Japanese Love Hotels

A cultural history

Sarah Chaplin

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Love hotels represent a significant aspect of contemporary Japanese culture, yet, until now, there has been surprisingly little written about them. In this book architect and cultural theorist Sarah Chaplin presents a cultural history of Japanese love hotels, charting the development of the urban love hotel from the late 1950s to the present day, and relating its cultural history to other spaces and earlier forms associated with sexuality, commerce and leisure. The love hotel is characterised as a barometer of social and cultural change in Japan's long post-war period, mirroring economic and psychological fluctuations, while challenging behavioural norms and domestic identities. Based on fieldwork covering more than 300 urban love hotels, this compelling study analyses in turn their urban context, their architectural form, their richly wrought interiors, their names and thematic contents, and their emerging status as a cultural industry. Chaplin employs a multidisciplinary approach, drawing on ideas from architecture, anthropology, aesthetics, critical theory, urban design, feminism, linguistics and sociology. Accessible and engaging, this book will appeal to all those who have ever stayed in a love hotel, but will be of particular interest to a wide range of readers who share a common interest in popular culture, semiology and cultural history.

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To Davina

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This book is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Davina Chaplin.

Introduction

> It's Sunday morning, 10:43am, and you don't have any particular plan for the day. So here is my tip: Get yourself a folding chair, place yourself comfortably across from the entrance of one of Japan's 30,000 love hotels, and just watch. Apart from a few surprises, your private programme should include the following: an old man accompanied by a 15-year-old girl in school uniform rushing into the hotel to make use of the reasonable 2-hour 'rest' rate; a middle-aged couple from outside Tokyo parking their car in the parking lot, then running the five metres to the entrance, hiding their faces like criminals; a teenage couple entering the place as if it were a McDonald's; and, as an encore, a newly-arrived foreign woman in her forties with her luggage walks happily in, only to come out confused and ashamed three minutes later. So just by sitting around you have a perfect overview of Japanese culture right at its most interesting point.[1]

The love hotel has for many travel writers and journalists helped to portray Japan as quirky and indefinable, and as such functions as a stock-in-trade image of Japanese popular culture, as revealed in this extract from an article by Andreas Stuhlmann. Most such accounts serve to reinforce Western perceptions of the love hotel as something redolent of permissive Japanese attitudes towards sexuality and consistent with a Japanese preference for convenient, high-tech urban encounters. Stuhlmann's recommendation bears witness to the vagaries of its clientele while simultaneously turning the love hotel into a performative spectacle. My intention in this book is to take the reader beyond the immediate and phantasmagorical spectacle in order to engage with the social and cultural dynamics of the situation. In so doing I aim to render the Japanese love hotel as not simply 'culture right at its most interesting point', but as a critical reflection of the changing cultural context which precipitated it.

Love hotels represent a significant aspect of contemporary Japanese culture. They primarily cater for the demands of couples seeking space dedicated to sexual intimacy on a short-term basis away from their crowded, often distant homes. They are not the seedy, grimy places that often serve this purpose in Western countries: on the contrary, they are typically 'smart and completely unsleazy,'[2] and in many cases, just as luxurious as a five-star hotel room, yet they cost a fraction of the price for an overnight stay – typically less than

¥10,000. One researcher calculates that half of all sex in Japan takes place in a love hotel, and that a large proportion of the country's offspring was therefore conceived in one.[3] As well as being socially significant, the love hotel business also contributes a sizeable sum to Japan's GDP, accounting for ¥4 trillion in annual turnover.

The love hotel is not unique to Japan, but the particular cultural meanings associated with it are peculiarly Japanese. Love hotels have proliferated extensively in South Korea where they are known as *yeogwan*, or love motels. There are also short-time hotels equivalent to Japanese love hotels found in Brazil, Greece, Singapore and the Philippines, indeed, the idea of rentable rooms by the hour is not uncommon. There are also parallels that may be drawn with the North American honeymoon hotel in terms of the degree of privacy offered and design of the interior.[4]

Japanese love hotels date back to the late 1950s, and by the mid-1980s there were more than 30,000 in Japan. Figures vary as to how many exist in Japan today, since the legal classification of a love hotel has since changed, but for reasons that will become apparent, this number is dwindling. Love hotels were almost entirely associated with prostitution and extra-marital affairs in the early stages of their development, but over time, with some exceptions, have lost this reputation to emerge as a respectable place for any dating or married couple to spend a few hours together.

Despite their prominence in the landscape of everyday life in Japan and in Japanese collective memory, there has been surprisingly little written about love hotels. Sepp Linhart notes that Confucian tradition has had a part to play in neglecting to study Japan's *akusho*, bad places,[5] simply because they were not considered worthy of serious attention. Only a handful of Japanese scholars has sought to account for the love hotel's existence,[6] while almost nothing critical or extensive has been written about them by Western scholars, with the exception of a detailed paper by an American law professor on the legal aspects of the love hotel business.[7]

It is not a sweeping statement to say that *all* Japanese towns and cities have love hotels, and a great many more are found clustered around motorway interchanges and on the outskirts of villages. While the extra-urban examples are indeed significant and provide comparative scope, as an urbanist and architect, my study focuses on the urban condition of the Japanese love hotel, encompassing over three hundred different establishments in half a dozen different cities extending from Kyūshū in the south to Tōhoku in the north.[8] I have focused in particular on three main urban centres, Tokyo, Osaka and Kyōto, which as André Sorensen points out, 'were commonly referred to as the *santo* (three metropolises), and were the three main pillars of the urban system.'[9] Together, these three represent (and to an extent exaggerate) the main urban typologies of other Japanese cities: Tokyo as an organically evolving conurbation, Osaka as a former castle town and major mercantile centre, and Kyoto as a planned imperial capital with enormous heritage status. Within each of the three cities, I have looked at a total of eight areas in which love hotels are located, and with this

spread, it is possible to characterise not only the general condition of the love hotel, but also its local inflections. What I have omitted from the scope of this study is the huge array of Japanese towns: the port towns, post towns, market towns and temple towns, where the kinds of urban conditions encountered in major cities are present in less fully fledged conditions. Love hotels in such places, indeed the particular case of love hotels around military bases, would no doubt yield many other interesting insights, but this study is restricted to inner city love hotels, which tend to be concentrated in and around entertainment districts and railway termini.

It is hard to reconcile the love hotel's flamboyant and idiosyncratic history with the prosaic way in which it is regarded in general by the Japanese. When I first encountered an area populated by love hotels in Tokyo some ten years ago and began to get enthusiastic about doing a piece of work on them, my Japanese friend and tour-guide, herself an architect, was patient but dismissive in explaining them to me. Love hotel proprietors, when approached with questions and questionnaires, were either baffled or flattered that I might want to learn more about their establishments: some flatly refused to speak to me, others gave me magazines and useful information. At times I felt like a private detective, waiting on street corners with my camera and notebook, occasionally following couples, always at a discreet distance to avoid being noticed, and lurking in love hotel lobbies muttering into a dictaphone.

My research sample amounts to about 1 per cent of the total number of Japanese love hotels, the same percentage as that of the Japanese population who use a love hotel on any given day. The material has been interrogated using a variety of methods, including observational and spatial analysis in the field, visual and content analysis of love hotel guides, magazines and websites, and some interview work, in order to reveal and evaluate patterns of use, spatial configurations, aesthetic coding, behavioural parameters, thematic preoccupations, and modes of dissemination and mediation. Like Stuhlmann, I too began by silently witnessing the arrivals and departures of love hotel clientele, and then went on to catalogue the names, façade characteristics, interior decor and salient features of the urban locales of love hotels. I also collated information on artists, curators and novelists whose work engaged with love hotels in some shape or form. Given the paucity of information in print, a great deal of useful information available was sourced from the internet, where love hotels are not only represented on their own websites, but are the subject matter of many blogs and syndicated articles. Aside from the primary data analysis, I have also delved into Japanese aesthetics, philosophy, literary criticism, urban sociology, anthropology and art history, in order to try to relate love hotels to earlier manifestations of sex in the city and to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of their cultural meanings.

One of the most difficult aspects of putting the book together has been the selection of images: the photographs are intended to have a relative independence from the text,[10] and to provide the reader with a supplementary visual essay about Japanese love hotels. This means that the particular images which form

the final selection are not the most 'quintessential' shots; rather they were chosen to articulate something that the kinds of images found in love hotel guides, websites and dating magazines usually omit. The black and white reproduction adds to a sense of estrangement: readers who are already familiar with Japanese love hotels will find something else in these images that resituates their relationship to them, whereas readers who have yet to encounter a love hotel will derive from them a critical frame of reference against which to gauge any future encounters. Dealing with the large quantities of data that were amassed was an exhilarating process, but I did not want the quantitative analysis to dominate the presentation of qualitative findings. As such, the material is presented primarily discursively, but I have also included a few diagrams, lists, maps and tables in order that the reader can also access the information gathered more directly.

Cultural history

This project takes inspiration from Walter Benjamin's *Passagenwerk*, in two senses: it is not only an attempt to catalogue a prominent yet overlooked, and moreover dwindling aspect of Japanese culture, but also a project to capture and understand postwar Japanese culture through an exploration of a specific cultural phenomenon. Benjamin was excited by the emergence of the Paris arcades in the 1820s as a consequence of a burgeoning textile industry, by their development in the context of the constructional use of wrought-iron, and by their privileging of a nascent form of commodity fetishism, as much as by their eventual demise. The love hotel offers a similarly rich scope as an object of study in terms of its cycles of production and consumption; indeed by focusing exclusively on a singular aspect of Japanese postwar culture a whole series of attitudinal and lifestyle shifts become apparent. As a democratic and accessible place at the service of the general public, the love hotel offers a powerful window on to the changing nature of the Japanese relationship both to their own culture and to other cultures, which have become embodied in the design and use of the love hotel. The love hotel thus functions as a kind of cultural barometer, from which it is possible to gauge the changing circumstances of everyday life in Japan and the beliefs, preferences and practices that accompany them.

These changes in circumstance and attitude span a period of time when Japan was recovering from defeat in the Second World War and the cultural, political and economic tailspin their involvement in this had caused. The Japanese were importing and consuming a huge quantity of new goods and ideas, as well as developing their own spheres of industrial production. At the same time they were recalibrating their cultural position with respect to dominant Western values and their own sense of cultural and moral inferiority. In theoretical terms, this was the time when Japan shifted from a modernist to a postmodernist worldview, a shift that took place during a time of rapid growth and in the context of a society still suffering from the traumas and after-effects of the Second World War.

Emerging in the midst of this historical context, the love hotel demands to be

examined as part of a complex and situated picture which encompasses more than the immediate parameters of everyday life. Miriam Silverberg addresses this when she asserts:

> A new cultural history needs to explore how new attitudes toward food, dress, and sexuality had profound implications regarding Japanese attitudes toward self, others and the state. In other words, to recount the adoption of Western clothing, bread for breakfast, and new attitudes toward sex, without associating them with new social practices that went far beyond dressing, eating, or kissing, is to avoid problematising the Japanese experience of modernity.[11]

Love hotels provide a means not only to view but also to problematise and schematise new social practices, thereby providing a means to locate them within popular culture, and to make a contribution to the paucity of historical accounts of Japan's postwar years.[12]

There are, then, issues to be addressed regarding the notion and location of popular culture per se within a Japanese context. Yoshio Sugimoto distinguishes between popular culture and elite culture in Japanese society, and classifies the former as that which 'represents the ways of life the common people enjoy and share,'[13] dividing popular culture into three categories: mass, folk and alternative or subcultural. Love hotels belong to the mass culture subset, being relatively recent, highly consumer-orientated, produced by specialists and involving a large section of the population. Despite this clear-cut definition, Lola Martinez bravely raises the question in the introduction to *The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture*, 'are Western notions of culture, particularly the divisions between high and low or élite and mass culture, actually universally valid?'[14] She acknowledges that for some writers on Japan, 'popular culture belongs to the realm of international culture,'[15] a valid point in relation to love hotels, whose relationship to global culture is particularly strong. Martinez also construes popular culture as that which is consumed, in different ways by different people. The academic upshot of this, as John Whittier Treat has articulated, has been 'the nagging suspicion that we scholars are not innocent of that process ourselves,'[16] which he argues has 'made the entry of cultural studies into the field of Japanese studies as critical as it is inevitable.'[17] Treat is convinced that

> the methods and aims of those who study Japan have been dramatically altered by the advent of new theories in the academy, on the one hand, and the dazzling speed of cultural change in Japan itself . . . [these] no longer, if they ever did, suffice to account for a set of fluid symbolic systems and practices that enable different groups to make various kinds of sense of their lives today.[18]

Given this turn of events, a fresh approach is called for, which is capable of elucidating the fluidity and multiplicity of Japanese culture in operation without artificially containing it.

In conceiving its cultural history, the love hotel needs to be treated not simply as a cultural institution, but as proponent and witness to a changing set of local and global conditions. Cultural history may be seen to derive from a Hegelian tradition of *Geistesgeschichte* (intellectual history), being a sub-genre of general historiography, whose methodology has been affected by a number of disciplines other than history, including philosophy, anthropology, sociology, linguistics, psychology and literary theory. Cultural history is thus a heterogeneous practice without clear disciplinary boundaries, and makes use of a variety of methods and approaches in order to gather together the various strands from which to construct its interpretive narrative. Peter Trifonas is troubled by the fact that 'this heterogeneity failed to make clear the boundary for its own identity within a well-defined disciplinary space . . . in other words there is no clear consolidation of origins or ends within cultural history.'[19] However, in the case of the love hotel, I am not purporting to consolidate its origins and ends – indeed they are only loosely explored here – it is more the sense of flux through the latter half of the twentieth century that I wish to communicate. Nor am I concerned with working within clear disciplinary boundaries in researching the love hotel's cultural history: working from a broad transdisciplinary basis offers enormous scope to the researcher, with opportunities for spatial, material and visual analysis of content and meaning, production and consumption from a number of different perspectives.

In studying the love hotel, a degree of disciplinary latitude is indeed necessary, as it spans a great many cultural identities, practices and categories, and its position within contemporary Japanese culture stems directly from this rich intertextual interplay. As such, I have deliberately sought to interrogate the love hotel from a number of different theoretical standpoints, in order that a set of new spatial, aesthetic and semiotic insights may emerge, both retrospectively and speculatively. Theory is then, as Deleuze and Guattari have asserted, most effective when it is used as a tool for prying. Ultimately, what I am aiming for is 'history as the writing of culture for flashes of insight into the complexity of representing the experience of reality, the reality of experience.'[20] In seeking to locate and express these flashes of insight, I am also conducting a twofold historiographical project: to present a richly situated account of the Japanese love hotel, and at the same time to bring into play certain relevant approaches lurking within cultural discourse as a means of reconsidering and questioning the received method of 'doing' cultural history.

The love hotel is both a product of modernity, in terms of its rationality of ends, but is simultaneously postmodern in terms of its means of achieving these. It developed during a late capitalist phase in history, and has been thoroughly worked over by postmodern experience, which has been dominated by issues of consumption and identity. Harootunian regards Japan as having a particular relevance of in this regard: 'the Japanese experience showed . . . that modernity was always a doubling that imprinted the difference between the demands of capitalism and the force of received forms of history and culture.'[21] Constructing a cultural history of the love hotel is thus one way of both probing this difference, and calling into question these received forms.

This notion of a double project is informed and prefigured by Roland Barthes' *Empire of Signs*, published in 1970, which amounts to a turning point in theoretical terms, in that it was 'a shift away from the use of the elements of formal semiology . . . to study the real-world phenomena of cultural practices as images and texts that can be read.'[22] Trifonas' critique of *Empire of Signs* allows that it is 'a key text of the period that ushers in and welcomes the "post-structural" era of literary criticism,'[23] but questions whether it amounts to cultural history, or whether it is rather a fictitious rendering of another culture. Trifonas begs the question, 'is it possible to write a history of Japanese culture without succumbing to reconstituting its Western mythology?' He suggests the answer lies in ideology, in that 'there is a distinctive ideological purpose informing the operation of what [Barthes] is doing by isolating "certain features" forming a sign system called "Japan": that is, writing a form of cultural history.'[24]

For Barthes, Japan constituted a 'situation of writing,' enabling him to escape from the overpowering tendency within Western metaphysics to ground meaning, and providing an opportunity to write more poetically and reflectively. In so doing he created his own sometimes naïve, sometimes even racist, vision of Japan. There are evidently problems with Barthes' *modus operandi*, which open up the whole issue of orientalism with respect to the production of cultural histories. His text, which yields an intriguing set of observations about classical components of Japanese culture, (*bunraku*, bowing, calligraphy) succeeds in mythologising Japan for the benefit of a Western readership. The construction of an exotic other, and the maintenance of a situation whereby otherness is artificially preserved through the act of producing a purely partial account of it, is the deeply problematic core of orientalism. Trinh Minh-Ha mitigates this reading, arguing that 'the unknown [which Barthes] confronts is neither Japan nor China but his own language, and through it, that of all the West. Subject and object are inseparable.'[25] As such, she infers, 'Barthes affirms that his preoccupations have little to do with description, deciphering or production of a meaning. He is concerned with the approach itself, with the discourse produced and with the confection of the envelope.'[26]

In the case of the love hotel, I am concerned not so much with isolating its features as I am with contextualising them, not so much with the envelope as with its contents. I am adopting a process that necessarily makes use of description and deciphering, in order to raise new questions about what is unknown or unknowable about another culture, and by what means it may be revealed and related. In *Empire of Signs*, which arose from a brief visit he made to Japan in 1966, Barthes adopts the position of the objective, dispassionate and impartial observer, in which he claims 'I am not lovingly gazing toward an Oriental essence – to me the Orient is a matter of indifference.'[27] This betrays a certain cultural chauvinism, revealed when he admits: '[Japan is] merely providing a reserve of features whose manipulation – whose invented interplay – allows me to "entertain" the idea of an unheard-of symbolic system, one altogether detached from our own.'[28] When the object of study cannot be conceived any longer as 'detached', and when the researcher can no longer lay claim to operating objectively, this is not a tenable position particularly in an increasingly globalised, mediated context.

There is, however, one legitimate kind of detachment in conducting a project such as this: not being absolutely fluent in the language makes it possible to study another culture in a different way. Like *Empire of Signs*, this is not a book by a Japanologist on Japan: it is rather a book by a Japanographer, that is to say someone who draws a picture of Japan from a position of outsideness, and whose work might serve to engage and enlighten not only those observers who are also external to its culture, but also its direct participants, who can distil from a morass of observations another way of looking at their own cultural milieu.

In addition to being alert to the issue of orientalism in studying the love hotel, it has also been important to be aware of the various self-orientalising tendencies known in Japan as *nihonjinron*, which have emerged within Japanese discourse regarding their own culture. Nagatani and Edgington point out that

> the nuances and expressions of national identity have certainly changed over the years; however, the basic tenets of *nihonjinron* continue to paint the essentialist images of Japan in such a way that Orientalism from without becomes reciprocated by Occidentalism from within.[29]

How Japanese culture is represented in the case of the design and inhabitation of the love hotel is thus equally as interesting as the many ways in which the occident is represented in its form and use, and the love hotel effectively maps this changing representational landscape. Elsewhere, Marilyn Ivy has argued that key to this changing landscape is a 'self-exoticisation *by* the Japanese themselves, whereby the essential qualities of Japaneseness seem no longer familiar, but simply *foreign* to the Japanese.'[30] The love hotel offers a useful commentary on this complex matter, raising important questions regarding what such 'essential qualities' are now considered to be, given that Japan has absorbed so much non-indigenous culture over centuries.

The love hotel also offers insights into the differences between East and West in terms of the construction of Self and Other. It would seem that the way in which the West tends to gaze upon Japan needs to take account of the way that the Japanese gaze upon their own culture. Whereas in the West, the mutually exclusive terms Self and Other are defined in opposition to each other, for the Japanese this is a nested and layered structure where degrees of selfhood are defined in relation to kinship and group membership (family, corporate, national).[31] Cultural history writing thus needs to be mindful of this difference, and preferably find a way to conceive of a contingent approach to cultural difference. Homi Bhabha talked about a means of considering culture 'that is inimical to binary boundaries: whether these be past and present, inside and outside, subject and object, signifier and signified,'[32] and of 'the spatial-time of cultural difference' which 'erases the Occidental "culture of common sense" '[33] and it is this kind of proximity and relationship to my material that I am aiming for. As such, the gaze becomes a condition of the circumscribing field of perception taken as a contingent whole, one which is defined temporally, phasally, periodically. This is entirely appropriate in the consideration of the love hotel, whose

own spatiality is tenuous and vulnerable, and whose existence culturally has been highly mobile, being both inside and outside of mainstream Japanese culture.

The love hotel exists as a 'projective cast,' a construct which Bhabha proposes may be

> inscribed as a historical narrative of alterity that explores forms of social antagonism and contradiction that are not yet properly represented, political identities in the process of being formed, cultural enunciations in the act of hybridity, in the process of translating and transvaluing cultural differences.[34]

In other words, the love hotel may be seen to play an important part in this process of translating and transvaluing within Japanese culture, and operates as a form of social antagonism in the sense that it interrupts the flow of social relations with its private spaces and acts. The issues of alterity and identity are considered here in relation to building type, spatial practice and urban context, and later as a part of Japanese visual culture as a whole, revealing how the translations and hybridisations found within the love hotel both affect and reveal perceptions of Self and Other in Japan more generally.

Motivating this aspiration towards hybridity is Barthes' determination with *Empire of Signs* to address only those aspects of Japanese culture which are in a sense 'pure,' deliberately leaving aside what he calls 'vast regions of darkness' which he elucidates as 'capitalist Japan, American acculturation, technological development.'[35] The love hotel occupies exactly this dark and unmarked space, perpetuating an oscillating and variable manifestation of the idea of *wakon-yosai* (Japanese spirit, Western means),[36] which first emerged in the Meiji era. It is therefore precisely in these vast regions of darkness that I am able to find my own 'situation of writing': by taking up a phenomenon that is symptomatic of capitalist Japan, of American acculturation and of technological development, I am able to locate the love hotel in this vast region of darkness, and to bring all three neatly together into a kind of metaphorical cultural triumvirate in the postwar period.

Japan has a highly idiosyncratic past, and occupies an unusual position in terms of cultural history: it was never a colony itself, and only engaged in colonial activities of its own for short periods of time. As an island archipelago located off a large mainland, which historically nurtured it culturally and materially, Japan developed particular ways of coming to terms with its own cultural specificity, of defining its relation to others, both near and far. Its contact with the 'outside world' was for more than two centuries severely restricted by a self-imposed trade closure (1636–1853), but it was during that same period that Japan developed a thriving and complex urban culture, with sophisticated forms of media, entertainment, leisure and communication. *Geisha* and *geisha* houses (*okiya*) formed part of this culture, and it is important at this point to distinguish them from the love hotel, since there is often an assumption that they must be

interrelated. The only similarity is that both *geisha* houses and love hotels are dwindling in number. The refined artistry of the *geisha* continues in small pockets in contemporary Japanese society, which Lesley Downer has shown is usually as a very exclusive part of corporate after-hours culture.[37] There are perhaps 10,000 remaining, mostly in Kyoto, compared to 80,000 in the 1920s. *Kyabakura* (hostess clubs) are another cultural form often confused with love hotels, and these offer flirtatious female company to *sarariimen* (white-collar workers), where hostesses are often foreigners, and the quality of entertainment is much bawdier, as Anne Allison has shown in her book *Nightwork*.[38]

These areas of confusion are symptomatic of an image of Japanese culture that is elusive and ambiguous, an image perpetuated not least by the Japanese themselves. This sets up a situation which itself begs a certain re-orientation in our habits of thinking. Andre Gunder Frank shows how trade did in fact continue despite political embargoes in place after 1636, and makes the point that

> the view of Tokugawa and even earlier Japan as 'stagnant' and 'closed,' not to mention 'feudal,' must be rejected. Indeed, we must revise even the notion that the arrival of Commodore Perry 'opened' Japan in 1853 and that the Meiji Restoration in 1868 spelled an abrupt break from its Tokugawa past.[39]

A large part of the orientalist account of Japan's history makes 1853 the quintessential threshold moment, after which Japan's modernisation got underway, and Japan became part of the global scene. During the Meiji period, Japanese identity was for the first time made available to the scrutiny of the West at the same time as it was undergoing fundamental restructuring according to Western epistemology, a situation that produced inherently ambivalent soundings. The love hotel is a product of this deep-seated ambivalence, emerging at the end of the period of Allied Occupation in the 1950s, a later and equally ambivalent period in Japanese history.

More than merely ambivalent, however, I want to locate an understanding of the love hotel as in some sense *liminal* with respect to existing cultural and social mores, operating for a time in between otherwise stable positions and spaces. I am using the notion of liminality here as something productive, active and transgressive. It is not strictly the prescriptive structural category that Victor Turner analysed in his fieldwork studies; rather I am conceiving the liminal as a contemporary spatial turn, which mobilises and reorientates perception and identity. The love hotel, as a space set aside from normal urban life, is a space of loosening, of becoming, that gives those who occupy it an agency that informs their actions and alters the nature of their relationships with others. Ultimately, this vehicle of the liminal provides a context in which to re-evaluate orientalism and occidentalism through a detailed reading of the Japanese love hotel. Meanings are in constant circulation and under a constant process of revision, informing their visual, spatial and material parameters, and are of fundamental importance in terms of characterising the love hotel as mutable in terms of Japanese cultural experience.

I want to emphasise here that is not my intention to fix the love hotel in writing a cultural history, but to do it justice both synchronically and diachronically. Inherent in the notion of liminality is a discernible and dialectical shift taking place, which enables those subjected to the process of becoming liminal to move through a series of states which approximate to the thesis, anti-thesis, synthesis model, a process which resolves itself at the point where the liminal condition is assimilated or 'reaggregated' back into society. This is operating synchronically in the form of patronage which the love hotel offers the individual, such that liminalisation occurs only for the duration of a rest or stay, after which a couple are reaggregated with their day-to-day existence. It is also operating diachronically where *the love hotel itself* undergoes liminalisation during a key period of its development, when the conditions are right to produce 'myths, symbols, rituals, philosophical systems, and works of art.' Turner postulates that the cultural forms thus produced 'are, at one level, periodical reclassifications of reality and man's relationship to society, nature and culture.'[40] Given that reorientations of meaning are produced only in a liminal phase, as the love hotel becomes reaggregated itself into the spaces of the city it can no longer interject its own cultural logic and set of rituals as Turner suggests, and hence its opportunities to precipitate a shift of cultural understanding are time-limited.

What drives both production and consumption of meaning in a liminal space like the love hotel are spatial practices, which James Clifford defines as 'new forms of dwelling and circulating.'[41] These have, to some extent, been brought about by a disorientating sense of what cultural difference means for us today, as Clifford asserts:

> an older topography and experience of travel is exploded. One no longer leaves home confident of finding something radically new, another time or space. Difference is encountered in the adjoining neighbourhood, the familiar turns up at the ends of the earth.[42]

This is certainly the case for the Japanese encountering a clutch of love hotels in the midst of their urban milieu, and this new locus of difference needs to be newly narrativised.

Clifford expressed the view that 'modern ethnographic histories are perhaps condemned to oscillate between two metanarratives: one of homogenisation, the other of emergence, one of loss, the other of invention.'[43] Between them, these two metanarratives conjure up a dialectic that Walter Benjamin used as his primary schema in the *Passagenwerk*, which he charted in a diagram.[44] Under 'thesis,' Benjamin provides the subheading, 'flowering of the arcades under Louis Philippe,' and intended to substantiate this with writings on panoramas, department stores and love. This is to outline a metanarrative of emergence and invention, which he then juxtaposed with its antithesis: 'the decline of the arcades at the end of the nineteenth century,' to be evidenced, according to Benjamin, by an intriguing trio: 'plush,' 'miscarried matter' and 'the whore.' Here we have Clifford's counter-metanarrative of loss and homogenisation. Clifford

does not, however, suggest a resolution of the two narratives, simply endless oscillation, whereas Benjamin's self-imposed task was to produce a Hegelian synthesis, which would resolve thesis with antithesis. Susan Buck-Morss is adamant that rather than achieve this, Benjamin's dialectical image is simply the null point.[45] Nevertheless, between the vicissitudes of love and whore, flowering and miscarrying, Benjamin is mindful of a cultural process at work which is responsible for bringing unconscious knowledge to the surface, in the sense of an awakening. This arises from the spatial practices that inhabit and inform the development of the arcades themselves, and constructs them as a space in which normal relations are in some way suspended. Here I am arguing that the same is true of the love hotel, which operates as a space outside societal norms, and elicits types of behaviour that are not usually part of everyday life in Japan. More specifically, the love hotel is subtended temporally between the parameters of love and whore, flowering and miscarrying.

Michel de Certeau's glossing of experience in terms of spatial practices situates the frequenting of love hotels as speech acts, tactics that intervene in the otherwise strategic manoeuvres of the state or powers that be. In other words, they have a micro-politics that might be capable of bringing about a mutation or a minor revolution in the overall symbolic order. Speech acts are ethnographic, walking stories that cut across territorial maps, their boundaries mobile and temporal. The participatory aspects of encountering a love hotel exemplify de Certeau's guiding principle to the letter, and I will show how this transgressive process of patronage reveals other spatial practices. Historically, the notion of spatial practice has been closely associated with the everyday, a construct which Harry Harootunian has proposed as an alternative optic through which to view history, thereby side-stepping the problems of orientalism and occidentalism. In his view, the everyday is 'the site of practices that point to its open-endedness, incompletion, and multiaccentuality, what many recognised as the social space of submerged dreams of the past.'[46] In the everyday, Harootunian believes he has found a way around the problem of binarism, in the sense that the everyday exists as 'a form of disquiet, a moment suspended.'[47] This is the very definition of the floating world, or *ukiyo*, to which the love hotel also subscribes. In engaging with the notion of the everyday in terms of the love hotel, and the need to dissolve a binary, as a spatial practice it must be seen as neither ordinary nor extraordinary, but as something that escapes both.

In researching this book, I have been especially inspired by Harootunian's account of another architect's attempt to capture transient aspects of everyday life in the 1920s. Wajirō Kon developed a spatial practice that he called *kōgengaku* or 'modernology,' the purpose of which was 'to record and analyse contemporary custom before it became history.'[48] Provoked by the Kanto earthquake in 1923, which had destroyed much of contemporary life in Tokyo and forced upon its inhabitants a reconstruction of their lifestyle, Kon's research was about 'capturing custom as it was being lived and experienced before it hardened into habitual convention,'[49] and as such was 'capable of disclosing the interior life of contemporaries by locating the social meaning they invested in

them.'[50] Motivated by 'a powerful desire to catch hold of and describe the experience of the streets,'[51] Kon's work was criticised by Jun Tosaka for being phenomenological formalism, but Harootunian shows that Kon's work on the *gendai*, or contemporary, articulated the tendency for everyday culture to 'develop before one's eyes' in the form of gestures, attire and conduct.

In a similar act of *kōgengaku*, I have attempted in the next five chapters to disclose customs in the making, and to pay close attention to activities that are going on day after day in Japanese cities without being analysed, clarified or contextualised. The love hotel has largely been ignored and overlooked simply because it is not considered to be important: this is the defining characteristic of the everyday. Thus, it is my intention to bring the love hotel into cultural discourse before it disappears from view.

Throughout the book I make reference to the phased development of the love hotel, which was loosely schematised by both Atsushi Katagi and Shoichi Inoue,[52] taking into account the period from the mid-1950s to the late 1980s. This began with an *emergent* phase of the early 1960s up until the oil crisis of 1973, which was followed by a *definitive* phase that lasted until a legislative change in 1985 to the Entertainment Law, after which the love hotel entered a *corrective* phase. The love hotel moved into a *cosmopolitan* phase in the 1990s, after the Japanese Bubble economy collapsed and cultural expectations and lifestyles shifted ground.

This articulation of the love hotel's key evolutionary stages has been reorganised by Mark West into a legal schema, whereby the love hotel falls into three discrete categories conditioned by the watershed of the 1985 law. First, West calls the non-conforming target of the new legislation the *statutory love hotel*. These are the kinds of hotels which create the strongest impression: full of mirrors and high jinks, deep-pile carpets and flock wallpaper, they were renowned in Japan for their exuberant styling. Those establishments responding to the regime change by circumventing (or simply flouting) the new provisions of the law West terms *extra-legal love hotels*, while a third set are the *non-love hotels*, that is to say ordinary hotels which conform to the definitional parameters of an inn or hotel on paper but operate to all intents and purposes as love hotels. West observes that 'categories two and three sometimes overlap.'[53] Despite appearances, this means that technically no new love hotels have registered since 1985, and the statutory ones, where refurbishment is precluded by the law itself, are in steep decline. It would seem that in terms of popular representations, the statutory love hotel has assumed the role of cultural stereotype, but is statistically now in the minority. Extra-legal love hotels, which make up the majority of the market, therefore constitute the majority of contemporary love hotels, with the non-love hotels emulating this type rather than the statutory type.

The way in which the five chapters are organised sequentially moves from the macro to the micro in terms of scale, from the visceral to the vicarious in terms of ontology, and from the love hotel as a phenomenological entity to the love hotel as a representational category. In Chapter 1, I am dealing with the

physical and perceptual location of the love hotel in its urban context, where I revisit Kevin Lynch's work on the image of the city as a means to detail configurations of urban form and inhabitation across a range of scales, and thereby interrogate the emergent role of the love hotel district in the postwar Japanese city. In Chapter 2 I am interested in the love hotel as a building type, where I invoke Jiri Neustupny's linguistic modelling of type as well as referencing architectural notions of type, in order to articulate a dynamic typological framework for reading the specific material and operational characteristics of the love hotel. Chapter 3 looks at the role of décor in the development of the love hotel interior. Through an examination of its images and technologies, the love hotel interior is compared to housing standards in postwar Japan as well as idealised internal environments such as bachelor pads, boudoirs and bridal chambers. Here the trappings of love hotel interiors reveal a changing landscape of intimacy, sexuality and escapism. In Chapter 4, the issues of love hotel nomenclature and their cultural connotations are analysed and contextualised according to practices of consumption on the one hand, and aesthetic schema peculiar to Japan on the other. In particular, relationships between the shifts in terms of the use of the three different Japanese scripts and the choice of love hotel names are articulated. Lastly, Chapter 5 takes up the theme of the love hotel as a fully integrated commercial enterprise, and considers the process by which the proliferation of individual love hotels has developed into an industry in its own right, complete with management and marketing techniques, trade fairs and magazines, specialist services and product lines. The love hotel is shown to operate as part of a larger sphere of cultural influence, having been incorporated into artworks, weblogs and exhibitions, leading to speculations as to the love hotel's emergent identity as heritagised and nostalgic.

In the conclusion, I draw together ideas from each of the five chapters to present an integrated understanding of the past, present and future status of Japanese love hotels, presenting my findings in three different ways: typologically, dialectically and cyclically. In this way, cultural history is treated as a provisional compilation or amalgam, which can be sliced through to permit different insights while also highlighting issues of method and subjectivity. It pays heed to the view that

> any critique, indeed any historical practice, must be positioned not inside or outside the West . . . rather, we must acknowledge a different arrangement . . . embracing new cultural forms that are developing everywhere that demand to be considered as coexistent equivalents with the 'West' despite the apparent historical differences among them.[54]

The love hotel is thus presented as one such coexistent cultural form to be positioned and embraced.

1 The urban context of love hotel districts

Walking through an area of the city populated with love hotels late on a Saturday evening, there is a sense of panic setting in as couples dart in and out of entrances in search of the last remaining rooms to stay for the night. On St Valentine's Day[1] and Christmas Eve, occasions in Japan when it is virtually an imperative to be with a loved one, this situation is accentuated still further. The clustering of love hotels effectively concentrates the available supply, facilitates browsing and stimulates spontaneous demand in a way that the stand-alone love hotel in the suburbs does not. Despite the existence and popularity of love hotel guides, most rooms are not booked in advance, which leads to the conclusion that roaming the streets is a customary part of the practice, and indeed the pleasure, of visiting an urban love hotel.

This chapter addresses the urban spatiality of the love hotel and accounts for particular aspects of its urban context, exploring the ways in which city dwellers participate in the spatial culture of a love hotel district, and analysing its key urban characteristics, which are evident at both the macro and the micro scales. My aim in this process is twofold: first, to characterise the love hotel district as part of a complex, changing and ambiguous network of urban spaces and experiences. Second, I aim to disrupt and problematise the Western tendency to emphasise the city's physicality in arriving at an understanding of urban context, since 'the Japanese do not comprehend urban space [through a grid pattern or a radiating network] but rather through collage or the empirical composition of symbols discontinuously scattered about.'[2] This has led several Western observers to characterise Japanese urbanism as paradoxical, suggesting, for example, that 'in Tokyo, the buildings are mostly Western, but their urban grid is not. The architectural style is visionary futuresque, but the urban structure remains medieval.'[3] In order to escape this apparent 'paradox,' which is a product of a perceptual mismatch between expectation and reality on the part of a Western observer, it is necessary to reconceive the notion of urban form in a more gestural and participatory way; that is to say, not a tangible outcome of the design process, but as an aspect of the process itself.

The Japanese use the notion of *kata* to refer to the idea of form-as-process, a notion which applies to detailed patterns of movement, practised either solo or in pairs, and found in theatre forms such as *kabuki*, the performative ritual of the

Japanese tea ceremony, and in martial arts. It is about learning time-based sequences of actions involving discipline and repetition, rather than a fixed arrangement or set of objects in space. In other words, *kata* embodies codified movement and gestural sequences, rather than a static navigational taxonomy or hierarchy. The Japanese love hotel, as an urban occurrence, precipitates its own *kata*, in that the actions of people frequenting love hotels were found to be entirely encoded and practised forms of behaviour. Structurally speaking, *kata* become synonymous with spatial practices only when they are conducted against the run of play; that is to say, when the rehearsed sequences are nevertheless unpredictable and have the effect of disrupting or countering conventional patterns of urban movement and inhabitation.

In analysing the perceptions of American city dwellers in the late 1950s, Kevin Lynch found that their 'mental maps' could be schematised cognitively into five distinct formations, namely *path*, *edge*, *node*, *district* and *landmark*. While these were codified as the constituent elements involved in perceptions of physical urban form in Lynch's book *Image of the City*, I want to use them here in the manner of *kata*, in such a way as to infer from Lynch's fixed structural hierarchy an approach that is more appropriate to the examination of a non-Western context. Fredric Jameson valorised Lynch's work in terms of introducing cognitive mapping to urban design theory, but argued that it is problematic because it lacks any sense of political agency or historical process. This lack makes it all the more pertinent to the Japanese urban context, however, where both such dimensions have also been found to be absent.

Unpacking a Western cognitive model by bringing it into contact with a Japanese urban context will reveal its limits and qualify its parameters in a new way. The structure of this chapter works through path, edge, node, district and landmark in sequence, and shows that, in Japanese urbanism, they do not form a unity of parts as Lynch envisaged. Rather, they may be seen to configure a makeshift and mobile reading of place. Jameson notes in relation to Lynch's work,

> there comes into being, then, a situation in which we can say that if individual experience is authentic, then it cannot be true; and that if a scientific or cognitive model of the same content is true, then it escapes individual experience.[4]

In examining the urban context of the love hotel, I am interested in neither the truth of the experience nor the model, but in the interplay between the two.

Path

An important distinction that is made in terms of Japanese urban street life is between *omotedōri* and *uradōri*,[5] which is to say between the main public thoroughfares and the more private back streets. Arie Graafland comments upon the fact that 'behind and under the new large-scale urban buildings the fine-meshed

network of another Tokyo continues to exist.'[6] Urban historian Hidenobu Jinnai claims that the European city is founded on a 'piazza society,' where the public realm is largely synonymous with civic focal or gathering points of historical significance, whereas the Japanese city is informed by the logic of 'backstreet society,' in the sense that 'rank-and-file urban society in Edo was sprinkled with numerous minute backstreet open spaces.'[7] Barrie Shelton has also commented: 'big streets in Japan are not high points of visual delight,'[8] and that 'the contrast between the big buildings on the big streets and the small-scale intimacy of the lanes can be astounding. Though a stone's throw from the big streets, the lane can seem very distant in spirit and character.'[9]

It is precisely these lanes and back streets which clusters of love hotels occupy: despite the fact that they depend on the critical mass of the urban populace to supply sufficient custom to keep their room occupancy rates up, they are nevertheless not located on the *omotedōri*,[10] and instead may be found a few streets back in the *uradōri* parts (see Figure 1.1). This is in part due to the vagaries of tenure and urban land use in Japan, where planning policy, particularly in Tokyo, has tended to neglect back street areas and has allowed unplanned development to spring up. André Sorensen's work, *The Making of Urban Japan*, reveals how it was the urban commoners who inhabited the inner urban blocks or *urachi*, and in the eighteenth century access to the interior of these blocks was formed by a series of *shinmichi*, narrow streets.[11] Typically these overcrowded areas were occupied by *nagaya*, long and cramped rows of single-storey accommodation. By contrast, many of the *omotedōri* are the product of the 1954 Land Readjustment Law, which contained provisions to compulsorily purchase land in order to build new urban infrastructure – enabling the major avenues and boulevards in Tokyo to be realised.[12]

Moving along a path from the *omotedōri* street atmosphere to a *uradōri* one is a qualitative shift in terms of the city's psychogeography: the streets typically become less formal and upmarket, instead becoming progressively darker, more intimate and more secretive. The scale of the buildings reduces, the width of the street constricts, there are few traffic-lights, and limited vehicular movements casually traverse intersections. Here the bicycle and the small delivery lorry are the main vehicles present, and, although they are not designated as such, the predominant movement found on these back streets is pedestrian. In these narrow streets containing myriad entertainment functions, particularly those lined with love hotels, the pace of the city decelerates to a leisurely stroll, punctuated by glimpses into intriguing interior worlds.

The nature of movement in this context must be understood as something relatively new in the context of Japanese cities, for as Donald Richie points out, 'Edo had no promenades,'[13] and hence no paths that were dedicated to strolling. The streets were too narrow at that time to provide pavements for pedestrians, and Richie reminds us that it was not until the Meiji and Taisho eras that it became popular to stroll along the wide streets lined with department stores full of Western consumer delights in the newly rebuilt Ginza. Here, groups of modern men or women (*moba* and *moga*) would stroll, browse and take afternoon tea or drink

Figure 1.1 Typical narrow backstreet (*uradōri*) of love hotels, Uguisudani, Tokyo.

coffee in a sophisticated European-style café, a spatial practice known as *ginbura*. Although men and women are also strolling and browsing in a love hotel district, this is quite a different kind of spatial practice from *ginbura*, being a more intensely private experience and one which entails walking arm in arm as a couple, rather than alone or in single-sex groupings (see Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2 Couples walking up Love Hotel Hill, Shibuya, Tokyo.

The nightlife and gaiety of Ginza in the Taisho era was gradually displaced to Shinjuku in the west of Tokyo, and it is here that the character of a particular back street district found in Shinjuku's Kabukichō still offers clues as to how the particular atmosphere of the love hotel street developed: Golden Gai, which many Japanese would say typifies the old Tokyo, is described by Donald Richie as:

> A small crammed warren of questionable bars and disreputable looking drinking stalls with rooms upstairs. Though developers have been at work for years, the owners are hardy and have not as yet agreed to being evicted. Walking these narrow lanes with the smell of sake and toasted squid in the air, amid the calls of women and the lighted lanterns of their shops, it is possible to imagine the Shinjuku of long ago.[14]

Golden Gai is easy to miss, as the appearance of this tiny microcosm from the streets approaching it is particularly unprepossessing, and it takes courage and familiarity (not to say initiation) to penetrate the tatty but well-preserved enclave. All around Golden Gai there are signs prohibiting the use of camcorders and cameras, as it is a favourite location for filmmakers and attracts a great deal of curiosity, indicating that there is now a nostalgic impulse towards capturing and aestheticising such a uniquely Japanese urban environment.

