well done, but this pride in work does not lead them to conclude that they must spend their lives centered on their jobs at the factory. Women's lives with their families command equal time and energy. Though admittedly the women have two jobs and a double burden, they shoulder these obligations and steer clear of small favors—a travel allowance, in Itakura-san's case—that would draw them into more hours at the workplace. These small refusals are also acts of critique, for women like Itakura-san had no desire to work full-time, if full-time meant *hayade* at four or five in the morning or nights that lasted sometimes until midnight. Certainly none of us part-timers (including the anthropologist) would be willing to forego the flexibility part-time work offered. For example, though Sakada-san may have been embarrassed by her month-long absence, she still saw fit to take a long break, and did so with relative impunity. Such refusals of the model of full-time work could be legitimated precisely because the part-timers called on familiar notions of gender and women's obligations to the *uchi*. A discourse on *uchi* as gendered domain could prevent the women from being further exploited in their work by allowing them to go home at a reasonable hour, just as it ensured their marginal status by defining women in terms of their allegiances to their families.

How, in the end, do we make sense of the fragmented stories I heard in snatches on the shop floor? They must be understood within complex, multilayered, mobile discourses on gendered work identities, that throw into relief the complicated ironies of constructing selves within fields of power. The central masculine story of craftsmanship is but a performative assertion, which paradoxically relies on women as an audience for

the narrative and as the marginal Other against whom artisanal identities can be defined. This assertion of identity is under siege from part-timers even as it excludes them. For women, the ironies are even more apparent. A woman at any given moment may feel most comfortable, most accepted, and most integrated into the workplace as she enacts certain familiar, culturally appropriate meanings of gender.²² At the same time, she at some level surely knows that she is thereby ensuring her exclusion. In such a situation, words like "resistance" and "accommodation" truly seem inadequate, for apparent resistance is constantly mitigated by collusion and compromise at different levels of consciousness, just as accommodation may have unexpectedly subversive effects. For it is precisely by enacting their conventional gendered identities that women also refuse to accept their structural marginality and make themselves central figures at the workplace. They use conventional definitions of *uchi* to redefine the term itself, legitimating their work outside the home by defining wage work as a contribution to the home. In so doing, my co-workers expanded the compass of *uchi*. And it is by invoking familiar conventions of women as defined by their obligations to *uchi* that my part-time co-workers could contest a masculine ethos of punishing endurance on the job. The unintended consequences of their strategies point us toward the limits and strengths of deploying conventional gender categories as oppositional forms in the particular context of the Satō factory and the political/economic/historical discursive field constituting my co-workers' understandings. The complex and often paradoxical effects of these deployments of gender lead us to reject easy definitions of accommodation which imply the complete self-subjugation of the subject, alerting us to the possibility for subversion within accommodation and drawing our attention to the multiplicity of possible points at which dominant cultural forms might be contested. Finally, they underline the always unpredictable and incomplete nature of resistance and the impossibility of constructing a transcendent space of resistance beyond discourse, beyond power, and beyond the law.