Behind every door adorned with peeling paint and old flyers advertising events and services, each *nomiya* or bar is no more than a two-storey makeshift hut, with a tiny antiquated room downstairs containing four or five bar stools, and personal bottles of whisky kept on shelves for regular customers. The rooms above are no longer in use, but were once proverbial 'knocking shops,' which clients could repair to with a woman of their choice after a session of hard, convivial drinking. The path from drinking (*nomu*) to buying women (*kau*) here is a short vertical manoeuvre, and the context is one of total informality and simple, straightforward access to creature comforts. Over time, as Stuart Braun describes, the *demi-monde* emphasis changed, and 'the upper floors of these coarse wooden and tin sheds were transformed into bars, and by the 1960s, over 200 *nomiya* had sprung up around the maze of laneways,'[15] which became the favourite haunts of Tokyo's leading cultural elite and political refuseniks.

By the 1990s, half of these bars had been lost to redevelopment initiatives, and in the streets adjacent to Golden Gai clusters of love hotels had sprung up, which according to Braun are 'given to accommodating strays from the 100-odd drinking dens that make up the Golden Gai.'[16] In the process of expanding and proliferating the nocturnal activities of Golden Gai into their modern-day equivalents, the journey from a drink after work to a night of love-making has become more attenuated, and can now be seen to occupy, both spatially and temporally, distinct phases. So much so that the path of a romantic date (*deito*) is now explicitly constructed as a narrativised itinerary analogous to a good meal in Japan's growing number of 'dating' magazines, which contain articles recommending different date 'courses' for a drive, a viewing spot, a restaurant, a visit to a place of interest and so on. In such articles the love hotel is characterised as the final course, a dessert or postre to the evening's entertainment, clearly integrated into the proceedings as its inevitable and premeditated conclusion.

What has been preserved of Golden Gai's quintessential streetscape in the process of moving from lustful spontaneity to romantic premeditation are the qualities associated with its spatial intimacy, while all of the social intimacy and gregariousness has been rinsed out. This renders a contemporary street of love hotels one in which couples experience the oxymoron of total urban anonymity in a local, neighbourhood setting: the ambience combines an image of discretion with the opportunity for indiscretion. Here, the love hotel customer's passage begins by publicly walking down the street, often in the middle of the empty road, carrying briefcases or bags of shopping, then shifts sideways with a knights-move to depart from their everyday life into a displaced and temporary form of existence. This gestural form, or *kata*, is an aleatory drifting, which the convoluted entrances and exits to the love hotels themselves intensify. The sense of drifting is further accentuated by the mediating and disorientating effect of the signage in such a streetscape, which has 'never added up to a definitive or rigid order.'[17] Signs, like the entrances, act as filters, designed to solicit custom from only those who can navigate the flows of space and information in search of a room.

Traditionally, the Japanese street is treated as an extension of the interior of the dwelling, with plants and personal belongings placed right on the edge of the paved surface, prefacing the space of the interior. This zone is known as the *engawa*, and is what Kisho Kurokawa calls 'grey space,' creating a zone of public–privateness that is ambiguous and shared between street and interior. The etymology of the prefix *en* in the word *engawa* means forming a bond, affinity or relationship. As a spatial concept, it is therefore less about separating than about uniting two distinct spatial conditions. In terms of the love hotel, this space is an important precedent for a love hotel's particular mediation of a path-threshold condition, where the fabricating of a human bond is the logical and implied outcome of the passage from street to interior. Moreover, the transition in the path from street to interior carries an additional load, since it is not simply a public–private threshold to be crossed, but one which entails a transgressive modal shift in societal terms: the couple entering are embarking upon a journey, a line of flight, which takes them from the prosaic, normalised context of their daily lives to something and somewhere else, and the prolongation of this passage from one to the other is a process of othering. Kurakawa also discusses a finer grain of intermediary spaces, namely *kansho*, which were even smaller alleyways and backlots between buildings themselves, creating a further layer of spatial mediation. In most love hotels, in order to enhance the experience and duration of entry, there is an evident elaboration of the traditional *engawa* and *kansho* spaces to form multi-layered semi-transparent arrangements, with a multitude of directional and level changes adding to the effect.

The love hotel thus operates as a liminal environment, redesignating the street as a path into unknown territory, turning a mundane lunch-break into an experiential adventure. As such, love hotel districts transform the urban social imaginary into something more phantasmagorical, not unlike the Parisian arcades, where Benjamin observed: 'in this street, the juices slow to a standstill, the commodity proliferates along the margins into fantastic combinations.'[18] The decision to leave the street and pass into a love hotel is a movement which secures and establishes unspoken tacit agreement to participate in a liminal experience, and the gentle gradualness of its configuration eases this delicate shift in a couple's relationship, making this a 'speech act' in the true sense of the word: the path taken becomes a token of commitment.

Gradualness is in fact a feature of the entire path taken towards the final point of entry into a love hotel: there is a slow but definite and palpable diminution of sound and light levels from the surrounding streets, which is partly what gives the love hotel street its cognitive identity. Conversation dims, crowds disperse, the neon signs become more restrained, and instead the street focuses its communicative appeal mainly at eye level, with more discreet use of neon and signage, multiple apertures and enticing low-level illumination inviting entry. As the pace decelerates in order to read and negotiate this environment properly, after the brashness and immediacy of the neighbouring streets, space becomes denser and more mysterious, and time becomes measurable and visible: the rest/stay sign clearly puts a price on the duration of the experience. This

establishes the love hotel as a *chronotope*. Mikhail Bakhtin, who proposed this literary construct, suggests that it is where 'spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history.'[19] More recently, it has been proposed that the chronotope is also a useful tool in analysing, for example, urban environments, whereby 'landscape becomes not only "graphically visible" in space but also "narratively visible" in time, in a field of discourses all attempting to account for human experience.'[20]

Julian Holloway and James Kneale suggest that 'the chronotope offers the possibility of tracing the spaced and timed constitution of the self' in the context of 'the production of city spaces via dialogical encounters.'[21] Here, the path to a love hotel is reconceptualised, a space and time of becoming not being, not simply imaged as either 'the route or routine of potential or typical movement'[22] as Kevin Lynch proposes, but a radical interface between what is and what might be, an alternative path inserted within the normative spaces of conformity and predictability that characterise much of the Japanese city, a path which offers a form of dialogue between self and self-as-other.

Edge

In defining the parameters of Japanese space, Mitsuo Inoue draws attention to the importance of the *kairo*, a symbolic yet physical boundary fence dating back to ancient times which was built around a religious compound or shrine, demarcating the sacred from the profane. This was often more of a passageway or narrow space in its own right, serving as an intermediary layer between the approach to the shrine or temple and its interior, effecting a clear edge condition, which was breached only in places by large gates with deliberately raised thresholds. With the exception of Japanese castles, walls were more symbolic than defensive and impenetrable, for as Kurokawa has observed,

> walls designed to sever the exterior from the interior did not develop in Japan. This was due, in part, to the material and structural differences inherent in wood-frame construction as opposed to stone-block construction, but was more importantly a result of a conscious decision not to obstruct the interpenetration of different spaces.[23]

With the development of the love hotel, this severing of interior from exterior became a reality, not by virtue of the choice of building materials, but due to the nature of the buildings' purpose, making them function more like castles than homes.

In Tokyo, a complex network of streets, with many intermediate boundary checkpoints, ensured that the Imperial palace would not be penetrated, and provided sufficiently labyrinthine qualities to deter intruders. Jinnai describes how this kind of spatial structuring ensured that

> the whole city space was partitioned both functionally and visually, not only by the several concentric moats encircling the castle, but also by right-angled corners and staggered rectangular strips of land intended to cut off the flow of traffic.[24]

Thus, both Osaka and Tokyo adopted a more convoluted street pattern, with many T- or L-shaped junctions, designed to make a strict separation between the seat of power and the surrounding urban environment dominated by merchants and commoners. In turn, the townspeople also constructed their own edge conditions, such that 'in Edo, individual neighbourhoods were separated from one another by high wooden gates, which functioned as apparatuses for partitioning space.'[25] None more so than the licensed pleasure quarters such as Yoshiwara on the outskirts of Tokyo and Shimabara at the edge of Kyoto, which were totally contained from 1617 onwards, and admitted entry to patrons only through large black gates. This *kairo* functioned, as Ikegami has shown, as a form of *cordon sanitaire*, segregating spaces reserved for licentious behaviour.

The aim of partitioning work from play lies at the heart of the containment of the pleasure quarters, and this edge condition is still maintained today by the clustering of entertainment functions, including love hotels, into particular areas. This has been necessitated by a combination of successive zoning restrictions and the inevitable economies of mass and scale fostered by grouping similar functions together. Mark West reports that

> Japan's loose zoning scheme has twelve types of zones; residences are permitted in eleven. Of those eleven residential zones, 'hotels' are permitted in six, including some of the most ubiquitous zones. Thus hotels, including love hotels, operated not only in red-light districts, but also next door to the retirement home, across the street from the school, and in the space where a back yard would be if Japanese urban dwellings had such things. Accordingly, the problems cited by anti-hotel campaigners were quite visible.[26]

The actual edges of such zones are now more likely to be new physical boundaries such as railway lines and elevated roads, effectively walling some clusters of love hotels into a narrow sliver of space: those around Nanba station in Osaka and adjacent to Uguisudani station in Tokyo are good examples.

The railway companies have been characterised by Jordan Sand as cultural entrepreneurs,[27] facilitating development along the new private lines radiating out from the centre of Japanese cities, and making the residential suburb a key part of bourgeois ideology in Japan. Sand describes in particular the emergence of the Hankyū line in Osaka, brought about by entrepreneur Ichizō Kobayashi, who 'linked three consumption sites on one private rail line: the urban terminal with a department store and shopping centre at one end, leisure and tourist sites at the other, and residential subdivisions of single-family detached houses in between.'[28] While at the time of their construction, these railway lines effectively joined the suburbs to the centre, creating appeal through sites of

pleasure, today they are more readily identified as an edge condition in many people's lives. This is brought about by the extreme distances between work and home, and by the long journeys to and from the suburbs which most working Japanese have to undertake. As a contemporary reincarnation of the *kairo*, commuting therefore acts as an effective separation between the home and the city: many feminist writers have analysed the extent to which the construction of the suburbs makes a rigid separation between the spheres of production and reproduction, and until the advent of television, this kept women incarcerated in a world far from the business affairs of their brothers, fathers and husbands, who could participate in the polis in a manner that was denied to the female sex. The adherence to the Meiji-sanctioned role of 'good wife, wise mother' ensured that Japanese women were fenced off from much of urban life, compelled to live a house-bound existence, which was to an extent necessitated by the design of the traditional Japanese home: without solid, lockable doors, the wife was literally required to mind the home.[29] This effective incarceration was, however, quite unlike the notion of a Japanese concubine's incarceration as one who is sexually available to her master. On the contrary, according to Ueno, 'sexuality no longer defines the family unit . . . sexuality is no longer situated in the household.'[30] The commute therefore not only establishes a firm logistical edge between family life and the working and playing identity of the average Japanese male, but also maintains these as different sexual spheres, and in turn generates the requirement for spaces dedicated to sexual play outside the home.

As a descendant of the licensed pleasure quarters, the presence of the love hotel, often found in close proximity to the railway lines and termini, and itself an extension of the sites of consumption which had developed during the Meiji and Taisho periods, reintroduces a heightened form of quasi-domestic space in the city to which ordinary people have access. To an extent, the love hotel therefore mediates the edge condition which commuting establishes, breaching the separation between suburb and city, while at the same time perpetuating the exclusion of sexuality from the home. For the average unmarried Japanese man or woman, who is marrying much later (average age twenty-six[31]) and who for economic reasons is still living at his or her parental home in the suburbs, the love hotel functions as a temporary home-from-home which permits sexual exploration. Love hotels help young people in particular to find a means to spend private time together in the city which otherwise precludes intimacy and keeps them apart. However, the love hotel also functions as an urban retreat for married couples who lack privacy in their homes, whether or not they are living as an extended family, and in this case, the city provides scope for them to regenerate intimacy outside the marital home. In both scenarios, the love hotel may be seen to operate as an important 'third space' in the daily urban grind, one that challenges some of the social parameters which urban spatiality in Japan has established, and that also goes beyond the simple need for spaces of consumption and entertainment which the department stores and entertainment spaces provide. As such, while the love hotel appears to be physically periph-

eral, in fact it has inserted itself as a midpoint, even an interruption, in the endless flow of urban life.

Locationally, the love hotel finds itself doubly on the edge: as well as being located at the edges of cities at a macro scale, love hotels also tend to be located at the edges of the particular areas with which they are identified. In Shibuya, the Dogenzaka area of love hotels near Bunkamura (a large cultural centre) certainly constructs a thick edge that divides the sedate residential community beyond from the thriving commercial district around the station, and is an effective barrier and mood modulator. These same edges are also defined by other elements, which in the absence of any physical walls or boundary structures are read as edgy, in the sense of undesirable. It is not surprising, therefore, to discover that where clusters of love hotels peter out, homelessness begins: there are cardboard cities in Nanba under the elevated roads next to Dotonbori district opposite the love hotel Continental Vijoux, in Shinjuku a pocket park at the western edge of Kabukicho 2-chome is overlooked by the love hotel Blanket Inn, and in Uehonmachi, love hotels Cosmo, Joyful Club and Peace back on to another small park fringed where men live out of boxes.

In Japan, this level of homelessness is a new phenomenon, emerging in the post-Bubble era. What unites the love hotels and the homeless is the extent to which they both fall beneath official radars, neither appearing on municipal documents and city maps: while every other service, function and place of interest is marked on Japanese official atlases, tourist guides and ward maps, they all assiduously omit to reveal the location of love hotel areas. It is as if they are a formally negated element in the Japanese cityscape, made conspicuous by their absence. This makes the love hotels' edge condition all the more compelling: like the homeless living on the fringes of society, they have literally disappeared from a cartographic economy, and circulate instead in other spheres. It would seem that while 'high city' urban attributes such as museums, embassies and four-star hotels are privileged in conventional map-making, the city's low life is relegated to the status of non-existent, and this reveals therefore the love hotels' true status in a hierarchy of building use, because while cinemas and kabuki theatres are shown, the temples and shrines they rub shoulders with are highlighted, in the places where love hotels abound, there are just blank urban blocks of unnamed streets. As with the areas of unlicensed prostitution in the Edo period, no record exists of this hidden dataset,[32] and consequently love hotels establish the borders of contemporary urban experience, and the edges of 'official' social acceptability.

The lack of cartographic information in the public domain has not only given rise to love hotel guidebooks, which literally fill the gap for those wishing to find their location graphically represented, but, more importantly, constructs a kind of black market social imaginary, in which the only maps which feature love hotels are mental maps in city dwellers' heads. Since it became clear quite early on that the love hotel guidebooks only referenced a selection of establishments, and were by no means a complete record of love hotels in a given area, as part of my fieldwork, I mapped the urban location of 300 love hotels, using local

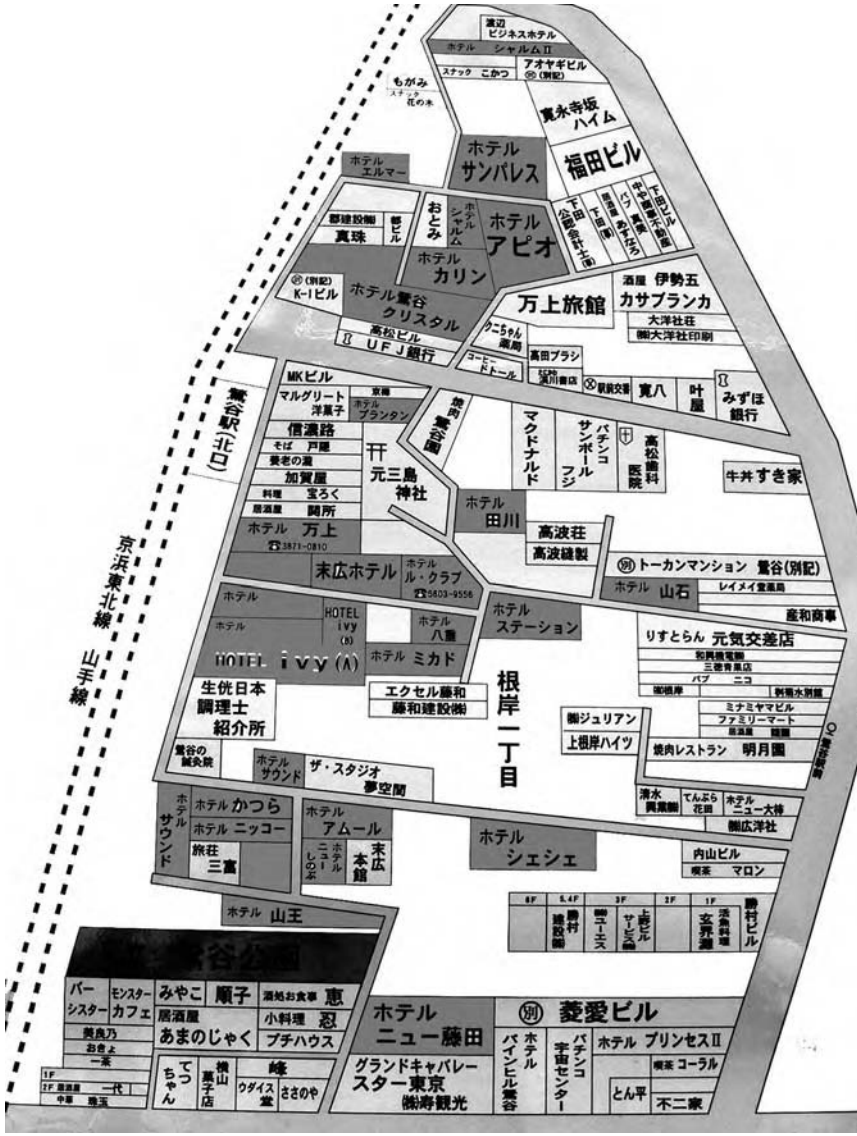

Figure 1.3 Map of love hotel district in Uguisudani, Tokyo.

ward maps as a starting point. The map in Figure 1.3 is of Uguisudani,[33] a tight, crescent-shaped wedge of streets lying between the Yamanote line and the main road Kototoi Dōri, which of the eight study areas contained the densest concentration of love hotels. The map was constructed from an impromptu hand-painted location map fixed to some railings in a side alley in Uguisudani, which

marked all the commercial premises found in the neighbourhood. Unusually it also marked the love hotels, and from this information, the extent of the more recent proliferation of love hotels may be shown, as well as a number of name changes to love hotels that existed at the time the original map was made.

A further dimension of the marginalisation of love hotel areas in terms of their status in urban society is the extent to which these same areas are associated with the borders of political dissent, foreignness and homosexuality: in the 1960s, Shinjuku was renowned for being a hotbed of left-wing politics and the home of the famous 'blue boys': Kabukicho was well known as the gay bar district, and spawned its own student rebellion in 1968. As Stephen Barber notes in *Tokyo Vertigo*, 'all through the 1960s, Shinjuku was on fire with sex and revolution. The avenues became glaring dream playgrounds of lust and experimentation. Tokyo had never seen anything like it.'[34] He describes it as 'Tokyo's burning heart' until the Bohemian community started to move out to the western suburbs in the 1970s, when the wholesale corporate redevelopment of western Shinjuku began. Donald Richie in his account of Tokyo also notes that during the 1960s the homosexual community established itself in Shinjuku, and is still there.

Replacing one kind of radical nonconformity with another more problematic variety, today, to the north of Kabukichō in the next district Hyakunichō, is an area inhabited by immigrants from Thailand, Korea and China. Todd Crowell claims that

> to many Tokyo residents, the mention of the name of the district still strikes fear in their hearts. It is not because of the long-gone militia, but because Hyakunichō has the reputation, due to its concentration of Asian foreigners, as a bastion of crime and sleaze.[35]

Perhaps the element of xenophobia masks the reality, in the sense that much of the property in Hyakunichō is owned by the Japanese *yakuza* who act as pimps to foreign prostitutes. It is thus the presence of the *yakuza* on the borders of a prominent love hotel district that contributes to its perceived marginal status. Mark West's research on Japanese love hotels reveals that the *yakuza* are deeply involved in the love hotel business, as they are behind much of the Japanese sex industry,[36] and this explains another aspect of the love hotel's marginality. One designer I interviewed who had fitted out several love hotels in the Osaka area said that he was aware of his clients' *yakuza* connections, and on one project he was asked to incorporate secret rooms within the hotel's envelope, but was not allowed to know their purpose. Just as the love hotel itself is unmarked on the city maps, hidden spaces within are similarly unmarked on the plans submitted to the authorities prior to a love hotel's construction.

This may be construed as part of what Barthes referred to as the 'vast regions of darkness' which he classified as 'capitalist Japan, American acculturation, technological development'[37] in *Empire of Signs*, and provides telling evidence for the Western commentator that the love hotel is indeed, to cite Norman

Bryson, an example of 'the surrounding envelope of invisibility.'[38] Many love hotels in Shinjuku had signs up in the lobby simply saying 'No foreigners' in English and in Japanese, which euphemistically refers to the many foreign prostitutes and hoodlums who attempt to use them for illicit purposes. This perception of the love hotel's marginal status in the city concurs with Chris Rojek's reading of urban spatiality, in which he states: 'there are always surplus spaces which act as the habitat of transgressive behaviour. Crimogenic zones in cities, where prostitution and drug dealing occur are familiar examples.'[39] The love hotel district is thus one that resides historically in the marginalised interstices of everyday life in the context of Japanese cities, as a vestigial element of medieval Japanese society. By proliferating in clusters, love hotel owners have had some degree of strength in numbers, forming a mutual self-help community. Today, while several of these clusters are undergoing rehabilitation, thereby raising them from a predominantly negative urban identity, at the same time, part of their allure evidently depends upon the edginess of their urban context.

In the past, the kinds of vestigial sites that tended to occur around the edges of Japanese cities derived from their religious purpose, and their location was the direct result of military rule, which aimed to control the amount of influence religion had on Japanese commoners. In the Tokugawa period, the shōguns dictated that centres of Buddhist and Shintoist worship should be situated away from the midst of the urban environment and forced them to occupy a more peripheral position in society. Even a superficial examination of a map of contemporary Kyoto demonstrates that this arrangement clearly still exists: the temples and shrines fringe the city and occupy the foothills, while the imperial power base is dead centre. By the end of the Tokugawa era, Sorensen notes that temples occupied 15 per cent of urban areas.[40] Their peripheral location suited the religious communities, for whom the deities resided in nature and not in the city, and the foothills therefore had a stronger spiritual presence.

What arose from this effective zoning strategy was a relationship of co-dependency between pleasure and prayer, an association which often confounds a Western Christian mindset, but which is understandable in a culture where Shintoism celebrates fertility. Chizuko Ueno has pointed out: 'business trips and religious pilgrimages were closely associated with extraordinary sexual experiences.'[41] It therefore followed that places offering scope for play after the main spiritual tasks were completed should be found in convenient proximity to the places of worship. Sepp Linhart establishes the connection between these peripheral places and their contemporary equivalents:

> [an] origin of the modern entertainment district can be found in the amusement quarters next to religious centres in the temple towns (*monzenmachi*). Since ancient times, when people came to a religious place from far away, they wanted to amuse themselves after offering their prayers and buying amulets.[42]

This produced what Jinnai calls 'an eccentric urban structure,'[43] in that space given over to play had been pushed to the urban periphery, evolving into a space

of co-location and liberation. It is within the folds of this eccentric structure that the love hotel found its rightful place, such that

> looking at a dark, foreboding temple gate in Tennoji-ku and the glittering Greco-Roman edifice Hotel Belle des Belles towering in the distance beyond, one sees a part of a chaotic system loose enough to contain them both, and a city in which they are both at home[44] [see Figure 1.4].

Thus the edges of cities took on a particular identity, one which conflated the physical boundaries of urban experience with its behavioural boundaries. As Nicholas Fieve observes,

> the Japanese city, and in particular the city of Kyoto, was – and still is – a parallel example of dynamic urban evolution. . . . Nowadays, [to find] the 'love hotels,' the 'soaplands,' and various other meeting places that are more or less socially unacceptable, one has to look further out toward the limits of the modern conurbation . . . to the areas which are not really part of the city, nor even its suburbs.[45]

Thus it is no surprise that on the eastern fringes of Kyoto, love hotels occupy the streets en route to the temple complex of Nanzen-ji. The main concentration of love hotels in Uehonmachi in Osaka lies betwixt and between the temples that

Figure 1.4 Design drawing for Hotel Belle des Belles, Uehonmachi, Osaka.

have been there since the seventeenth century (see Figure 1.5). In Umeda, there are two shrines around which love hotels are grouped, and in Tokyo, some of the newest and the oldest love hotels in Shinjuku are found in the street that is dominated by the Hanazono temple. Hotel Moti in Shibuya is built right next door to a Shinto shrine (see Figure 1.6), while Uguisudani's love hotel district lies in close proximity to Kan-ei Ji temple and both the Yanaka and Tokugawa cemeteries, and one love hotel found there, Hotel Stela, even has a tiny Shintō shrine within the layered confines of its forecourt.

The shōgun's ruling effectively established a shared sacred-secular idea of sanctuary between temples and shrines on the one hand, and amusement quarters on the other hand, and their mutual development is key to understanding a Japanese zoning of pleasure and leisure. Jinnai advises that

> in reading the structure of Tokyo as a city, the placement of the sacred spaces is extremely important . . . at the time of their construction, the city precinct did not reach as far as the temples themselves; the idea was to surround the city with sacred space by placing temples on distant uplands.[46]

Over time, he argues that 'because they gave rise to amusement quarters nearby, [temple quarters] also promoted the expansion and development of the city . . . intimately tied to people's images of the city; they helped to form a structure of meaning.'[47] The urban edges thus became intensified over time and more

Figure 1.5 Hotel Cosmo adjacent to Buddhist temple, Uehonmachi, Osaka.

Figure 1.6 Hotel Moti adjacent to Shinto shrine, Shibuya, Tokyo.

urbanised as a result, producing the kind of conditions in which the latterday love hotel could thrive. Patterns of use became established whereby citizens treated these places as a form of escape from urbanity, in that they could 'find release in the temple and shrine precincts and nearby amusement districts on the city's periphery – such places did indeed create a sanctuary.' Such places were under the control of the commissioner of temples and shrines – rather than the city commissioner – and this meant the regulations governing them tended to be more relaxed.[48] It was this waiving of the norms of Japanese society and their relative distance from the seat of power that enabled both the temples and the attendant clustering of brothels and bawdy entertainment to thrive in relative isolation. Amino has referred to such locations as 'spaces of social nonattachment,' a description that aptly applies to the role of the love hotel.

Apart from the politics of religion and imperial power, there was another reason for moving the temples and brothels to the edges of the city: fire. In 1657, after several fires had devastated large parts of the city, it was decreed that many of Edo's shrines and temples should move out to the higher Yamanote district. At the same time the main licensed pleasure quarter, Yoshiwara, was moved further out, from its original low city location near the temples of Asakusa to a place upstream about an hour's boat ride away. Brothel owners agreed to this shift, on the grounds that in their new location they were allowed to remain open all night. Even so, 1911 saw another fire devastate this new location of the

Yoshiwara, and many writers have said that after this time Yoshiwara never really recovered.[49]

Fire has always figured as an edge in the Japanese urban mindset, creating the need for breaks in the city to prevent its spread from one area to another, and these open spaces developed a carnivalesque character, being the place of spontaneous gatherings and parties, and black market trading. In the event of a fire, people gathered up a few possessions and fled to these areas, taking refuge in the festival atmosphere. Rojek asserts that carnival was 'a time of sanctioned transgression in which the people were given licence to lampoon the main normative structures of coercion which regulated their lives in the rest of the year.'[50] The love hotel has evolved from this carnivalesque landscape into one that might more accurately be described as grotesque, in that the spontaneity and frivolity have been in a sense petrified and ossified into the fabric of the buildings, as metonymic gestures that recall this earlier transgressive social identity.

It was not only fire that formed an edge condition where the usual strictures were relaxed: Jinnai reflects that

> in Edo, it was the watersides and the bases of bridges, special places owned by the shogunal government, [where] they could escape the social bonds constraining normal commoner districts and become places where the free activity of the populace was permitted,[51]

establishing a situation in which 'the city's ludic space as a whole was strongly tied to the water.'[52] This is what gave rise to the term 'water trade' or *mizu shōbai*, and the notion of a 'floating world' with its perceived radical separation from day-to-day reality. However, part of this floating world belonged to the everyday, and with the low life of the city, the tradesmen and their activities. It was here that the execution of criminals took place, and that unidentified corpses were abandoned, associating them with the more grotesque sides of human existence. Places adjacent to water also exerted a romantic appeal for the Japanese, as evidenced in Jinnai's statement that 'it is well-known that a large number of "rendezvous teahouses" – the equivalent of today's love hotels – were built in the romantic neighbourhood of Shinobazu Pond . . . an ideal spot for a liberated place full of romantic feeling.'[53] Timon Screech shows how water has always had strong sexual connotations generally: 'water was the element of *yin*, the feminine, designated as moist, dark and recessive. Sex was discreetly referred to by such *yin* euphemisms as the moments of cloud and rain (*un'u*).'[54] He draws attention to the connection between sexuality and images of lakes and waterfalls in erotic prints or *shunga*, and this connection may also be seen to exist in contemporary love hotels in three different ways: first, in that some bear names which refer to watery locations in the cityscape: Shirakawa (White River),[55] Suimei, Water Hotel, Sweetwater; second, in the instances of images depicting water in the bedroom interiors, and third, where water features and fountains form an integral part of the threshold condition to the love hotels itself. All three recall the atmosphere and moated status of the *mizu shōbai*.

The symbolic function of water has now mutated: the former city of water is replaced with what Bushō called *oka no Tokyo* (land-based Tokyo),[56] in that the railways and elevated freeways that criss-cross the city may be regarded as the latterday waterways or urban flows of Tokyo, and hence the areas around the train stations now have a similarly escapist mood to the bridges of the Edo period. The main terminuses of Shinjuku, Shibuya and Ikebukero in Tokyo all appeared in 1935, and were responsible for shifting attention to the periphery of the city such that 'everywhere, cities exhibited a phenomenon of centrifugal collapse, and Tokyo's vital urban culture, accumulated at its centre over generations, was swiftly lost.'[57]

The edge condition that arises from aspects of the Japanese city associated with religion, fire and water is summed up in the concept of *mu'en*, or place of no relation, outside the order of things. Eiko Ikegami in her book, *Bonds of Civility*, argues that '*mu'en* referred to sacred places but also to such spaces as markets, trading posts, riverbanks, and graveyards . . . thus *mu'en* spaces offered a kind of asylum at places of boundary intersection as spheres for transformation.'[58] Ikegami describes how people of *mu'en* standing were invited to elite events at *kaisho* salons in order to introduce something of the adventurous and edgy atmosphere that was found circulating in *mu'en* spaces into formal gatherings. Thus, she claims

> the ritual logic of *mu'en* was transformed into a mechanism to create an alternative reality within the established system. The presence of men and women of marginal status at banquets signified the temporary status of *mu'en* in the space of *kaisho*.[59]

In terms of exerting its own ritual logic, the love hotel plays a similarly transformational role, introducing a note of *mu'en* into the more established system of the Japanese city. It has been suggested that love hotels were built on *mu'en* land in the first place: land occupied by former burial grounds was unsuitable for other uses, and hence was cheap and available.[60]

The primary conceptualisation of edge emerging from this evaluation of the love hotel's place in the Japanese city is not that of a strict division, but one which exists as a zone of marginalisation, a space in which difference is seen to proliferate. The forces within the city producing such edges therefore have more to do with controlling behaviours and activities than with partitioning the city, although, in the case of fire, it certainly began as a physical interruption in the urban fabric which subsequently developed into a form of social disruption.

Node

The idea of turning Tokyo into a 'multi-nodal metropolis' is over thirty years old, and was devised to ease pressure on the Central Business District in Marunouchi. It has its roots in the way Tokyo evolved from a collection of

villages, and also in which the city was rebuilt after the 1923 earthquake. Cybriwsky describes how

> Tokyo began to be more polycentric, emphasising new commercial districts at the urban periphery. These were particularly important on the fast-growing west side of the city, where crossroads at Shinjuku, Shibuya and Ikebukero were transformed from local centres into major regional sub-centres that would compete with the CBD in offices, retailing, entertainment and other functions.[61]

Seidenstecker notes that a new word entered the Japanese vocabulary during this developmental phase: *fukutoshin*, meaning secondary heart of the city.[62] The areas in which love hotels have tended to develop are all in fact *fukutoshin*, since the core of the Japanese city has always had a more lofty emphasis, whether imperial, military or civic in nature: Shinjuku, Shibuya and Ikebukero are the three major locations in Tokyo of love hotel clusters, with Uguisudani being much smaller in terms of scale. In Osaka, the areas in which love hotels are concentrated, namely Umeda, Uehonmachi and Nanba, also have the characteristic of playing second fiddle to the heart of the city.

In Osaka and Tokyo, each of these *fukutoshin* were the product of private investment, where business enterprise established not only the anchor stores in these areas, but also built the commuter train lines to bring customers in from the suburbs which they served. Over time, Tokyo's former villages have become differentiated in character and attract different segments of the cities' populations, who come to play and relax there after work. The experience of the Japanese capital as a clustering of nodes or villages was thus perpetuated into the twenty-first century. Many of these villages grew up around the rivers, and were therefore a product of 'the crossing points of waterways and streets namely bridges and their surroundings.'[63] Barrie Shelton notes that now

> most of Edo's bridge crossings have disappeared, but their equivalents remain where roads cross roads. In place of bridges are massive multi-directional zebra crossings. These are nodal points rather than spaces, and remembered for their intensity rather than their form.[64]

Shelton thus affirms the importance of *kata* in understanding Japanese urban form, where it is the performative concentration of people and activities that informs the sense of place over and above its physical or symbolic attributes.

The position of the love hotel district in relation to a nodal understanding of the Japanese city merits further exploration. Roland Barthes interprets the node in a Japanese context as a point of extreme eventfulness as opposed to an explicit piece of place-making: 'the public space is a series of instantaneous events which accede to the notable in a flash so vivid, so tenuous that the sign does away with itself before any particular signified has had the time to "take."'[65] This absence of a strictly formal quality is reinforced by John

McCreery, who regards Tokyo as 'a wide scatter of objects and places which usually have no clear relationship with each other; and, if places rather than objects, these have no clear form within themselves.' In particular, Shelton discusses the role of train stations, which he believes are 'more marked by their intensities of activity, concentrations of people and of information (signs) than clarity of form.'[66] The front of the train station becomes the key reference point at many of these nodal concentration points, as Shelton suggests:

> here the use of the term *mae* in Japanese cities is a fascinating one: for instance, *ekimae* (literally meaning 'in front of the station') describes less a physical place than a field of force, of which the station proper (ie the platforms) is the functional (but visually weak) centre.[67]

The station functions in much the same way as the bridges did in earlier periods, especially as railtracks have assumed the role once played by the rivers and waterways of Edo. It is the point from which a node is seen to emanate; indeed, a study carried out in 1983 by HILL (Hakuhodo Institute of Life and Living) led to the positing of a radial '600m' model to explain the concentric arrangement of social and cultural activity around a station.

Six hundred metres is the distance the average person would walk in the space of ten minutes, and the authors of the HILL report identified within this span of time three distinct concentric layers making up the station's catchment area, across which land declines in value. They found that the first layer, 1P, was given over to shopping and eating, which they named 'Parfait', as a reflection of the mainly female-orientated nature of this band of land use. Their description of typical images in the 1P zone included: 'McDonald's, families, crepes, crowds, people waiting, school uniforms, big book stores, banks, fortunetellers, fruit stores, pedestrian malls, record shops, Renoir coffee shops.'[68] By contrast, the 2P zone, or Pub Zone, was more male-orientated, and contained such elements as 'pachinko parlours, mahjong rooms, pubs and cabarets, red lanterns, neon, noise, groups of friends, discos, drunks, game centres, the sound of Japanese ballads, trashcans, shills, saunas, coffee shops, narrow alleys.'[69] The third concentric ring, 3P or the Parking Zone, started to become less cohesive and more multi-purpose in a low-grade way, consisting of 'parking lots, hotels, beancurd makers, public baths, rice stores, dogs, dog droppings, open spaces, telephone poles, rent-a-car dealers, Yamazaki Bread stores, vending machines, liquor stores, small parks for kids, quick print shops, small bookshops, launderettes, and hot lunchbox shops.'[70]

It is in this mixed, lower value vicinity that the love hotels have tended to spring up: beyond the female-friendly shopping meccas, beyond the watering holes for salarimen, and in these less frequented streets. The love hotel finds its natural home in the areas that HILL's reporters called the boundary zone. Here, business is starting to give way to residential, and it is a transition that is conveniently bridged by the love hotel, being both business and residential in its purpose. The 1983 report also intimated that beyond this 600 metre radius there

might be a fourth zone, typically occupied by a large park or cemetery. In Steven Heighton's book of short stories *Flight Paths of the Emperor*, this sequential experience of moving away from a node is succinctly articulated in a passage about a Westerner walking home:

> It was late, and a slim metallic moon was balanced over the city. As I walked home past the darkened banks, the pachinko joints, the Love Hotels and bars and stores and on into the empty streets of my neighbourhood, I though of the apartment I'd left early that morning, how foreign and unsettled it always seemed because I spent so little time there . . . I pictured sound waves stirring a few grains of dust on the *tatami* floor. My Japanese neighbours were as busy as I was and I hardly ever saw them – and what is a neighbour anyway if you're never home? . . . when I reached the alley that led to my apartment, I turned back towards the lit-up streets and bars around the station.[71]

This structuring of a nodal condition is borne out by all but one of the study areas in Tokyo and Osaka. In each case, the nearest love hotel area is found at around a 600 metre distance from the stations of Shinjuku, Shibuya, Ikebukero, Nanba, Uehonmachi and Umeda. McCreery cites Ikebukero in particular as an example of a now fully developed 3P node, which 'displays the mature form of an urban centre. Everyday shops are now completely absent from the area within 600 metres of the station.' Interestingly, he notes that 'massage parlours, love hotels where couples can rent rooms for brief periods of time, and other sex-related businesses appear next to the 2P zone,'[72] and it would appear from the research undertaken in 1983 that the love hotel has now become a fully established ingredient of the 3P zone, in some cases recasting it less in terms of a hinterland with a confused identity and making it more coherently connected to the node from which the layered spatiality is seen to span. The only exception to the standard 3P location of the urban love hotel in my research sample is around Uguisudani station, where love hotels commence in the immediate *ekimae* space. This is therefore best interpreted as a 1P area only, which the report suggests is the first stage of development for a smaller commuter station, and in more suburban areas this would tend to be the location of a single or handful of love hotels serving a local population, as in the case of the stand-alone Seeds love hotel in Mejiro. However, measured from the major nodal station of Ueno, the 600 metre rule still holds for love hotels in Uguisudani. In the case of those examples studied in Kyoto, the ten minutes on foot is not a relevant yardstick as this district was not found to be part of any concentric layering of urban functions around nodal points, being akin to the suburban love hotel type, mingled discretely among a residential neighbourhood and dependent on the car as the main means of arrival.

In a fully matured urban situation, the report speculated that neighbouring 3P areas would start to merge, as Shibuya and Harujuku have done, to produce 'a city of many centres in close, almost continuous, proximity.'[73] McCreery per-

ceives a link between visualising urban space as predominantly nodal in character to the spatially orientated system of written ideograms, where characters occupy a place or plot around which other *kana* and *kanji* cluster. By contrast, the Western mode of writing is more linear, and hence in an urban sense privileges the street or path. As Botund Bognar has described, this has the effect in Japan of rendering the city as

> additive texture, wherein preference is given to the parts (or episodes) in a network of independent places; the whole (or the story) as an aggregate or incomplete form, remains illusive, to be conjured up only in the memory and imagination of the perceiver.[74]

It is important in this context to read the love hotel district as part and parcel of this episodic condition, where its usual role is tangential to the main action at the centre of the node, occupying instead the far reaches of the 600 metre zone. The distance is critical: any closer to the station hub would be too soon for a couple to decide to rent a room. I watched many couples go through the process of deciding and negotiating in the space of a ten-minute stroll away from the station such that by the time the love hotels begin to present themselves, there was an stronger sense of commitment evident between them. The phasal shift through areas 1P, 2P and into 3P is therefore an important and necessary interlude prior to arrival at an area of love hotels.

The node in Kevin Lynch's schema was primarily conceived as an intersection on a gridded city plan. In Japan, where the city does not follow this same rectilinear logic, the detailed shading of atmosphere radiating from intense points of eventfulness in the Japanese city produces a different relationship to nodality, and helps situate the love hotel in *psychogeographical* rather than simply in geographical terms.

District

Wayfinding in the Japanese city is far from linear, and depends upon an understanding of its nested address system of *machi* (part of town), *ku* (ward), *chōme* (sub-area) and plot: to find a particular place is more like a process of zooming in, negotiating a number of successive levels. In this respect, discernible districts are important, since 'it is not the network of streets but rather the patchwork of areas or *machi* by which you establish your position.'[75] For Roland Barthes, encountering Tokyo for the first time in 1966, the city seemed like an 'urban territory' in which 'the name of each district is distinct, known, placed on the rather empty map like a news flash. . . . All these districts produce different races, distinct bodies, a familiarity new each time.'[76]

Love hotel districts create their own distinctive news flashes in the urban landscape to which people are drawn, animating the Japanese urban structure. Over time, whole *chōme* or postal districts have come to be associated with areas in which love hotels have congregated: Dōgenzaka 2-chome in Shibuya-ku,

Kabukichō 2-chōme in Shinjuku-ku, Negishi 1-chōme in Taito-ku, Ikebukero 2-chōme in Toshima-ku, and in Kita-ku and Nishi-ku in Osaka. As has already been shown, this is consistent with the focusing of the *demi-monde* in Japan generally: the *mizu-shobai*, or water trade, has always been concentrated in districts, partly to sustain trade and partly in response to regulatory measures, such that, 'even today, specific shops, cinemas, theatres, and other cultural institutions or entertainment complexes can be found grouped into distinct areas.'[77] For love hotels, changes to the Entertainment Law passed in 1985 meant that they were reclassified as 'sex-related' business and not as inns or hotels any more, in that they offered facilities that were not required for the basic purposes of guest lodging. This meant they could no longer operate in districts outside those designated by the authorities as sex-related, which in Tokyo meant the four postal districts listed above.[78]

These areas are generally known as *sakariba* – crowded places – a term that derives from *sakaru*, to prosper, and *ba* meaning place. Linhart's research on *sakariba* in Japanese cities has shown that they were initially fire breaks within the city in the Edo period, and later became associated with the thriving areas around temple precincts, notably Asakusa in Tokyo around the famous Kannon temple, an area which still has a number of love hotels surrounding it today. In the second half of the twentieth century the focus of Tokyo's *sakariba* began to shift as Asakusa began to be seen as old middle class, whereas Shinjuku and Shibuya were new middle-class centres for the *petite bourgeoisie*. Nowadays, the *sakariba* is the main after-hours haunt for large sections of the urban commuter population, representing a temporary diversion before the long journey home: 'many people break their journey at a *sakariba*, in order to reduce the accumulated feeling of stress after a long working day.'[79] As such, most *sakariba* have evolved around transport hubs, particularly the main terminals for suburban lines radiating from the major cities. The busiest nights are Fridays and Mondays; however, around festival times they are largely empty, the focus of activity being elsewhere. Spatially distinct, the *sakariba* is also a place where other behaviours can be adopted, and this marks it as a liminal space in the Japanese urban landscape, in the sense that 'leisure and recreational space has a liminal quality. In the relaxation and informality associated with these spaces, people can objectify the order of everyday life and subject it to criticism or mockery.'[80] The *sakariba* is regarded as a zone of liberty in which a *salariiman* can misbehave, and any bad conscience that this might generate is offset by what Ikei Nozomu has called 'the sympathy of wrongdoers' (*hanzaisha no kyōkan*) who are also participating in the classic (male) leisure triad of drinking, gambling and sex (*nomu*, *utsu*, *kau*).

More than just a space to gather and have fun, Seiichiro Saito has taken the interpretation of the *sakariba* a stage further by calling it a 'zone of evaporation' (*jōhatsu kūkan*). In the love hotel district, itself a sub-district of a *sakariba* district, the experience of disappearing is thus doubled: the first act of evaporation taking place on entering the *sakariba* itself, the second upon entering an individual love hotel. Linhart notes that the term *jōhatsu* was used in the 1970s and

referred to people who suddenly disappeared completely, but argues that in the case of the *sakariba* this act of disappearance is temporary and symbolic, retaining something of the usual Japanese social protocols or *kata*:

> disappearing at a *sakariba* is by no means complete. Although there exist discreet 'love hotels' and similar places at pubs, bars, and snack-bars, the Japanese custom of exchanging visiting cards is as valid here as in any other context of Japanese society.[81]

As such, Linhart feels it is enough to situate the *sakariba* as being between rather than beyond, that is to say between home and work, in such a way as to be 'complementary to these two other spheres.'[82] In any event, *sakariba* evidence certain lifestyle attributes and predilections for those who choose to frequent them. Roman Cybriwsky suggests that these strongly focused areas have become 'epitome districts' which have acquired a particular reputation over time, thereby cementing their identity in the minds of city dwellers. He alludes to the cathartic potential of an epitome district, and suggests that it is

> much more than just the largest and bawdiest entertainment district in the city; it is a gigantic fantasyland for adults, a total escape, if only for a few minutes or hours, for the tens of thousands who enter on a given day, from all the ills and oppressions that surround them.[83]

The Long-term Development Plan for Tokyo Metropolis, *My Town Tokyo*, released in 1986, aimed to clarify and perpetuate its epitome districts, which were identified as 'cities' in their own right. In urban planning terms, this indicates that in order to construct the notion of 'My Town Tokyo' it was first necessary to break down and repurpose discrete portions of the metropolis. Thus Shinjuku was labelled as a 'city for spreading business and people-to-people contact,' Ikebukero as a 'city developing into a compound city,' Shibuya as a 'city for creating information and fashion,' while Ueno-Asakusa was flagged to become a 'city for utilising tradition and fostering culture of tomorrow.'[84] The four districts of Tokyo which were delineated in this manner are today the main locations of love hotel districts, and it is interesting to see how the new urban expectations generated by the plan are becoming manifest in the ways in which the character of the love hotel areas themselves are becoming differentiated. In Shinjuku, the character of the love hotel district on the whole is indeed becoming more businesslike: the buildings are more like grey, multi-storey urban office structures compared to their smaller, more colourful, exuberant and fashion-orientated counterparts in nearby Shibuya. Ikebukero's love hotels are more of a mixed bag than is evident in other parts of Tokyo, perhaps a feature which is consistent with the desire for it to become a compound city, while the heritage aspiration of Asakusa and Ueno is yet to become apparent in the district of love hotels in Uguisudani and around Asakusa, although here there are one or two newly opened love hotels that have adopted a neo-Japanese theme, which

might be an early indication that even the ambition of utilising tradition is becoming activated in the construction of the love hotels themselves.

The development and delineation of an urban district is usually subjective, dependent on local knowledge and implicit codes; however, when a self-conscious process of 'districtisation' takes place (as in the case of *My Town Tokyo*), in urban planning terms this starts to circumscribe areas overtly in ways which render them legible to the stranger as well as the local inhabitant. Love hotel districts fall into the former category until the moment they start to appear on maps in the backs of love hotel guides, whereupon they become demarcated in such a way as to fix the absolute extent of their territory rather than the range of their ambience. In other words, just as fragrances can linger in a room after the person has left, so too can love hotel districts linger in the spaces beyond their physical location.

Landmark

Historically, in terms of the development of Japanese spatiality, the Japanese were less interested in how particular urban characteristics could create *genius loci*, and more interested in views of distant nature as a means of orientating themselves in a given environment and rendering it memorable. This gave rise to the tradition of naming and visiting *meisho* or famous places, and the articulation and itinerisation of such points of historical interest created a landscape of aestheticised viewpoints between otherwise undifferentiated tracts of urban form. Mateo-Babiano and Ieda describe how 'the basic position and direction of Edo's major thoroughfares were designed to provide views of the city's scenic spots including Mt. Fuji, the Musashino Plain, the Sumida River, Mt. Tsukuba, Mt. Kanda . . . and many others.'[85] This may be compared to the contemporary practice of identifying 'date spots', which are depicted in dating magazines as good places to stop the car on a romantic night out and 'enjoy the view.' Articles feature an impressive array of nocturnal shots of Japanese cityscapes, port terminals, bridges and other man-made landmarks considered somehow romantic.

The only man-made constructions which interrupted the Edo skyline were the purely pragmatic fire watchtowers, and it was not until the Meiji era that the roofscape began to be articulated with architectural landmarks: before that point the notion of a man-made urban landmark, as something intended to be seen, was an alien concept. Jinnai describes how towards the end of the nineteenth century, 'the flat cityscape of roof tiles was replaced overnight by a proliferation of towers. Government offices, university and school buildings, the Kankoba Exhibition Hall, warehouses adjacent to commoners' houses, even brothels began to boast towers atop their roofs.'[86] One particularly notable example was Japan's first 'skyscraper,' the Ryōunkaku or Junikai Building in Asakusa's entertainment district, a twelve-storey edifice containing Japan's first elevator, built in 1890 but destroyed in the 1923 Kanto earthquake.

As the spatial structure of the Japanese city began to shift towards a more western approach, in terms of its figure-ground the tight-knit grain of the urban

fabric remained while the figures that populated the urban environment became more distinctive.[87] The presence of architectural landmarks started to articulate urban experience in a new way, particularly in the low city, where 'even the principle of orthogonal street planning was piecemeal: it was applied like a sort of mosaic, the pieces of which were topologically orientated according to various beacons, *sono ba sono ba* ("from place to place").'[88] Augustin Berque shows how this new spatial practice or *kata* became excessively ludic, so much so that Japanese urban environments 'have been compared to *sugoroku*, a kind of snakes and ladders, in which the throw of the dice made you go from one [famous] place to another, without a constant orientation.'[89] This gave rise to a new trend to design landmark buildings, where the skyline element was simply grafted on to the building below, producing a landscape of 'soaring towers, ostensibly a symbol of Western architectural principles, [which] actually reflected a combination of Western and Japanese styles, and emphasised, if anything, the image of a traditional castle turret.'[90]

The motifs that were incorporated in the early Meiji period into buildings of all types reveal that it was a period of architectural experimentation, and, significantly, the love hotels maintained some of this early exuberance into the latter half of the twentieth century, with castellated features and turrets being a particular trademark of the love hotel at its peak. Seen in this context, the love hotel exists as a point of continuity with emergent Meiji urban design principles, and may be seen to perpetuate the practice whereby 'innovatively designed buildings could attract the widest possible attention.'[91] Thus in the first instance, landmark buildings were simply built to draw the eye, but later took on the secondary role of providing orientation points. In a relatively new city like Tokyo, which has been largely rebuilt twice in the last century, the love hotel has come to play a particular role in articulating the skyline and providing contemporary landmarks by which city dwellers can orientate themselves. This ability for the love hotel to communicate at the scale of the city augments and complements its intimacy at street level, where signage is designed to be read in close proximity, and entrances invite customers to move with ease in and out of the various establishments in making their choice.

Typically, a skyline sign is mounted on the roof of a love hotel, from which illuminated or neon lettering proclaims its presence (see Figure 1.7). This serves to attract the attention of urban motorists and also enhances the love hotel's visibility from a passing overground train. As a device, it has the effect of incorporating the love hotel into the visual language of the Japanese city, where it trades on its euphemistic status as a hotel: invariably a skyline sign which announces itself to be a 'hotel' will in actual fact be a love hotel on closer inspection.

Approaching Tokyo from Narita airport, there are many instances of high-level signage which advertise the presence of love hotels in the vicinity of a commuter station or shopping node. The Yamanote line, looping around the centre of Tokyo, is also addressed by several prominent love hotel skylines, notably Uguisudani and Ikebukero, where the love hotel districts are immediately adjacent to the train tracks (see Figure 1.8). In Osaka, the elevated loop

Figure 1.7 Hotel Chapel Cinderella skyline sign, Uehonmachi, Osaka.

line passes by the district of Uehonmachi, and the love hotels around Nanba may also be seen rising above the deck of an elevated road passing through that section of the city. In Fukuoka, a skyline of love hotels is reflected in the river opposite Nakasu island, on which the city's soapland is concentrated, making the love hotels read as a discrete urban area set apart from the main nucleus of the city.

Figure 1.8 Uguisudani love hotel district seen from Yamanote line platform, Tokyo.

The skyline sign appears to be a device that is to some extent falling into disuse: the more decrepit love hotels on the far side of Kabukichō in Shinjuku rely on skyline signs as their main communicative aspect, particularly after nightfall, and especially where there is a parking garage present, indicating their main purpose as a locating device for those arriving by car. However, rather than a skyline sign, many of the newer establishments in the same district have now opted for façade lettering displayed on the upper part of the main façade, which is floodlit rather than fabricated in neon. The skyline can also betray a heritage of defunct love hotels: the high-level signs are expensive to dismantle, and often after the closure of a love hotel, the skyline sign remains even when the building below has found a new use, or has itself fallen into disrepair. Similarly, skyline signage is expensive to alter: when love hotels are renamed they may not always apply this renaming to the skyline sign. In such cases, it continues to proclaim its older identity from a distance, as in the case of the Meguro Emperor, Tokyo, or at best, is painted out. An example of this is Hotel Comons' (*sic*) sign in Umeda, now renamed Diva hotel, which remains as a blank box on the roof. The skyline sign is also useful to indicate the ongoing presence of a love hotel while the rest of the building is under reconstruction – as witnessed in the case of the Hotel Atlantis and Hotel La Tiffarna in Osaka. Some love hotel skyline signs are even erected on adjacent buildings, in order to gain the necessary height to increase visibility and function more successfully as a landmark in

the cityscape. This form of large-scale illuminated signage, which is designed to catch the eye from a distance, contributes to an impression that Japanese cities are like 'fragmented, trivialised and accelerated versions of Venturi's Las Vegas.'[92] However, its precise purpose is somewhat different: whereas the spectacular neon roadside signage in Las Vegas was employed by the various casinos along the Strip to maximise the likelihood of persuading the passing motorist to turn off into the very public forecourt, there is something rather more intimate about the skyline sign's mode of communication. It is as if it is 'narrow-casting' its message to individual customers, rather than broadcasting it for all to see. Although there are many parallels that one can draw between a Las Vegas casino and an urban Japanese love hotel, the basic *modus operandi* of the latter has always privileged the pedestrian rather than the motorist.

The skyline sign is really the first part of a two-stage process, which begins with a distant acknowledgement of the love hotel's presence, and ends with locating it in the context of a micro-milieu: in other words it enables patrons to home in on their love hotel of choice, in a city where addressing systems are notoriously difficult to navigate, even for the Japanese. Barthes remarked, 'the largest city in the world is practically unclassified, the spaces which compose it in detail are unnamed.'[93] He elaborated that this is in part overcome by the Japanese propensity to draw impromptu maps for each other, commenting that 'to visit a place for the first time is thereby to begin to write it.'[94] This personal representation of the city-as-landmark reveals the impact and reproducibility of certain urban attributes for the city dweller. When visiting a love hotel for the first time, most patrons would rather not have to stop and ask the way in such personal circumstances, and so the skyline sign performs this initial function of writing for them, providing a means of navigation that can obviate the otherwise interactive process of locating the chosen love hotel. As such, the skyline sign is an important part of the urban wayfinding experience, and functions as a subtle *aide-mémoire* and an important accomplice in the process of selecting a room for the night.

The love hotel skyline also performs an urban role that goes beyond its immediate purpose, in that its skyline presence enhances the imageability and memorability of the city, articulating its moods and zones for city dwellers and animating their passage through vast, undifferentiated, built-up areas. It asserts the love hotel as a participant in the urban drama of the Japanese city, functioning as a constant visual reminder of the need for institutionalised sexual intimacy in urban Japan. It should also be noted that in Japan, where self-conscious urban landmarks are a relatively new phenomenon, there have always been other ways to provide points of reference involving temporal or seasonal markers or events. Rather than heightening its visual identity, the urban condition has tended to be articulated along experiential lines, by drawing attention to moments in the calendarisation of space. Lamp-posts in streets and neighbourhoods all over Japan are invariably decorated with plastic sprigs of cherry blossom in spring or fake maple leaves in autumn, and the main annual *matsuri* (festivals) are observed with street processions, festivities around shrines and temples, street food and open-air picnics.

Love hotels districts often participate directly in these practices, especially in cases where they are co-located with temples and shrines or next to parks – those near religious compounds in Asakusa and Uguisudani have a direct relationship to seasonal events, and these are moments of carnival when the whole of the urban environment is momentarily enlivened and shifts into a less conforming mode. Love hotels have also appropriated some of the seasonal iconography in their own expressions of renewal and revitalisation: silk flowers and colourful posters festoon a newly reopened establishment, and seasonal menus are now advertised outside some of the newest establishments, which pride themselves on offering a full selection of meals via their room service. It is unlikely, however, that we will see a return of the practice that once existed in licensed pleasure quarters whereby brothels celebrated their popularity annually with their own festival known as *tsumi yagu*, in which the prostitutes' bedding was heaped up and put out on show: as Edward Seidenstecker comments, 'it was a curious custom, and it must have been very erotic as well. The bedding, especially commissioned for display, was in gold and silver brocades and coloured silks of extreme gaiety.'[95]

There is one example of an erotic and colourful form of display still in evidence, which for Shoichi Inoue is an indication that the love hotel has entered its final phase as a landmark: in the vicinity of the more downmarket love hotel areas such as Umeda and Uguisudani, flyers advertising call-girls are attached to the lamp-posts and inside telephone boxes. This Inoue interprets as the last vestiges of an expression of sexuality that announces itself publicly, where once the love hotels themselves supplied this message through their over-decorated (*mankanshoku*) façades and sexual references. As landmarks, urban love hotels have tended to become more retiring now that their clientele is adjusting to, and moreover expecting, the plainer urban language they have started to adopt, and as other architectural landmarks begin to assert themselves.

Conclusion

In terms of its presence in the Japanese city, the love hotel district is often found alongside temples and shrines in peripheral locations, and is specifically a part of the city associated with the *shitamachi*, or low city. The spatial practices that arise from these thriving spaces of commerce and enjoyment have been mapped against Lynch's five-part schema to show how through *kata* the city is experienced and the love hotel is located and encountered. There are criticisms in martial arts circles of the whole notion of *kata*, in that it is often referred to as 'dead patterns' which are no longer applicable to real life. Malcolm Miles certainly regards Lynch's work as a dead pattern, 'superseded by critical frameworks [of] feminism, cultural studies and environmentalism [which] reshape the discourse of urbanism.'[96] What I have tried to show here is that just as the love hotel district still has something subtle and interesting to add to the experience of the Japanese city, so too does Lynch's work on urban imageability aid the cognitive understanding of place. However, what has been demonstrated is that

it only amounts to more than the sum of its parts when a more nuanced understanding of its constituent elements is activated.

Japanese cities face a perceived impasse to do with their infrastructural inadequacies, which Akira Suzuki puts down to the fact that 'architects have found it impossible to shape the urban life of Tokyo . . . they [have] lost control of the internal living environment.'[97] He wonders, however, if new social rituals 'may offer a means of restructuring the city.'[98] I have shown here how a number of different social rituals help structure the city, but in this regard, the manner of the individual's engagement with spatiality is critical. Berque has drawn attention to the fact that 'it is not the places which conform to the integrative and stable point of view of the (modern) subject. On the contrary, it is the subject itself which shifts to places and conforms to them.'[99] Both positions demand a recognition that phasal shifts are not necessarily written into the fabric of the city, but are a performative element, a spatial practice that produces the integration of place. Joy Hendry has studied in detail the layering of politeness and shifts of linguistic register that operate in normal Japanese social relations, and argues that Japanese space also exhibits the same layered structure, which requires inhabitants to be aware constantly of their relative status and modify their behaviour in relation to their surroundings.[100] It is therefore the shifting perspective of self in relation to the built environment which helps to establish an ontological patterning in which the differentiation of spatial character is intimately linked to the modification of social character, making behaviours in the Japanese city more contextually conditioned than might be the case in the West.

This is where not only the ocularcentric but also the ideological dimensions of Lynch's perceptual schema come into view: above all, the (Western) perceiving subject of the city according to Lynch is stable and unchanging. That is to say, while Lynch acknowledges that the gazing subject varies from person to person, and that while each person brings his or her own memories to bear on the formation of their image of a city, their individual approach to its constituent parts remains consistent. Adjustments are not consciously made or required as city dwellers navigate through the urban environment, and their role is thus that of a register, in that experientially it is not subject to fluctuation in its evaluative processing of the visual information that the city puts forward. The heterogeneity of a the Japanese urban environment is often regarded by Western observers as an attribute of episodic urban form rather than an experiential modifier. The apparent inward focus is what makes the Japanese city seem episodic, disjointed and fragmented to Western eyes.

The love hotel district thus has an important role to play in challenging and re-mapping cognitive readings of the Japanese city. It provides the city dweller with a range of navigational aids, marginal destinations and compelling encounters, all of which are of value in an era when much of urban life has been sanitised and experientially desensitised. In terms of imageability or legibility, I have shown how the love hotel district urges a path of digression, luring city dwellers away from primary nodes and drawing them centrifugally towards the

borders. There, I have argued that it establishes itself historically as a secondary centre, often alongside places of worship which are similarly relegated to the urban periphery, and here it produces a new language of *meisho*, excrescences which project transgressively upward to interrupt the otherwise relatively uniform city skyline. In so doing, the love hotel district has been shown to write itself into the city, but is nevertheless representationally still under constant erasure, and as such depends upon supplementary systems such as guidebooks to articulate its existence.

Having inscribed themselves into other contexts, while still part of the *uradori*, it would appear that love hotel districts are starting to play a less visually overt role in the urban fabric. Rather than signalling themselves as qualitatively separate from the city's regularised existence, instead they are becoming a more integrated and urbane part of the urban continuum. In Kabukichō, the revised, more demure form of display exhibited by the latest clusters of love hotels gestures towards a desire to function more subtly as a contiguous part of the neutral, normal backdrop of the Japanese city. It would seem that in time the love hotel district could slowly become absorbed into the generalised urban condition, and lose its heterogeneity as it submits to an integrative impulse.

However, appearances can be deceptive: beyond the visual cues, the love hotel district remains discontinuous with the urban realm in two ways. It not only offers a differentiated context for the modification of normal patterns of behaviour and exchange, but it actually succeeds in inverting them. First, it does so by taking up a position along urban edges and margins and makes the periphery into a focal point in terms of urban leisure and sexuality, a critical fold which foregrounds marginality and threatens to displace urban equilibrium with a state of opprobrium. Second, as a liminal space found within the 'zone of evaporation' in Japanese cities, the love hotel district has initiated urban rituals and spatial practices, which restructure the city through their diurnal slippages and manoeuvres. What is interesting are the ways in which spatial practices eroticise the spaces of the city, rather than eroticisation being restricted to the love hotel districts' visual appearance. Thus, even as the physical manifestations of the love hotel district become less visually differentiated and discernible, its distinctive *kata* or spatial practices that are the prelude to the sexual act will continue. The love hotel district thus establishes the city as a form of erotic foreplay and an integral part of a Japanese libidinal economy.

2 The love hotel as a building type

A book published in 2001, entitled *Made in Tokyo*,[1] lays out its architectural contents explicitly in the form of a guide to the unusual and specific building types that have proliferated in the capital in recent years. The generic naming of these types and the isometric line drawings and location maps provide interesting insights into the differences between these new urban constituents according to their main distinguishing features. Among those listed are: neon building, *pachinko* cathedral, sex building, *karaoke* bar, car tower, shopping wall/mall, billboard apartment house, golf taxi building, rollercoaster building, bath tour building. Each entry is defined by its primary function, a typical urban location is given, and a three-dimensional drawing identifies its main elements. The *sekkusu biru*, or sex building, for example, which is typical in soapland (the sex district) in Japan, is shown as a five-storey structure, and is described as a 'mixed tenancy' building, where rooms for sexual services are located in the upper rear parts of the building, with windows alternating with advertising banners across the front façade. The entrance is shown as a narrow flight of stairs leading from the pavement to the first floor and a small signboard sits on the pavement advertising the facilities and services within to passersby.

Notable by its absence from this typological guide to Tokyo's unique infrastructure is the love hotel, although many other *sakariba* (entertainment zone) functions are listed, and the authors make reference to areas such as Kabukichō. It is possible that compared to other building types, the love hotel was considered too varied – that is, insufficiently generic – and hence too difficult to define in such formulaic terms. In one sense, the love hotel lends itself more easily to being *stereotyped* than described as a type, in that populist accounts tend to exaggerate its features, and re-create the love hotel along the lines of a myth.

Type in relation to buildings usually designates a common purpose, or at least broad equivalence in terms of its use value (place of worship, house, town hall), but assumes idiosyncrasy and local inflection in its realisation. Anthony Vidler considers the issue of local inflection in relation to building types, suggesting that 'apparently totalising "types"' are brought into contact with real context, such that 'the architectural project . . . is then presented to the city, so to speak . . . as material to be submitted to the life and consuming power of the context.'[2]

In this way, type enters into a cultural dialectic with site, resulting in a piece of urban architecture. In extreme cases it produces what he calls 'vagabond architecture,' which draws on notions of bohemianism, nomadism and criminal potentiality, practising what Benjamin termed 'the peddling of space' (*colportage de l'espace*).[3] As a place committed to 'a wayward life,' the love hotel has frequently been cast in this light, and its *yakuza* connections and relationship to nomadism will be brought out in this chapter. Vidler's glossing of type presents some useful themes for an exploration of the love hotel, but more importantly, prompts the need for a fully reflexive and dialectical notion of type, particularly in relation to social conditions and cultural formations. A proper explication of the love hotel as a building type thus needs to encompass not only its use, but also different modes of augmentation, materiality and regional variation.

The love hotel's typological status therefore needs to be situated as part of a complex and shifting set of social meanings over a fifty-year period, defined not only with reference to its function and its spatial location and configuration, but also through its evolving manifestation as a culturally situated response. It is this cultural dimension that makes the love hotel significant, or even legible, as a discrete type, and therefore, to draw out the cultural parameters of type, it is useful to draw on a linguistic model, since language, like the love hotel, is culturally responsive and similarly changes through time and across regions.

By mapping love hotels against a linguistic understanding of type, it becomes possible to present and interpret them not as a fixed set of spatial and aesthetic attributes, but as a dynamic array of interdependent practices. J. V. Neustupny, a specialist in Japanese linguistics, describes how 'types mainly serve as devices which explain the generation of individual rules and features, variation and conflict.'[4] In an essay on 'The Role of Typologies in Understanding Japanese Culture and Society,' he argues that in the past typologies simply listed a number of features and seldom discussed the criteria by which configurations of features were arrived at,[5] and therefore concludes that 'typologies must be developed in more rigorous ways.'[6] Within the context of what he calls textural types, namely types which are bound to a culture or society, Neustupny identifies three categories. First, the *common denominator* type is one that is reduced down to principles of basic importance, and is evident in situations where change is minimal or taking place very slowly, which he suggests might be indicated by the long, introspective Tokugawa period in Japan. Second, there is the *interaction* type, which is where different systems are influencing one another, developing some kind of principle of alliance, and is therefore the product of new external interface being established. The example Neustupny offers here is Japan in the Meiji period, but the impact of the American-led Occupation in the postwar period operated similarly. Third, he posits that the *developmental* type is one which is present when society is undergoing a period of enormous change, for example, during a significant phase of internal restructuring and modernisation.

Mapped against this schema, in this chapter the love hotel will be situated as

a *developmental* type, arising during a period of rapid growth from a society that had clearly established *common denominator* types from which to draw, such as the shophouses and their associated signage, brothels and inns, which function as its historical precedents. Japan was confronted from the Meiji period onward with a whole panoply of foreign social mores, particularly during the American-led Occupation. During this *interaction* phase, when the earliest kinds of short-stay hotel accommodation appeared, the idea of the culture house and 'cultural living' were being promoted,[7] and the American motel was introduced. As a result, Japanese value systems were being called into question, such that the love hotel as a *developmental* type arises not just as a response to new lifestyle aspirations but also to rising levels of unhappiness in the postwar period. The current condition of the love hotel will also be shown to betray some signs of becoming a *common denominator* type, as the active phase of its development begins to wane, and its status in society becomes more conventional and integrated.

Common denominator type

A standard assumption that underlies an examination of the love hotel's historical determinants is that it derives from earlier building types dedicated to a sexual purpose, namely the brothels and rendezvous houses of earlier periods. This reading needs to be augmented by an examination of other commercial formations which also informed the development of the love hotel, such as traditional Japanese shophouses or *mise* and their associated signage or *kanban*. As a precedent, the design of shop architecture is of paramount importance in considering the urban love hotel type for two main reasons: first, the development of its commercial role and hence its requirement to participate in the city through both its public and private realms, and second, the need to appeal to its primary clientele, the merchant and commoner classes, by making use of the kinds of signs and symbols with which they were conversant. As shown in the previous chapter, mercantile and entertainment functions are both constituent elements of Japanese low city or *shitamachi* functions, exhibiting similar spatial configurations and *modus operandi*.

The link between the *mise* or shophouse and the geisha is recorded in the phrase *misedashi*, or store-opening, which referred to a young geisha's debut. The spatial configuration of the traditional Japanese shop or *mise*, from the verb *miseru*, to see, indicates an overt visual emphasis involved with the sale of products. In medieval times, a room opened up to the street with removable screen elements, and merchandise was attractively displayed, enticing customers to enter the foremost layer of the building, which was typically built right up to the pavement edge and shielded by a projecting roof. To the rear of the *mise* there would be a vegetable garden from whence the produce came. In Tennōji, a rundown part of town on the outskirts of Osaka, there are still a couple of streets where prostitutes are displayed in this same manner, the mama standing guard in the open shop-front, ready to negotiate a price with a customer; the girl herself, shy and composed, bathed in electric light awaiting her fate. After agreeing a

price, the customer would be invited to retreat to a room further back in the building, possibly on the upper floor, and depart later from the side entrance, the girl returning to her station afterwards.

In his account of the spatiality of Kyoto's licensed pleasure quarter Shimabara, Nicholas Fieve traces the development of the *mise* into a brothel, from which several key attributes of the modern-day love hotel directly derive. Initially, a detached 'tea'-room was built at the bottom of the garden as a place reserved for leisure and private activities. This was made possible by virtue of the fact that land parcels in Kyoto, dating back to the Heian period, tended to be deep, with a narrow street frontage. An *oku-mune*, a private interior space for guests, was built on to the rear of the shop, connected to the *mise* by a passageway, an arrangement which gave rise to the *tsubo niwa* – a little garden situated in between the front and back sections of the house – which is typical of traditional Kyoto houses. Fieve notes that an upper storey, or *nikai zashiki*, was later added, built of dark timber with vertical screening on windows.

Thus, just as at the scale of the city there is a distinction made between the *omotedōri*, or main thoroughfares, and the *uradōri*, or back streets, the type of house which developed from the *mise* contained a front part, known as the *omote-mune*, leading into an inner courtyard, or *zentai*, behind which lay the *oku-mune*, a more private interior space for guests. This arrangement replicates the way in which the Shogun also designated his castle spatially, with the *omote*, front, for state business, and the *oku* or indoors, at the back, which was only occupied by female servants of different ranks.[8] The contemporary use of the word *oku* to refer politely to another man's wife bears witness to the implicit gendering of this spatial layering, in which space deep within the building was largely a female preserve. This layered organisation of front and back spaces meant that 'the invited guests could amuse themselves quite freely, without fear of being observed from the street.'[9] Indeed, the use of wooden screening, or *kōshi*, 'let those inside see outside without themselves being easily visible from the outside.'[10]

The arrangement of the attenuated spatialisation of the *mise* is perpetuated in the development of the love hotel. Not only is there typically a highly evolved means of layering and separating different forms of entry and exit, with the first spaces operating as a decision-making zone, as in the case of a typical *mise*, but the arrangement of bedroom spaces at the back and above replicates this staged structuring of spatial penetration, and constructs the same level of controlled visibility. Many love hotels even have a residual *tsubo niwa* within the layers of entry between street and lobby, the best examples of which are not surprisingly in Kyoto. It is intentionally difficult to see into the lobby space of the love hotel from the street, and most establishments, with the exception of the newest generation of love hotels, tend to mask or shield the windows of upper storeys, either wholly or partially, so that no one can see in, and very often the customers themselves are denied a view out.

While the love hotel controls direct lines of sight both into and out of the building, it nevertheless has a pronounced visual presence in the street, aided in

most cases by the presence of specific forms of signage. Historically these may be linked to the Japanese *kanban* style: *kan* comes from see, and *ban* means board, although such signs were also often made of cloth, tin and paper. As Frank Gibney explains in his historical account of *kanban*,

> merchants both in Edo and in the ancient capital of Kyoto had already developed speciality quarters. Not the least reason for the profusion of *kanban* was the merchants' need to establish the identity and attractiveness of a single store in a quarter devoted to shops selling much the same merchandise.[11]

Urban love hotels that are concentrated into particular enclaves have a similar need to assert their presence relative to each other, and this is expressed through a hierarchy of signage, ranging from skyline signs designed to be read from afar at the top of the building (traditionally referred to as *nikai kanban*), to those projecting from the façade to be seen from further down the street (deriving from *nobori kanban*), and those adorning the fascia to announce the love hotel at closer quarters (deriving from *sage kanban*), including mobile, often backlit signs, that are wheeled out on to the street to indicate the establishment is open for trade, and for a specified price and time. Such signs, which we might call *keitai kanban*, 'portable signboards,' recall the saying that shopkeepers often utter at closing time, '*kanban desu*' – time to take the sign in. On closer inspection, there is often a further level of detailed information on the outside of the love hotel, giving insights into the specifics of its offer: facilities are often listed, together with new features, special discounts and so on. The key sign, however, which indicates its identity as a love hotel as opposed to any other kind of establishment, is the rest-stay sign, which in larger establishments is often duplicated at each entrance along the love hotel's frontage. Furthermore, the room panel in the entrance lobby, with its backlit images of bedroom interiors, should also be regarded as part of the *kanban* aesthetic, since it is part and parcel of the representational system employed to market the merchandise – the rooms themselves.

In addition to the presence of signboards, traditionally the *kanban* style of adorning a commercial establishment also made extensive use of *noren*, a handmade cloth curtain hanging over the entrance indicating modest hospitality, usually split in the middle or in sections to allow customers to pass through, but partially shielding the interior from view. *Noren* are frequently used in domestic settings too, hanging as a modesty screen over the doorway into the kitchen area and also indicating the entrance to a bathroom. Public bathhouses (*sento*) would usually have a *noren* over the main entrance, with the word *yū* (hot water) inscribed across it.

In a love hotel, however, the *noren* has shifted both its locus and its purpose, but is similarly employed as a gesture towards modesty and discretion. Rather than being used over the main pedestrian entrance, the love hotel *noren* is usually an elongated series of PVC flaps that hang over the entrance to the parking garage. As such, it has become a defining part of the love hotel typology

Figure 2.1 Car park *noren* and boards concealing licence plates, Hotel Cosmo, Uehonmachi, Osaka.

whenever parking is present, and the *noren* thus serves to index or indicate metonymically the building's status as a love hotel: normal hotels would not employ such a feature at the entrance to a parking facility. The name of the love hotel is invariably screenprinted on to the PVC *noren* (see Figure 2.1), and while as a device it provides little real privacy for those arriving or departing by car, it is nevertheless effective in terms of indicating the extent of property ownership, particularly in cluster of love hotels where each has its own facility, thereby avoiding any confusion as to where to park. It has therefore shifted its *raison d'être* from discreet to discrete.

There are regional differences in the way the love hotel utilises *kanban* techniques to communicate its presence: Osaka love hotels tend to be more exuberant and demonstrative, employing greater use of colour and incorporating bolder graphical elements, with three-dimensional iconic forms featuring much more commonly in their elevational treatment compared to those studied in Tokyo. In Kyoto there was a complete absence of any figurative elevational enhancements. Suzuki notes a preponderance of *kanban* imagery in Osaka's entertainment districts generally,[12] particularly in Dōtonbori where giant octopus, large crabs with moving claws and fibreglass models of blowfish hang on many restaurant façades. These are known as *yoki kanban*, and Levy and Sneider regard them as historical continuity with earlier *kanban* forms, in that 'these marks of the old

Figure 2.2 Hotel Mickey Cookies, Nanba, Osaka, as an example of a *yoki kanban* façade.

Osaka *chōnin* persisted into the Japanese business of today, honoured as faithfully as the replicas of *kanban* and *noren* which Japanese multinationals use to dignify their product and their house.'[13] *Yoki kanban* on a number of Osaka love hotels targeting a younger clientele include large bows, teddy bears, hippopotamuses and cartoon characters, and gesture towards a cute or *kawaii* aesthetic,

which is generally regarded as an indication of an infantile culture in denial about its adult status (see Figure 2.2). By contrast, the more suburban love hotels in Kyoto appeared more 'grown-up' and made much more discreet use of signage, relying instead on low-level visual indicators to establish their purpose and status relative to their residential surroundings. Only one love hotel in my study sample, namely Yayaya, which opened in Uguisudani in 2004, utilised a traditional cloth *noren* in its entrance lobby, giving it the appearance of an old bathhouse or inn.

A major part of an updated *kanban* aesthetic that love hotels employ is the use of neon. Suzuki claims that in Japan neon is in some ways synonymous with sex, and of the three hundred or so love hotels studied, an overwhelming majority incorporated coloured exterior lighting of some form, predominantly the neon variety. This raises the issue of the cultural association of *kanban* with vulgarity and excess: Gibney notes that in the past shops were required to advertise in a way 'that would entice customers without seeming too showy or blatant. Japan's Tokugawa rulers tended to frown upon excess display particularly during their periodic fits of Puritanism.'[14] This aesthetic control was informed by visual cultural norms established by the reigning shōgun of the time, and meant that there was an implicit subcultural connection between conspicuousness and worldliness, to the extent that by the end of the seventeenth century, Levy states that 'conspicuous consumption became an art in itself'[15] such that 'inevitably the culture of the time reflected the tastes of the merchants for the gaudy and decorative.'[16] The controls over the appearance of shophouses were in a sense an extension of the kinds of sumptuary regulations which were put in place during the Tokugawa period to control the status connotations of dress: Eiko Ikegami's work shows that 'since the merchants' aspirations toward upward social mobility were blocked by status boundaries, they substituted expensive clothing – which became an index of economic rank and privilege – for social promotion.'[17] The same may be said of the love hotel, which due to its low social status has used its decorative appearance to flout contemporary mores about the appropriate urban attire of buildings. Shoichi Inoue makes explicit this link between decorative dress and decorative façades by employing the term *mankanshoku*, which embodies simultaneously the connotations of a painted whore and an over-decorated battleship returning with the spoils of war. Inoue suggests that this aspect of the love hotel's appearance, which was originally intended to make it more appealing to a male customer, is now being toned down in order to appeal more to female customers, who find the gaudiness of earlier love hotel exteriors unappealing. It is a well-researched fact that women are much less visually orientated in sexual matters, and in any case in the late 1980s during the corrective phase of its development, it was important for the love hotel trade to distance itself from any whore-like connotations if it was to build up a good relationship with its female customers.

Another possible reason for the gradual reduction in the *kanban* aesthetic in the design of love hotels is the need to minimise its associations with the *yakuza*: the origins of the *kanban* are thought to be signs held aloft on poles carried by

itinerant pedlars, who wrapped their merchandise in a cloth. The *yakuza* are descendants of the pedlar, or *tekiya* class, and according to Jacob Raz their form of self-presentation has been expressly identified with the conspicuous *kanban*. The love hotel as a building type may therefore be deemed to function metonymically as a *kanban* on behalf of the *yakuza*, making it 'an announcement of an exclusive order in typically inclusive terms.'[18] Owing to the fact that there are reputedly *yakuza*-run love hotels and those which have been built with money from *yakuza* loan sharks, the visible cues that indicate this ambiguous *yakuza* connection certainly supplied the love hotel with a mysterious caché, which at one time probably worked for it as a type, and now is more apt to work against it.

Kanban are also differentiated in terms of the types of calligraphy used, which for the Japanese carry a variety of shades of meaning. These range from old, traditional styles such as *tensho*, to bolder forms associated with kabuki or sumo wrestling, and more modern gestural types where the brushstrokes are loose and fragmented, some of which are now considered illegible. In the case of the love hotel, a whole new *kanban* aesthetic has developed, which employs newer, simpler typefaces and forms of script that sever the connotations with old values and meanings. The definitive love hotel thereby distanced itself from classic forms and the association with a craft tradition in order to maintain its typological position as an outsider, making extensive use of non-Sino scripts and the romanised alphabet in its projecting and fascia signs. Only a couple of the newest love hotels made use of an updated, subtly rendered *kanban* style: the aforementioned Yayaya in Uguisudani uses the *tensho* style of calligraphy (Figure 2.3), and the façade makes use of natural render, earthy colours, timber detailing and the kind of dark vertical window screens on upper windows, recalling a geisha house in the Gion district of Kyoto. This gesturing to a more sophisticated aesthetic repositions the love hotel as a building type which used to favour excessive and vulgar motifs, but which is now signalling a different aspiration towards loftier, more aristocratic associations.

The constitution of the first licensed pleasure quarter, or floating world, was at the start of the seventeenth century, when the shogunate allocated a piece of marshland to the north of Edo and gave permission for the first incarnation of the *Yoshiwara* ('Rushfield'), which opened for business in 1618. Nicholas Bornoff describes the kinds of architecture found within:

> the brothel buildings were to be entirely functional, of predetermined size and devoid of decoration; their inmates would be strictly prohibited from wearing showy finery . . . patrons were also to be barred from remaining in the quarter for longer than twenty-four hours, and the gates of the Yoshiwara would only remain open during the day.[19]

From the outset, it was not only sumptuary regulations that were applied to the 'attire' of buildings: restrictions on opening hours also gave the ruling elite a degree of control. These restrictions came to be less strictly enforced towards

Figure 2.3 *Tensho*-style calligraphy and Japanese styling on Hotel Yayaya, Uguisudani, Tokyo.

the end of the Tokugawa period, and Seidenstecker gives a description of a later incarnation of the Yoshiwara, when

> the number of houses on the eve of the Sino-Japanese war was still smaller than in the last years of Edo, though some of them were larger and more

> ornate houses by far than Edo had ever seen, grand edifices, indeed, of four and five storeys, with chandeliers, stained glass and the like.[20]

Clearly, the *mankanshoku* aesthetic was starting to take hold by this stage.

When Yoshiwara was moved to a location further north in 1657 after a major fire, Bornoff notes the buildings were allowed to be a little larger, and could operate all night. As a result, the new pleasure quarter became known as *Fuyajō*, or 'Nightless Castle.'[21] The use of the castle as a quintessential architectural motif for the love hotel thus has its origins in the pleasure quarters' scheme of reference, informing the design of the love hotels such as the Meguro Emperor hotel in Tokyo, built in 1973 on the south bank of the River Meguro (see Figure 2.4) and designed by architect Kurosaka Yasuhisa. The castle aesthetic, described as 'epoch-making,'[22] is embodied in Katagi's description of the Meguro Emperor hotel:

> It looks like a medieval castle; machicolation, battlements, above these are asymmetrically placed turrets, further up is the donjon with yet more machicolation and battlements. The walls are covered by mortar, dotted with oblong or circular windows and balconies. The features suggest this is a European medieval castle, and the lack of historical buildings in Japanese cities makes it stands out. When the impression of the details and the dirt on

Figure 2.4 Meguro Emperor hotel (now Meguro Club) on banks of River Meguro, Tokyo.

> the Meguro river are marred at dusk, 'Meguro Emperor' takes you to the famous Rhine.[23]

The Meguro Emperor, built during the definitive period in the love hotel's development some ten years before Cinderella's castle was constructed as the centre-piece of Tokyo Disneyland, inserts a virile yet romantic imported image in the midst of Tokyo, even today. Its explicit visual and material othering relative to the generic cityscape served as an effective tactic to convey its radical programmatic differentiation from the surrounding buildings, promising something more than a rest or stay. Its strong image enabled it to assume the role of the 'model' love hotel, no doubt bolstered by the later influence of Disneyfied castle imagery, functioning as the archetypal image of the love hotel long after a preference for this kind of symbolism has waned, proving that 'all models have a very strong symbolic significance and all too conveniently become an easy and readily justifiable solution because they ensure that the building will immediately be recognised by all.'[24]

Contrary to this insistence on the castle as model in the context of Tokyo's pleasure quarters, the basis for the architecture in Kyoto's pleasure quarter, Shimabara, was the Kyoto townhouse or *machiya*. Here, two architectural styles in particular were favoured: the *shoin* style and the *sumiya* style. Fieve comments that the *sumiya* style 'has certain baroque overtones which are quite foreign to the pure line of aristocratic buildings, but the quality of such detailed and sensual decoration offers an eloquent contrast to the austerity of the townhouses at that time.'[25] On the other hand, the adoption of the *shoin* style created a look that made use of bamboo, straw, reeds, wood and bare cob-walls – 'all of which became features of garden pavilions within the compounds belonging to leading nobles and military lords – and all of which was in marked contrast to the standard of noble architecture that adorned their reception rooms.'[26] This kind of material palette with its subtle forms of muted, naturalistic detailing has just begun to inform the design of love hotels, particularly in parts of Tokyo, and it is interesting to see this design strategy of emulating the taste of the ruling elite re-emerging long after the shōguns of the Tokugawa period prohibited its use on ordinary buildings.

As a contemporary typological descendant of the Yoshiwaran brothel, the love hotel embodies many of the ornate features associated with its Meiji styling, yet it is also consistent with some of the earlier more prescriptive measures. The restriction of no more than twenty-four-hour occupancy is still an assumed part of the love hotel protocol, and the configuration of the external envelope of many love hotels is, albeit in a small-scale manner, symbolically walled and moated: many establishments employ water features as part of the threshold condition, and almost all incorporate a sequence of walls, screens or barriers which block direct entry. Where the contemporary love hotel deviates from the description of a seventeenth-century brothel is in its free use of decoration, and exploring this issue warrants further examination of the links between taste and class in Tokugawa Japan.

Japanese design history is often characterised as a history of cultural borrowing, and it seems clear that borrowing was practised as a form of aspirational design, where aristocratic elements provided a means for the brothel to imbue the prosaic form of the townhouse with more style and flamboyance, at the same time legitimising it through association with more noble architectural references. Although frowned upon by those of a Confucianist disposition, the relative isolation of Shimabara from the seat of power in Kyoto made it possible to experiment: as Fieve maintains, 'far away from the conventions which regulated the lives of people in all social classes, the mixing of styles and of influences was possible in a place that was outside the social norms.'[27] As with the restrictions on the use of *kanban*, the proper use of detailing was not supposed to usurp those features and characteristics associated with a higher social class. This makes the eclectic free interpretation of aristocratic detailing where pleasure quarters were concerned particularly transgressive, leading Fieve to conclude that 'in terms of architectural expression, then … the licenced district of Shimabara represents a zone of freedom.'[28] The most expressive components of Kyoto's zone of freedom were not so much the street frontage of these establishments as the so-called 'tea-huts' that lay in the gardens behind.

These so-called 'teahouses' had as their precedent the rustic tea-huts, which Zen tea masters developed back in the fifteenth century, where their original aesthetic and meditative purpose was perverted in Shimabara to encompass sexual play. As such, the teahouses of the *yūkaku* referenced conventional forms of Japanese hospitality in a rhetorical manner. In the same way, the contemporary love hotel embodies a rhetorical gesture towards contemporary forms of etiquette, in that lobbies are now being retrofitted with sofas, bars and café tables, but there is rarely an actual barman or waitress to come and take an order; these are spaces which are purely scenographic, and are not in any case the place where couples would rendezvous: the modern equivalent of the meeting place would tend to be elsewhere, in front of the train station, or in a Starbucks or Excelsior[29] coffee shop beyond the love hotel district altogether. The preamble to the love hotel that harks back to the role of the teahouses are the kinds of sex shops which have proliferated in soapland districts. These kinds of service known as *shashin-shimei* typically preface streets of love hotels and have touts luring customers inside to view walls of backlit images of models, their eyes masked by a black rectangle. The proprietor is there to aid the process of selection by generic 'type' of woman or man, and then to make the necessary arrangements to meet someone fitting this description, for a set fee, off the premises. Such *fuzoku* (adult entertainment) establishments were observed trading in the *sakariba* of Shinjuku, Shibuya, Nanba and Umeda, where larger concentrations of customers provided a lucrative basis for their business.

In 1872, a liberation order was issued which released prostitutes from servitude in the pleasure quarters, and after this point many brothels became *karizashiki*, or 'rooms for rent', where women 'were permitted to do business in the rented rooms, so long as they were licenced.'[30] Seidenstecker notes that such establishments were limited to the areas around the post stations in Tokyo,

which were the main points of entry to the old city. There was even an old Meiji saying, 'a thousand houses, four thousand women, seven districts' of which Yoshiwara was the largest.

By the start of the Taishō era, Seidenstecker describes how the *hikitejaya*, or 'teahouses that take one by the hand . . . were guides to and intermediaries for the or bordellos proper,'[31] providing a space for introductions and negotiations to take place. Over time, the successor to *hikitejaya* was the *machiai*, which Seidenstecker notes were originally simply the antechambers to tea-huts, but these eventually became 'places of assignation and presently restaurants to which geisha were summoned.'[32] Bornoff offers a slightly different account, suggesting that in Yoshiwara's five main streets it was the *ageya* houses where introductions were arranged, and these came to be called *machiya* (meeting houses) or *deaichaya* (teahouses), or even the composite *machiaijaya*. The teahouse experience is described by West:

> upon arrival, a female employee secured customers' shoes and other possessions, not for safety, but as a security deposit on the bill, which was paid upon exit. She then escorted customers to a private room, served tea and cake, drew a bath, and left the couple to their own devices.[33]

West also reports that as late as 1926 there were some 3,250 *machiai* in Tokyo alone.[34] It was in such a teahouse that the infamous Sada Abe murdered her lover in 1936, an event which caused a media frenzy about her sexually active lifestyle and the grotesque circumstances of her lover's death. Her statements to the police following her arrest revealed that she and her lover frequented many such teahouses, which operated in a manner similar to that of a contemporary love hotel.[35] Roadside teahouses were places to rest on a journey, and the very notion of 'rest' came to have sexual meanings as travellers refreshed themselves in other ways. Indeed, the use of the term 'rest' to mean a short stay in a love hotel probably harks back to this earlier practice.

In truth, however, the real precedent for the love hotel, in terms of providing a place outside their homes for ordinary folk to have sex, was the park bench. The Japanese were clearly not at all prudish about such behaviour, but at the same time this was not a form of exhibitionism, more a matter of expedience. Parks and open spaces were the most typical venue until well into the twentieth century for ordinary Japanese folk: West quotes novelist Aiko Goto, who, in an interview regarding the increase in the number of love hotels, responded:

> sex was originally something to be done while bathed in sunlight in the middle of a field. The need to seek stimulation behind closed doors shows how weak people have become. Young people don't need stimulation like that; young people should be doing it in the park. It's much more pleasant.[36]

Contextualising and updating this *alfresco* ideal, Howard French remarks that where sex is concerned, ordinary Japanese people 'have been inventive: painted

screens and voluminous robes offered lovers of old a semblance of privacy; lovers of today rely on the cellphone to arrange assignations and on love hotels to keep them.'[37] As such, the love hotel interiorised outdoor space, and there are aspects of its interior design (which will be covered in Chapter 3) that gesture towards this condition.

While sexual intercourse was common in public places and outdoor settings, this location was not idealised or eroticised. Analysing the settings of erotic prints, Screech shows how their persistent theme of floating world imagery 'effectively strips sex off the streets of Edo itself'[38] to the extent that 'the city is sexually inert.'[39] Sex as depicted in erotic imagery was thus more and more interiorised, but practical opportunities for sex indoors were largely lacking until much later in the twentieth century. West's research led him to assert:

> it was not until the 1930s that the market provided 'amateurs' with indoor facilities suitable for them in the form of *enshuku*, the first true predecessor of the modern affordable love hotel. *Enshuku* literally means 'one-yen dwelling,' and customers paid one yen per person to rent a room by the hour.[40]

These establishments stood out during the pre-war period in that they 'marketed what was then quite exotic: rooms with Western furnishings, double beds (so scandalous that they could not be pictured in print ads), and locking doors.'[41] West notes that in addition to the *enshuku*, sexual liaisons occurred in a rather unlikely location: noodle restaurants (*sobaya*). He reports that

> at the beginning of the 20th century, it was common knowledge that noodle restaurants rented out upstairs rooms for short periods of time for sex. In fact, it was such common knowledge in some areas that actual noodle restaurants (which served noodles but had no rooms for rent) were forced to write 'REAL noodle restaurant' on their outdoor signs in order to enable clientele to distinguish them from sex locations.[42]

Other accounts suggest that the precursor to the love hotel were roadside travel inns, or *tsurekomiyado*, set up for Japanese prostitutes to service American troops in the aftermath of the Second World War, which were later revised for use by Japanese patrons. Even today, *kissaten* (sit-in-type coffee shops), internet cafés, *karaoke* bars and other facilities offering booth-like accommodation are deemed adequate substitutes for the park bench, or are simply more inexpensive and expedient than a night in a love hotel.

The love hotel also derives some of its formal qualities from the traditional Japanese inn or *ryokan*, while at the same time being a reaction against the style of service associated with staying at a *ryokan*. In the 1960s many *ryokans* were used as love hotels: one Japanese writer recalls:

> when I was a student in Kyoto there were many such tiny *ryokans* along 'Philosophers' Path' near Ginkaku-ji temple. When the students passed by

> the hotels after drinks, they used to shout *ganbare yo!* ('Do it hard!') over the fences to the couples who might be in there.[43]

While the *machiai* offered the same kind of service associated with staying at a *ryokan*, later love hotels were a marked departure from it. In a *ryokan* guests are received graciously by their hosts at the entrance, change into house slippers on entry, and are personally shown by a maid to their *tatami*-matted room, where she prepares and serves green tea for them, explains the arrangements for bathing and dining, then bows and exits backwards from the room, returning later to make up the futon beds. The issuing of keys and collection of payment are treated as minor matters that do not intrude on the welcome. Staying at a *ryokan* is thus a gracious experience embodying a highly socialised level of commitment on the part of the guest. This derives in part from Japanese tea ceremony etiquette: admiring the garden/the view/the items displayed in the *tokonoma*, all formed part of the mannered acceptance and enjoyment of the host's facilities. The *ryokan* may be identified in performative terms as *kata*, where guests and hosts play out a practised, ritualised form of participation. By contrast, the love hotel, while just as mannered in its spatial practices, dispenses with the intimacy of the traditional *ryokan* welcome, and installs in its place social anonymity, where the contractual arrangements and the norms of reciprocity[44] are minimised to preserve discretion and save embarrassment. In a love hotel, slippers are simply not required (one exception being the elderly Hotel Joyful Club in Uehonmachi, where they are laid out in front of the room panel). In a love hotel, guests are rarely shown to their rooms; instead there are technological solutions borrowed from the airline industry: floor lights often illuminate the route from lobby to room once payment has been secured. Love hotel money transactions are almost legendary, with many weblogs reporting tales of procedural confusion and dismay over automated key issue and pneumatic shuttle systems. In the postwar period, *ryokan* offering short-stay accommodation were referred to as '*abekku hoteru*' (from the French *avec*, with), and reputedly the main change made to their accommodations was the addition of numerous mirrors. Other places for overnight stays, particularly those which lay 'on the fringes of amusement districts and thus [had] a fairly long-standing function as "*hotels de passe*," '[45] simply retained their traditional *tatami*-matted and futon-based interiors.

Interaction type

There have been two building types to emerge from Japan's interaction with the West during the twentieth century which have a direct bearing on the development of the love hotel, the first being the 'culture house' movement which took off in the 1920s, and the second being the motel, which did not start to have an impact until after the war. Jordan Sand's book *House and Home* shows how Japanese ideals regarding domestic life were fundamentally reworked in the Taishō period (1912–1926), with the culture house as its focus. This movement

derived from Western floor plans and images of detached two-storey homes which revolved around a nuclear family lifestyle, and were well endowed with modern accoutrements and artefacts to support a cultural life. Sand writes, 'after the term was coined in 1922, the "culture house" served as a touchstone in the discussion of improving "middle-class" life, and in debates over social inequality among white-collar urbanites.'[46] He draws attention to the ways in which 'consumer subjects in cities of the Japanese metropole took pleasure in exotic appropriations from the empire and the global market-place of "culture."'[47] While there were those who had travelled outside Japan, for the many who had not, the mere presence of foreign cultural artefacts served to imbue their lives with an atmosphere of cosmopolitanism and remind them, as Sand shows, that they occupied the centre of an Asian trade empire. Not surprisingly, given the devastation wrought by the 1923 earthquake in Tokyo, there was also a pragmatic reason to turn to new forms of building construction in the 1920s, making masonry buildings a practical imperative in the rebuilding exercise.

Culture villages, which comprised model houses with European-style pitched roofs (often covered in red tiles), glazed windows and white rendered walls, were being built all over Tokyo to showcase a new way of living. By 1929, architect and documenter of the culture house era, Wajirō Kon, commented: 'there is hardly a suburban house these days that is not influenced by the so-called culture house.'[48] Different variants emerged, including the *supanishu* (Spanish) style, and also something called *kindai wafū*, or modern Japanese style. Art Deco was also much in evidence, with styling that incorporated streamlining, porthole windows and the whitewashed look. Sand delineates four ways in which the culture house altered the inherent visibility of the typical residence in Japan. He suggests that, first, they were designed in an obvious way to be looked at; second, their prolific use of graphic styles accentuated their status as specular objects; third, the amount of advertising turned the houses into popular symbols of the era; and lastly, they were literally more visible because they were not built with high surrounding fences as traditional Japanese homes were.

These four changes prefigure aspects of the outward appearance of the love hotel, whose detached and compact form has always exhibited itself as something to be looked at. As already discussed, graphical elements in terms of *yoki kanban* became a common part of the façade treatment in some parts of Japan, and the absence of a high perimeter fence maintains the 1920s practice of having lower garden walls. Sand describes the status of the culture house as constituting a 'fragmented social space' in the sense that it 'promised both the exposure of everyday practice to the even light of rationality and the pursuit of secret fantasies in a hidden space of play.'[49] The love hotel errs on the side of the latter, but its constructional development owes a considerable amount to a rationalising discourse which produced the culture house as a robust and secure form. Indeed, part of the erotics of the love hotel derives from the idea of being able to lock it up, or possess the key. Sand argues that it is the particular combination of new features such as these and their connotations which produced the culture life as a

'contested space,' indicative of 'a blurring of boundaries between masculine architecture, a modern, Westernising public pursuit, and feminine ornament.'[50] The culture house as interaction type therefore represents a powerful grouping of imported values and images from which the love hotel as a developmental type could later draw, such that erotic values and cosmopolitan meanings were already embodied in certain forms, and could be used metonymically.

While the main period of culture house construction came to an end in the run-up to the Second World War, 'dreams of the cultural life were still very much alive in the first two decades after the war.'[51] The love hotel may be regarded as a late manifestation of this dream, especially given the fact that it was not until the 1970s that home ownership became attainable for middle-class Japanese: love hotels acted as an aspirational substitute which could be temporarily 'owned.' By the 1980s, the influence of the love hotel's discrete, self-contained form had evidently informed a renewed commitment to culture houses, when there was a spate of building what Sand describes as 'box-shaped white-panelled American-style "shortcake houses."'[52] Even today, as a building type the love hotel represents a subcategory of cultural living, particularly in its alignment with aspirational cultural values and an orientation towards the commodified rather than the crafted.

The culture house continued to evolve as an interaction type until well past the eve of the love hotel's effective moment of inception: the moment when the new Anti-Prostitution Law, passed in 1956, came into effect on 1 April 1958, banning licensed prostitution. Lesley Downer describes the nostalgic reaction which this produced in the pleasure quarters: on the eve of the new law, 31 March 1958,[53] brothel owners, prostitutes and their patrons, all linked arms and sang *Hotaru no Hikari*, 'The Firefly's Glow,' in 'one of those moments of exquisite poignancy which the Japanese love to savour.'[54] Downer articulates the impact of the new law, whereby

> hereafter there would only be unlicenced prostitution which rapidly became the domain of the *yakuza*. Some of the most famous old houses of the Yoshiwara did indeed close. Some became cafés, but most simply carried on under another name, setting up signboards advertising themselves as *toruko* or Turkish Baths.[55]

The year 1958 was also, then, the point of inception of soapland. Following the implementation of the new law, the late 1950s brought about a typological transformation of former brothels. Akira Suzuki provides an interesting insight into the regional variations on the euphemistic renaming of older establishments, claiming that in Tokyo the brothels or *yūkaku* were renamed cafés, perhaps indicating the greater cosmopolitanism of the capital at that time relative to other cities; in Fukuoka they were called *ryoriya*, or 'eating houses,' in Kyoto *ōchaya*, honourable teahouses, perhaps reflecting the predilection for delicacy and euphemism in this more genteel environment, and in Yamaguchi *machiai*, or meeting houses.[56] Katagi's account of this period[57] highlights the fact that many

of the former *yūkaku* were turned into *tsurekomiyado*, and describes them as being of a wooden bungalow type, built in the traditional Edo period style, but fitted with all mod cons. During the 1960s, many *tsurekomiyado* were rebuilt in reinforced concrete like *manshon* (apartment) buildings. This constructional shift is an indication of a level of confidence in the likely longevity of the love hotel as a type, and evidence of the general spirit of optimism that was growing in the 1960s. West sketches in subsequent love hotel developments during this period:

> contemporaneous weekly magazine articles reveal a host of different labels, including yellow hotels, couple hotels, and love hotels. Whatever the name, these early love hotels were set apart from their *enshuku* predecessors by two primary features: 'elegant,' 'gorgeous,' or 'royal' architecture and furnishings.[58]

These three adjectives betray a growing self-consciousness during this period of the love hotel's development, where the inevitable starkness of expedient postwar construction was in the process of being reassuringly banished. What was replacing it was an implicit design code that favoured the plush, the sumptuous and the lavish, producing a new species of love hotel that paraded its opulence with newfound dignity.

These changes in the love hotel's physical construction and appearance mirror the rapid changes taking place in postwar Japan. The context for the Anti-Prostitution law in 1958 is also fascinating, coming at a time in Japanese history when the American-led Occupation had recently ended, and all kinds of values and behaviours were being reappraised. During this important part of Japan's early postwar reconstruction phase politics were in a state of turmoil, and stable working cultures and a new wave of mass consumption were yet to become established. At this time, the main cultural reference point was obviously America, as Yasue Yuwahara claims: 'during the Occupation years, the Japanese were actually kept in isolation and knew about the outside world only through American eyes.'[59] Shunsuke Tsurumi's *Cultural History of Postwar Japan* lists the three main effects of the Occupation:

> first in the area of food, second in the region of lifestyle, especially in male–female relationships, and lastly in the region of the sense of justice, the shift to the new values set by the United States was felt to be a necessity which had to be accepted.[60]

Part of this process of adjustment involved a new level of prudishness: the Americans thought it uncivilised that the Japanese allowed mixed bathing in their public bathhouses, and insisted that walls were erected separating male and female bathers. They were even more disapproving of the practice of making love in public places. Americans were held in high esteem in the cultural consciousness of a beleaguered and belittled Japanese nation, and thus in the same

way as Tokugawa *yūkaku* emulated the detailing of the reigning elite, in the 1960s the motel epitomised an American elite lifestyle to which the love hotel could aspire.

Apart from the motel, there were of course other kinds of Western-style hotel accommodation being built in Japan in the latter half of the twentieth century, such as large high-class business or tourist-class hotels which were entirely consistent with international standards, and defined for the Japanese the height of hospitality in a globalised world. These palatial five-star hotels offered even greater levels of customer service than the traditional inns, and certainly required the same degree of social interaction upon checking in. By contrast, as a typological import, the motel introduced a more anonymised set of protocols in Japan. Andreas Stuhlmann characterises the motel as a key component in the connotational shift in the love hotel as a building type, enabling a new set of references to be brought into play:

> inspired by the motorisation of Japan in the 60s, another prototype of the love hotel were the simple and functional motels that sprang up near highway interchanges. Then came the time when more and more people started to visit exotic, foreign countries, and soon a simple, cockroach-ridden *tatami*-matted room in a 'love hotel' with a *dasai* (corny) Japanese name were not satisfying anymore.[61]

The Japanese image of the motel, or *moteru*, was one that had been heavily mediated by Japanese exposure to influential American films such as Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), and consequently as a type the motel was seen as simultaneously glamorous and edgy. The American motel formula also raised the stakes technologically for the Japanese hotel industry as a whole, introducing 'the 3 Cs': they all had Coolers (refrigerators), they privileged the Car, and they were equipped with a Colour TV. Motels proliferated in Japan in the run-up to the 1964 Tokyo Olympics as a quick fix to the shortage of hotel beds, and both the Olympics and the motel were responsible for increasing the levels of television ownership in Japan as it slowly became a domestic necessity.

Like other types of hotel, the love hotel also adopted the motel's 3C formula, but it has since augmented this with a variety of more specialised facilities, which will be discussed in Chapter 3. Japan's extra-urban love hotels also adopted the motel's spatial arrangement in terms of the adjacency that is achieved between car-parking and rooms, but this required a device to occlude the registration plates of the car parked in front of the room. These 'automotive *noren*' are little clip-on covers for the plates themselves, or take the form of a board which is leant against the front of the vehicle. This is now a familiar part of the love hotel's paraphernalia, and, like the plastic *noren*, has become similarly metonymic. In urban settings where land was much more limited, parking facilities developed a different syntactical relationship to the lobby space, with motorists parking underground or on an adjacent lot and entering the lobby via a separate entrance to patrons arriving on foot.

Quite apart from the reconstruction of the Japanese value system that resulted from the Occupation years, the need for wholesale literal reconstruction cannot be overstated: Tsurumi describes how, in the immediate postwar years,

> all the major cities, except Kyoto, had been practically burned down. In Tokyo, the horizon, hidden for many years, could be seen in all directions. Many were living in air-raid shelters; others used drainage pipes to store their kitchen utensils and even to sleep in . . . our manner of living at the outset of the Occupation had much in common with the ancients.[62]

The 1950s were quite simply a ground zero in Japanese cultural life, and a repetition of earlier traumatic periods, notably the 1923 Kanto earthquake. Everything needed to be rebuilt from the ground up, including the confidence and self-belief of the Japanese people, requiring tremendous physical and psychological effort and resilience, in order to bring about a process of recovery and regeneration. The early love hotel served a useful psychological role in the wake of this period. Munesuke Mita's account of *The Social Psychology of Modern Japan* devotes one chapter to 'The Typology of Unhappiness,'[63] for which he carried out a detailed survey of 304 agony column respondents in 1962. His intention was to recognise and assess different types of unhappiness experienced by Japanese people in the wake of the Occupation and during the early days of rebuilding the economy. From this study he produced a series of 'macrosystem' diagrams charting the causes and corollary factors involved in feelings respondents expressed of loneliness, anxiety, alienation, frustration and fatigue.

Each of these factors may be seen to contribute to the love hotel's formation as a tactical response, where the underlying purpose is to mitigate any unhappiness by providing access to a new type of space capable of countering the kinds of concerns captured in Mita's study. These he summarised as a loss of excitement about life, a sense of powerlessness, a distrust of others and society, a closure of concerns about self and one's private life, and a general non-fulfilment of desires. In turn, these concerns had been precipitated by the less than satisfactory structure of daily life in Japan, which he found had failed individuals in their need to be creative, to develop interests, to feel a sense of human solidarity and to plan ahead meaningfully. Instead, people complained about long work hours, and wholly standardised living schedules and behaviour patterns.

In this context of discontentment, the love hotel emerged as a type of building in which excitement could be rekindled, and withdrawal from public life could be assured, albeit temporarily, inserting itself in the interstices of busy working lives, and it did so in three different ways. First, it also empowered patrons to wield some of their earnings in profligate ways that gave a degree of respite from prevailing cultural imperatives governing lifestyle choices. Second, the love hotel created an environment where one's private life could take centre stage, and actually helped institute the very notion of 'private life' outside of the home for ordinary Japanese people. Third, it followed that the love hotel build-

ing type needed to convey an image of privacy and seclusion, which combined comfort, stimulation and freedom.

Developmental type

As a building type, the love hotel developed a set of strategies in connection with the design and realisation of its external envelope and patterns of entry. These can easily be enumerated as a list of superficial features, but it is the role they have played in the development of the love hotel's identity that needs to be narrativised. Aspects of the specification of materials, finishes and details, together with spatial and elevational configurations form a critical vocabulary for the love hotel's built form, and it is this vocabulary which has undergone a series of shifts through the love hotel's developmental phase.

Façade

While the traditional Japanese villa or *yashiki* is enveloped on all sides by deep eaves, with wooden verandahs extending out from the main rooms which give equally onto exquisitely manicured gardens on each side, the urban love hotel adopts an opposite strategy. It turns inward and assumes a condition of absolute frontality: the street façade becomes the main form of urban communication, but even so, gives very little away about its interior world. Pre-1985 love hotels typically have façades that are punctured with few openings that barely resemble windows, let alone the wide sliding openings of a traditional Japanese house. In their place are a number of strategies of structural embellishment and surface elaboration: Hotel Papillon has an organic cement web animated with cut-outs of cartoon characters adorning its façade, Hotel Angelic is encased in a decorative metal grille from fascia level upwards, and on the front of Hotel Lovely in Shinjuku a dense criss-cross lattice obscures any fenestration. It is the ambiguity of expression that lent these older examples a particular allure. Later innovations in the constructional design of façades promoted a more culturally specific 'look': Hotel Leoni and Hotel Venus both incorporate Italianate design features which establish a layer of jutting balconies and arched loggias that sit in front of the fenestration, while others such as Star Crescent in Shibuya and Hotel En in Ikebukero adopted a simplified castellated aesthetic that gave the façades a fortress-like appeal. As the concealment of windows became less important, façade articulation became more concentrated at eye-level on the base storey of the building, with a simple tiled finish becoming standard above (this accounts for around 80 per cent of those studied). The tiling was however defamiliarised to an extent, in that glazed white and pearlescent tiles, mosaic tiles and brick slips were typically used, often hung with a vertical emphasis, thereby avoiding the horizontality of indigenous forms.

As constructional techniques evolved, *in situ* concrete structures were augmented with proprietary cladding systems that used a steel support structure. Large perforated, enamelled or anodised panels could then be used for façade

elements, and the love hotel's ambiguity became less about concealment of the interior and more about the use of an increasingly non-domestic material palette. As the Japanese economy boomed, the typical love hotel façade moved towards a glossy, polished, fetishised surface, the more expensive examples employing costly imported marbles and granites. Candybox in Umeda (Figure 2.5), Faveur and Chez Moi in Shibuya, Plantan in Uguisudani, all dating from the 1980s,

Figure 2.5 White panelled façade with no fenestration, Hotel Candybox, Umeda, Osaka.

exemplify the use of high gloss panelling, while approximately 10 per cent of the sample (three-quarters of which were in Tokyo), including Hotel Listo, Bron Mode, Cean and La Mode in Shinjuku, applied a veneer of real stone. The process of veneering was sometimes offset by the application of textual inscriptions: Festa, La Vie en Soft, Public Jam, and the now demolished Lover's Inn, reproduced their smooth generic cladding as an intricately tattooed surface, presenting a smooth white surface or skin that demands to be written upon.

When the economic Bubble began to burst and Japan entered its 'lost decade', any evidence of wear and tear was turned into a positive aesthetic, or was used to convey an image of somewhere authentic and long established. The illusion of flaking render and worn paintwork was incorporated into the façade of Hotel Maria Theresia, which left it looking less pristine but somehow more authentic. Similarly, Faire Retour and A Year in Your Provence (*sic*), also in Nanba, made use of a sun-kissed Mediterranean look. Thus, against a backdrop of economic recession, the image of the love hotel was bolstered by alluding to fading European rusticity rather than the shiny slickness of new money.

In the first few years of the twenty-first century there are two ways in which love hotel façades are staging a return: the first uses a historic vernacular, as in C-Heaven, Story and Yayaya in Uguisudani, which recapture the compositional simplicity and rustic materiality of their *shoin*-style Japanese forebears. In some of these newer examples, the use of traditional wooden screening, or *kōshi*, is reappearing. The second emerging elevational strategy has to do with construction and the use of traditional craftsmanship: Hotel Gurei, still under construction in spring 2005, resembled a medieval building site, littered with chisels and large, freshly cut blocks of stone. While Katagi argued in the 1980s that the key aesthetic strategy was that of the 'sham castle'[64] with self-evident constructional fakery, it seems that the preference for fakery in love hotels is giving way to the genuine article, as they seek to legitimise their status in the lexicon of urban buildings. As one love hotel designer has commented, 'the gaudy look is out of date. The buildings themselves are changing – anything that looks like a castle is out of date.'[65]

There have also been periodic shifts in the colour palette of the love hotel façade: the earliest examples demonstrate a preference for darker shades (e.g. Hotel Paper Moon), which enhanced their air of intimacy and made them more appealing to a male audience. During the 1970s the overall façade coloration moved towards variations of white and off-white as love hotel owners sought women's approval and became more space-age (e.g. Hotel Fashion Skylab), becoming more artificial in one of two ways in the 1980s: either highly artificial/industrial or pastel/saccharine. The recession has brought back a warmer, more earthy yet urbane palette. Metallic embellishments also changed from gilded/brass (as in 1960s Joyful Club's gold-leafed lotus bosses) to polished chrome detailing and trims which came to the fore in the 1980s, when there was a recurrence of an Art Deco feel to façades, as witnessed in Hotel Pal and Hotel Smart. This was followed by a preference for more satin and matt finishes, or

indeed a complete absence of anything shiny or metallic seen in many post-2000 love hotels. The most upmarket establishments are in effect no longer embellished by the superficial application of adornments. Instead, the markers of quality are now fully integrated into the fabric of the built form itself. It must be stated that these moves were not only found in the development of the love hotel, but are symptomatic of a broader picture of commercial architecture in Japanese cities and elsewhere in the developed world, as new materials became available and design trends flourished. There has been a general global shift towards luxury being identified with real materiality: just as natural fibres in fashion have prevailed over synthetics in the late twentieth century, and in jewellery the less ostentatious now tends to signify more expensive, so too have certain natural colours, materials and surface finishes come to be associated with prestige buildings.

Running parallel with these developments in the love hotel façade's material expression is a series of developments in the handling of windows, betraying changes to their underlying social role, which may be broken down into three clear strategies. Although there was no ruling about the presence of windows on a love hotel façade, in almost all pre-1985 love hotels, windows were invariably hooded, screened, or shuttered, and glazed in mirrored, obscured or stained glass, and in some cases are blanked out or even entirely absent. This first strategy thus negated the dual purpose of a window: to provide daylight and natural ventilation. Neither was desired in the love hotel interior: the illusion of its inner world depended on a degree of hermeticism and on artificial and controllable forms of air-conditioning and lighting systems. Windows on the early love hotel façades were thus *redundant*. These 'non-window' windows were sometimes no more than an openable panel (for fire escape purposes) in the otherwise smooth surface of the façade (Candybox), or were so completely covered by a grille (Hotel Angelic) or perforated sheeting (Hotel Nikko) that they did not read as windows. Second, more self-conscious manifestations of window openings began to supersede the redundant stage, as fixed shutters, brise-soleil, window-boxes and other framing devices started to draw attention to the idea of window, even if it still did not function as one: Cocoji, L'Elise and Piccolo all fall into this second *rhetorical* category. Increasingly, however, the window in its third incarnation is being embraced as a new and important constituent element of a façade in its own right, appearing in a normalised or *real* form without rhetorical embellishment. Such façades, as found in the case of Hotel Forsion, Hotel Grand Calm and Hotel Paseo, adopt the look of a prestigious European apartment block, whose repetitive grid of large, openable windows and balconied recesses intentionally renders self-evident the number of rooms, with the distance between windows providing an outward indication of their relative size.

In the past few years, examples of love hotels have appeared which have taken a step beyond the fake 'Juliet' balconette, opening up the possibility of the external use of space by creating façades with balconies or loggia that are real and accessible (e.g. Hermé, Shibuya; de la Pierre, Kyoto). Chairs and tables were seen positioned in these locations, but it is likely that these will remain

rhetorical and unused for some time, as self-conscious clientele adjust to the idea of being seen lounging on their love hotel balcony. For now, when a real window is seen open, in all probability it is because the room is in the process of being cleaned.

Threshold

Traditionally speaking, in Japan

> two types of buildings dominated the appearance of cities, and may still be experienced in some places. There were the freestanding houses hidden behind high walls – the *yashiki* [mansion]. And there were the *machiya* [townhouse] . . . these, at different times, could have a measure of openness (with activity advancing out onto the street) or closure (with activity retreating behind screens).[66]

Shelton's description reveals that typological differences between *yashiki* and *machiya* lay primarily in their styles of threshold and enclosure. They would not necessarily have been found in the same neighbourhood, but aligned themselves with parts of the city, the *yashiki* being more of a *yamanote* (high city) type and the *machiya* a more plebeian *shitamachi* (low city) type. Seidenstecker notes that in the *yamanote*,

> because of massive gates and high garden walls, there was little of the street life that prevailed in the low city. Tiny garden plots lined the streets of the Low City, but the walled garden was virtually gone there by the end of the Meiji.[67]

According to William Tingey, in the case of the *machiya*, 'the street is not completely cut off but allowed to filter through into the building.'[68] The precise condition of the love hotel threshold mediates dialectically between these two types, in that it has to be sufficiently open to engage passing custom, and sufficiently closed to remain discreet about its function. In effect then, the love hotel as a building type merges the discrete residence standing behind a wall with the commodified space at the front of the *machiya*, positioned in closer proximity to the street.

In practice, this means that love hotels disguise their entry points in the exterior envelope and draw on a range of framing and masking devices at ground level to make the form of entry deliberately prolonged and convoluted. Many variants of the threshold type were observed among the 300 or so love hotels surveyed, and despite the narrowness of some streets and the limited size of the average plot, the majority of entrances were set back by a distance of at least two metres from the pavement edge, in order to create space for an attenuated and oblique form of entry. Fewer than one-tenth of those sampled were arranged like an ordinary hotel, with an axial or walk-up entrance. In no cases was the

lobby revealed and visible through plate glass windows, and only one love hotel was observed to have a sweeping flight of steps leading up to an unscreened entrance, namely Hotel Atlas in Shinjuku, which opened in 2004.

The thresholds of the oldest love hotels surveyed were evidently informed by the design of a Japanese stroll garden in a condensed form, where a meandering path leads past Japanese-style planting, and leads customers into a recess which turns back on itself, in the same manner as a traditional *genkan*. One Japanese-style establishment in Shibuya had a modest *shoin*-style bamboo and mud fence prefacing the entrance. The most abrupt style of entrance encountered was that of Motel B, an older love hotel in Ikebukero, where space was extremely limited, and the entry zone was necessarily confined to a few potted plants around a sliding door.

Love hotels in Kyoto occurred in a neighbourhood of narrow streets that was populated with *yashiki*-type residences, with high walls in front of traditionally built houses. While similar in scale and degree of setback and as muted in their coloration as their neighbours, on closer inspection these hotels clearly distinguished themselves from the surrounding context by incorporating overtly Western details: La Peche used heavily textured bricks, Jaune Bon Bon had bay windows, Jardin des Fleurs adopted a patio with a central flowerbed and crazy paving, and La Pierre presented an open-arched entrance with wrought-iron and cobbles. In this location, where most customers arrive by car, the threshold experience was somewhat contrived, in that customers were forced to make their final approach on foot by virtue of the parking facility being located in a small lot opposite or further along the same street.

A great many love hotels had adopted what can only be described as a public convenience style of entry zone, with a central screen wall permitting entry from either side. This screen sometimes concealed a few steps up, but in most cases where there was a level change, the lobby was set a few steps down from street level, thereby reducing the overall height of the building (see Figures 2.6 and 2.7). The referencing of a lavatory indicates its homologous relationship to the love hotel, in that 'like the public toilet, the love hotel is a purely pragmatic answer to a basic physical need.'[69] Love hotels with wider frontages had multiple screening devices in their entry zones, arranged to conceal two or more separate entrances, particularly in the case of a corner plot, or where there was surface-level parking requiring an additional direct entrance of its own. Some love hotels on very shallow plots or L-shaped plots had entrances (and front façades) on two adjacent streets (e.g. Piccolo, Blanket, le Ciel, Africa). Hotel Manjo in Uguisudani, which had a dual entrance and a long side passage, exploited its siting to allow two different identities to operate simultaneously, one for each façade, thereby appealing to two different target audiences. Where space was limited externally, the entry zone was sometimes drawn into the ground storey of the building to give the impression of a deep threshold, by pushing the doors into the lobby proper further back. 1st Pocket in Umeda offset the fact that this was really an internalised space by creating the feel of a Western-style street with road markings, street furniture and advertising hoardings.

Figure 2.6 Entry zone of public convenience, Shinjuku, Tokyo.

The importance of this attenuated entry zone in relation to deliberations over the choice of love hotel cannot be underestimated: in this intermediary space couples were seen pausing and conversing, using mobile phones, or simply waiting. It serves as an unmanned waiting area, a latterday *machiai*, in which a decision is reached, prior to entering the lobby and taking the next level of

Figure 2.7 Entry zone of Hotel An, Shinjuku, Tokyo.

decision regarding the actual choice of room. It also serves to extend the sense of a journey from leaving the street to the point of entering a love hotel room, and there was no evidence that this journey was being curtailed in the newest examples: if anything, entry zones are becoming more sophisticated, with deeper thresholds where space permitted. This was particularly true of the larger, stand-alone examples. In many cases, the threshold space functioned as the main sales pitch, particularly at dusk, when the qualities of the external illumination and planting could be best appreciated. Figure 2.8 shows the entry zone of Hotel Osaka by night; similar examples were the highly illuminated frontages of Casablanca and Speranza in Ikebukero.

Greenery of one sort or another was a virtually ubiquitous feature of the love hotel threshold: the most minimal taking the form of a row of clipped conifers in front of the entrance; at their most exotic a veritable jungle, in itself an image of fecundity and abundance. The presence of greenery recalls the Edo practice of maintaining the tiny garden plots that fringed domestic plots in the low city, but it also transforms the threshold into a historical cue, functioning as a reminder of that earlier locus of sexual relations, the park. An erotic charge is thereby created by giving the illusion of the space being leaky or breached in some way, such that 'sex, though contained, is in imminent danger of breaking out;'[70] as such the attenuated entry zone, with its walls, screens, plants, columns and sliding doors, functions as an erotic prelude to the interior.

Figure 2.8 Entry forecourt of Hotel Osaka, Uehonmachi, Osaka.

The threshold's specific materiality also took a variety of forms. The choice of walling materials in the immediate vicinity of the entrance was often referencing something typically Japanese in an updated form; for instance, the translucent screens or glass block walls are reminiscent of sliding paper *shōji* or screens, or where rough cobbles or random stone had been used these were reminiscent of the rusticated ramparts to Japanese castles. Others incorporated more Western tropes such as leaded glass panels (see Figure 2.9). Darker terracotta tiles and brick slips used for screen walls with a horizontal emphasis conjured up more Western precedents, with one dating from the late 1970s, Oishii in Shinjuku, bearing more than a passing resemblance to Frank Lloyd Wright's prairie house aesthetic. In the examples of love hotels built in the 1980s, the screen walls became less substantial, and more use of perforated metal and reflective surfaces is evident, which set up myriad inter-reflections in the layering of spaces, further fragmenting glimpses of the lobby or street. More recent entry zone innovations included a forest of columns, sometimes designed as palm trees (Speranza, Osaka, Africa, Casablanca), or just an abstract cluster (White Cube, X/O) which couples laced their way through to find the entrance. Others had adopted the format of an enclosed patio fronted by a low wall, sometimes with a colonnade prefacing the entrance at the rear of the space framing the actual entrance (Suehiro, Raffaie, La Vie en Soft). What may be surmised from the many variations is the perpetual innovation of

Figure 2.9 Entry zone of Hotel Saga, Kyoto.

the love hotel threshold form, responding to the Japanese consumer's desire for novelty and newness.

From a regional perspective, threshold distances from street to entrance tended to be shorter and more direct in Osaka compared to Tokyo. Osaka was also where the shortest 'rests' were possible (in some cases as little as thirty minutes), and is it clear from this that Osakans do not stand on ceremony and are seemingly more prurient than their Tokyo cousins. Of the Tokyo examples, those with some of the densest, most elaborated entry zones were found in love hotels in Shibuya, and given that the plot sizes were on average much smaller than in other study areas (Shibuya hotels averaged twenty rooms when the average overall was twenty-five), the fundamental importance of the layered form of entry to the urban love hotel becomes apparent: if the designers had been briefed to omit the attenuated entry zone, more rooms could have been squeezed on to the plot, and more profit generated.

The threshold was significantly less pronounced in cases where the lobby was signalled as a genuine place to wait: those with bars, sofas, café tables and internet stations, and an atmosphere which encouraged lingering dispensed with the need for the entry zone to perform this role. Casa di Due in Shibuya was one example where the music from the lobby spilled into the street, and the bar inside was visible and inviting. Several couples were engrossed in conversation and enjoying a drink together, something which was not witnessed in any other

hotel. This coy form of glimpsing is of course an old form of erotic display to which the Japanese are attuned: glimpses of the lining of a woman's kimono, or more particularly her sleeve, were deemed to be highly arousing. In the love hotel, they find their spatialised equivalents, where the act of crossing a threshold into the lobby is invariably accompanied by a shy but disembodied recording of a woman's voice saying, *irrashaimase*! – welcome.

Lobby

Couples are not ushered into a love hotel: they enter unaided. When they reach the door, it opens automatically, with the movement sensor timed to slide open after a brief pause. Only two of those surveyed had open-out doors that were operated manually: Dixy Inn in Shibuya and La Pierre in Kyoto. The love hotel lobby as a developmental type is not a place of chance encounters between strangers as Siegfried Kracauer conceived it to be,[71] but a space in which any sort of encounter is minimised. The aim of every love hotel lobby is to dispatch the couple to a room of their choice without delay, preferably without any human intervention, but it needs to achieve this without appearing rushed, officious or perfunctory. A reception desk is clearly present and marked with a sign, but is almost wholly covered with obscured glass and is apparently redundant (see Figure 2.10), since there is no requirement to 'check in.' Its real purpose is however more panoptic: other than their hands, the person on duty is not meant

Figure 2.10 Example of mute reception desk in love hotel lobby.

to be seen, but can view all the activities within the entry zone and lobby via CCTV and will intervene if they notice anything untoward. Given that there are no items like luggage, passports or travellers cheques to deal with, the lobby is a strangely silent place, punctuated by the sound of the automatic doors gliding open and shut.

Where there is music present, it helps establish an unhurried or romantic atmosphere, ranging from generic classical strings, to the theme tune from the film *Endless Love* (heard in Little Chapel Christmas, Nanba), to Bob Marley (heard in Caribbean Resort, Shibuya). Low levels of lighting add to the atmosphere, making the lobby closer to that of a private nightclub than a typical hotel. Hotel Kikuna in Uguisudani even had moving lights fitted with gobos to give a dappled light effect. Many of the older love hotel lobbies had richly patterned thick pile carpets on the floor, but this kind of plushness is tending to give way to highly polished marbles and terrazzos laid out in ornate geometric patterns in keeping with trends in conventional hotel lobbies. Other commonly encountered features were stained glass, classical statuary, fish tanks and large urns with trailing plants and floral displays. Where a love hotel had recently reopened, it was adorned with highly scented fresh flowers, and other, more artificial aromas of vanilla and jasmine were not uncommon. A handful of establishments (such as Candybox and Orange Chips) made use of special effects such as dry ice and incense, which served to make the lobby environment more mysterious and Other. The love hotel lobby has thus adopted a wide range of specific tactics to construct an ambience that is substantially different from the other kinds of lobby environments and public entry spaces.

Rather than the reception desk, the focal point of a love hotel lobby is the room guide panel. Couples consulted this as they might select hamburgers from the backlit panel in a fast-food restaurant, or purchase a drink from a vending machine. The love hotel room panel is a consistent feature in the lobby, and has gone through many iterations – only 1 per cent of the study sample had no room panel at all (Roland, Yae and Paper Moon), and in each case they appeared to pre-date the introduction of this feature. The simplest type of room panel looks more like a telephone switchboard consisting of a grid of numbers and red lights, such as that in the Meguro Club. Only one establishment in a sample of over 300 indicated room numbers and prices used Japanese numerals; the rest were all given in Arabic numerals. The vast majority of room panels were the back-lit pictorial variety, where a grid of colour transparencies displayed each of the rooms photographically. In both the older and smaller establishments, the room guide panel was wall-mounted and located in a prominent position relative to the main entrance. In some of the newest establishments, the room guide was a free-standing element in the lobby (see Figure 2.11). Images of rooms that are illuminated indicate rooms that are unoccupied, and beneath each image is the room number together with details of its pricing structure and facilities. Many room guide panels were fitted with movement sensors, which triggered a voice recording giving instructions as to how to proceed with the selection of a room. In some establishments the panel was electronic, allowing couples to browse the

Figure 2.11 Example of a room guide panel in love hotel lobby, Hotel X, Shinjuku, Tokyo.

rooms via a navigable computer interface using touch-screen technology (Maria Theresia, Villa Giulia, de la Pierre, Vogue). This not only made the establishment seem more upmarket in pandering to a computer-literate generation, but it also meant that the circumstances in which couples selected a room were more intimate and tactile, and gave scope to include several images of each room.

A growing number of love hotel lobbies have introduced a small amount of retailing, invariably in the form of glazed cabinets containing high-quality branded merchandise. This was particularly popular in hotels aimed at young people, and more common in Osaka, where there has always been a stronger commercial emphasis compared to Tokyo or Kyoto (Gang Snowman, Mickey Cookies, Hotel Chapel Cinderella). Customers were being encouraged to purchase a souvenir or love token for their partner on the way out, selecting from a range of goods that typically included soft toys, jewellery, leather goods, designer T-shirts, cigarette lighters, die-cast model sports cars and other items. Significant by their absence were items of a sexual nature – these did not grace the cabinets but tended to be available for sale or hire elsewhere, usually in vending machines in the rooms themselves. The mere presence of these glazed cabinets, which were as much representational as active sales space, resituates the lobby as a space of normalised consumption, making it appear contiguous with the world outside and indeed similar to a four- or five-star hotel environment. Retail elements also

indicate a greater willingness on the part of younger customers to interact with the proprietor in negotiating a purchase, and in this respect the anonymised spatial practices of the love hotel are seen to give way to the usual expectations of customer service found in a department store.

Revisions to the Entertainment Act meant that love hotel lobbies were required to assume the same social role as a normal hotel lobby, and as such post-1985 love hotels were altered to convey at least the image of waiting, if not the reality. This has tended to take the form of clusters of upholstered seating or café-style chairs and tables in the lobby (see Figure 2.12), but there were no serving staff in evidence, and on no occasion were couples witnessed actually eating in the café areas. Hotel Sea had a widescreen television in the lobby area but it was switched off, and other lobby accoutrements intended to prolong and encourage lingering included pinball machines, telephone boxes and internet booths, and, in one instance, there were hammocks (Mickey Cookies). The lobby of Hotel Saga in Kyoto, which was refurbished in 1988, was perhaps the most elegant and at the same time the most atypical, being closer to a minimal modernist office lobby by Mies van der Rohe, complete with pale travertine floors, black leather and chrome chairs and a floor-to-ceiling plate glass window looking into a very low-key courtyard garden, or *tsubo niwa* (Figure 2.13). With the introduction of soft furnishings, the acoustic reverberance of the lobby is also reduced, thereby enhancing the intimacy as well as the tactility of the love hotel's communal space. While love hotels responded under duresse to the need

Figure 2.12 Lobby seating in Hotel Grand Calm, Umeda, Osaka.

Figure 2.13 Lobby with *tsubo niwa* garden, Hotel Saga, Kyoto.

for more opportunities for normalised social interaction, this also afforded greater potential for emulation in terms of the specification of the space to high-class hotel lobbies, albeit in a miniaturised format. The love hotel has thereby assimilated this regulatory requirement to form part of its voluntary identity.

While it is clear that the love hotel as a developmental type has taken inspiration from a wide range of sources, including the modern culture house of the 1920s, very few of the examples studied, including the most recently built, seemed to model themselves on the new modern Japanese house which came to prominence in the 1970s and 1980s. This period represents a progressive phase in Japanese architectural history, led by a postwar generation of architects who had been exposed to Western design precepts but who were seeking Japanese idioms for their work. Between them, architects such as Kenzo Tange, Togo Murano and Fumihiko Maki remapped the envelope of the domestic environment in a variety of different ways, and changed the material palette from an architecture of wood and paper to one constructed primarily out of steel, concrete and glass blocks.

While love hotels appear for the most part to have shunned this particular precedent, conversely it has been remarked that certain Japanese architects' houses bore a striking resemblance to a love hotel: Chris Fawcett, in his book *The New Japanese House*, is evidently amused by the Nishida House (1966) designed by Yōji Watanabe:

> Alluding to Japanese castles, this bastion-like house could almost be mistaken for a love hotel; there is the same super-scaled graphic exterior woven from over-literal quotes taken from history books, there is the same concealed entrance, modest planting, air of secrecy.[72]

Fawcett maintains that 'the most prevalent forms of private housing in the past decade are tarted up with tricks and devices not so different from the love hotels.'[73] His narrative of ritual and anti-ritual casts the love hotel in a typically ambivalent light, where it both serves to challenge the stance and preoccupations of modernist architecture at the same time as being dismissed as little more than a set of tricks. It is clear that, for whatever reason, the love hotel exerted a degree of influence over designers and architects, and as such it was hard to remain indifferent to such a self-apparent building type during a period when modern architecture agendas in Japan were very much under review.

In common with many building types associated with popular culture, the love hotel's equivocal relationship to 'high' Japanese architecture is still apparent, and has created a culture of undisclosed attribution among design professionals. Love hotel photographer Kyoichi Tsuzuki bemoans the fact that 'of course there are also famous architects that take commissions [for] Love Hotels, but they never use their name. They do it, but they don't put it in their biography, you know. And that's really dirty!'[74] But the legacy of modernity leaves behind a gap which the love hotel is able to fill, in that 'corporate institutions exclude the individual by depriving him of meaning – they leave only gaps in their structures to be filled with private fantasy. Modern culture has no place for the man it created.'[75] Architect Toyo Ito saw this as symptomatic of a cultural rigidification taking place generally, and complained that as a result, 'people surround themselves with consumer code items in the form of decorations. And the heavier the ornament, the emptier.'[76] The love hotel can be interpreted as one such coded and ornamented example of rigidification, but this was a cul-de-sac which as a building type it has been robust enough to escape from. While an attitude of simplicity and rusticity (*wabi–sabi*) was starting to resurface in architectural circles, love hotels during the definitive phase created moments of pleasure and excess using marble and granite cladding and random stonewalling materials as opposed to the rawness of cast concrete, mainly because the love hotel in the 1960s and 1970s needed to distance itself qualitatively from the kinds of rough-and-ready apartment buildings that were being constructed. However, once architects like Ito and Ando had re-valorised concrete as a material with highbrow architectural connotations, a few love hotels in the late 1980s and early 1990s turned to use it aspirationally. Nevertheless, examples of love hotels which made use of unadorned cast concrete, such as Continential Vijoux in Nanba and J-Girl in Ikebukero, were rare exceptions. Interestingly, they were also some of the very few love hotels to have been featured in the architectural press as exemplary new buildings, while the vast majority of those clad in more gaudy attire (and therefore not considered to be 'architecture') have been consistently ignored by the architectural press.

The period of the new Japanese house is also referred to as post-Metabolism, the catch-all term for architecture in Japan which came after the architectural movement Metabolism. Compared to the massive, formally repetitive aesthetic that Metabolism had tended to produce, post-Metabolism represented a comparatively mobile and illusive set of design parameters which were 'a timely emancipation from the tyranny of form,'[77] constituting instead the idea that 'form depends on cultural agreement.'[78] Post-Metabolism also offered an emancipation from the tyrannies of scale, enabling the building of 'small-scale acts of urban intervention,' and found expression for a time in the 1980s under the rubric of nomadism. Japanese architects like Toyo Ito and Arata Isozaki became interested in the idea of the cultural nomad and with the notion of cultural equidistance,[79] reconceiving the typical city dweller and their relationship to built form. Indeed, Toyo Ito began to highlight the female perspective on urban living in the mid-1980s, and developed the notion of the Nomad Woman, whose transitory daily needs were catered for in a more distributed way, such that 'the dwelling of the Tokyo Nomad Woman accommodates grooming, snacking, and entertainment.'[80] The concept of nomadism lent cultural cachet to a kind of urban functionality that the love hotel was already expert in providing, giving rise to a closer fit between the material palette of high and low architecture. Thus Ito's preference for lightweight materials, including perforated metals, which characterised his nomadic architecture, was adopted by many love hotels at the time, in the veiling and layering of entry zones, examples being Hotel R25 in Shibuya and Hotel Nikko in Uguisudani, whose façades are masked by perforated powder-coated steel sheeting.

Where there was most congruence between the architectural highbrow and love hotel design was in relation to a 1980s style known in Japan as 'Deadtech.' Usually identified with the Kyoto-based architect Shin Takamatsu, Deadtech was a muscular, dystopian approach to design which favoured dark, highly polished materials, and displayed a penchant for sci-fi, symmetry and chunkiness similar to that of graphic artist Giger or the set designer for *Blade Runner*, Syd Mead, who were both popular in the 1980s.[81] Bognar describes a key example, Kirin Plaza in Osaka, as a 'sophisticated high-tech urban machine that not only expresses the frightening aspects of an overwhelming technology but speaks equally to the vitality and fictional quality of the everchanging story of the city.'[82] It is not surprising that love hotel designers would see the appropriateness of this design aesthetic, with its leanings towards the *ero-guro-nansensu* (erotic grotesque nonsense) of Japan in the 1930s. This combination of fetishised technology and narrative spatiality is intrinsic to the love hotel typology, which, like Kirin Plaza, often appears suitably cryptic and ambiguous.[83] Consequently, there was a preponderence of love hotels that adopted the Deadtech aesthetic during the 1980s and found it to be a winning formula, with fat chrome columns and polished black marble defining the material palette for a time. It was a style into which neon could be easily incorporated and which was easily retrofitted, and so also had obvious practical advantages in an industry where newness is highly prized. Deadtech owes a debt to Art Deco, with its

mannered motifs augmenting an otherwise pared-down aesthetic, and like Art Deco, Deadtech is now regarded as a relatively tangential moment in architectural history.

Conclusion

In tracing the love hotel's development as a building type, it is clear that its lineage is mixed, and that it has tended to draw on those influences that were capable of challenging the status quo and problematising existing forms. The love hotel as a developmental type is inherently synthetic, drawing together elements from earlier common denominator and interaction types that combine well to produce an appropriate mood or atmosphere. Hence the floating world is referenced more for it atmospheric qualities than as a functional antecedent. The shop or *mise* has influenced the love hotel as much due to its complex spatial meshing of front and back as to derivations of the *kanban* aesthetic. Distilled from the 'culture house' and the motel are the love hotel's relationships to the street, the car and the door key. More important still is the much larger cultural shift that these interaction types provoked, in the sense that their mobile and transient forms of existence proved more influential than the solidity of the borrowed architecture.

Neustupny's fluid, provisional characterisation of type has allowed a dynamic picture to come through of the love hotel as a building type that is subject to a variety of ideas and ideals, so that it becomes possible to explain how as a type it has changed, rather than how it became fixed. The issue of fixity has often been the stumbling block in typological work within linguistics, where, as Neustupny points out, 'typologists could not easily explain why and how a type changed. Frequently, the type was de facto conceived as a permanent type which had always been there and would continue to be there.'[84] In adopting a provisional engagement with type, the presence of variations from the type are not seen as deviations, or deviant. Rather, in the case of the love hotel, 'contemporary typologies accept the coexistence of a number of types within a single system,'[85] and that by accepting the coexistence of more than one, it has enabled the idea of type producing 'variation and conflict'[86] to be entertained.

Over the course of its development, the love hotel has moved from a strategy of partial concealment or obscuration, towards greater self-apparency, as witnessed through the consideration of its principal constituent elements, façade, window, threshold and lobby. This movement is mirrored by the psychological changes evident in Japanese society in the postwar period, but runs counter to a broader historical shift from modernity to postmodernity, and in this respect the love hotel confounds received or prevailing patterns in the pursuit of its own agenda. It also articulates the question that Masao Miyoshi has framed: 'Is postmodernism a historical period or a cultural system?'[87]

The twenty-first century has precipitated a fresh look at the issues faced by architectural practice and has brought regional and nationalistic considerations to the fore once again in architecture, with many practitioners turning to

localised notions of typology as a means to secure greater cultural specificity and particularity in their work in an era where the generic holds sway. Equally, there are high-profile Japanese architects such as Jun Aoki and Kazuo Seijima currently pioneering highly mannered and decorative use of new structural materials and kinetic cladding for high-fashion architectural projects as a means to achieve specificity in their work. Conversely, love hotel design is seen to be moving into a less decorated, less mannered phase, providing an interesting cultural counterpoint whereby the generic becomes a new avenue to explore, and a new opportunity to establish a point of difference.

3 Images and technologies of the love hotel interior

In this chapter I will address the way in which the interior design of the love hotel bedroom has evolved, and show what this reveals about changing circumstances of Japanese lifestyles in the postwar period. The various attributes of the interior will each be discussed in terms of their specific contribution to the spatial, visual and material cultural identity of the love hotel and its occupation, and in the process I will establish points of reference to key contemporaneous sociological and cultural orientations. The love hotel interior is a quasi-domestic space that nevertheless stands in opposition to domesticity and, by placing it in the context of the limitations of Japan's postwar housing provision, the parameters of both the unadulterated dream and lived reality with respect to home will be made apparent. Considering important shifts in the love hotel interior's actual and conceptual configuration, I will show how at different stages of its development, the dominant image of the love hotel interior and its associated technologies takes inspiration from such twentieth-century icons as the bachelor pad, the boudoir, and also from earlier Western *mise-en-scènes* associated with fairytale castles and bridal chambers. Throughout its development, both imagistically and technologically, the love hotel interior has continuously represented a site of resistance. I will show how the nature of this resistance has changed and weakened, and how its relationship to the outside world has become apparently contiguous yet increasingly complex.

The research method for analysing the love hotel bedroom involved extensive content analysis of the images of interiors published in love hotel guides and dating magazines. For each establishment featured, there is generally a single image of the room, sometimes with inset images of the bathroom, toiletries, meal options and other sundries as well as a textual description. Given that in each case the room shown is intended to typify its respective love hotel, and that there was remarkable consistency in terms of the way in which images were lit and cropped, they lent themselves easily to comparative analysis. In the same way as the external appearance of love hotels was coded based on observational fieldwork, images of the love hotel interiors yielded a second set of data which could be correlated with the first, with approximately 70 per cent overlap in terms of the establishments covered in the guides compared to those covered in the field. With guides and magazines covering a span of eight years from 1997

to 2005, and trade journals dating back to 1986, this permitted diachronic as well as synchronic analysis of the interiors, and of their modes of representation.

Bricolage

Pinpointing a textual image of the earliest love hotel interior is very difficult, and even its typological precedents, as discussed in the previous chapter, are quite diverse. However, there is one passage from an influential Japanese novel, serialised in the mid-1920s, which provides a glimpse of things to come: *A Fool's Love* (*Chijin no Ai*) by Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, also translated as *Naomi*, provides interesting insights into the ambivalent experimental relationship the Japanese had in the 1920s towards Western-style domestic interiors, and was inspired by a vogue for Western 'culture houses' that were being promoted in Japan at that time. More importantly in terms of its relevance to the sexualisation of space, Tanizaki specifically renders this interior setting as fit for an erotically charged risqué scenario for his protagonists, Jōji and his much younger girlfriend Naomi, to play out their Lolita-esque games. It is an I-novel, that is to say it is written in the first person from the point of view of Jōji, and here he describes their house in some detail:

> We rented a shoddy Western-style house near the tracks of the National Electric Line. Modern and simple, it was, I suppose, what people would nowadays call a 'Culture Home', though the term was not yet in vogue then. More than half of it consisted of a steep roof covered in red slate. The white exterior walls made it look like a matchbox; rectangular glass windows had been cut into them here and there. In front of the entrance porch was a small yard. The house looked as though it would be more fun to sketch than to live in, which isn't surprising, as it was built by an artist who had married one of his models. The rooms were laid out in the most inconvenient way. On the ground floor was an absurdly large atelier, a tiny entryway, and a kitchen – nothing else. Upstairs, there were two Japanese-style rooms, six feet by nine feet, and nine-by-nine respectively. Hardly more than attic storerooms, they were really quite useless. This attic was reached by a stairway in the atelier. Climbing the stairs, one came to a landing enclosed by a handrail, just like a box in the theatre, from which one could look down into the atelier.
>
> No doubt the odd design – it was like an illustration for a fairytale – appealed to Naomi's childlike curiosity, despite the impractical arrangement of the rooms. To be sure, it was just right for an easygoing young couple who wanted to live playfully and avoid the trappings of a conventional household. No doubt this was the sort of life the artist and his model had in mind when they occupied the house. In fact, the atelier by itself was large enough to satisfy the needs of two people.
>
> There was no place to put the usual household items like cabinets and braziers in a house like this, so we were free to choose our pieces and carry

> out whatever design we liked. We bought some inexpensive India prints, which Naomi, with her uncertain fingers, sewed into curtains. At a Shibaguchi shop that specialised in Western furniture we found an old rattan chair, a sofa, an easy chair, and a table, all of which we set out in the atelier. On the walls we hung photographs of Mary Pickford and several other American movie actresses. I also wanted Western style bedding, but I gave up on that idea because two beds would have been expensive, and I could have Japanese bedding sent from my home in the country.[1]

The outward appearance and location of the house are not only consistent with the culture house phenomenon but also embody many of the attributes of the typical love hotel discussed in the previous two chapters: its proximity to the railway line, its white stucco exterior with limited fenestration, and the yard and porch arrangement which sounds remarkably like the attenuated entry zones of a typical love hotel. However, it is Tanizaki's prototypical description of the emergent Western-style interior that proves the most potent as a set of putative indicators of the love hotel bedroom interior, both in terms of its contents and its method of assembly. Like the love hotel, Naomi and Jōji's 'culture home' was constructed as an eclectic process of assemblage or bricolage. There is a latent desire here to represent otherness, to imbue the living space with enough non-indigenous items to distance it from the homely, thereby rendering it capable of conveying an erotic charge. Tanizaki emphasises the foreignness of the materiality of the dwelling and the sense of freedom which this gave them, drawing attention to imported cloth from India, rattan furniture (which was a key colonial trope for the Europeans at the time), and his use of the word 'atelier' assigns the space an unorthodox quality which licenses the unusual behaviours taking place within. Other adjectives such as shoddy, absurd, impractical and inconvenient betray the ambivalent valuation of this kind of environment for the Japanese, and part of the appeal of the novel was its vicarious, voyeuristic insights into an 'easygoing' way of living that most Japanese could not countenance at the time for themselves, but were nevertheless drawn to. In terms of representing the love hotel interior in an embrionic form, most telling of all is the way Tanizaki describes the atelier as 'absurdly large' – generating a new aspiration for spaciousness that will be drawn out in this chapter.

Tanizaki thus draws the reader slowly into a world over which Jōji has less and less control as the novel progresses: the character of Naomi functions as a productive form of cultural delinquency that was developing in Japan, in which young women were favouring Western goods and ways, and abandoning their prescribed and subservient female role. According to Ian Buruma, the resulting concept of 'Naomism' meant 'a breakdown of traditional restraints. The "Woman" was revealed under the kimono. Raw passion was unleashed.'[2] In other words, Naomi is synonymous with spatial transgression, and the spatial arrangement of their unconventional dwelling is complicitous in its capacity to support the couple's desire 'to live playfully.' Jōji manages to retain some measure of control over Naomi's transgressions by maintaining separate, Japan-

ese-style sleeping quarters, a measure which effectively concentrates all the sexual activity away from the traditional Japanese arrangements for sleeping, instead locating it in the more active living spaces of the house. This safeguards the Japanese-style rooms from being identified with bizarre and unfamiliar sexual mores, and allows the novel's depiction of experimental sexuality to operate in less indigenous and value-laden surroundings.

Bed

Intriguingly, Tanizaki implies that the Western-style bed would have been a step too far for the protagonist Jōji, who instead brought Japanese style bedding to the house from his parents' country home. The type of bedding to which Jōji was aspiring would have been sheets and blankets; indeed, when these were first introduced in Japan, they had a distinctly exotic and erotic allure, and there is still one love hotel in Shinjuku called Blanket Inn, which gives some indication of the connotative values that came to be attached to what is in the West an entirely innocuous form of bedlinen. Jōji's Japanese bedding, on the other hand, would have been a futon over which is stretched a cotton cover, leaving the decorative fabric of the futon visible as an oval shape on the upper surface. This style of bedding was not tucked in, and lay draped over the top of the futon mattress on the floor.

The bed was, and still is, the focal point of the love hotel interior. Even by the 1950s, very few Japanese people had experienced Western-style beds: they had been available in Japan since the 1920s, in that experiments in 'cultural living' or '*la vie simple*' very often incorporated the high-up double bed, but the majority of Japanese still rolled out their futons on *tatami*-matted floors each night. Jordan Sand notes that

> most of the houses in culture house guides had at least one room labelled 'sleeping chamber', often with paired single beds shown abutting one another on the floor plan, although the interiors of these rooms were rarely shown in illustrations.[3]

Culture homes thus represented a new-found ideal, but for most people, cost and lack of space precluded dedicated bedrooms. Consequently, the bedroom remained an alluring and unattainable image well into the postwar period.

The first time Western-style beds were introduced in any great quantities was during the 1960s, particularly during the run-up to the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, when new Western-style hotels and motels were being built to accommodate visitors to the Games from overseas. Japanese businessmen who had travelled abroad would also have experienced Western-style beds, and a preoccupation with a new way of sleeping grew during this developmental period. Love hotels began to use the Western bed as the main way of differentiating themselves from other types of accommodation, particularly the traditional inns or *ryokan*, which retained the futon. Nowadays, many business and tourist-class hotels offer both *washitsu* (Japanese-style) and *yōshitsu* (Western-style) rooms to

guests, where the bed is the main point of distinction, since green tea, *yukata* robes, and other Japanese elements of hospitality are usually available in both. Specifically, love hotel interiors in the definitive period of its development during the early 1970s tended to favour large divans covered with patterned vallanced bedspreads, a sign of luxury in a changing economic context: much as the introduction of chairs had already made sitting on the floor seem very backward during the Meiji period, the idea of sleeping raised above the floor held particular kudos for Japanese in the Showa period.

The sophistication and appeal of the Western-style bed was not limited to its elevation above the floor and the new types of bedding involved, but was also associated with its permanence and presence in a room. Sand comments that 'in a *tatami*-matted house, any room could serve as a sleeping chamber, and as a result, no room bore specifically erotic overtones in the manner of the Western bedroom or boudoir.'[4] The Japanese were used to beds that disappeared during the daytime, and unlike the love hotel, their beds did not occupy space as the main figurative element. Traditional futons also constituted sleeping as something that took place side-by-side rather than together under the same set of covers. The love hotel bed is almost without exception the focal point of the room as depicted in the love hotel guides, photographed from the ideal view upon entering the room. Such a permanent and central feature was deeply unfamiliar, and the sheer emphasis on the bed as the prime object in the space was erotic in itself: 'the general absence of a native tradition of marking a private space in the home for the conjugal couple only enhanced the eroticism of bedrooms and beds.'[5] The Japanese were also not accustomed to placing the head of a bed against a wall, since futons were generally laid out in the middle of the room, with space all around them. This new positioning of the bed allowed for much innovation in the relationship of bed to wall, particularly in the form of mirrors and headboards, and this exotic spatialisation of the bed also led to the development of spatial arrangements between other relatively new items of furniture. Bedside tables, television consoles, lighting controls and so on took up positions relative to, or integral to, the bed, augmenting its centrality in the room. As such the status of the bed moved from an image to a technology in the development of the love hotel interior.

By the late 1970s, love hotel owners started to become more competitive and ambitious, installing imported European-style beds, ornate Louis XIV styles, four-posters or oversized sleigh beds, at great cost, which they put in their best rooms. As the need to differentiate one love hotel from another, and indeed to differentiate one room from another, grew more intense, specially designed novelty beds started to emerge in the early 1980s, an extravagance which further distinguished the love hotel from other kinds of overnight accommodation. Even today there are still a few rooms sporting a bed in the shape of a clam shell, a space rocket, a car or a boat, but these have since fallen out of favour and are only found in the unrefurbished establishments.

The type of bed to emerge in the 1970s as specific to the love hotel, however, was the *dendō* or *engata* bed, a circular revolving contraption, which was invari-

ably surrounded by mirrored panels, and was electrically operated. This was for a period during the 1970s thought to be the quintessential ingredient in a love hotel interior, effectively turning the bed from a place to sleep into a rotating erotic stage or adult toy with pornographic and kinaesthetic potential, explicitly signalling the bed's primary purpose for sex. By the mid-1980s, the authorities took the view that this kind of perverted use of technology needed to be legislated against, and the *dendō* became the main item that was prohibited in the 1985 revision to the Law Regulating Businesses Affecting Public Morals,[6] along with mirrors over one square metre that were designed to reflect the body in a supine position. Proprietors invariably responded by removing the electric motors from the circular beds, and the *dendō* now only remains in vestigial form in a handful of love hotels that have not undergone wholesale refurbishment.

What is interesting about the *dendō* bed is its similarity with that installed in Hugh Hefner's Playboy Mansion in Chicago. Between 1959 and 1970, *Playboy* magazine published in the US edition a series of articles promoting a bachelor lifestyle, featuring designs for penthouses, hideaways and so on. George Wagner reveals that when Ronald Dirsmith renovated Hefner's mansion in 1959, he installed a bed, eight-and-a-half feet in diameter, with motorised controls which could make it rotate 360 degrees. Wagner quotes from a contemporaneous review, which enthused:

> when the hinged panel in the black leather headrest is lowered, it reveals not only the buttons controlling the rotation of this automated innerspring, but also a set of dials that operate an ingenious three-motor vibrator system . . . the headboard also houses remote controls for the video-tape recorder, a rheostat for romantically dimming the bedroom lights and outlets for two pairs of stereo headphones, with complete controls for the room's elaborate hi-fi system.[7]

The Japanese edition of *Playboy* did not start until 1975, but with imported copies of the US edition in circulation, and a continuation of the theme of bachelor lifestyle to a Japanese readership, love hotel designers would have been aware of this bachelor-orientated design agenda, in which the man is conceived of as a free agent, whose brand-new apartment 'facilitates his behaviour through a dependency on technology. It is a space of imagined liberation, in which technology serves as an extension of sexual desire.'[8]

Given that the Japanese authorities even banned the use of the term 'double bed' in advertisements in 1932, such was their taboo status at the time, there has been a complete cultural shift from bed-as-taboo to bed-as-trophy over a period of fifty years until the early 1980s. The *dendō* is regarded in Japan as more comical now than seedy, and, after the legislation change, was replaced in the 1980s by a new invention, namely the 'bodysonic' bed, which came equipped with sensors to vibrate and play music in response to body movements. Other love hotel bed manufacturers took to calling their elaborate designs after glamorous European women or well-known films such as 'Grace' and 'Dolce Vita,'

and these came with astronomical price tags. Given the expanse of mirrors surrounding some models, there was also a flurry of innovation in the mid-1980s among bed manufacturers such as Biken to redesign of many of the beds currently on the market with motifs such as Art Deco-inspired sunbursts and jazzy piano keyboards.

During this shift into the love hotel's 'corrective period,' the style of bedding was also changing to embrace a European vogue for continental quilts: in many love hotels floral vallanced bedspreads were slowly substituted for plainer, simpler solutions, with a pair of plump pillows replacing the previously smooth mono-pillow of the definitive period. Monogrammed bedlinen, where a plain white duvet cover was printed or machine-embroidered with the name of the love hotel, first began to appear in the late 1980s, and this now typifies the contemporary love hotel interior. This monogram serves to remind customers which establishment they chose, and also, more usefully, identifies bedlinen to ensure it comes back from the laundry.

The definitive period of the love hotel interior is celebrated by photographer Kyoichi Tsuzuki in his 2001 book, *Satellite of Love*, in which he claims that 'interior design's erotic "true north" [is] the love hotel.'[9] Tsuzuki sought out many of the still extant interiors dating from definitive period prior to the new legislation being imposed, and his book captures the spirit of the 1970s love hotel interior with its emphasis on rich, warm colours and textures, its atmospheric, claustrophobic and inter-reflected spaces, which gather together a panoply of Western influences and finishes, to create the ultimate setting for adult sexual play. The cover illustration shows a *dendō* bed in a state of blurred animation, rotating in the midst of a room lined with fragmented, curving mirrors and framed by a series of theatrically lit proscenium arches painted yellow, red and green. Cover notes reveal that this is room 403 called 'Club Beat' found in an Osakan love hotel called *Za Riichi*, The Rich, where even the name itself is synonymous with a desire to pull out all the stops for those who can afford this level of extravagance.

Capsularity

Also featured in Tsuzuki's book is room 201 from The Rich, containing a bed in the shape of a gold space capsule which used to slide back and forth on rails. This theme, dating from the early 1970s, reflects something of the global preoccupation at that time with space travel. The designer was no doubt responding to the future-orientated theming of the Osaka Expo of 1970, which was moreover responsible for promulgating many new ideas about contemporary lifestyles to the Japanese market, particularly the idea of capsular living. The capsule hotel, as exemplified by Kisho Kurokawa's Nakagin Capsule Building of 1972, was designed to serve the needs of the Japanese *salariiman* in the smallest space possible. The rooms were prefabricated, stacked and tiny, no more than miniaturised portholed boxes, recalling the restricted yet high-tech conditions of a space station. Contrary to popular perception, Akira Suzuki claims that

> Kurokawa's idea of a capsularised existence did not take root in Tokyo, as the city was insufficiently urbanised, its inhabitants still enamoured of life in the suburbs. However, the historical minimalism of its living spaces provided the necessary preconditions for the development of the capsule hotel and the one-room mansion.[10]

The love hotel, being intentionally maximal rather than minimal, is thus the antithesis of the capsular dimensions of domestic living in Japan. Here, a trade-off may be seen to operate between space and time, in that the love hotel offers the largest possible space occupied for the shortest possible time, while the capsularised home condenses everyday life into the smallest possible space.

The love hotel thus distinguished itself by its excessive space standards, and was only truly capsular in the socially discontinuous sense that pleasure quarters were: 'the quarters were capsules that floated outside the normative polities of the cities.'[11] In this regard, the love hotel may also be compared to the liminally capsular existence of the bridal chamber, which Barbara Penner has described as 'a specially designed *mise en scène*, which enclosed and helped to organise the first sexual encounter of the newly-wed couple.'[12] Compared to the minimum space standards and prefabricated aesthetic of the Japanese capsule hotel, the American innovation of the bridal chamber, dating back to the 1840s, was a lavish affair, whose furnishings 'evoked a vision of handiwork and labour.'[13] As a setting, the bridal chamber was a space away from prying eyes, for the bride and bridegroom to try out their new roles as husband and wife, which meant that 'closing the door became a powerful metaphor for the couple's move from single to married status.'[14] The culture house movement of the 1920s anticipated and embodied the same revering of craftsmanship and the nuclear family as the American bridal chamber, and the love hotel simply took the level of introspection and painstaking decoration a stage further, by excluding daylight and minimising awareness of the outside world. In some instances, this more decorative interpretation of capsularity was extended to create the impression of being transported elsewhere, with the theme of outer space sustained through visual depictions of stars and planets as part of the interior décor.

Architectural historians have observed that during the 1970s, many Japanese architects were concerned to create living environments that were increasingly capsular, not only for reasons of escalating land prices, but also as a psychological response to the cold war and to the excessive urban pollution in Japan in the 1960s and 1970s.[15] This level of insularity and anomie was also symptomatic of a period of adjustment in the Japanese mindset in order to nurture a more home-grown approach to modern life. Botund Bognar suggests that 'the small inner world, or hermetic microcosm, concealed in solid concrete buildings with a hard-surfaced geometry was to provide the conditions for moments of silence in which the individual could recreate himself [*sic*] physically and spiritually.'[16] It was not only the love hotel interior which during this period effectively negated the external world with its practice of excluding daylight: the architectural elite

of the day were also experimenting with lifestyles that directed their gaze inwards, and excluded awareness of a surrounding context.

This was also a reaction to the lack of privacy that had dominated Japanese domestic life since feudal times: if privacy was hard-won within the context of the domestic interior, at least it could be manufactured at the expense of an excluded outside, making the 'grey spaces' in and around traditional Japanese houses more impervious, and extending this sense of privacy further by erecting internal walls that effected a degree of seclusion between one part of the house and another. Toyo Ito's U-House (1976) internalised the house completely, so that daylight was only received indirectly. Tadao Ando's Row House in Sumiyoshi, Osaka (1976) required its inhabitants to go outside in order to pass from one part of the dwelling to another, across a bridge spanning an inner courtyard. There was, then, a palpable desire to segment and separate not only the interior from the exterior, but also to isolate spaces more completely within the confines of a dwelling, to create distinct and cellular rooms with door openings in solid concrete walls. This new attitude to the subdivision of space paved the way for the love hotel to exert even greater appeal, as its design standards where internal wall construction were concerned were extremely robust and assured the kind of acoustic privacy rarely available in the home.

The ideal space norms for housing in Japan which developed during the postwar period produced the formula known as *n*DK,[17] where *n* is the number of bedrooms based on the number of people in the household minus one, D is dining and K is kitchen. Sand attributes this development to the architect and reformer Uzō Nishiyama, based on his wartime surveys.[18] This formula, with its principle of separating eating from sleeping, replaced the earlier 2K typical layout, which consisted of a kitchen and two other non-designated rooms. In the 1940s, housing was in short supply and most was privately rented.[19] The Japan Housing Corporation (*Nihon Jūtaku Kōdan*) was formed in 1955, and in conjunction with the private sector, built twenty-three million dwelling units in the space of less than twenty years, of which the majority were either multi-storey suburban *danchi* or *manshon*.[20] Ann Waswo's analysis shows that while the actual size of the average *danchi* apartment increased over this period from 462 square feet in 1955 to 645 square feet in 1973, in the later years there was a sharp drop in the application rate for *danchi*, and vacancies began to appear. A survey conducted in 1970 revealed that 76 per cent of tenants wanted to move out of what they saw as accommodation that was '*tōi*, *takai*, *semai*' (remote, expensive and small). The reason for this shift in perception is inextricably linked to lifestyle changes: 'what might have been adequate for living Japanese-style was now perceived as decidedly cramped.'[21] Many suburban *danchi* dwellers aspired to living in what they perceived as the more urban and spacious *manshon*-type apartment, but even these disappointed: 'the model units [of *manshon*] had been sparsely furnished, sometimes with items of unusually small size in order to enhance the sense of spaciousness.'[22] Nevertheless, in the 1960s such properties were mostly bought 'off plan' for sums in the region of twelve times an average household's annual income. This puts into context the relat-

ively modest overnight cost (less than a day's pay) of occupying a well-appointed love hotel interior with enviable proportions and lavish furnishings.

The *n*DK formula was developed not only in order to standardise Japanese housing provision during its postwar reconstruction, but also to accommodate as economically as possible the needs of Japanese people moving in large numbers from rural areas to work in the cities. In anthropological terms, the formula indicates a shift in the spatial configuration of the home from one in which most space is communal or multi-purpose, to a form of housing where the interior spaces are more clearly functionally assigned: Akira Suzuki confirms that 'separating eating and sleeping space, and separating boys and girls in different bedrooms were ideas from public housing that became the norm.'[23] However, 'while widely accepted in principle, separate bedrooms for parents and each of their children sometimes proved difficult to realise,'[24] due to severe space constraints in urban contexts. While children may have gained from this arrangement, the general lack of parental privacy was perpetuated in the *n*DK model. Although nominally the house became a reflection of the conjugal bond with the couple sharing a bedroom, it is clear that a fully developed sexual relationship was difficult to sustain in this kind of arrangement. By the 1980s, Ueno reports that 15 per cent of couples in Japan were sleeping apart at home, often commencing when the wife started sleeping in a child's bedroom after they left home.[25] Sexual contact thus appears to diminish once the task of reproducing and child-rearing comes to an end, and this practice institutes a further loss of intimacy in married life, in which the couple are apart from each other even when asleep. Ueno thus situates love hotels as something of a marital saving grace: 'people do not complain about an absence of sexuality in the household; they have easy access to specialised spaces for sex. In fact, Japan has developed a unique type of architecture in the form of lovemaking hotels.'[26] Rather than exacerbating a detrimental situation for marriage as an institution, the love hotel provides a welcome solution.

Regardless of this particular positive affirmation of the love hotel, there are other perceptions of its impact on family life. From the late 1950s onward, Japanese families began to be more atomised with regard to their style of domestic inhabitation, and gravitated to their own private worlds. While the husband of a typical family was rarely present, leaving early in the morning and returning late at night, the wife had no particular space of her own, but had access to all parts of the house, which she managed single-handed. The *n*DK arrangement thus created social problems with (male) adolescents withdrawing from not only the social world within their own family, but completely absenting themselves, a phenomenon given the neologism of *otaku* (a polite word for 'you') in 1989. This translates in practice as 'nerd' or 'geek,' but in Japanese amounts to someone calling his fellow classmate 'sir,' and therefore sounds ridiculously formal and remote.[27] This form of address amplifies the social impact of self-imposed spatial segregation, and various media reports expressed concerns about the *otaku*'s social relations to revolve around the internet, and the fears that this might be spawning deeply antisocial behaviour involving rape,

assault and murder. However, it is not only boys that focus their social energy on the internet and present a difficult parental dilemma: teenage girls in Japan have caused a similar stir, with the rise of the practice of 'compensated dates' (*enjo kōsai*), in which young girls offer themselves as dates to older men in exchange for gifts and pocket-money. These dates can be set up via telephone clubs but are now more commonly arranged via internet and mobile phone. The average Japanese family is thus under pressure to try to resist the tendencies of their teenage children to retreat into their own private, internet-and-computer-dominated world, or to enter into cynical sexual relationships for all the wrong reasons. The love hotel is complicitous in both practices, in that it sustains awareness and availability of pornography with respect to the *otaku*, and offers easy access to private space for *enjo kōsai*. As such, the love hotel is a deeply ambivalent place for many parents: on the one hand, it offers a kind of salvation for their compromised opportunities for marital (or even extra-marital) sex, while on the other hand it has given rise to serious misgivings about the detrimental effect on their children. This concern is not confined to teenagers, but extends to much younger age groups: West notes that a large part of the hue and cry which brought about the 1985 revision to the Entertainment Law was due to parents voicing concerns about garish love hotels opening in close proximity to a primary school or kindergarten.[28]

Floor

In a study of changing attitudes to the *tatami* mat in the 1920s home, Sarah Teasley shows how '*tatami* adjectivised class' in that it was retained in the maid's quarters and workspaces, but 'vilified as outdated, unsuitable for modern middle-class life and embarrassing for Japan as a modern nation.'[29] Furniture and *tatami* mats were not thought to go together, for both practical and ideological reasons: the furniture tended to damage the surface of the *tatami* and also look out of place. Therefore, where Western-style furniture was being adopted, the *tatami* mat needed to be abandoned, or remain only in vestigial form, in the guest-room only. In the 1950s and 1960s, love hotels tended to follow this line of reasoning more quickly than the average residential environment, because the use of the bed and other furniture warranted it, but also because there was a connotative need to install an othering or distancing between spaces associated with prosaic domesticity and those dedicated to sex outside the home: *tatami* indicated a space of work for women, and in this new play-space the presence of *tatami* was not considered appropriate. Therefore, in order to ensure that the love hotel interior invoked an atmosphere conducive to sexual relations, very few love hotels elected to retain the *tatami* mat. Instead floor coverings less prone to damage by the bed and other furniture were used in most love hotel interiors. In particular, the deep-pile patterned carpet became the floor finish of choice during the definitive period, often in swirling designs in deep reds and golds. For the Japanese, this either harked back to an image of a golden historic age inspired by China, or conjured up a plush new European aesthetic aug-

mented with ornate furnishings. The particular combination of red and gold flock wallpaper with patterned carpets in the love hotel interior has gradually disappeared in all but a few establishments, as new fire regulations prohibited fabric wall finishes and the deep pile carpets proved difficult to maintain.

Today's more cosmopolitan love hotels are tending to favour high-gloss floor finishes which have a lighter, more airy quality compared to the sumptuous carpets of the 1970s. Laminate flooring is the most popular, reflecting Western interior design trends, with Italianate tiled and marble flooring proving a popular second choice. This alters the acoustic ambience of the love hotel interior from one which was typically hushed and muted to a more resonant space which evokes the ambience of open-plan loft living similar to that of the 'atelier' described by Tanizaki. The image of a New York-style loft is reinforced through the use of fair-faced internal brickwork, an absence of curtains and drapes, and through the specification of designer furniture which deliberately enhances the sense of spaciousness. This approach is consistent with a global trend towards desiring larger, more multi-purpose bedrooms: as Akiko Busch notes in her book *Geography of Home*, 'today's bedroom is asked to serve a variety of functions.'[30] Historically, far from being the most private of domestic spaces, the bedroom was once a much more central room in the house, particularly where royalty were concerned, in that the bed was where the monarch held audience.[31] The love hotel interior is showing signs of becoming less intensely private, and there is now much more congruence between the design and material palette of the love hotel lobbies and the bedroom interiors in the most recent establishments, indicating that the need for a radical separation with the outside world is less strong. Rather, the love hotel interior is now being called upon to accommodate other kinds of activities. A small handful have taken the gesture towards reduced capsularity as far as a balcony, with the more luxurious of these even sporting an outside hot-tub, indicating a return to traditional Japanese forms of bathing.

Bathroom

Private bathrooms first began to be integrated into the Japanese domestic environment after the war. In the pre-war period, most homes had access to an outside privy, but bathing was a public activity: according to Suzuki, 'earlier public housing had never included a bathroom because it was considered too luxurious.'[32] Over the past fifty years, as the use of *sento* (public bathhouses) has declined due to lifestyle changes, Japanese homes have been adapted to incorporate facilities for bathing. This has tended to be in the form of prefabricated polycarbonate capsules inserted ingeniously into a compact space, where very often the taps from the washbasin are shared with the bathtub/shower, and there is little space for one person to dress or undress, let alone take a bath or shower with someone else. The idea of the bathroom as a space for sexual experimentation and titillation developed in a completely different context: soapland. At the same time as the legitimate communal bathhouse began to wane, a different kind

of 'bathhouse' for courting sexual favours grew, and the culturally exotic name *toruko* developed, after Turkish baths.[33] There is a strong cultural link between bathing and sex in Japan: in particular, *onsen* geisha (hot spring geisha) offered quite a different level of service compared to their refined sisters in Kyoto, and are virtually synonymous with prostitution, especially in the seaside town of Atami.[34] The *kanban* indicating *onsen* geisha is an inversion of the original sign for *onsen*, a bowl of steaming water: inverted it looks like a jellyfish with tentacles dangling, a sign that is now metonymic of soapland. Here various services were offered involving soap massages, and customers were treated to different forms of bodily pleasure, some of which were supposedly negotiated separately and conducted elsewhere. While sexual favours certainly take place in soapland, love hotels were often used as a place to move on to after an evening in the *toruko*, and the need for a satisfactory continuity of experience bred expectations about the ideal love hotel environment in which the relationship could develop. Shoichi Inoue reports that many love hotels even had arrangements with prostitutes to bring business in, and some were even given lodgings on the premises.[35]

As sizeable en-suite bathrooms gradually became standard in love hotels by the 1980s,[36] one feature to gain prominence was the internal window, whereby the bathroom could be viewed voyeuristically from the bedroom. Katagi traces the inspiration for this type of bathroom back to one popular love hotel interior, in which 'Yamamoto Shinya [a popular porno film director] appears on the transparent wall between the bathroom and the bedroom, as if to prompt us to act out a film.'[37] This feature effectively extended the scope of the love hotel interior beyond a simple bedroom setting and lent potential for couples to role-play and objectify themselves in new circumstances. The bath became a secondary focal point in the love hotel environment, and led to the development and adaptation of new technologies such as large double-ended baths, kidney-shaped baths, Jacuzzis, glass bathtubs, coloured acrylic bathtubs and so on. Indeed, developments in the love hotel bathroom allowed for a return of the circular *dendō* form, this time in the form of a tub, which often conveyed another sexual connotation of the cup, which was ritually exchanged by a geisha and her patron.

In the newest love hotel guidebooks there is a subtle transformation in the representational hierarchy of the love hotel interior: often the bathroom is now depicted as the main image, with the bedroom represented only as an inset image, an inversion which indicates the extent to which the bathroom is now starting to act as the main selling point, taking centre stage relative to bedroom facilities. This is consistent with a growing global market for spa resorts and hotels, which translates domestically into a tendency to regard the bathroom as a primary leisure space. Moreover, while older love hotels are often depicted with one or two sexual aids in the bathroom, such as the kind of soapland seats used for 'washing' genitalia, many of the newest love hotels have resignified the bathroom less as an erotic space, and more as a space for personal grooming and luxurious relaxation, where the emphasis is on high-quality branded beauty products, and baths are shown full of bubbles, or are themselves bathed in

coloured lighting effects. The latest craze is for the 'flower bath,' a gimmick that love hotels use to promote themselves, where rose or orchid petals are strewn across the steaming surface of the bathwater, inviting a romantic and indulgent soak. Flowers have, of course, always been associated with sexuality in Japan, in particular irises, chrysanthemums and cherry blossoms, and processions regularly took place in the licensed pleasure quarters to celebrate them.[38] The space for pampering is extending out into the bedroom space too, with twice as many interiors in 2005 guidebooks showing elaborate dressing-tables as a focal point in the room compared to guidebooks in the mid-1990s.[39]

Lighting

The Japanese relationship to electric light in relation to notions of otherness and sexuality provides an interesting context to understanding the connotative values of the exotically illuminated love hotel interior of today. Lighting has become something of a speciality for love hotel designers, and the bedside control panel in any self-respecting love hotel interior offers scope to manipulate the lighting conditions and effects within the room to suit its different occupants. The levels of theatricality, which have become the norm for the love hotel, contrast sharply with the typical lighting conditions in the Japanese home, which are generally more utilitarian and low key. The idea of sex taking place in brightly lit surroundings is consistent with depictions in Japanese *shunga* (erotic prints), which invariably showed sexual relations taking place in daylight.

In reality, most actual sex happened in the dark. This is borne out by sociologist Chizuko Ueno's analysis of the spatial layout and habitation of a rural dwelling. Considering its four-square arrangement of rooms and its absence of circulation spaces, Ueno looks at the impact this had on emergent sexual practices and roles, and discusses the role of darkness in the practice of 'night-courting.'[40] While the parents slept in one room, young boys could enter the house under cover of darkness, pass through the parental chamber, and get into bed with one of the pubescent daughters. This practice required feigned ignorance on the part of the parents, who recognised it as part of the social hierarchy of village life, and their tacit acceptance engendered a form of sexual freedom which at least took place under the protection of their own roof. Because all rural homes had the same basic arrangement of rooms, the village boys knew their way in the dark, and would get into the right bed.

Darkness thus defined these early gropings for the sexually nascent villagers, but the love hotel has assumed the opposite context, providing an exotically illuminated setting for a more urban kind of sexual exploration. Electric light was deplored by Tanizaki in his 1931 essay *In Praise of Shadows* as undermining an appreciation of Japanese material culture, in that it cast Japanese skin, lacquerware and other esteemed items into too harsh lighting conditions compared to simple candlelight. He claimed: 'so benumbed are we nowadays by electric lights that we have become utterly insensitive to the evils of excessive illumination.'[41] As such he managed to occidentalise and demonise electric light,

characterising it as something that is vulgar and lacking in sensitivity, and associating it with lowbrow Japanese culture: 'the gaudy kabuki colours under the glare of western floodlamps verge on a vulgarity of which one quickly tires.'[42] Edward Seidenstecker reports that in the Yoshiwara at the turn of the twentieth century, it was not floodlamps but chandeliers that glittered in the reception areas of many brothels, which could also account for Tanizaki's negative valuation of electric lighting.[43] There is an obvious continuity between the floating world of Edo and the development of the love hotel which can be evidenced in the use of light, given that bright lights were synonymous with sexuality in Japan, and by comparison, dimness is associated with tradition.

In the early love hotels, simple incandescent lights were used, which are warmer in colour and provided a more flattering way of rendering skin tones, compared to the blueish fluourescent pull-cord ceiling lights often used in traditional *ryokan* today. Love hotel designers have since developed a whole array of new effects, including ropelights, fairylights, Christmas lights, backlit stained glass or images, downlighters, uplighters and so on, with the effect that the bedroom interior appears as richly wrought as a well-lit filmset, and with it the idea of having sex in the dark is banished.

Like the *dendō*, there is one popular form of illumination that has come to epitomise the love hotel interior: the blacklight fantasy, or BLF. Ultraviolet lighting was already a staple of the nightclub and discotheque, and its use in the love hotel interior also came to the fore at a time when special effects were

Figure 3.1 Image of room at Hotel Og Og, Umeda, Osaka.

becoming more and more dominant in the film industry. As a special effect, the blacklight fantasy not only renders flesh in an erotic and flattering light, but it has the effect of doubling the spatial experience, in that it can transform one bedroom setting into something entirely different and exotic, bringing into focus motifs or scenes that have been painted in UV reflective paint on to the walls, typically conjuring up images of underwater worlds or distant galaxies as shown in Figure 3.1. Katagi notes that 'this transforms the role of the wall, that is to say, from separation and isolation into creation and expansion of the private space.'[44] Some love hotels' reputations are based on having a BLF in every room (Casa Swan in Umeda – Figure 3.2, and Köln in Shibuya), while many

Figure 3.2 Hotel Casa Swan 'black light magic' poster, Umeda, Osaka.

others feature one or two rooms that have ultraviolet lighting. Analysis has shown that while the technology is no longer new, the BLF remains an important feature in the love hotel interior repertoire, and moreover is still diversifying in terms of its application, becoming part of a suite of coloured lighting effects that can now be produced using LED technology. Hotel La Pierre in Kyoto underwent a renewal in 2004 and reopened with posters highlighting the introduction of this new form of programmable coloured lighting effects in all its rooms, a design feature that achieved media prominence when the French designer Philippe Starck incorporated it into hotel bedroom interiors for the American hotelier Ian Schrager.[45]

Image

The BLF may also be characterised as a form of visual display found in the love hotel interior, used as a means to create a fantasy setting. In actual fact it is a manifestation of an established part of the love hotel interior, namely the *moodie*, which is effectively a large mural that is either painted, constructed (for example, plaster bas reliefs, 3D elements organised in a vitrine or a stained glass panel), or projected on to a wall surface within the room. In an environment where actual views out or openable windows were rare, the love hotel began to deploy the *moodie* during the definitive period of its development as a way of providing an artificial view of elsewhere, which could be consistent with the rest of the room's theming, or, in the case of the BLF version, a departure from it.

Typical subject matter for the love hotel *moodie* reveals a changing preoccupation and familiarity with other places over time, in that the earliest love hotels derived their imagery from historical Japanese images of samurai, geisha, irises, including re-creations of familiar Hokusai and Utamaro masterpieces. As the Japanese began to become active as tourists overseas as well as on their home turf, Japanese imagery was superseded by a preference for romantic places in Europe, Neuschwannstein Castle in Bavaria being a popular motif (found in Piaa on the outskirts of Osaka and Ōjo (Royal Castle) in Tokyo). Love hotels in the 1980s drew from popular Western clichés, such as forests and palm-fringed beaches (for example, Yasuda in the Higashi-Kanto area), and began to conjure up destinations of which only a few Japanese had direct experience, such as Egyptian pyramids. More recently, the trend has shifted towards photographic backdrops of other cities, New York's skyline being a popular choice, or Golden Gate Bridge, as shown in Figure 3.1.

This widening repertoire of other places is evident in the development of supplemental subject matter in erotic prints or *shunga* during the eighteenth century. Timon Screech shows how as 'travel increased and places known only by hearsay entered the realm of actual experience,'[46] these images departed from the standard setting of the Yoshiwara, and started depicting copulating couples against a great variety of different backdrops, which were intended to heighten the erotic charge of the main image, employing devices to create a sense of spatial extension or inclusion of elsewhere. Typically, *shunga* showed views of

Mount Fuji and other significant landmarks painted on screens, which had the effect of associating sexual acts with journeys and travelling, and hence a spirit of adventure and the possibility of new encounters, which carried a *frisson* in its own right. The love hotel has simply taken this technique a stage further, and through the *moodie* is able to make reference to a wider spectrum of other places and journeys, maintaining for the Japanese the association between travel and sex. The realm of experience is today enlarged not only through travel but also vicariously through the media, and many *moodies* contain imagery that borrows from the landscape of film, including James Bond and Disney scenes. There are, however, very few instances of *moodies* depicting naked or copulating bodies, with the exception of shunga art used as wallpaper in room 410, and an erotic manga *moodie* in room 411 of Hotel Adonis in Uehonmachi, which is an S&M-orientated love hotel.

The subject matter of the love hotel *moodie* has been linked to notions of the sublime by Katagi, who maps its use historically to Europe in the eighteenth century when romantic artists were striving to represent the immensity of objects in the natural world, stars, oceans, mountains, and volcanoes were seen as sources of the sublime, and there was a growing respect and awe for the grandeur and violence of nature. This is present in the love hotel *moodie* in imagery of dramatic skies, rainbows, seascapes and so on. These attributes became more mystical and reverent in the hands of Romantic poets, who in turn inspired grand tours of Europe to take in its sublime sites. In the case of the love hotel, a gesturing to the grand tour is indeed evident, and a new relationship to nature and culture is encapsulated in the appetite for and valuation of such images as an integral part of a romantic setting. The sense of awe and wonder that the Japanese were exploring, however, is less about fear and violence perceived within nature, and is more sanitised and artificial in its mode of recreation in order to achieve its effect. The romantic impulse is thus assimilated in a more accessible form, and none of the moodies has quite the evocative power of a romantic painting; rather they serve to enhance the singularity of the experience taking place within the room, supporting its emotional impact, instead of providing an emotive force in its own right.

In many recent love hotel interiors, while the traditional *moodie* appears to have been omitted, it is still present in other forms: one-third of such rooms now have an open aspect, allowing daylight in, and, in some cases, an actual view of a cityscape replaces the depiction of an urban scene, bringing the room into much closer proximity with its actual location, thereby revoking the former strategy of removing the gaze from the everyday and the here and now. A second contemporary manifestation of the *moodie* is given by the TV plasma screen or data projection screen for computer gaming, which offers an animated, interactive version for customers to participate more fully in an act of escapism, albeit one that seemingly replaces or forgoes the sexual encounter rather than augmenting it. Inoue commented in a 1989 article on the love hotel interior that there had been a shift from the desire to be enclosed or incarcerated within a hermetic world to a desire to include, even if vicariously, a sense of the beyond,

providing a release from the confines of the actual space.[47] Now, it is clear that the vicarious sense of elsewhere is being replaced by an acceptance of the love hotel being congruent with the everyday, and thus there are fewer cues that are intentionally designed to transport the room's occupants into another imaginary realm.

One reason the *moodie* grew in importance as a key ingredient of the love hotel interior was as a substitute for large mirrors, which the 1985 legislation change had effectively outlawed. The long-standing association between mirrors and love hotels dates back to their precursors, the *tsurekomiyado*, which were adapted for amorous use through the introduction of mirrored surfaces.[48] As such, mirrors are synonymous with the eroticisation of space, giving rise to a preponderance of reflective surfaces that epitomised the love hotel interior during its definitive phase. These were often decorated with patterns and motifs that obscured portions of their reflective surface, ostensibly to make women feel aroused but not objectified. Shoichi Inoue has argued that opulence in the design of love hotels was intended to make women feel they were being treated well, but it is more likely that the overtly sexual orientation of early love hotel interiors was originally geared towards satisfying male sexual instincts with a prominent emphasis on the visual. By the mid-1980s when the mirrors were called into question by the state, they were also proving unpopular with the love hotels' female clientele. As Suzuki argues, as women began to become more active in the decision-making process where love hotels were concerned, it became apparent that they found an abundance of mirrors sexually inhibiting,[49] and many establishments began to refurbish their rooms accordingly. The visual orientation of the love hotel interior has diminished, and whereas the earliest love hotels maximised their potential to arouse their inhabitants, interiors are now much more restrained visually with respect to their sexual overtones.

In the more stripped-down love hotel of today, where very often there is no visual imagery present in the room, there is a shift from an escapist impulse to a more integrative one. Yi-Fu Tuan notes that ' "escapism" has a somewhat negative meaning in our society and perhaps all societies. It suggests an inability to face facts – the real world.'[50] However, Tuan sees this ability to escape as the motivating principle behind the existence of human culture: 'culture is more closely linked to the human tendency not to face facts, our ability to escape by one means or another, than we are accustomed to believe,' and he even goes so far as to suggest that 'a human being is an animal who is congenitally indisposed to accept reality as it is.'[51] The love hotel interior may therefore be regarded as one which was traditionally a space specifically constituted to allow this disavowal of reality to take place, and to temporarily suspend one's inhabitation of it. Much of the attention to detail in the design of the interior was therefore intended to aid the process of slippage, whether through distraction or the representation of an elsewhere. In the early examples, wall finishes that suggested the interior of a medieval castle were common, with the illusion of heavy stone walls intruding into the interior adjacent to beds surrounded by heavy velvet curtains, creating a fantasy of incarceration. Later examples constructed a

more baroque and dreamlike image of escapism, where clouds were frequently painted on to the ceilings, and beds were framed with slender fluted columns. Fakery is linked to escapism and hence the escapist mindset of early love hotels engendered this aesthetic, but is now being displaced.

Technology

The presence of imagery as a prominent aspect of the love hotel interior has been gradually supplanted by the presence of gadgets, and in particular by gadgets that create images; indeed love hotels have occasionally been referred to as 'gadget hotels.' Thus as rooms became visually more banal in order to create a more sympathetic environment for female customers, male interest is sustained by means of technology. The mirror has effectively been reintroduced in an actively technologised form: CCTV or camcorder technology is often made available as part of the room's facilities, enabling couples to see themselves reflected and recorded, and even streamed to the occupants of other rooms if they so wish. In addition, the love hotel's use of mirroring technology has been miniaturised, initially through the introduction of Polaroid cameras as a standard room prop in the 1990s, but now, with the development of 3G mobile phone technology, there is no need for proprietors to provide instant cameras, and couples are readily using their own means to capture events, review and relay them as they wish. (The practice of uploading images and weblogging will be covered in Chapter 5.) Thus the invitation to stage and witness oneself engaged in sexual acts is still present as a form of play, but is less immediately obvious, and moreover has become a voluntary aspect of the room's occupation and a new spatial practice. Other less scopically orientated gadgets intended to augment sexual play are invariably present in the love hotel interior, with more than three-quarters of hotels listed in the most recently published guides claiming to vend *otona no omocha*, or adult toys, as part of the standard room specification.

There is a popular misconception that the extreme form of *otona no omocha*, S&M, is a feature of all love hotels. In fact, it has never been particularly prevalent, and its occurrence is dwindling, with very few instances of love hotels in Tokyo and Kyoto featuring S&M-themed rooms. Indeed, S&M seems to persist mainly in parts of Osaka and in strongly themed out-of-town establishments such as The Rock, and is no longer generally deemed to be a marketable theme in anything other than a niche capacity. Two love hotels specialising in S&M rooms, Adonis in Uehonmachi and Pamplona in Nanba, publish a small marketing booklet featuring images of all their rooms, since they tend not to be featured in the more mainstream love hotel guides. S&M rooms involve a particular colour palette (red and black), with crucifixes, chains and caged enclosures forming the constituent elements. The one love hotel guide that actually showed couples occupying bedrooms on a few of its pages featured a spread promoting S&M rooms. The image was of a young, gawky-looking man in the background, and an older, fully clothed woman smiling knowingly at the camera while

handcuffed, with a speech bubble above her head that said 'doing dangerous things makes your world beat faster.' In order to valorise this type of interior as fun and exciting to a contemporary readership, the woman is shown in charge, or taking the lead, not as a dominatrix, but in an ordinary and accessible way.

On the whole, however, contemporary love hotels are tending to promote technologies that revolve around pampering and other less sexualised pursuits, with the love hotel interior becoming increasingly dedicated to massage, relaxation and personal grooming. Devices such as tanning beds, sauna booths, massage chairs, exercise bikes and jacuzzis are now common. Here the fascination with the *ero-guro* (erotic grotesque) of earlier love hotels is giving way to something more sanitised, as women and also men are taking greater bodily pleasure from acts associated with cleanliness and innocent play rather than sexual stimulation. The focus is more sensual than sexual, with couples pleasuring themselves side by side, playing games, singing and listening to music, rather than pleasure being mutually reciprocated.

One item of technology has remained constant throughout the past fifty years, namely the television, which has had a powerful impact not necessarily on the love hotel interior per se, but on Japanese cultural expectations and relationships in general. Akira Suzuki believes that the breakdown of intimacy in the family home, which revolved typically around a central brazier in a convivial four-and-a-half-mat room, or *yojōhan*, where the family gathered to eat, talk and keep warm, was brought about by the arrival of the television, as has also been noted in other cultures. First, television effectively reorientated the room so that the family's gaze was redirected towards a screen in the corner, and this was then further exacerbated when individual family members acquired their own TV sets and retreated into their separate rooms. TV ownership was very low in Japan in the 1950s, but by the time the love hotel was emerging in 1958, levels of ownership doubled in the space of a year, which may be attributed to two main factors: the impending marriage of the Crown Prince of Japan which took place in 1959, and ABC's launch of a Disney programme in Japan in the same year.[52] A further effect of television can be drawn regarding the changing circumstances of domestic de-socialisation and the shift in focus from licensed brothels to rooms-by-the-hour, whereby the love hotel provided a new form of private space to which a family member could retreat to watch television.

Having directly affected the Japanese domestic scenario, colour television then emerged as a constituent component of the new motel experience during the 1960s, and as the love hotel adopted the motel's 3C formula (cooler, car and colour TV), it became the main proponent of entertainment and sexual stimulation in the room, delivering multiple adult channels. Later, when video technology became available, it provided the means to view adult videos, and this service, whether as video on demand or in the form of adult DVDs vended in the rooms, is now standard in every love hotel. Just as the focus has been away from direct face-to-face contact with other family members following the arrival of the television, so too in the love hotel has the television ensured that the couple is not entirely focused on one another, but is liable to be distracted by, and, by the same score,

motivated by, the presence of the television in the room. Televisions have typically got bigger, wider and slimmer as technology has moved on, and the majority of love hotel interiors still show a TV in direct relation to the bed, rendering it central to the love hotel's functionality, a clear marker of status and indulgence in a competitive market. The increased dedication towards television viewing in the love hotel interior is also apparent: whereas previously the relationship between the bed and the television indicated that viewing was casual and incidental, now many rooms boast a separate sofa orientated directly towards the television, and it is clear therefore that lately, watching television has become an end in itself.

Re-exoticisation

While a few of the oldest love hotels in Tokyo took inspiration from high-class Japanese geisha houses, providing an aspirational context in which a *salariiman* could seduce a woman, by the late 1990s, the presence of a Japanese-style interior represents something of a new departure. Rather than being a vestigial element, any distinctly Japanese-style features were effectively being 'reintroduced.' Young people in Japan, who typically live in apartments with few of the trappings of traditional Japanese domesticity, have a somewhat estranged relationship to traditional Japanese culture, whereby 'the past is a foreign country.' Thus, where *tatami* or *shoin*-style joinery are found in contemporary love hotel interiors, it is as an exotic flavour rather than a historicised reconstruction, in which Japanese items or features are reappropriated and resituated in a self-reflexive interior setting. As Millie Creighton has observed, 'increasing westernisation has transformed Japaneseness into the exotic,'[53] which in terms of the love hotel means that because 'material goods and customs associated with the once-exotic west have become a routine part of life'[54] a new aesthetic is sought, one which turns its attention to images which seem to the average Japanese consumer to represent a new exotica.

This re-exoticisation has actually taken two forms: on the one hand there is evidence of a reverse process of Japanese imagery and motifs being used in a low-key way (hotels which fall into this category were observed in Uguisudani – Story, C-Heaven and Yayaya; Aroma in Ikebukero, and Us in Nanba). This parallels similar trends observed in domestic interiors, where there has been 'a rising tide of interest in adding Japanese touches to a Western style base. The dominant element is Western, with the Japanese touches mixed in to create a fresh impression.'[55] On the other hand, there are a number of brand-new hotel interiors making explicit reference to tourist destinations to which more moneyed and seasoned Japanese men and women are now travelling, such as Africa 1 and 2 in Umeda, Petit Bali in Ikebukero, Bali Modern in Nanba and Nangoku 2 (meaning southern country) in Shibuya. In each case, the interiors displayed whitewashed walls, wooden blinds, billowing white bedlinen and drapes over heavy-dark-wood furniture, with much emphasis on exotic carvings and water features. Idealised versions of Asian and African cultures are thus beginning to rival more classically inspired or modern influences found in European and American referents. As with the materiality of Jōji and Naomi's

culture house, these newly exoticised Asian and African examples are represented in an explicitly neo-colonial fashion, with the kinds of attributes that earlier homes in the colonies would have exhibited.

The process of re-exoticisation is also to some extent motivated by a desire to excise some of the negative effects of accumulating Western paraphernalia in Japanese homes. The accumulation of household items had been encouraged since the start of the culture house boom, with articles in women's magazines exhorting its female readership to purchase and arrange things for the home. Sand draws attention to the fact that this was a new role for Japanese women: 'the decorating of formal rooms in the bourgeois house, which consisted mainly of selecting objects for the *tokonoma* alcove and adjacent shelves, had previously been considered a male prerogative.'[56] Women were keen to make their homes 'homier and more cosmopolitan.' This was at a time when a lot of Western goods were newly available and in plentiful supply. In the postwar period, after an initial period of paucity and scarcity of goods during the 1950s, Japan 'entered a new stage, permeated by customs and goods of western origin,' which in turn created a new problem that 'most Japanese now struggle with – how to make space for their possessions in their cramped dwellings.'[57] This has created a major preoccupation with DIY solutions, one journalist commenting in 1993: 'I know a sizeable number of the young single population must live in one-room mansions because they are the source of the major decorating problems in a huge number of magazines.'[58] Indeed, Kyoichi Tsuzuki's book *Tokyo Style*[59] is a wry look at the reality of the average Japanese home, published as a counterpoint to the preponderance of books which promoted a kind of romanticised Japanese 'zen' minimalism during this period, best exemplified by a book entitled *Japanese Style*.[60] Tsuzuki's photographs show deeply compromised and cluttered domestic scenes in which the purpose of any space is indeterminate not through choice but necessity: kitchen equipment resides next to desks and audio-visual equipment, clothes and bicycles hang from ceilings, electric cables and shoes lie in drifts across the floors, and here and there patches of *tatami* matting or rolled-up futons are still visible. Order is hard-won in this context, and storage is a primary concern, with DIY makeover programmes on Japanese daytime television pitting housewives against each other in conquering their wayward possessions into attractively organised rooms in their homes.

By contrast, the contemporary love hotel interior has been getting larger, with some of the newest and most upmarket rooms reaching palatial proportions. Moreover, these interiors present an image of a purged space in which no work is necessary or required, no storage is needed, and surfaces are free of clutter, or are adorned only with items of aesthetic value. Instead of work, purely leisure-related activities are privileged, and in this new cosmopolitan phase of the love hotel's development, the bedrooms contain no more than is necessary to support and augment such activities. The emphasis on indulgence is something which the Japanese often fail to capture in their own living environments: while Westerners are constantly striving to make their homes into sanctuaries, this has been

a source of constant frustration for the Japanese who find that they have neither the spatial nor financial means to achieve this in their own houses. A 1987 study conducted by HILL entitled 'Dream Houses' identifies the ways in which Japanese consumer behaviour has adapted to this situation. The authors of the study noted that although domestic space was indeed in short supply, the main problem was inhabitants' inability to use small spaces effectively: 'more than the fact that residences are small, the problem is that Japanese have forgotten the variety of ways to use a small space in the traditional tea house.'[61] Having arrived at a situation where privacy was highly valued and domestic space was more defined and isolated, those surveyed in 1987 complained about 'how cut up and small the rooms they inhabit are. From simply wanting more rooms, they have advanced to wanting larger rooms . . . people are putting more effort into what they do with the spaces they live in.'[62] Second to the main complaint of apartments being too small was the fact that Japanese people wanted 'something that feels luxurious.' Third, respondents argued that their homes were hard to live in in the sense that you have to walk through one room to get to another – often there is still only a *shoji* screen which did not provide enough separation between rooms. Fourth, the survey revealed that many people found their homes to be too dark, and expressed a desire to live in brighter places. Notably, respondents to the 1987 survey were particularly dissatisfied with their bedrooms.

The HILL survey took place in the midst of the Bubble, when consumer satisfaction was a major preoccupation, simply because people were earning and expecting more. In relation to the development of the love hotel interior, this also falls at the start of a new chapter, after the new legislation was imposed, and many hotels were forced to review and make over their bedroom interiors to become compliant. Those surveyed would have been aware of the newly refitted luxurious love hotel bedroom interiors, and this would have contributed to their levels of dissatisfaction. HILL researcher Ōta Masukazu revealed that

> in the early 80s, Japanese housing was still cramped, dirty and cheap. It was more fun to play around in the city than it was to go home. It was only in the late 80s, when people began to have more money, that housing became a serious issue.[63]

In effect, at the height of the Bubble economy, consumer expectations also reached an all-time high, and there was a realisation that much of the housing that had been built in the postwar period was substandard. In stark contrast, love hotels were able to invest heavily during the Bubble years and create ever more generous and spacious interior settings, charging higher prices and raising the bar for the consumer in terms of what constituted luxury and glamour in lifestyle terms. The net result was a widening gap between reality and fantasy, such that in the wake of the Japanese economic downturn in the 1990s, 'dreams have got bigger, incomes have shrunk.'[64]

In circumstances where domestic space was increasingly at a premium, it would be more practical for families to live in multi-generational units, but the

1987 survey also revealed that this was not the preferred household structure for most people: the younger respondents aspired ultimately to a nuclear family set-up, but for the time being, while still single, their demand for 'a hiding place of their own and for custom-designed houses'[65] was high. A preference for living alone is something which housing markets throughout the developed world are confronting, but in Japan where land has always been in short supply, it means that the tiny cramped apartments will have to remain the norm long into the foreseeable future, and the temporary occupation of a love hotel therefore represents an attractive antidote to the obvious spatial constraints of this particular modern lifestyle choice.

However, the love hotel is also in the process of being overlaid with a new aspiration regarding one's social life: as the Japanese became more home-centred in their thinking, they wanted to be able to bring friends back to their houses and use the home as a social setting. The HILL authors reflected that 'in the 2DK era, it was very rare to invite friends over. As housing became more spacious, people began to think about houses as places for social life.'[66] Since this was not possible in many cases, particularly in big cities, an alternative form of private space for socialising and entertaining was called for. Karaoke and neighbourhood restaurants have traditionally fulfilled this role, but in recent years love hotels have responded by creating larger 'party rooms' that can be rented by the hour by a group of people (Figure 3.3). The assumption here is not that an orgy will take place, but that a group of young people might retire from a day's shopping in Shibuya or Shinjuku to a well-appointed room where they can try on their new purchases, sing karaoke, chat, drink and eat, before going their separate ways and catching a train home to their respective homes in the suburbs. Parties are also sometimes aimed at single-sex groups, or even single women, such as the 'Lady's Plan' and 'Pyjama Party' options offered by Hotel Maria Theresia in Namba. Ed Jacob reports that

> although males are not allowed inside the hotel unless they are with a female, the Maria Theresia is very popular with single females who want to use the room for a few hours of 'me time' or do some female bonding. At just 4,000 yen for three hours, the price is quite reasonable, and includes afternoon tea, a mini flower bath, aromatherapy kit, foot bath, a nail care kit, and souvenir hand towel. The 'pyjama party' costs just 5,000 yen, includes the same amenities as the Lady's Plan but includes free 'princess dresses' and tiaras to try on during their stay.[67]

The love hotel as a context for gregarious behaviour is in many ways an ideal compromise for the young Japanese, whom McCreery describes as:

> Consummate consumers who prefer to enjoy their comforts while keeping others at a safe distance. They cultivate their connoisseur's skills of selecting things that suit individual tastes. Instead of public performances, the selves their habits construct are intensely private ones – and they want to

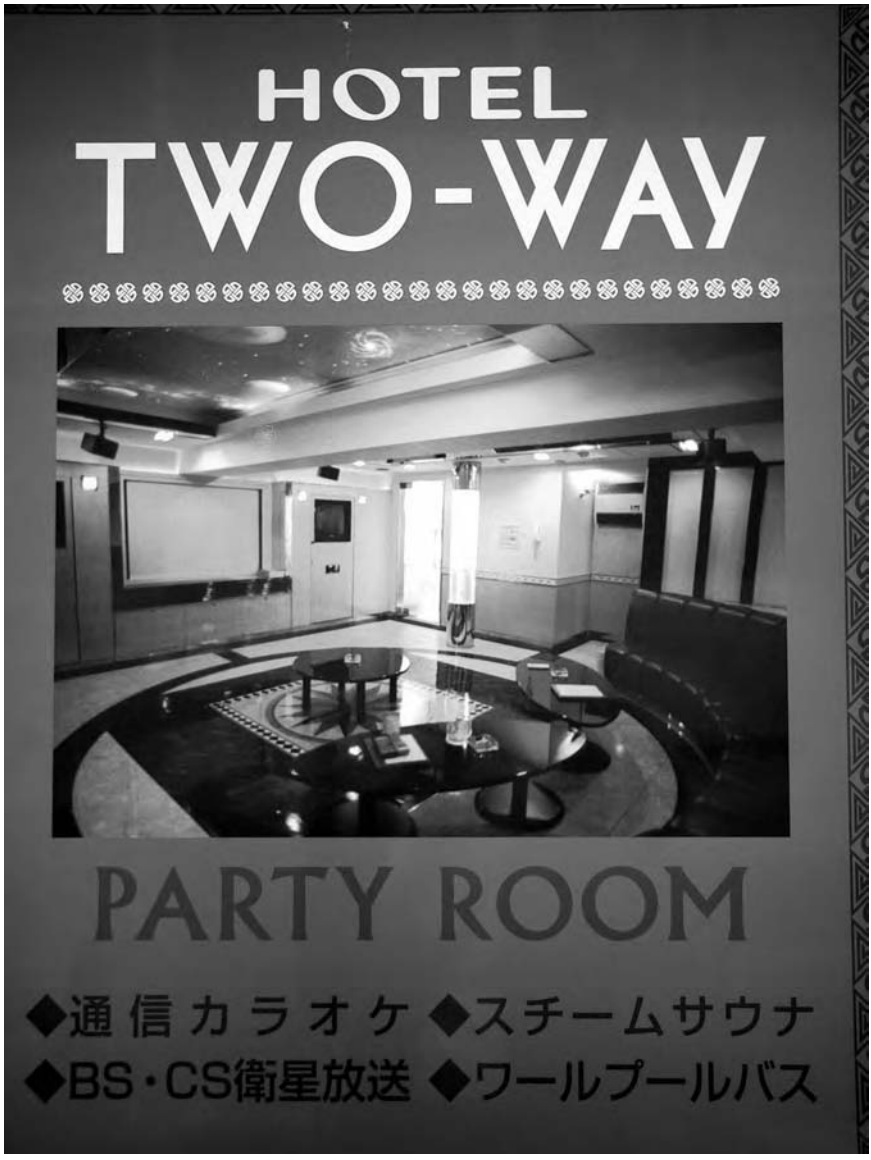

Figure 3.3 Hotel Two Way 'party' poster, Shibuya, Tokyo.

> keep it that way. The worker bees who laboured to produce the Japanese miracle are becoming a nation of wary shoppers.[68]

Responding to the predilections of the wary shopper may be seen in the increasing levels of blandness and sameness applied to many contemporary love hotel

interiors, where nothing shouts too loudly and everything is played down. In terms of reflecting changing consumer attitudes, these bland interiors give nothing away about themselves, mirroring the new tendency to want others to 'love me but leave me alone.' This is in sharp contrast to the earlier approach which HILL identified, synonymous with the former, more exuberant love hotel interior, namely 'let me do my thing.'[69] The need to exert one's individuality may be seen to be giving way to a desire to conceal aspects of the self as a preservation instinct, when in the context of Japan, life's goals and possibilities seem suddenly more capricious and less predictable: gone are the jobs for life, and this has precipitated a new, more casual attitude to the workplace, captured in the colloquialism *furita/freeter*. This is a term often used to refer to a male or female part-time or temporary worker who is seen as lacking in commitment and focus where his or her career is concerned, and is quite happy to flit from job to job. This used to be an anathema for the Japanese male, for whom part-time working was a wholly female preserve, and shows how there is a weakening work ethic taking place in Japan, which may yet produce some surprising effects.

For the time being, love hotels are responding with a casualness towards interior design on their own part, moving away from the sexualised intensity of earlier, more plush interior settings: as has been shown, the love hotel offer includes many other things which effectively de-emphasise it as a place to have sex. The proliferation of items such as plasma screens, snooker tables, exercise bicycles, dartboards, tanning beds and jukeboxes is an indication of the boredom experienced by a younger generation of Japanese who have more leisure time on their hands within the working week – formerly, the average *salariiman* had a large disposable income but worked incredibly long hours and was not expected to take their leave entitlement, making their free time a scarce and precious commodity. Opportunities for intimacy with the opposite sex had to be artfully manufactured and the love hotel supplied a convenient place for these snatched encounters. In this scenario the room had to be fun and make an impact in order to secure repeat business. Now, with couples having more leisure time available, they are able to spend more time in love hotels, so the rooms can afford to be less visually arresting. Conversely, they also need to provide more of a range of relaxing diversions for their occupants to enjoy. The love hotel interior's purpose has thus shifted from a heightened sensory environment devoted to lust and passion to a low-key space geared towards more passive, disengaged types of activities.

This kind of behaviour has a name in Japanese culture: *shōjo*. Emerging in the Taisho era during the 1920s, the *shōjo* typified a young woman presenting herself as an active consumer while not necessarily operating as a sexually active adult. John Whittier Treat has looked at how this *shōjo* attitude has developed and is exemplified in contemporary Japanese literature, particularly in a new genre of Japanese fiction best represented by the work of female novelist Banana Yoshimoto. With the arrival of Yoshimoto's generation, Treat believes that 'the *shōjo* was rearticulated as a definitive feature of Japanese late-model consumer capitalism.'[70] He describes how

> the role of the *shōjo* in the service economy was not to make products, but consume them (more precisely, to *symbolise* their consumption). . . . Until they marry, when they cease to be *shōjo*, they are relegated to pure play as pure sign. It is in the interim of their *shōjo* years that these young women participate in a uniquely *un*productive culture.[71]

As such, the *shōjo* woman exists in an in-between state where gender expression is concerned: Jennifer Robertson regards the *shōjo* as 'notquitefemalefemale,'[72] an epithet which Treat expands further: 'one might well argue that *shōjo* constitute their own gender, neither male nor female but rather something importantly detached from the productive economy of heterosexual reproduction.'[73]

The need for a non-productive space for the *shōjo* generation to occupy as a consumer is adequately met by the love hotel, which is both quasi-domestic, thoroughly internalised, and, at the same time, an act of consumption. However, this denial of a libidinal economy, which is synonymous with *shōjo* culture, makes the love hotel's original *raison d'être* difficult to square. At the same time, however, the love hotel does offer a space in which to negate traditional ties by adopting a non-familial identity, which is an important aspect of the *shōjo* identity. In spatial terms, the love hotel performs in a way that is conducive to *shōjo* values, in that it

> repudiates the kinship economy of the family, and, in its stead produces a non-circulating narcissistic 'small space', a space which is no longer a momentary phase on route to an adult heterosexuality but a site of potential resistance to it.[74]

The love hotel thus offers an appropriate environment for young people to use play as a means to delay their arrival into adulthood.

However, in order to achieve this level of appeal with a *shōjo* clientele, the contemporary love hotel is effectively required to renegotiate the basis of its originary liminality: it is now expected to operate as a suitably narcissistic and non-circulating proto-adult space, but to somehow resist the tendency towards active heterosexuality. Banana Yoshimoto's story *Asleep*[75] makes use of the love hotel in exactly this manner, with oblique references to the love hotel interior as a setting for a non-sexualised but heterosexual form of intimacy. In the story, the decision to visit a love hotel is arrived at coyly and indirectly: the boyfriend announces 'I can go to work in the afternoon tomorrow' to which the girl replies 'So we'll stay someplace tonight?'[76] The next scene finds them in bed, but just talking. The love hotel environment is neither described nor even referred to as such, and the reader is only made aware that they are still there when the boyfriend dresses to leave and tells his still sleeping girlfriend that he has 'paid for another two hours.' The story uses the context of the love hotel as a space in which the couple can be non-productive, and its association with sleep and torpor is the primary means by which the main female character evades entry into adulthood. Her refusal to work is contrasted with the kind of work carried

out by her girlfriend Shiori as someone to sleep *beside*. Sleep is thus characterised as a form of denial, compared to staying awake while your client sleeps, which is a specific form of paid labour. Shiori's labour of sleeping beside someone requires a specific context, which to the female narrator is far more heightened in terms of its ambience than the banal love hotels she frequents with her boyfriend: she describes how Shiori's apartment contained 'a huge, very sleepable bed,' and that

> being there was more like being in a foreign country than in a hotel or something. It had a real bedroom, a place meant for sleeping, the kind of room I'd only seen in movies. Several times a week, Shiori lay there alongside her customers until morning.[77]

Here, both the bed and the bedroom exert a strongly exotic appeal to the young female narrator not because of its erotic potential or connotations, but because of its unfamiliar sense of purpose, being a Western-style bed dedicated to sleep on a professional basis. Sleep is somehow situated as beyond erotic and close to death, making it more compelling, and offers a means to resist adult heterosexuality. This passage also reveals how the bed has maintained the connotative status it acquired during the culture house period, now normalised as a space for sex than as a place for sleep. In the case of Shiori's bedroom interior, the act of sleeping renders the bed once again compelling and unfamiliar, a détournement that is a thoroughly *shōjo* manoeuvre.

In addition to the *shōjo* tactics of sleep and slothfulness as a means to delay the onset of adulthood and social reaggregation, Treat also draws attention to the role of nostalgia. In this case the instancing of the recent past 'substitutes a temporal longing for a spatial separation, creates a loss that can never be retrieved but is never wholly absent either.'[78] With respect to the love hotel interior, nostalgia is articulated in a number of ways, including reference to older styles and technologies, but perhaps more effectively by creating a vacuum of meaninglessness: the current trend for forms of décor which have no direct referents displaces the present into a pastless condition which sustains existence in an atmosphere of complete neutrality, constituting an ideal: 'an adolescent space without substantive or fixed subjective content, a point in the commodity loop that exists only to consume.'[79] This meaninglessness is valued for its ability to remove the specificity of everyday life and replace it with something that temporarily suspends time and experience, in such a way as to side-step issues to do with authenticity and being. The love hotel as an inauthentic environment assumes a position of critical importance in this respect, since 'there is no space we authentically occupy, so culture tries to fill the gap by manufacturing images of both home and rootlessness.'[80] The love hotel interior has indeed become a way of supplying both, and in the current context of Japanese popular culture, occupies the position of specialist in the production of such contradictory imagery.

Conclusion

Experientially, the changes to the image and technology of the love hotel interior may be summarised into a chart listing aspects of the love hotel experience 'then' and 'now' (Table 3.1). It is apparent that the love hotel has been undergoing a series of inversions in terms of how the experience is pitched, and is shown to be moving away from the situation where the interior was closed off and highly differentiated from everyday Japanese experience in terms of its décor. This change of emphasis, which was precipitated by the corrective measures that were imposed on love hotel owners in the mid-1980s, while installing a much blander and more normalised look and feel to the décor of the standard interior, has nevertheless emerged to become a new site of resistance for a younger generation. Influenced by *shōjo* cultural values and looking for a place to deny the social imperatives of marriage, productivity and responsibility, the love hotel plays host to delayed ambitions and stalled life goals.

The experience of a typical love hotel room has changed in all aspects, and whereas it was once based on an imported fantasy of unattainable places or

Table 3.1 Love hotel interiors 'then' and 'now': a comparison

Then	*Now*
closed	open
male-orientated	female-orientated
rest	stay (*sabisu taimu*)
dark/dim	light/bright
descriptive	nondescript
hushed	resonant
stigmatised	accepted
liminal	subliminal
secretive	communicative
individual	branded
unheimlich	*heimlich*
risky	riskless
ad hoc	predictable
bed-as-taboo	bed-as-trophy
decorated (*mankanshoku*)	decorous
separate from world outside	integrated with world outside
erotic	exotic
tends towards bachelor pad	tends towards bridal chamber
sexual intimacy	emotional intimacy
faked materiality	genuine materiality
references soapland	references soap opera (*dorama*)
plush	plain
colourful	neutral
designed	equipped
cosy	cool
brief	protracted
jouissance	*plaisir*
visceral	cerebral

pasts, it is now predominantly based on a 'fantasy' of the everyday. This might sound like an oxymoron, but given the constraints on domestic living space, home is still far from being the uncluttered and unfettered space that most Japanese aspire to. In general, it seems that the appeal of the older love hotel interiors is now more nostalgic than it is erotic, and that in general the erotic dimension of the total love hotel experience needs to be milder in order that it won't alienate its newer, more passive clientele. Set against the context of recession and a changed work ethic, Japanese people found they had more free time, and their basic needs and tastes started changing, as well as their attitudes towards work, play and family life. The love hotel is now beginning to accommodate this changed perspective, with greater emphasis on gaming, relaxation and grooming, reflecting wholesale changes in society, in particular attitudes of a younger generation who are its primary target market.

4 Naming and theming the love hotel

Setting aside an analysis of the environmental issues of the love hotel, which in Chapters 1–3 revealed its urban, built and interior characteristics, there is much to be gleaned from a more semiotically driven cultural analysis of the ways in which love hotels have been classified, named and referred to in Japan. Just as the love hotel has moved through a series of marked stages in its physical development, both internally and externally, there has been a parallel series of shifts in its generic naming, and also in terms of the specific names and themes given to individual love hotels.

In this chapter, the different choice of written scripts in Japanese and generic titling of love hotels, as fashion hotels, leisure hotels, boutique hotels and sweet hotels, will be contextualised. I will consider the nuancing of individual love hotel naming and consequent positioning in cultural terms, and situate these linguistic and symbolic aspects within the context of a wider discussion of aesthetics, and in relation to the mediation of popular culture in Japan. Diachronically, changes in the choice of love hotel names chart a narrative of cultural opening and awakening; synchronically, present-day love hotel naming trends provide a revealing insight into prevailing social mores and aspirations. Attitudes towards gender, class, wealth, technology and cultural difference are clearly reflected in the choice of love hotel names and their implied themes. Drawing these different insights together, I then argue that the theming and naming of Japanese love hotels have both been informed by three distinct aesthetic schema, one Western, namely romanticism, and two deriving from Japanese culture, *iki* and *kawaii*, and these will each be discussed in detail.

An underlying focus is the question of why there is a cultural need for thematic content at all and how it is constructed, whether this is rigorously pursued as part of the whole love hotel experience, or is merely present in name only with no follow-through in terms of interior décor or external appearance. Mark Gottdiener is of the opinion that 'for the inhabitants of cities, the quest for meaning and the need to endow the built environment with a richly textured symbolic content could not be quenched by hypo-significant architecture and urban planning,' and as a result 'themed environments reassert their presence in even the most technologically advanced places.'[1] His focus is on the United States, and in particular the sign-vehicles of Las Vegas, but the Japanese love hotel is a

compelling example of a themed environment in a technologically advanced society, one that compounds the American model with more complex representational issues. In the case of the love hotel, theming is generally used more loosely, and there is less emphasis on remaining true or consistent to a single theme; rather, theming provides a means to access a shared social imaginary.

The Japanese not only have a choice of written scripts to draw from, but have systematically over the past 150 years adopted and appended a huge number of new words to their language as part of the process of Westernisation and modernisation. These loan-words or *gairaigo* (literally, 'words of foreign origin') often carry specific connotations that are not necessarily drawn directly from their foreign source, but arise when given a new spin in the context of everyday Japanese speech. Many words are shortened for convenience and to facilitate easier pronunciation, and bear little resemblance to the original inspiration. Equally, there are a great many pseudo-loan-words (also called *wasei-eigo* when seemingly drawn from an English word) which have been invented by the Japanese, but which are rendered in such a way as to appear to be a loan-word.

There are three scripts used in written Japanese: the Chinese-derived system of ideograms called *kanji*, the indigenous cursive Japanese syllabary of *hiragana*, and a second, more staccato-looking syllabic script called *katakana*. *Katakana* is typically used to designate any borrowed or loan-word in the Japanese language, and the use of *katakana* marks a word out as having a particular status linguistically, denoting something new, cosmopolitan, chic, trendy or state of the art. *Katakana* may also be used as a distancing effect, effectively placing a word in inverted commas, somewhat outside the indigenous fold of the Japanese language, and is therefore useful for articulating a difficult or taboo concept in more value-neutral, quasi-euphemistic terms. In this sense, the use of *katakana* does not necessarily place a word or concept in a state of purgatory until it has been more fully assimilated or contracted into an abbreviated or more Japanised term. Rather, it offers a means of recasting concepts expressed in *kanji* as *katakana* in order to render them more socially acceptable, or more in keeping with the prevailing moral climate, or to casualise them. For example, whereas specific Chinese-derived *kanji* were used formerly for sex and masturbation, nowadays it is more common to make a transliteration of the English words and render them as loan-words in *katakana* (*sekkusu* and *masutabeshon* respectively), thereby reducing their social awkwardness. Akira Miura, who produced a dictionary of loan-words in 1979 entitled 'English Loanwords in Japanese,' marvelled at the rapid proliferation of loan-words which caused him to publish a second edition in 1985 containing 'many pseudo-loans which did not even exist when I was writing the first volume.'[2] The plethora of new *gairaigo* at this time is indicative of a burgeoning appetite in Japan for all things imported and foreign, as the Japanese economy was beginning to boom. European cars, clothes and architecture were particularly sought after, and in many ways this borrowing of otherness was reminiscent of the early days of the Meiji period.

Love, sex and marriage

The appellation *rabu hoteru*, or love hotel, represents an interesting case study in relation to the loan-word phenomenon. As a generic piece of nomenclature, the term was culturally loaded from the outset: the choice of the word *rabu* has settled as the standard qualifier for the type, and *rabu hoteru* has since been contracted to *rabuho*, as the more familiar, shorthand way of referring to love hotels. Both Yukari Suzuki and Ed Jacob agree that *rabu hoteru* did not become fully established as the dominant term until the mid-1970s: Jacob explains how

> magazine articles in the early 70s used a variety of terms. Love hotels were called *shikake hoteru* ('gadget' hotels), *dōhan hoteru* ('go together' hotels), *abekku hoteru* (from the French word *avec*, meaning 'with'), and *tsurekomi hoteru* ('take into' hotels). It was not until the mid-1970's that the word 'love hotel' became standard. Even then, many people continued to refer to them as *abekku hoteru* or *tsurekomi hoteru*.[3]

In all likelihood, *rabu hoteru* gradually gained ground on other appellations because it carried more positive, exotic and romantic connotations, and because English had more cachet, owing to Japanese exposure to American culture in the postwar period. Indeed, there is an interesting cultural correlation between a desire on the part of the Japanese public to speak better English and to have a good sex life at this point in time, as revealed by Minesuke Mita, who has researched the history of bestsellers in Japan. Mita identifies that between 1959 and 1962, 'the shifting style of concern had abstracted, or inverted, the substance of love and of thought into techniques of presentation and channelled them into "standard" manuals of accomplishment,'[4] and shows that in fact the majority of bestselling books in Japan fell into the how-to categories: among those topping the sales were *Wisdom on Sex Life* in 1960, *Gaining Power in English* in 1961, and *English for Adults* in 1962.

The particular cultural connotations around the early use of the loan-word *rabu* are also interesting: the notion of 'free love' emanating from the West in the 1960s provided a wealth of media images and ideas for the Japanese to draw from. Their system of arranged marriage was being called into question by a new postwar generation, who themselves were becoming increasingly less accepting of the social status quo, particularly as Japan's confidence and economic stature grew. Ian Buruma contextualises the typical view that carried over from pre-war Japan:

> Marriage is essential to a woman's happiness. Love, on the other hand, seems less so. In the morality of the samurai class in traditional Japan, romance and matrimony were two completely separate things; personal feelings were irrelevant, and sometimes even antagonistic to the interests of the clan. It was different among the vast peasant population in the countryside: they often did

> marry for love. But modern Japan has been strongly influenced by the samurai mentality, and love, although increasingly desirable, is not yet deemed essential for a marriage to succeed.[5]

This particular view was also coloured by a long-held belief in Confucianism, which 'did not regard romantic love in a positive light, and therefore brave, strong and moral men were not supposed to be interested in sex and romance.'[6] As such, even in the pleasure quarters, romance was frowned upon between men and women; rather it was a mannered form of seduction that was to be encouraged. As Ian Buruma states, back in the Edo period, 'it was thought to be highly uncivilised, uncouth even, to fall in love. The courtesan, after all, had to remain a work of art, a fantasy without a real personal identity.'[7] Rendering love as the loan-word *rabu* was therefore a necessary manoeuvre in order to move away from an enduring Japanese perception that love (*ren'ai*) was a coarse and messy emotional state of affairs, and consequently allowed the notion of love to be aligned more closely with the more glamorous Western idea of romantic love, *romanchiku rabu*, which carried different, fresher and more appealing connotations for young Japanese, particularly women.

As early as 1931, Tanizaki wrote in an essay entitled 'Love and Lust' that

> the influence Western literature has exerted on us has taken many forms, without any question. One of the most important, in my view, has been 'the emancipation of love', or to take it one step further, 'the emancipation of sexual desire'.[8]

For Tanizaki, love and lust were virtually synonymous, and it took another fifty years before they had achieved an appropriate level of separation in the Japanese mindset, in order that today 'being "happee" with one's loved one, living in the lifelong glow of a "*romanchikku mūdo*" is perceived by many young girls as their goal in life.'[9] On a more sober note, Buruma also muses: 'unfortunately the contrast with reality in many cases could not be greater, for society is not yet geared to fulfil these dreams.'[10]

The love hotel has been instrumental in paving the way towards fulfilling this particular set of cultural aspirations, creating a private social space set aside from society in which to work through ideas about love, lust and romance. These young girls' dreams are, like the loan-words used to express them, largely imported, and necessarily so. Romantic heroes and heroines are found in abundance in European fairytales, for example, but are lacking in the Japanese equivalent. European and Japanese narrative structures are in many ways culturally antithetical: the ideal ending of 'happy ever after' does not occur in the Japanese folk tradition. This is discussed by Hayao Kawai in a study of the forbidden chamber as a motif in the Japanese fairytale: 'in Japan, happy marriage is not a frequent motif in fairy tales, whereas in the typical European story the hero rescues the maiden from distress and at the end they are married.'[11] Instead, at the end of the equivalent Japanese tale there is a situation of nothing, which is

coloured by a sense of incompletion rather than closure. Appreciation of this turn of events depends upon understanding of *aware* or sorrow, which the incompleteness of the story induces in the reader. In order to establish this atmosphere, 'females need to be sacrificed.'[12] This creates a structure in which the role of the woman in that of prohibitor, in the sense that she is the one who issues the taboo to the male protagonist, and eventually becomes unhappier than the one who breaks it, making a happy outcome an impossibility. Kawai identifies the forbidden chamber as a 'non-daily space,' where the man encounters a woman in stories like *The Bush Warblers' Home* ('Ugui no Sato'). He describes how 'the structure of daily and non-daily spaces is interpreted as the structure of the conscious and the unconscious in the psyche.'[13] In mapping the different variants of this particular folktale, the forbidden chamber is either given as a guest-room or a storehouse (*kura*), but their encounter here is not a story of tasting forbidden fruit, or even of falling in love: as a context it is only sexualised to the extent that 'they are like two comets flying through the loci of two parabolas: they are destined never to meet again after their momentary encounters.'[14] The chamber in the Japanese fairytale is thus not a space of romance but of castigation. It would seem, therefore, that love hotels bearing names such as le Foret, Secret Pleasure and Fairy Kiss are not referencing the Japanese fairytale but its European equivalents.

Similarly, in terms of the traditional masculine role in fairytales, whereas in the West the ideal of chivalry is dominant as the source of courage, solicitousness and devotion, the equivalent concept of *gikyo* is handled somewhat differently in Japanese folklore. Mita defines *gikyo* as the 'voluntary abandonment of an intense attachment or inner urge for devotion to a person or group,'[15] which gives the notion of chivalry in Japan a much stronger quality of self-denial and self-sacrifice. This was an important theme in Japanese political songs leading up to the Second World War, as part of the spirit of rising nationalism, while songs in the immediate postwar period referred more obliquely to this theme, with *gikyo* used to evoke feelings about the abandonment of one's beloved home town, as young men moved to larger cities to find work.

By the mid-1950s, 'the postwar Japanese had lost sight of the pattern of an object of common fidelity. . . . Moreover, where once the system had been moulded by suppressing desires and affections of the citizenry, the new post-war order, on the contrary, thrived by stimulating their desires and affections with respect to consumer goods as well as personal relations.'[16] In this reconstructive situation, the love hotel played its part in enabling the Japanese public to acquaint themselves with new objects of desire, which not only referred to one's desire for another person, but included the experiential consumption of new material goods. In its nascency, the love hotel thus provided opportunities to consume vicariously and temporarily items which patrons could otherwise ill afford, and at a time when people were more in love with the goods they were consuming than with each other.

Moreover, in the struggle to recover politically, culturally and economically, the Japanese ideal in the 1950s was one of performed cheerfulness, whereby

gikyo or chivalry was transformed into 'a mental device, which, on a personal level, glorifies the conditions to which one has been subjected, and somehow converts them into affirmative feelings.'[17] Seen in this light, the love hotel also supplied a space in which cheerfulness was not mandatory, and other feelings could be allowed to find expression. Importantly at this juncture, the Japanese love hotel was therefore a space in which, counter-intuitively, one could dispense with any notion of chivalry.

In order to construct an adequate understanding of the received notion of love in Japanese postwar society, which in turn informed the development of the love hotel, it is important to consider the role of the women in the Japanese popular psyche. Chizuko Ueno foregrounds the lack of available role models for Japanese women emerging from Edo-period Japan: there was the *yujo*, the woman of pleasure, that is to say a prostitute, and the *jionna*, or woman of the soil or land. This distinction established in the Japanese imaginary a separation between beauty and ugliness, sensual love-making and procreation, art and necessity, such that 'a woman characterised as *jionna* was not considered a suitable partner for lovemaking. All erotic thought was centred around *yujo*, or professional women, who had developed the refined metaphysics of love.'[18] In this regard, the love hotel offers an important space for women, in that it enables this binary to be either set aside or, better still, elided.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, as the trend towards favouring love marriages (*ren'ai kekkon*) and conjugal living grew, the nature and quality of heterosexual relations, and in particular women's sexuality, was put in the spotlight. Christine Marran has looked at this aspect of Japan's postwar cultural transformation, and observes that at a time when values and ideologies were being called into question, sex becomes a useful lowest common denominator of human experience, and is thus a starting point for moral and emotional reconfiguration. Consequently,

> in the frenzy of the wartime and postwar period, when the flesh is one of the only reliable essences capable of grounding values . . . the sexual, criminal woman is presented as an idealised component in the formation of a new democracy, even as she operates on the more superficial level as titillating, erotic icon.[19]

The oft-cited icon is Sada Abe, famous for an incident which took place in 1936, which captured the imagination of the Japanese public through its lascivious reportage: Abe was 'a low-life geisha'[20] who murdered her lover and wandered the streets to evade police custody, carrying with her the man's severed penis wrapped in a *furoshiki* (a cloth for carrying things). The courts deemed this to be a crime of passion, and it came to epitomise *ero-guro-nansensu* in such as way as to become 'an ironic metonym for heightened female sexual desire,' thereby posing new questions about the need to acknowledge a more active female sexuality. John McCreery explains that 'as Japan walked the dark path toward war, people had no way to express their anger and fled instead into an erotic,

grotesque nonsense.'[21] Japanese women identified with Sada Abe because she was seen as 'less of a demoness and more of folk heroine,'[22] representing a Japanese woman who hit back at the strictures of male dominance, and was thus respected for articulating her strength of feeling for another human being, rather than containing them always behind a falsely smiling façade. This was, then, the female inspiration to denounce the prescribed visage of cheerfulness which otherwise prevailed.

Relating the change of perception around female sexuality to developments in mass media, Marran analyses the rise of women's *kasutori zasshi* (pulp magazines) in the 1950s. These publications foregrounded ideas about sexuality and conjugality, with titles such as *Ai no Fūfu Seikatsu* (Conjugal Life of Love), *Shin-Fūfu* (Newly-weds) and *Kanzan-naru Kekkon Seikatsu* (The Perfect Married Life). These began to replace the erotic-grotesque style of publishing that had prevailed in the pre-war period, and in its place constructed a revised heterosexual female readership. This new style of magazine publishing was however critiqued for 'promoting isolation and privatisation of the sexual within the sphere of the heterosexual couple, producing a limiting and regulatory view of sexuality.'[23] The love hotel represents in some senses a continuation of this same process of isolation and privatisation of the sexual encounter into the 1960s and 1970s, and curbing this tendency was just one of the reasons for the new legislation in 1985. As a backdrop to the emergence of the love hotel, the postwar restaging and scientisation of adult sexuality in Japan, especially measures enshrined in the 1948 Eugenic Protection Act. This act controlled the use of sterilisation, represented important cultural developments, and, moreover, enabled the love hotel, like pulp magazines, to establish itself not as a place of sexual deviancy but as the kind of environment in which the sexualised woman 'does not play the other to the domestic but is worked into the new domestic imaginary in which boundaries between normalcy and deviance blur.'[24] Importantly, at the time of the love hotel's emergence, Marran shows how the discourse on the sexually deviant woman 'was infiltrated by a new one in which the sexually "deviant" could now include not only the prostitute and lover, but the wife and the widow.'[25] This is an important shift in terms of the love hotel, as it began to acknowledge and accommodate a broader range of sexually active couples and romantic impulses.

The revised context for romantic love and the feminisation of relationships in the postwar period was also informed by the pre-war work of Japanese feminists, to which Sonia Ryang draws attention in a paper on love and colonialism, in which she foregrounds the pioneering work of Itsue Takamure. Writing at a time when the politics of colonialism were being hotly debated in Japan, Takamure spoke on behalf of the marginalised Koreans in Japan, in such a way as to make 'explicit endorsement of love as a political action, not as a personal affair that cannot be discussed in public.'[26] In 1926, the middle of the Taisho period, itself a 'brief period of social leniency with regard to individuals' ideas and forms of self-expression,'[27] Takamure published a major treatise entitled *Ren'ai Sōsei* (Genesis of Love), in which she set out her views on the interrelationships

between cities, beauty, love and femininity, arguing that 'beauty grows only in leisurely environments, including cities, holiday resorts. . . . Beauty is maintained intentionally. Once a woman throws away her will to beauty, she will be fallen. Beauty and nature are thus mutually opposed.'[28] Beauty and leisure are thus seen as inextricably linked, and moreover rendered as the responsibility of the woman to be exercised and maintained, a link that thereby bestows a degree of power over the physical environment to women. These comments are indeed prescient, anticipating the role of the love hotel as part of an urban leisure environment, and creating a context for its subsequent naturalisation as part of a woman's sphere of influence.

Until the seventh century there was no system of marriage in Japan, and with this in mind, Takamure tried to argue that while female culture is primarily about maternal love, women no longer like the marriage system. She believed it should be abolished and replaced with an idea of free or natural love, taking inspiration from her mentor and intellectual predecessor Hiratsuka Raichō, who also 'took free love to be the terrain of female emancipation.'[29] Elise Tipton raises the prospect of sexuality and agency during this period of Japanese prewar history, stating that 'free love also had political connotations, for it was linked with radical ideas of anarchism, socialism, and communism. The question of sex and sexual norms was thus deeply embedded in social and political concerns.'[30] There had clearly already been a groundswell of politicised media content within Japan prior to the postwar period, and this was as much a part of the impetus for a reorientation of values where women and romance were concerned as the outside influences from the West.

Choice of script

A pertinent line of enquiry regarding the context of the love hotel's naming and theming is that of the prescribed and gendered use of language in Japan, and in particular the connotations surrounding the use of the different scripts. Japanese feminist Etsuko Yamashita, among other commentators, has written on the subject of *hiragana* as a writing system belonging to women, compared to the masculine system identified with the use of *kanji*. She thus links femininity to *hiragana*, establishing an implicit link to orality, and masculinity to *kanji*, and hence to a culture of literacy.[31] The predominance of *kanji* in the naming of the earliest love hotels thus marks them out as an inherently masculine domain, orientating their patronage towards the male, and drawing nostalgically upon other epochs and epoch-making places as a way of dignifying the experience: love hotel names such as Nikko, Katsura, Ōjo (Royal Castle), Chisen (Thousand Fans), Heian, Manjyo, En, Hisui, Yashima, Mandarin, Taisei, often expressed in a mix of scripts, typify this approach. The mention of familiar but far-off places in Japan also carries a hint of *aware*, the sense of yearning for elsewhere, which gives the love hotel a superficial quality of chivalrousness. (See Figure 4.1, Hotel Tagawa, where the typeface used manages to give the appearance of being simultaneously romanised and also like *hiragana*.)

Figure 4.1 Street in Uguisudani, Tokyo, looking towards Hotel Tagawa.

Analysis of the 300 documented love hotels revealed that nowadays fewer than one tenth are given names rendered exclusively in *kanji*, and this proportion is diminishing, highlighting the rise of the female decision-maker. Interestingly, *hiragana* is also used for a very small proportion of love hotel names, but it is apparent that the feminine axis which *hiragana* has historically defined is

nevertheless evident in the specific choice of names rendered in this script: in the study sample, those written only in *hiragana* included *Ichigo Kurabu* (strawberry club), with both teenage (*ichigo* meaning fifteen) and sexual overtones (Ichigo Milk is the name of a popular adult video actress in Japan), and *Yoi-ko Kurabu*, where *yoi* is given in *hiragana* and *ko* is the kanji for child, which carries the meaning of good or nice child, but there is a *double entendre* in that *yoi* has two homonyms which mean early evening and intoxicated. Hybrid use of *hiragana* may be evidenced by Paper Moon in Shinjuku, a love hotel name written in *hiragana* but pronounced in a romanised way, and *Oishii*, a word which is usually rendered in *hiragana* to mean delicious or tasty; however, the sign on the love hotel inscribes this name in *katakana*. *Kawaī neko* meaning cute cat is another establishment named in *hiragana*, with obvious allegiances to a female clientele, but which also harks back to the traditional *kanban* icon of the beckoning cat, used to entice custom on the high street and also in the licensed pleasure quarters. One explanation for the use of *hiragana* not proving popular in the naming of love hotels may lie in its overtly everyday and domestic associations, its tendency to make an establishment aimed at men and women too effeminate, or more straightforwardly, that *hiragana* does not embody sufficient cosmopolitan cachet with its target audience to make its application appropriate.

By contrast, love hotels rendered in a romanised script are increasing: today more than one-third carry *romāji*-only names and this trend is continuing, with 20 per cent more love hotels bearing a romanised name in the most recent guides compared to those published in the mid-1990s. The use of *romāji* in general within Japanese culture has often been reflected upon, and is in part attributable to the global branding of products and markets, and the impact of the qwerty keyboard, which privileges the use of a roman alphabet over Japanese syllabaries, which take longer to reproduce in typed form. Conversely, those with *katakana* names are on the wane, which is perhaps a consequence of increased levels of foreign alphabet literacy among the Japanese, making the choice of *romāji* easier to sustain. Romanised text was first used in Japan by the Portuguese, and in the early Meiji period there were controversial proposals to abandon the Japanese writing system entirely in favour of *romāji*. In the twentieth century, there has been a sharp rise in the use of *romāji* in Japanese advertising, flattering the reader and bestowing a degree of glamour on the item concerned. It also had the useful commercial advantage of being able to set the price of goods named in *romāji* at a premium, since this naming implied that they were imported foreign goods and therefore commanded a higher price.[32]

In terms of naming Japanese love hotels, as well as bestowing glamour and kudos, the use of *romāji* also carries a vaguely erotic charge, harking back to a moment in the Meiji period when there were distinct associations between *romāji* and eroticism. In particular, there was a widely known piece of writing in the form of a diary written exclusively and deliberately in *romāji* in the year 1909 by Takuboku. Charles Inouye's research on the diary has revealed that Takuboku's use of *romāji* enabled him to adopt

> a cloak of secrecy . . . to enhance his own authorial power. Not only was he writing a diary, an essentially private text, but he was using a script which few people at the time could read. He chose, in other words, a secret and powerful language that could tell of newly discovered territory . . . an abundance of sight that expressed itself as a secreted insight.[33]

The sights he was attempting to record relate to the naked female body and his sexual exploits with the opposite sex, and the use of *romāji* enabled him to express himself more freely and to convey his experiences of sexual awakening in a frank and at times misogynist manner. As Inouye remarks, 'when writing in *romāji*, his prose is noticeably freer, more descriptive, more analytical, more literary.'[34]

These are the same qualities for which Japanese literature by female authors such as Sei Shōnagon's *Pillow Book*[35] was typically famed, and which was achieved through exclusive use of *hiragana*. A phonetic script allowed Shōnagon to move away from the pictographic, with all its etymological associations, into a more open-ended system of meaning. Similarly, for Takuboku the use of *romāji* effected a process of estrangement while 'weakening a long held predilection for polysemy and image association.'[36] *Romāji* was synonymous with a process of discovery, and was being used by Takuboku to map new experiences, wherein 'the territory of self-invention is the new Japan, and this primary object of his sight is a woman.'[37] Inouye thus presents a gendered analysis, aligning the mapping of a new Japan with the female body, and identifies the process of Westernising this 'body' through an alternative form of writing produced from a masculine viewpoint. He concludes by suggesting:

> we might say that the modern self emerges to and within a restructured awareness of sexuality. It does this by way of a harlot writing (porne + graphein) that teaches sexual (and therefore self) difference, domination, and finally alienation and loathing.[38]

Inouye's argument positions the modern subjectivity at the mercy of sexual urges, and harlot writing is the by-product.

The notion of 'harlot writing' is perpetuated in the proliferation of love hotel names and themes, through the continued use of *romāji* as a means to both reveal and conceal sexuality simultaneously, further articulating the notion that 'the discovery of self requires the obscurity of an Other: the foreign, the barbarous, the unrealised, the past, the feminine.'[39] The love hotel has during its fifty-year history dealt with all these forms of obscurity, and indeed these are the very aspects of Japanese culture which the love hotel embraces and makes its own, collapsing a whole melée of signs into its interiorised world, and making sense of this in its primary function as the servicing of the self through sexual exploration. Inouye argues that 'the emergence of selfhood required the pornographic act,'[40] without which there would be no concept of the modern Japanese self. In Roland Barthes' terms, this manifests itself as a transformation from a

writerly text (of harlot writing), which Takuboku produced in the Meiji period, to a readerly text (of harlot reading), now that Japanese people are almost as conversant with the roman alphabet as with their own scripts. Thus, whereas *romāji* gave Takuboku access to a liminal linguistic space within which to record his own private ruminations, the prevalence of *romāji* today shows it has been integrated at every level into everyday Japanese, 'because of its modern associations with consumer culture and its claims to improve life.'[41] As such, Inouye maintains that '*romāji* is a marker of worth, serving a similar semiotic function to the multitude of Caucasian faces featured in contemporary Japanese television commercials.'[42] Nevertheless, *romāji* is still, albeit in a much more limited sense, harlot writing, in that it is used to solicit business from the Japanese consumer, and may therefore be considered as a pornographic use of a written script to enhance the allure of the products or services thus advertised.

The use of *romāji* as a contemporary site of resistance has been highlighted in Sharon Kinsella's research into the writing style of Japanese teenagers in the 1970s, which shows great similarity to Takuboku's appropriation of *romāji* in terms of the freedom it gave the writer, albeit recording different subject matter. She describes how:

> Cute handwriting was arrived at partly through the romanization of Japanese text. The horizontal left to right format of cute handwriting and the liberal use of exclamation marks as well as English words such as 'love' and 'friend', suggest that these young people were rebelling against traditional Japanese culture and identifying with European culture. By writing in the new cute style it was almost as though young people had invented a new language in which they were suddenly able to speak freely on their own terms for the first time. They were thus able to have an intimate relation with the text and express their feelings to their friends more easily.[43]

In terms of the choice of script, the love hotel has made use of four different sign systems, each loaded with specific cultural connotations. However, while its erotic charge has apparently lessened, *romāji* still holds sway as the most intimate and hence potent form of expression. While the earliest love hotels took Japanese names, often referring to famous places in Japan such as Nikko, Katsura, Atami, Iijima, some chose to render them in *romāji* as well as *kanji*. When named exclusively in *romāji*, many love hotels dating from the late 1970s and early 1980s were given simple, easy-to-read alphanumeric names such as G7, N88, R25 and Hotel 03, or were assigned trendy but spatially descriptive loan-words commonly in circulation at the time such as Club, Studio or Annex. Later, as familiarity with *romāji* grew, the thematic content of the names was able to diversify. *Romāji* tended to be used on street signs or in the public realm generally for the benefit of foreigners, and so its use on love hotels, which were not aimed at this group, served to orientate them towards foreignness, and thus present them as Other within the context of a Japanese textural environment.

Theming

Gradually, famous places outside Japan started to become popular choices, with English royalty emerging as one of the earliest non-Japanese themes: Ed Jacob notes that after 1973 when the influential Meguro Emperor opened, 'a royalty boom began, with many hotels giving themselves names like "The Buckingham", "The Royal" or "Elizabeth".'[44] The late 1970s and early 1980s saw a surge of other foreign thematic referents, as the Japanese began to take more vacations in different parts of Europe. Numbers of Japanese travelling overseas jumped from 0.7 million a year in 1970 to more than ten million per annum in 1990,[45] and this kind of direct exposure to foreign places exerted a powerful influence on the theming of the love hotel. For a time, French names were popular, including Cache Cache, Parfait, Faveur, le Pays Blanc, la Foret, Amour and Charme. These gradually gave way to a trend for other European-inspired names such as Aphrodite, Wien, Maria Theresia, Malta, and specifically to Italian names such as Léoni, Piccolo, Casa Swan, Luna, Giulia and Casa di Due, as other stops were added to the standard Japanese itinerary of Europe.[46] Later, hispanic names started appearing, such as Sala del Rei, Pamplona, El Apio, San Nou, Paseo, and a few North American names also proved enduring, such as Dixy Inn, Manhattan, Pasadena, Goldengate and Green Gables. However, it was not until the 1990s that other parts of the world beyond Europe and North America were being incorporated into love hotel theming; for example, Airs Rock (*sic*), Ganesha, Casablanca and Ramses in Ikebukero, and Mahatma Maharana in Kyoto. Other evidence of an increasingly outward-looking attitude is revealed in themes to do with the future and technology, indicated by names such as Cosmos, Orion, UFO, la Moon, Star Crescent and Jupiter.

There were a number of love hotels that took much more gentle, flowery, feminine names in the 1990s, and this is indicative of the need to cushion the effect of the downturn in the Japanese economy while at the same time exerting a stronger appeal to women. Hotels exemplifying this category include Dessin des Fleurs, La Vie en Soft, Jardin des Fleurs, la Peche, Claire, L'Elisa, La Michelle, Cassandra and J-Girl (Figure 4.2). This shift may be paralleled with the emergence of new women's magazines: Keiko Tanaka's research shows that between 1980 and 1985 Japan saw the arrival of several new romanised magazine titles such as *Elle*, *Marie Claire* and *Cosmopolitan*, and this same period also marked the launch of homegrown titles such as *Sophia*, *Ef*, *Classy*, *ViVi* and *Lee*, and was also the point at which market segmentation of magazines by age started.[47] Tanaka points out that

> it is important to keep in mind here the strength of young Japanese women as consumers. The Hakuhodo Institute of Life and Living (1987) has shown how rising disposable income has made Japanese women powerful and how it is women who are the force behind major changes in society.[48]

When compared to a sample of love hotel names, it is evident that there is a high degree of consistency or continuity of values between the readership of the

Figure 4.2 Use of concrete on Hotel J-Girl, Ikebukero, Tokyo.

magazines and the customer base of the love hotels, who fell roughly into the same demographic segment. Nowadays, the love hotel market is as aware of its various age- and interest-defined niches as the magazine industry.

There are a number of love hotels whose names are more akin to pseudo loan-words, in that the spelling in *rōmāji* is either made up or is a misspelling or

mutation of a more familiar word such as Bron Mode, La Tiffarna, Tiffard, Pia, Cean, Wako and Listo. This practice is extremely common in Japan, and has given rise to a picture book entitled *The Joys of Engrish*, which reveals hundreds of instances of signage and packaging where English phrases are used incorrectly. Aside from issues of lexical or litigious probity the intention is always to assign more kudos, and to the Japanese the difference between Tiffany and Tiffard or Tiffarna is minimal enough not to matter.

Aspirations to grandeur as a means to survive a downturn in the economy were particularly transparent where the term 'grand' actually appears in the name itself, as in the case of Gran Farre, Grand Calm and Grand Chariot. Another newcomer in the grandiose category is Continental Vijoux in Nanba, a large concrete edifice, whose naming seems 'strongly reminiscent of the old British habit of insinuating raciness with the adjective "continental".'[49] Less grandiose and more concerned to stay in business by affirming the closer nature of the heterosexual bond, there has also been a spate of love hotels carrying names which underscore a spirit of togetherness, such as D'Accord, Us, For You, Chez Nous, Pour les Deux, C'Est Bian (*sic*) and Two-way. Beginning in the more confident late 1990s, increased cultural capital among the Japanese gave rise to more cosmopolitan thematic referencing, with love hotel names derived from films, art, literature, music, foreign slang and cuisine: Rodin, Diva, Titanic, Hotel Art, Gatsby, Beatwave, A Year in Your Provence (*sic*), Pastabook, Farfalle, Broccoli.

Many love hotel names make reference to particular colours. This is hardly surprising, for as Timon Screech points out, colour (*iro*) meant sex.[50] The word *iroppoi* is used to mean sexy or attractive, and the phrase '*iro me o tsukau*' means to use one's eye colour, in the sense of putting on amorous looks. White House, White Box, White Cabin, Le Pays Blanc, White Cube, Shirakawa (white river) are a direct reference to the culture home phenomenon, and also to White Day, the female equivalent of Valentine's Day in Japan, celebrated on 14 March. References to white also subconsciously reference the eroticised whitened skin of a geisha, while those with the word green in their name such as Greenhills, Green City and Green Palace refer back to an older euphemism where a green house meant a brothel. Interestingly, pink is not used in the naming of a love hotel, although it appears in the colour palette of many interiors, since this would associate an establishment too closely with the *pinsaro* (pink salons offering services involving oral sex) of soapland, where pink predominates as the colour of sex. The colour connotations of Western erotica, however, are also in evidence: in 1994, Blue Chateau opened, in 2003 Marine Blue, and in 2005 a new low-key love hotel in Umeda was simply named Blue.

One innovative solution to the naming of new love hotels reported by Mark West was a public competition run by novelist Haruki Murakami in Japan to elicit ideas.[51] The winners included 'Human Relations' (*ningen kankei*), 'Mendel's Law' (*menderu no hōsoku*), '*Kōshien*' (the name of a stadium famous for a high school baseball tournament), '*Asoko*' which West explains is 'a double entendre meaning either (a) a somewhat ambiguous "over there," allowing a

couple to say "let's go over there" or (b) genitalia,' and similarly, a love hotel whose name meant 'the characters for the flower hydrangea, which can either be read "*Ajisai*" (the actual name of the flower) or "*Shiyōka*," meaning, roughly, "let's do it." '[52] Jacob believes that during the 1980s,

> in an attempt to attract guests without increasing their spending on advertising, hotels began giving themselves cute yet bizarre names like '*Kabo no Oishasan*' (The Hippo Doctor) or '*Moshi Moshi Pierot*' (Hello Clown) in order to stand out from their competitors.[53]

Such names work simply because they are odd and hence more memorable.

The most recent trend, however, has been towards more urbanistic theming. Contrary to the tendency in Las Vegas for casinos to be named after specific cities such as the Venetian, New York New York and Paris, in the case of the love hotel naming betrays a desire to construct an increasingly blurred boundary between the notion of a 'normal' Japanese city hotel and a love hotel. Names such as Urban Stage, City Angel, Station Square and White City 23 take up this directional stance, and more overtly still, there are love hotels simply calling themselves City Hotel and Town Hotel, as if to make this generic typological elision complete. In contrast with the highly specific place referencing of Las Vegas, love hotel names thus demonstrate a preference for urban anonymity, and with this the idea that the name can be instrumental in the process of love hotels blending into the generic cityscape.

At the level of theming as well as in its façade and interiors, the Japanese love hotel is performing a new kind of masquerade now, which is about disappearing or lying low visually through mimicry of other urban forms rather than through an elaborate and decorative concealment of erotic play. This is another significant shift, and warrants further examination of notions of play in Japanese society. Converse to a Western moral structure, in Japanese folklore, any act of transgression on the part of the male protagonist goes unpunished, an enduring idea which perhaps explains the male attitude to play that still operates: as Buruma observes, 'for men, there is play, which is another way of replacing reality by a fanciful facade . . . play often functions as a ritualised breaking of taboos, which are sacrosanct in daily life . . . play is the spectacle, the carnival, the masquerade.'[54] In these three words, a whole picture of the early role of the love hotel can be glimpsed: a role based on fanciful façades, visual enjoyment and the objectification of the male's object of desire, a role which for the Japanese recalls the rural practice of night-creeping and the orgiastic fertility festivals which were more or less the only erotic event in the Japanese calendar, and lastly a role which conceals play within the confines of a specially designated place.

The generic term for this form of play in Japanese is *asobi*, the subject of a book by Yoshida *et al.*, in which they argue that

> as societies became civilised and people found themselves bound by various social norms, the masks and costumes that had once been a means of access

> to the world of the divine became tools for liberating people from the humdrum of their everyday lives.[55]

This is still true in contemporary Japanese society, and in recent years there have been various manifestations concerning the use of costumes which have connections to the love hotel: during the 1980s, *bodicon* was a particular style of sexy, clingy costume worn by office ladies after hours in the cities' nightclubs, where 'body-conscious' women displayed themselves on the dance floor, but were characteristically untouchable in that they had little intention of attracting a mate. Similarly, *image clubs* have proved a popular form of soapland entertainment in Japan, where women dress up and act out the fantasies of their male customers.

The practice of *kosupure*, or costume play, is now available in a number of love hotels: customers can make use of dressing-up costumes found in the rooms, and role-play in private. Those depicted in love hotel guides include sailor-style school uniforms, *no-pan kissa* outfits (basically a waitress without underwear, another café trend which is now banned) and PVC raincoats. One *kosupure* love hotel in an Osaka guidebook included a wedding dress as part of its repertoire. This shows that in incorporating opportunities for dressing up, the love hotel is not only privileging erotic play: more chaste and romantic forms are starting to proliferate, making it a domain less exclusively focused on fulfilling a male idea of *asobi*, becoming instead more inclusive of the different ludic needs of male and female customers.

Naming

The idea of costume gave rise to a new way of referring to the love hotel which became popular in the 1980s, following the legislation change. As a *fasshon hoteru*, the connotations with eroticism and the floating world remain intact, but a new association with the pleasures of consumption is introduced. The loanword '*fasshon*' embodies ideas of style and transience, previously denoted by the *kanji* that also means wind or atmosphere. Although the adoption of the term *fasshon* would seem to align the love hotel more closely with a glamorous and Westernised world, it nevertheless carries a distinctly Japanese subtext, one which retains its links with the sex trade; as playwright Osanai Kaoru once commented: 'one has no trouble seeing why the playwrights of Edo so often set their plays in the Yoshiwara. It was the fashion centre and the musical centre of Edo.'[56] Similarly, Buruma notes that in the Edo period, 'prostitutes and actors were the fashion-leaders and superstars of their time.'[57] Continuity with this association is maintained in soapland by the related and euphemistic typology *fasshon herusu* ('fashion health'), which indicates an establishment where various forms of massage are available with added sexual services by negotiation. Love hotels given a generic fashion-orientated appellation include Fashion Hotel Skylab, la Mode, Vogue and Dress, while a few have taken more specific names referring to department stores (Ecrin, Century 21 and Printemps), or

fashion brand names such as Verace (*sic*), and Hermé (*sic*), a newly opened love hotel in Shibuya.

The generic renaming of the love hotel as a fashion hotel has a regional bias more readily associated with the Kansai region than the Kanto. The reference to fashion also redirects its appeal more clearly to a female clientele, for whom fashion is a dominant cultural preoccupation: during the Bubble years, women had large disposable incomes, and statistics show that a large part of their expenditure was on clothes. By calling a love hotel a fashion hotel, it makes it a place that may be identified with the practices of comparison shopping at which young women in Japan excelled themselves. It also locates the love hotel as operationally contiguous with the sophisticated processes of identity construction and presentation. John Clammer, writing on urban consumption practices in Japan, has identified that shopping is a process composed of four elements or stages: eclecticism, wrapping, choosing and discarding.[58] Clammer argues that by following this schema, the Japanese have constructed consumption as 'a mechanism for the recreation of [their own] ethnicity,' arguing that 'use values in Japan need to be expanded to include "play values" (ludic dimension) in order to take account of the fact that many commodities are experiential in nature or are used as vehicles for experiential strategies.'[59] This is particularly true of the love hotel, and implies that in its very eclectic system of wrapping through name and theme, the customer is able to choose and discard parts of the love hotel offer, effectively turning their use of service time into an experiential strategy.

The issue of ethnicity is subtle, but can also be witnessed historically through the fashion world's appeal on different levels and in different contexts vis-à-vis Japan. The broad context of this revolves around how Japanese and Western fashion designers were perceived in the 1980s, and the ways in which Japanese consumers were starting to exert a more experimental and quirky approach to dress compared to the kinds of clothes which the high-profile Japanese fashion houses were known for: Lise Skov has shown that while the folded, pleated, oversized, holey, crumpled, asymmetrical, dark-dyed clothes associated with Commes des Garçons, Issey Miyake and other Japanese designers appealed to Western consumers because they looked exotic and oriental, the home market in Japan was looking for a new impetus such that 'Japanese fashion is thus caught simultaneously between the conventional idea of Japonisme as exotica and postmodernism's promise of a collapse of cultural hierarchies.'[60]

The love hotel is similarly witness to this process of postmodern collapse, and exhibits the same cultural ambivalence towards high fashion through the corrective phase of its development as a further renaming took root, in effect moving the love hotel further towards a situation of clinging on to the coat-tails of the fashion world: by the 1990s, the term fashion was less common than the word boutique, or *butikku*, especially in Tokyo. A *butikku hoteru* conjured up simultaneously the ideas of enhanced intimacy and heightened consumer sophistication in the love hotel typology, associating it with small, trendy retail outlets in places like Shibuya, while at the same time obliquely referencing a trend taking place elsewhere in the international hotel industry towards small, luxuri-

ously appointed establishments which privileged modern styling and operated without extensive lobby facilities.[61] As Halldór Stefánsson remarks,

> some of the famous as well as infamous 'love hotels' are now being turned into 'boutique hotels'. These innovative businesses are cashing in on the ideas that the 'mood for love' can be noticeably enhanced when warmed up with designer-label luxury gifts – *burando seihin*, branded products.[62]

Love hotel names which infer a quirky boutique or brand status include Purple Eye, Paar Mal, D-Wave, those with repeating titles such as Dan Dan, Og Og and Xie Xie, and paired neighbouring hotels with single-letter names such as X and O (meaning kiss and hug respectively). Linking the boutique hotel with the boutique, journalist Imafuku Takako produced a little pocket guide in 2000 entitled *Tokyo: Ii Mise, Ii Rabuho*[63] ('Tokyo: Great Shops, Great Love Hotels'), which covers all the shops and love hotels she considered to be worth featuring for the benefit of her young, trend-obsessed readership. Despite using the term *rabuho* in her title, Takako observed that

> in general, there is a cheap, dirty feeling about the name 'love hotel,' so most places don't use it today, but prefer something like 'leisure hotel' or 'boutique hotel' (which already sounds a bit old). But, in the end, they're all the same, just different variations.[64]

The new name *butikku hoteru* established its credentials more solidly and successfully than *fasshon hoteru*, and secured a position within the competitive world of contemporary culture for the love hotel that meant it would feature regularly in magazines, on television and in everyday conversation. It was an important stage in building up allegiance and familiarity, and minimising any remaining associations with prostitution and illegality. In a boutique, the door is always welcome, a woman can walk right in and try things on at will, she can build up a relationship of trust with the shop owner and will return again and again to buy new outfits. These are exactly the kinds of behaviours the love hotel needed to encourage, and its new nomenclature thus strengthened cultural allegiance in the right quarters of Japanese society.

In the love hotel trade sector, contrary to the preferred name *butikku* on the part of the consumer, the generic name *rejā hoteru* (leisure hotel) has tended to dominate, as this allows an extension of the scope into a wider range of business opportunities. The launch of *Leisure Hotel* in 1986, the trade title associated with the love hotel industry, also contributed to the wider use of this generic name in the love hotel business. The particular connotations of the use of the word *leisure* also appear to elevate the status of the love hotel into a more legitimate territory. Sepp Linhart notes that '*rejā*' (leisure) has acquired a particular Japanese gloss: 'as a loanword from English [it] denotes only noble actions or behaviour that is well thought of, rather than more basic human desires.'[65] This renaming, which appeared following the 1985 Entertainment and

Amusement Act, facilitated an increase in the cultural status of modern pleasure quarters generally and love hotels in particular, with the intention that they would no longer be seen in a Japanese social context as appealing to base instincts, but could rather embody a more 'noble' cultural identity.

Despite this attempt to elevate status, it must be remembered, as Chris Rojek has pointed out, that the word *leisure* derives from the Latin *licere*, meaning to licence or allow. Rojek argues that in order to situate leisure properly it is also necessary to examine what takes place at the edges of that which is allowed by society. In this context, the love hotel functions as an intriguing figure, occupying the very boundary between a sanctioned and an 'abnormal' leisure activity. Viewed in this way, the appellation *rejā hoteru* at once connotes a more relaxed and affluent pursuit, and simultaneously retains a faint underlying tinge of criminality due to residual *yakuza* connections and its tendency to overlap with soapland.

To counter this ambivalent aspect of the meaning of leisure, the love hotel has gradually compensated by privileging its associations with luxury. These have now become central to its identity embodied in many names to do with wealth: Lux, Pearl, Platinum. It has also been a growing trend within Japanese culture generally, as the Bubble economy gave people greater disposable income. The love hotel has profited from this in the sense that there was a limit to what proportion of inflated Japanese salaries could be spent on home improvements owing to rental status or space constraints, making love hotels an alternative means to gain access to the kind of luxurious surroundings to which the Japanese were starting to aspire.

A developing identification with luxury stands out as an important transitional aspect in terms of the love hotel's diachronic development where names are concerned. Christopher Berry stresses that it is the adjectival or qualitative aspects of luxury goods that are most important, and since these aspects are developed within a social network they are inherently fluid and dynamic, existing in a state of flux.[66] As such, a certain 'drag effect' is discernible, whereby goods which start out with a luxury status gradually lose it when the goods begin to be desired and acquired by a lower social group.

The designation of love hotels as 'leisure hotels' may be interpreted as an attempt to secure a renewed image of refinement in the wake of new government legislation in 1985. The drag effect was countered at this juncture when a large number of establishments reopened with names that started with the word 'new': New Tabiji, New Seeds, New Elegance, New Tokai, New Sunobu, New Sky, New Wave. Another naming strategy to indicate a more mature and comfortable status was to allude to old established private members' clubs, with names such as Ivy, le Club, Prince de Galles and Oak House, a strategy which was often underscored by identifying alongside the name how long the love hotel had been in business, with a line of text below the name proclaiming, for example, 'established since 1987' (see Figure 4.3). This tactic has now been replaced by the use of the word 'resort' in a name, such as Aine Resort, Laguna Resort, Caribbean Resort, which carries particular cachet as an exotic place devoted to luxury and

Figure 4.3 Sign for Hotel Prince de Galles in Shibuya, showing its longevity as an institution.

exclusivity. Nowadays, the successor to a love hotel whose appeal has waned slightly is more likely to be indicated by a number after the name, indicating its enhanced status in the manner of a film sequel: hence Sunreon 2, J-Girl 2, Sound 2, Africa 2, Nangoku 2, even Utopia 3. The increased cosmopolitan leisure orientation is also conveyed by Japanese love hotels named after new casinos in

Las Vegas: in 1989 Hotel Caesar arrived on the scene in Japan, in 1996 Hotel Aladdin opened in Shibuya, and in 2001 love hotels called Venise (*sic*) and MGM opened in Japan.

Compared to the accepted appellation of leisure hotel, the term 'sweet hotel' is yet to become firmly established as a dominant name convention but is nevertheless starting to proliferate. This term was encountered on promotional signage for love hotels in both Osaka and Kyoto, and in the naming of one new hotel in Tokyo, as well as featuring as the title of a magazine on new love hotels.[67] At a stereotypical level, women's predilection for sweet things is referenced by love hotels with names such as Candybox, Sweetie, Vanilla and Sweetwater; however, this is also an indication of a certain level of cultural regression creeping into the love hotel genre, evidencing Akira Asada's observation that 'Japan seems to be becoming progressively more infantile.'[68] This is a reflection of a softening of values, and a pervasive atmosphere of mutual indulgence, which derives from the intimate structuring of the mother-child relationship referred to in Japanese as *amae*, the effects of which are discussed in detail below. The term 'sweet hotel' may also be seen as part of the strategy of resistance which *shōjo* culture represents, as discussed in the previous chapter, with its desire to resist the onset of adulthood and its tendency to refer nostalgically to childhood.

The various different naming and theming strategies that have been employed in relation to the Japanese love hotel have been informed by three main aesthetic schema: first, the Western idea of *romanticism*; second, the idea of *kawaii* (cuteness) spawned by Japanese youth culture, and third, by the Japanese idea of *iki* (chic). Taken together, these form the basis from which practically all love hotel names and themes have drawn inspiration, and actually structure a layered, semi-sequential progression in terms of the love hotel's aesthetic development. This started with an urge to express Western notions of love and romance, then shifted into a more introspective and childlike mode, drawing from dominant popular cultural motifs, and lately has entered a more tasteful, sophisticated stage which gestures towards a Japanese philosophical counter-tradition. This is not to describe a situation of successive cancellation in operation, but it is more a case of one system overlaying another, since all three aesthetic schemas still inform love hotels operating throughout Japan today.

Romanticism

References to Western romanticism were one of the earliest ways in which the love hotel signalled its cultural role: with names that included the words *castle*, *palace*, *hill* and *forest*, it was able to distinguish itself in narrative terms from the former brothels and houses of assignation. Colin Campbell has argued that at least in Europe, romanticism was a middle-class ethic guiding attitudes about lifestyle and consumption.[69] Mike Featherstone takes up this theme and argues that 'romanticism cannot be assumed just to work as a set of ideas that induced

more direct emotional expression through fantasies and daydreaming,'[70] since it was more socially embedded than that. Romanticism was how the middle class in Europe exerted their value system in relation to the ruling aristocracy, by privileging spontaneity, sincerity, depth of feeling and the development of personal identity. It is interesting how this came to be adopted as an aesthetic schema by the early love hotels in the Japanese context, where similar sites of class conflict existed. The love hotel borrowed from romanticism its transgressive nature and its focus on liminal excess, utilising imagery of fortification and incarceration, which simultaneously fostered male sexual fantasies at the same time as referencing more feminine interests to do with princesses and royalty. Where the architectural codes of Japanese high society were fixed and restricted, romanticism provided a broad and expressive palette from which the love hotel could draw. Katagi discusses the 'sham castle' aesthetic in early love hotel design, characterising this stylistic preoccupation as promoting a new consciousness in sexual behaviour whereby 'the love hotel offers us to act like a knight on a white horse and a princess and simulate their love stories. Within this fantasy, the reality of sex outside marriage is somehow justified.'[71] In Katagi's view, the love hotel is merely interested in looking like a castle, not actually replicating it, employing an attitude of *mitate*, which Augustin Berque subtly differentiates from a Western practice of pastiche and quotation:

> there lies a profound difference between the ephemeral infatuation for postmodernist quotation in the West, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the tenacious bent of the Japanese for *mitate*. If, in Japan, 'seeing as' (*mitateru*) is admitted as a matter of course, it is because no transcendence, no ideal essence compels forms to express a ground or a substance which would anchor and subordinate them. Forms have a value of their own, wherever they may be.[72]

This attitude allows the love hotel to adapt motifs and elements freely, such that under the guise of *mitate* an act of cultural transposition is simply enabled.

The Japanese relationship to ideas about romanticism in general, which were first received in a mediated form during the early Meiji period via the Victorians' interest in medieval, gothic as well as classical revival, is one of appropriation, assimilation and derivation. For the West, as Richard Coyne has pointed out, the medieval period became

> anything people wanted it to be . . . as the mysterious other, it . . . readily becomes entangled with myths from other eras and places, of frontier worlds, the Wild West, piracy, Celtic and Norse legends, the Orient, primitivism, the future . . . such that Umberto Eco has commented that it is difficult to discern a true medieval period independently of romantic conceptions of it.[73]

This was even more the case in Japan, where invoking romantic imagery was necessarily more value-neutral and eclectic, a situation which made romanticism

ideally suited to the love hotel's process of cultural bricolage, enabling free association of different motifs. Thematically, what romanticism had to offer was a suitably rich backdrop, scope for individual expression and a certain degree of freedom in a tightly constrained and conformist social context such as Japan. It was elusive enough to maintain the right atmosphere of vagueness for Japanese consumers, for whom accurate detail is not at issue, and provided a credible setting for the activities which take place inside a love hotel, mirroring the effect of its loan-word *romansu* in creating a distancing effect from the various ways in which ideas about romantic attachment had been negated and demonised in traditional Japanese culture.

References to romanticism gradually enabled the love hotel to move closer to accommodating a female perspective, and this may be witnessed in a series of three successive moves in the case of the original Meguro Emperor hotel in Tokyo, which originally opened in 1973. This edifice still stands as the archetypal romantic turreted love hotel with a massive fortified façade, yet its interior has been reworked, with white walls and grand pianos, flowing staircases and ornate plasterwork telling a different story within. The transition from male-orientated to female-friendly was eased by a series of renamings: the original name is given as four robust-looking *kanji*, which were then replaced by the rather ambivalent *romāji* name 'Gallery', which also still adorns the building as shown in Figure 4.4. More recently, and with more than a hint of nostalgia, the hotel has

Figure 4.4 Meguro Emperor hotel close-up of fortified top of building, with legacy of successive namings.

been renamed in *rōmāji* as Meguro Club, which bestows a feeling of exclusive membership and belonging on its long-standing and loyal customers.

Ed Jacob's online feature, *Love Hotel of the Month*, reveals that the romantic side of the love hotel's aesthetic palette is still manifest in contemporary establishments:

> the Maria Theresia hotel in Nanba is one of the foremost innovators in [a] new wave of love hotels that sells romance rather than sex. Rooms are large, comfortable, spacious and bright, combining design elements ranging from the 18th to 21st centuries – canopy beds and chandeliers exist side by side with wide screen televisions, and neither looks out of place.[74]

Romanticism has thus managed to bring a sense of equivalence to any items which are appropriated and assimilated into the love hotel design from elsewhere. While the notion of romanticism informed the overall cultural stance of the love hotel in the early stages of its development, with an emphasis on self-expression and spontaneity, its subsequent commodification has meant that later designs for love hotels only embodied the motifs of romance. As in the West, *romansu* is now a set of codified practices, complete with its own seasonal moments (Valentine's Day and White Day), and its own trappings – chocolates and sweets, love hearts and date spots, particularly in relation to the love hotel on which many of these practices are focused.

Kawaii

The aesthetic of *kawaii* or cute became prevalent in the late 1970s and early 1980s, coinciding with the opening of Tokyo Disneyland in 1984. Sharon Kinsella, who has researched *kawaii* as a Japanese phenomenon, states: '*kawaii* style celebrates sweet, adorable, innocent, pure, simple, genuine, gentle, vulnerable, weak, and inexperienced social behaviour and physical appearances.'[75] *Kawaii* is now ubiquitous in Japanese culture, used to sell or communicate not just goods and services to children and adolescents, but extending its appeal to the adult consumer as an easy way of getting their attention. Daniel Harris states that 'cuteness is not an aesthetic in the ordinary sense of the word and must by no means be mistaken for the physically appealing, the attractive. In fact, it is closely linked to the grotesque, the malformed.'[76] In this respect, *kawaii* may be seen in the context of Japan as a continuation of the *ero-guro* (erotic grotesque) nonsense in a newly configured form, one which dispenses with the erotic in favour of the infantile, where the grotesque in cuteness is 'the explicit intention of objects to elicit from us the complex emotions we feel when we encounter the pitiable.'[77] In Japan, *kawaii* is associated with *manga* characters with their enlarged heads and eyes, shown in sugary colours.

The love hotel's use of a *kawaii* aesthetic occurs during the corrective phase of its development, and may be regarded as pitiable in the sense that its freedom of expression had been curbed by new legislation to the point where it had to

develop new attention-grabbing tactics that did not rely on sexualised imagery. Kinsella shows how etymologically *kawaii* derived from the term *kawaisō*, meaning pathetic, poor or pitiable.[78] In the mid-1980s, the love hotel had to make up for the enforced removal of an erotic dimension to its communicative appeal, and cuteness provided the required alternative: as Harris asserts, 'something becomes cute not necessarily because of a quality it has but because of a quality if lacks.'[79] In the last chapter, which cited a story entitled *Asleep* by Banana Yoshimoto, sleep and slothfulness effectively realigned the love hotel bedroom away from sex. Harris points out that the image of drowsiness underpins cuteness, effectively making an 'aesthetic of sleep.'[80] Cuteness also betrays an inherent narcissism, which for the Japanese also characterised this period in the mid-1980s when the economy gave everyone free rein and enabled self-centred behaviour to become more commonplace.

Cuteness achieves this narcissism by the way in which it 'ascribes human attributes to non-human things,'[81] and this cutification of the love hotel may be seen in the naming of certain establishments with the use of the word *ko*, meaning child, and the application of diminutives such as Little Chapel, Little Chapel Christmas. Kinsella notes the connection here, whereby love hotels, 'which sell room space for sex are named after good, sweet girls like *Anne of Green Gables* and Laura of the *Little House on the Prairie*.'[82] Visually, love hotels like Mickey Cookies and Cocoji in Osaka made use of oversized *kawaii* detailing on the façade, in the form of a large teddy bear or cartoon-like windows that look as if they have been drawn by a child or borrowed from a gingerbread house. Kinsella argues that *kawaii* worked its magic within the context of an increasingly rationalised and depersonalised culture, where consumer goods and experiences lacked the ability to establish a proper affinity with the user. The love hotel had also become identified as a less sympathetic environment for young women in particular, rendering the effect of *kawaii* both emotionally and economically recuperative in the sense that 'cute style gives goods a warm, cheer-me-up atmosphere. What capitalist production processes de-personalise, the good, cute design re-personalises.'[83] In the case of the love hotel, the design was re-personalised through the accessorisation of the lobbies with cute goods for sale, and in the love hotel guides, where the covers and choice of colours make the selection of a love hotel inseparable from an immersion in the *kawaii* aesthetic.

Within the category of *kawaii*, Kinsella observes a shift whereby 'cute fashion gradually evolved from the serious, infantile, pink, romanticism of the early 1980s to a more humorous, kitsch, androgynous style which lingered on into the early 1990s.'[84] As a corrective practice, the use of *kawaii* techniques is evidence of a prevailing culture of constraint, such that cute features register as 'the residue of unfulfilled wishes that crystallise in the gap between the daily realities … and our quixotic and unobtainable notions of what they should, ideally, be,'[85] in a sense playing for time while an ideological stance shifts on to a new footing. In the love hotels, this is evident in the bizarre mixing of *kawaii* Hello Kitty imagery with S&M in a couple of the rooms at Hotel Adonis. As

such, *kawaii* is a meanwhile configuration, and creates the feel of a liminal state entered into during a period of waiting. The love hotel thus made use of *kawaii* tropes in its own period of adjustment and mitigation. Sharon Kinsella has also argued that *kawaii* represents a deliberate attempt to delay the onset of adulthood by young Japanese consumers,[86] and the preponderance of *kawaii* in teen culture certainly speaks of perceived unfulfilled and unfulfillable hopes and dreams on their part. If the love hotel was to maintain its appeal with this new *manga*-reared generation of customers, it needed to appeal in a manner they could relate to, and to provide a suitably unthreatening and anti-adult context.

The preference for *kawaii* in the naming of love hotels is far from disappearing; indeed the shift towards referring to love hotels as sweet hotels sustains this notion for at least a proportion of the market, and examples of *kawaii* names assigned to new love hotels in the past two or three years bear this out: Fairy Kiss, Popo, Fantasia, Dodo. The graphic design of love hotel guide covers and magazines also reveals a tendency to make the love hotel as an experience more palatable by resorting to *kawaii* imagery and effects, which in turn derive from the *manga* industry. However, the corrective phase in the love hotel's development is now over, and the slowdown in the Japanese economy is showing signs of reversing, and with it the need to associate the love hotel with juvenile imagery is waning.

Iki

Although *kawaii* allowed for a particular nuancing of a feminine aesthetic, it did so with recourse to childhood and negated the development of a more sophisticated feminine identity. Use of European romantic motifs had facilitated a certain degree of othering for the Japanese love hotel, creating a space outside the confines of traditional Japanese culture in which the new terms of a love marriage could be worked through, but had failed to create a context in which the roles of men and women were equal participants. By the mid-1990s, a more mature scheme of reference was required, given the fact that Japanese women were marrying later, working for longer, and becoming more financially independent and socially sophisticated, and as a result more secure in their social and sexual identities. In particular, the inherent schism between the nurturing, fertile mother figure, the woman of the soil (*jionna*) and the accomplished professional female lover (*yujo*), was not resolved within the aesthetic codes of either romanticism or *kawaii*.

The image of the woman as *yujo* was an alluring unreal figure of eternal mystery, one who engaged the man in a process of moving from a *yabo* (unrefined male lover) to a *tsu* (male sophisticated in the art of love-making), a process known as *iki*. Historically, *iki* is an important construct, and has been translated as meaning chic, stylish or dandy, functioning simultaneously as a concept, an adjective and a spatial practice. Leslie Pincus, the scholar who has done the most work in this area, tells how '*iki* circulated in the erotically charged atmosphere of the Edo pleasure quarters, the *kabuki* theatres, and the

popular arts of the late Tokugawa period,'[87] and argues that *iki* 'expressed the cultural autonomy of the rising mercantile and artisanal class and its resistance to a near bankrupt samurai bureaucracy.'[88] *Iki* was the way in which a geisha enticed a client into a sustained relationship, and in urban terms was how the floating world seduced the high city through its studied artistry.

In 1930, Japanese philosopher Shūzō Kuki, who had spent the past decade in Europe, published a small book entitled *Iki no Kōzō*, 'Structure of Iki,' in which he characterised *iki* as a way of resisting the seemingly relentless process of Westernisation in Japan, a process which caused him some dismay. He considered *iki* to be a term free from Western obsessions with identity and certainty, offering instead a means to confront and resist the West by amplifying a set of sexual behaviours that were specifically Japanese. The structure he proposed was a complex interaction in which sexual allure (*bitai*) works in opposition to fearless pride (*ikuji*), producing the effect of *akirame* (resignation). Hajimu Nakano writes:

> that which *iki* designates is not an inborn quality . . . it cannot be learned easily . . . only adult, experienced men and women can possess it . . . *iki* thus functions as a symbol of a ripened bourgeois culture, which is fostered exclusively in the society of the townsmen.[89]

Through the work of Kuki and others, *iki* resurfaced as a bourgeois aesthetic code in the pre-war period, assigned with a new cultural purpose. As a mode of resistance, *iki* thus worked historically in two ways: during the Tokugawa period it enabled the townspeople to counter the aesthetic coding of the ruling elite, then during the early Shōwa period it enabled the Japanese to counter the aesthetic coding of Western cultural rule, thereby fostering a more nationalistic cultural agenda. In both cases, *iki* is the product of a cultured and refined urban society, where desire is not about the spontaneous outburst, but is suitably constrained, structured and aestheticised into a sophisticated spatial practice, or *kata*.

The contemporary love hotel operates the system of *iki*, through its stylish and sophisticated use of colour, materials and other design features, but more particularly in the way its spatiality functions, making the love hotel a postwar site of resistance. It does so by challenging the unrestrained code of Western romanticism on the one hand, and countering the pervasive aesthetic coding of cuteness on the other. Furthermore, by referencing *iki* as an aesthetic code, love hotels are beginning to dissolve the binary of *jionna* and *yujo*, thereby generating scope for a properly integrated twenty-first-century role for a woman who is neither *yujo* nor *jionna*, but a modern hybrid. The love hotel has effectively remapped the spaces of conjugality within the city, and at the same time dismantled the prescriptive, ritualised conception of professional love-making. In short, the love hotel has successfully embraced the idea of the non-professional, or *amateur* lover, without the rough-and-ready connotations of rural life, at the same time as turning away from its earlier reliance on Western influences. This

contemporary accessing of *iki* therefore goes beyond a re-exoticisation of Japanese cultural influences, and is more about the cosmopolitanisation of a Japanese form of seduction.

Iki is manifest in a number of ways: there are a few love hotels which have names that capture the spirit of *iki* and reference the continuation of a ritualised courting process in the structuring of the love hotel experience, such as Love Quest, Smart, What's, If and Woo. There are also a few recently refurbished love hotels that have a distinctly chic and stylish atmosphere, namely Broccoli (Uehonmachi), American (Umeda) and Hermé (Shibuya), where the lobbies are bathed in a pale, diaphanous light, and the graphic design of the exterior signage is sleek, spare and self-assured. The love hotel does so by acting as a third party in the spatial practice of contemporary courtship, exhibiting sexual allure (*bitai*), and eliciting fearless pride (*ikuji*) from couples who choose to enter. The notion of *akirame*, resignation, is secured at the point the room is booked, but since this is always a temporary sojourn, poise is restored when the couple rejoins the outside world again, and the delicate balance of *iki* is maintained.

Diagrammatically, *iki* functions as a complex series of interplays and juxtapositions of differing aesthetic qualities, which Kuki assigned to points on a cubic figure. The uppermost four corners Kuki assigned to *iki* (chic), *shibumi* (astringency), *amami* (sweetness) and *yabo* (conventionality). The four points defining the lower surface of the figure are given as *jōhin* (refinement), *jimi* (sobriety), *hade* (showiness) and *gehin* (vulgarity). Kuki argued that 'all the apexes stand in relations of mutual opposition,'[90] and goes on to articulate particular combinations of these as producing the attributes of *miyabi* (elegance), *aji* (flavour), *otsu* (smartness), *kiza* (affectation) and *irroposa* (amorousness, deriving from *iro*, colour). Locatable within this three-dimensional graphic are the various thematic transitions and mutations of the love hotel: while at one time the brash figure of the love hotel would have been identified as *hade* and *gehin*, it later developed qualities more closely associated with *amami* and *yabo* as *kawaii* took hold as a dominant aesthetic code. Today's love hotels have a greater affinity with *jōhin* and *iki*.

Kuki's consideration of *iki* also extended to the issue of colour, which is equally interesting from the point of view of the development of the love hotel: he lists various muted, cool, muddy shades, and summarises his thesis on colour by suggesting that 'an "iki" colour is essentially the negative after-image which accompanies a brilliant experience,' basing this thesis on the fact that in nature, the colours that are assimilated at dusk are greens, azures and browns rather than reds and yellows. In particular, Kuki argues that '*iki* harbours the grey of colour-blindness.' What was apparent in the definitive phase of the love hotel's development was a preponderance of the kinds of gaudy, bright colours that are considered in Kuki's system to be vulgar and unrefined. However, moving into the corrective period of love hotel design, the colour palette has been shown to have shifted, in that many designs used softer, sometimes pearlescent tones in the form of pale blues and pinks contrasted with polished metallics. Most recently, those establishments which have emerged since the mid-1990s have

shown a marked emphasis on earthier tones and more matte surfaces, with a palette of rust, beige, brown and grey applied as coloured render and authentic stone and timber detailing. This colour cycle may now be seen as culminating in the form of Hotel *Gurei* (Grey), as the aesthetic preferences of *iki* are finally embedded as part of the love hotel *oeuvre*, and take on the quality of an after-image.

Conclusion

On the strength of its responsiveness at the level of scripts and names, and its distinctive aesthetic practices and thematic developments, the love hotel has proved to be a resilient and flexible construct, capable of shifting qualitatively according to the prevailing social and cultural indicators of luxury and allure. It has utilised language to mark its location within a richly connotative landscape, adapting reflexively over time both through the choice of script and the choice of name. Love hotel theming has as a result moved through a series of distinct phases, from showy and specific to more underplayed and non-specific, and the timing of these representational changes has been shown to relate to national as well as foreign influences. Love hotel theming has also responded to a constantly changing gender dynamic, and a rapidly changing economic picture in Japan. Consequently, Japanese love hotels have managed to assimilate and project both indigenous and alien imagery alike, and to construct hybrid conditions expressed through theme and script.

The mark of a truly self-aware love hotel is one which knowingly incorporates three different scripts in its name, or manages to conjure up the idea of origin in its choice of theme: Birth, Zero and Ark sound strikingly unlikely as love hotel names, but each embodies the sense of a new start, a threshold between inside and outside worlds, and establishes a neutral, almost clinical common ground that is neither cute nor romantic. Stefánsson notes that 'throughout Japanese cultural history, boundaries between the collective "inside" and the surrounding world have been maintained by inventing, re-inventing and instituting various cultural processes to drive and to regulate acculturation,'[91] and it is clear that the love hotel has played an active part in this, existing as a point of mediation and a site of invention, not only between Japan and the rest of the world, but between the different styles of aesthetic acculturation and the different attitudes towards human relationships that arise from transgressing cultural boundaries.

5 The love hotel industry

As an integral part of its cultural history, this chapter traces how the love hotel has over a period of just over fifty years achieved industry status. I will look first at the operational and presentational issues faced by the love hotel as a *trade*, and consider the ways in which the love hotel functions within cycles of production and consumption. This includes taking account of how a degree of consolidation has been achieved through the development of trade publishing, trade events, love hotel groups, and management concepts, services and philosophy. Second, I will review the ways in which the love hotel has entered the realm of *media*, considering changes in the advertising and marketing of products and services, its presence on websites, chatrooms and blogs online, and the ways in which the love hotel has been brought into service itself within cultural economies, prompting cultural commentary through different forms of user and artistic engagement, to emerge as a nascent form of heritage industry. Lastly, under the heading *investment*, as a response and also as an impetus to its change of cultural image, I will reveal plans by financial organisations to mobilise and securitise the love hotel's lucrative financial status, speculating on the further development of the love hotel industry.

Trade

As Donald Richie wryly observed of the Japanese sex industry, 'few countries other than Japan show how effectively a natural instinct may be turned into a well-run business.'[1] The love hotel industry alone accounts for more than ¥4 trillion a year in turnover, a figure which is nearly four times the operating profit of Toyota Motor Corporation, Asia's most valuable firm,[2] double Japan's *anime* market, and almost a trillion yen more than the annual takings of the Japan Racing Association (JRA).[3] Love hotel consultant Vitamin Miura has unpacked these compelling statistics, reporting that more than 500 million visits to love hotels take place each year, that 1,370,000 couples use a love hotel daily (which is more than 1 per cent of the total population of 127 million people on any given day), with each couple spending on average ¥8,000.

What sustains these figures more than anything else for love hotels is the very high occupancy rates they can achieve: compared to the sector norm of a single

occupancy per day in a business or tourist hotel, the average love hotel can expect to handle more than two and a half times this number, and in some cases (the Rock being one example), room occupancy may be as high as 600 to 700 per cent. The financial investment firm MHS estimates that on average a love hotel enjoys 78.8 stays per room per month, and is therefore capable of producing a financial return on investment of anything up to 45 per cent, based on current property valuations.[4] While available data on love hotels may be at times vague and inconsistent, their impact cannot be denied, and the very fact that such data have been compiled and identified is an indication that the love hotel is no longer seen as a matter of individual private enterprise, but is being taken seriously at a national level as a substantial and valid contributor to Japan's GDP.

Behind the impressive figures, however, there is another story of the crippling expense of opening, maintaining and renewing an average love hotel: Mark West's investigations revealed that

> on average, to build a nice, modern hotel of twenty to thirty rooms requires approximately $10 million. Expenses quickly mount. Furnishing and construction costs account for the bulk of the $10 million; furnishing each room costs approximately $100,000 to $150,000, for a total cost of $2 to $3 million. Adding a black-light system may add $10,000 per room; a sauna, $15,000.[5]

Given this order of expenditure, it is not difficult to see why Japanese people are dissatisfied with their homes. In addition to these costs, and in order to mitigate opposition when a new love hotel opens its doors, love hotel operators may often pay around $100,000 for donations to politicians and neighbourhood associations.[6] Consequently, 'running a love hotel is no longer a family affair and is anything but a small-scale business,'[7] a situation which lead one financial commentator to assert that the love hotel is indeed 'ripe for a reputational overhaul and a move into the mainstream.'[8]

Part of the desire for an overhaul on the part of the Japanese government stems from love hoteliers' attitudes towards taxation: love hotels are one of Japan's highest taxpaying industry but may not necessarily pay up: as West notes, 'of course, love hotels are notorious for tax evasion.'[9] Indeed, there are reports that large corporations use love hotels as tax avoidance schemes,[10] to which tax inspectors have responded by identifying love hotels' true tax liabilities by comparing their water usage rates with their reported income.[11] The 1980s Japanese comedy film *A Taxing Woman*[12] is witness to this practice: the protagonist is a female tax collector who experiences difficulties trying to levy taxes from certain love hotels in her area.

The love hotel industry came to the attention of the West in a brief period running up to the 2002 FIFA World Cup hosted by Japan and South Korea. It was estimated that there would be a shortfall of 20,000 hotel bedrooms to accommodate football fans in Seoul. Due to the state of the Korean economy,

there could be no investment in new tourist hotels as there had been for the 1988 Seoul Olympics. As a result, the municipal authorities drew up a plan to put up overseas visitors in the city's many love motels or *yeogwan*, determining that in the process these would be redesignated 'world inns' for the duration of the event. Jonathan Watts, writing for the *Guardian*, reported in November 2000 that there was 'a growing backlash by Christian groups and residents' associations, who claim that such facilities are undermining the nation's morals by encouraging extra-marital affairs and sexual promiscuity among teenagers.'[13] A municipal official cited in the *Korean Herald* claimed:

> the latest measure is aimed at killing two birds with one stone. We can help to resolve the dire shortage of lodging facilities during the World Cup as well as finding a good use for love hotels, which have become a source of headaches in the capital.[14]

There are no official data on the changing nature of love hotel clientele; however, based on recorded observations and anecdotal evidence, it is clear that the current market has expanded and differentiated, with love hotels, indeed love hotel areas, targeting different audiences. Fieldwork revealed that some proprietors in Shinjuku were aiming at an older market, while in other clusters across Kabukichō, there were streets where only young couples wandered in and out of love hotels. In both Uguisudani in Tokyo and Umeda in Osaka there were men and women leaving establishments alone, and men circling and loitering in these areas, waiting to be joined by a woman.

An insight into the typical kind of customer is provided in a series of street interviews conducted in Dōgenzaka, Tokyo in 2001 by Howard French. For example, interviewee Mr Imai, twenty-eight, a designer of industrial products, revealed the importance of the existence of love hotels in his everyday life: he described how living in a company dormitory for bachelors in Osaka has given him 'a truly un-hip problem: overnight guests are not allowed.' His girlfriend, Ms Yamamoto, twenty-five, worked for a publishing company in Tokyo and was still living with her parents. Imai revealed they had been staying at love hotels in Dōgenzaka about once a month for the past eight years, and 'although we don't see each other very often, it doesn't mean that we want to do anything special when we meet. Usually we'll have dinner or drinks somewhere nearby and then look for a room.'[15] This indicates the extent to which the love hotel solves everyday logistical problems experienced by many Japanese couples.

Overall there are three types of clientele which love hotel owners prefer: dating couples, married couples and adulterous couples. Depending on the establishment, four other types of clientele are sometimes tolerated: men visiting with prostitutes, same-sex couples, families and singles. The latter group might encompass a *salariiman* who is too drunk or too late to make the journey back to the suburbs, or in the case of women, where the establishment has offered ladies-only promotions. According to Imafuku Takako the customer base experiencing the most growth is young couples in the twenty to twenty-seven age

bracket, who have the highest levels of disposable income and the lowest levels of debt and financial responsibility. This demographic produces the demand for more entertainment facilities, including the latest fashion for party rooms to accommodate larger groups of people. Takako predicts,

> we are also seeing the rise of 'total amusement centres' where you can spend hours just exploring the interior or watching robots. Personally I think separate trends will develop: on the one hand towards bigger and better, while on the other hand the trend will swing back to more basic hotels where you only go for one purpose. The style of hotels also depends on the area.[16]

Thus in Tokyo, Shibuya is seen as the place where this age group would tend to gravitate, while married couples might seek a room in Shinjuku, where several hotels identified themselves with an older age group.

Prostitution-based visits are difficult to quantify as well as police, not least as West points out because the law is actually framed as a Prostitution Prevention Law, rather than one which *prohibits*: 'as for enforcement, managers at several hotels told me that police consider love hotels to be "off limits" unless something obviously amiss was observed.'[17] Love hotels in some urban areas have become co-opted to perform the function known as *hoteheru*, a loan-word contraction of 'hotel health,' and West reports that 'some love hotels are widely used by pay-for-sex services, some of which violate prostitution laws, some of which do not. Hotel employees with whom I watched closed-circuit video of customers entering the hotel easily pointed out regular female customers who arrived with many different male companions.'[18] In this sense the love hotel has become imbricated in a different industry, one which in most cases proprietors would rather avoid being associated with, despite its potential to augment takings with a highly lucrative source of regular income. One report suggested that as much as ¥200,000 per month could be earned from the *yakuza* by allowing the euphemistically named 'chiropractic' services to be carried out in a love hotel.[19]

As far as the love hotels themselves are concerned, like any other business, regular clients are better for sustaining profit margins than new customers. McCreery believes that Japan is now moving towards a society of regulars,[20] and love hotels are benefiting from this shift in terms of there being less of a need for marketing and innovation. As one article in *Leisure Hotel* states, 'the highest earning hotels do have a high proportion of regular customers.'[21] Those less successful hotels surrounding the high-earning ones also benefit from their surplus trade, one of the main economic advantages of clustering. However, the same article also argues that to be an 'overflow' hotel is an 'unstable business environment' and relies on a process of turning an overflow customer into a regular customer, achieved through advertising and word of mouth.

The emergence of a trade journal devoted to the love hotel trade in 1986 marks the moment when love hotels had achieved sufficient critical mass

coupled with a level of market confidence in the love hotel as an established entertainment typology, and is thus a key indication of the point at which the love hotel achieved industry status. *Leisure Hotel Management* was a Western-style quarterly trade title published by Sogo-Unicom from January 1986, which was then renamed *Leisure Hotel Management and Renewal* from January 1988, reflecting the implications of the 1985 legislation change, which for many hotels had precipitated a process of refurbishment. During 1988 the title was changed again to simply *Leisure Hotel*, which has continued publication up until the present day.

The magazine presents many opportunities for detailed content analysis, and, drawing from its twenty years' worth of material, I have focused in particular on three aspects: the type and content of its advertising; the featured articles on newly opened and refurbished love hotels; and the editorial spreads and reports which provide historical overviews, economic analysis of current trends and speculative forecasting. Both the editorial and advertising content yield insights into the ways in which the love hotel has become more self-aware over this twenty-year period as to its profitability, competitiveness, and distinctiveness. *Leisure Hotel* has clearly been instrumental in defining the love hotel as it moved from the corrective phase of its development into a more mature, cosmopolitan phase, and, moreover, assisted in the process of professionalising love hotel design, by highlighting the commercialisation of the love hotel offer and improvements to its systems of management. Competition is stimulated and market differentiation is actively encouraged through the magazine's coverage of new establishments, with colour photographs and factual assessments of their features and innovations laid out in a similar fashion to those found in love hotel guides, but here the reviews also reveal comparative construction costs and other relevant data.

Leisure Hotel has also spawned an annual trade event and conference also run by Sogo-Unicom, which entered its twelfth year in 2006. The event has been attracting more and more delegates each year, with 7,000 attendees in 2005. As an event, it has all the usual trade stands and seminars, and caters for love hotel proprietors, their suppliers of services, goods and related manufacturers, enabling them to showcase their wares and network with one another.

In the first issue of *Leisure Hotel and Management* in 1986, there was an article exhorting its readership to form or join an association, basing its argument on interviews with a younger generation of independent love hotel owners who had aspirations to group together for mutual support. One interviewee, Ms Ito, felt that

> if the association members were stimulated by each other and were interested in making rooms that other members would want to stay in, I would be interested in joining. If people just copied each other and the result was hotels that were the same, that would be meaningless. Any association would encourage individuality among its members.[22]

An Okinawan love hotel owner, Mr Matsuoka, expressed a need for an association which would enable him to keep abreast of changes in trends:

> not just to seek comfort from each other, or as a social get together, but to exchange ideas and get access to training. For example, for someone like me in Okinawa, far away from the main island, I have no idea what is happening in other areas. What problems is each area facing, the trends in society, I'd like to have the chance to exchange opinions with other hotel owners.[23]

Matsuoka also conveyed the view that younger hotel owners needed access to those who had been in the business for longer, to avoid making their mistakes. These views are indications of an industry entering a more self-aware mature phase, with an emerging evidence base of past experience available to draw upon, but only if it can be encapsulated and disseminated in an appropriate way. Despite there being a level of support for a love hotel trade association, one never materialised, and even today, only one trade organisation exists in Japan for hoteliers, which is responsible for controlling hygiene aspects, and as such, Sogo-Unicom's *Leisure Hotel* trade fair is effectively the only trade gathering that exists for the specific love hotel sector.

Rather than a discrete, national association forming the basis for shared understanding and mutual support networks, it has been the formation of corporatised groups which has irrevocably altered the previous system of love hotel ownership, and, more importantly, has been instrumental in the process of love hotels evolving into an industry. This move from the predominantly independently owned and run enterprises, to love hotel entrepreneurs beginning to develop a portfolio of properties, enabled proprietors to balance their cashflow better and self-fund future investment across a number of love hotels, as well as developing corporate strategies to attract more regular customers. As love hotel groups began to emerge, a corporate mindset started to become apparent, whereby group heads began to recognise the need to differentiate themselves in a new way in terms of brand values and brand identity which were distinctive across their respective portfolio. The group's offer had to become both more differentiated and more consistent, and love hotels that came under the ownership of a given group needed to be revised in order to be seen to subscribe to its ethos and image. The group concept enjoyed many benefits over the individual hotel, not least in terms of incentivising brand loyalty through the introduction of membership and points schemes, making it harder for a love hotel that was not part of any group to compete.

The largest and one of the oldest love hotel chains is Aine System Company, a Shizuoka-based network of more than 150 hotels, with a total of 2,500 rooms earning ¥30 million a year and covering many parts of Japan. *Aine* is actually an acronym that encapsulates the group's mission, which is to offer its customers '*A*menity space, *I*ntelligent performance, *N*ever land, and *E*xperience.' This encapsulates the brand identity within the name itself, and its expression in

anglicised terms positions it as escapist and aspirational. The particular choice of wording privileges spatial and performance characteristics which engage with the specific cultural referent of Peter Pan, which in itself invokes an innocent yet mischievous sensibility. *Aine* appears as a form of visible branding on the façades of all their hotels, and their aggressive business development set the benchmark for other groups to follow. Tomoyasu Kato, group head of *Kato Pleasure Group*, an Osaka network of fifty hotels, plans to expand his love hotel empire to 100 by 2010. Other groups include *Club Chapel* with a portfolio of twenty-seven hotels, the U's Group with twelve, and various smaller clusters of love hotels which are concentrated in a particular area, such as the *Hotel Station* and *St Moritz* groups with concentrations in Uguisudani, and the Kansai-based *Plaza Angelo*, *PJ*, *Sarah Bernhare* (sic) and *Le Tessia* groups, each with several love hotels in and around Osaka. In each case, the group's brand image is sustained and projected via a website, which brings together the various establishments in each group under one virtual 'roof.'

The emergence of the love hotel group has strengthened competitiveness, and created the need for individual love hotels to respond with ever more tempting offers to maintain their business. Simon Moran, writing for the Japanvisitor.com website, encountered a love hotel offering a free trip to Tokyo Disneyland for any couple who stayed in every one of their twenty-four rooms in the space of six months, and a free trip to Hong Kong if they managed it twice.

The love hotel, with its rapid turnover of rooms, has a more pressing need compared to the normal hotel industry to keep track of whether rooms are currently occupied, being cleaned or are vacant, and more importantly, to monitor closely whether guests are being charged correctly for their rest or stay. There are many stories of couples being locked in their rooms until they paid, and practices such as this clearly contravened Japanese fire safety requirements. An indignant posting on one website carried a story that claimed 'the deal is: you pay to get out. The door lock actually has a plexiglass shield around it on the inside, so you can't pick the lock and leave. Next to the double-locked door there's a vending machine where you can pay if you don't want to deal with a human receptionist. Also humorous: posted on the un-open-able door is an emergency exit map, showing how to leave if there's a fire.'[24] The systematisation of love hotel management therefore became an imperative during the corrective phase of the late 1980s. In 1986, analogue booking systems, such as those manufactured by Automation Systems, were being advertised, which controlled the locking of rooms centrally and incorporated CCTV surveillance. By 1988, *Leisure Hotel* issues carried adverts for the latest Passive Infra Red technology, and a system called 'Numbercatch,' designed by Panasonic as an example of 'human electronics,' to capture car registration plates as customers entered and exited love hotel parking facilities. At this stage rooms were still accessed by a physical key, and other advertisements featured technologies for anonymised key issue systems.

By 1990, the state of the art in love hotel management, manufactured by Kaneoka, was a so-called 'business assist system' that purported to integrate

room management to a new level, and it is clear that time management thinking was beginning to inform the operational aspects of the love hotel. The market for electronic hotel management systems began to thrive in the early 1990s, with companies vying for business: Fuji were offering their 'electronic hotel system,' Sanyo's was called the TCR 9200, Taiko and Falcon both had 'intelligent systems' on the market. By today's prices, such a system might cost as much as $200,000 to install. The room behind the reception area is where the hotel system is controlled from, as shown in Figure 5.1.

During this same period, management articles were starting to occupy editorial pages of *Leisure Hotel*, with detailed graphical analysis of room occupancy rates per calendar month and by geographical region in Japan. A new level of statistical data collection was beginning to drive the process of professionalising and conventionalising the love hotel as a legitimate form of business operation. The mid-1990s saw the introduction of pre-paid card systems, which enabled customers to simplify payment for any number of items during their stay including the room charge, but this innovation also greatly improved the cashflow and scope for brand loyalty for love hotel operators, many of whom began participating cooperatively in such schemes, which by 1999 were exemplified by the 'Hotel Point Card' scheme. Love hotels participating in the scheme sported membership stickers on the entrance doors or the rest/stay signs, thereby providing an additional competitive edge over adjacent non-participating establishments. A different but effective strategy to generate customer loyalty in love hotels has been to install lockers, whereby married couples can store adult toys

Figure 5.1 Control room, Hotel Maria Teresia, Nanba, Osaka (photo courtesy of Ed Jacob).

and other items they would rather not keep at home. For love hotel proprietors it guarantees repeat business and reduces customer churn.[25]

By the start of the new millennium, adverts for products facilitating enhanced management were less frequent in *Leisure Hotel*, indicating that by this stage the market was fully saturated and conversant with the systems available, with relatively little innovation taking place in this field. Instead, much of the advertising space was given over to specialised entertainment products and services which love hotels were being urged to introduce in order to augment their offer and maintain their points of difference with each other. Thus whereas issues of *Leisure Hotel* in the late 1980s carried numerous adverts for products typical of the hotel industry in general, such as televisions, mini-bar fridges and hairdryers, these were gradually displaced by a preponderance of items specific to the love hotel per se: Propart and Corin were emerging as market specialists in the kind of fantasy artwork used in *moodies* and blacklight fantasies, Koga Architects regularly offered their services as specialist love hotel interior and exterior designers, Clarion claimed the market share of in-room karaoke machines, Eatons stole the market in the sale of dildos and condoms, and Panther gave way to Pepee as the market leader for promotional beauty products and massage gels. During the 1990s the range of advertisements in *Leisure Hotel* became increasingly eclectic, and is indicative of the fact that love hotel rooms were starting to compete less through the general design and ambience of the rooms themselves, and more on the basis of their technological augmentation.

Indeed, in market terms, the love hotel industry was both an earlier adopter and high-end user of new technology, possessing the necessary purchasing power to buy into the latest innovations before the domestic market was able to follow suit: advertisements for video projectors and 3D goggle systems, laser disc systems, colourwash systems and waterproof hi-fi speakers proliferated in early issues of *Leisure Hotel* well before the consumer technology surge for such items occurred. Kyoichi Tsuzuki emphasises the extent of the love hotels' role in this respect:

> there is a big, big industry. The love hotels are a big market for the equipment companies like Panasonic or Coca Cola or whatever. It's not the regular people that buy the most expensive bathtubs, it's the love hotel people – and not the city hotel. And the most advanced stereo sound system, it's in the love hotel.[26]

Consistent with the early adopter is the willingness to pay for technological cachet: sophisticated satellite dishes, cordless telephones and VCR machines were being advertised at exorbitant prices, even in the context of the inflated late 1980s. Japanese manufacturer Pioneer chose to unveil an interactive TV system incorporating shopping, video on demand and gaming aimed specifically at the love hotel industry as early as 1992, and items that would later take Japanese popular culture by storm also appeared much earlier as part of the love hotel room apparel, such as internet access, the one-minute photo machine that could

produce sticker-sized photos, personal pachinko machines, party karaoke sets and mini sauna capsules.

Changing preferences in bathing technology are evident in the shifts in content of features and advertisements devoted to this aspect of the love hotel's standard formula: large, novelty-shaped coloured acrylic baths were popular in the late 1980s, with jacuzzi and whirlpool variants being slowly introduced. By 1990, a preponderance of advertisements for specialised cleaning products designed for dark-coloured sanitaryware indicated that from a maintenance point of view the appeal of coloured baths was already waning, and adverts began to feature variations on a white theme instead, with colour being reintroduced later in the form of LED underwater bath lights.

The continuing demand for blacklight fantasies in love hotel interiors seems to have been sustained by a range of peripheral products coming on to the market which effectively extended its erotic appeal to customers, as well as providing a new means to achieve the same effect: adverts from the late 1990s included theatrical projection systems and gobos that cast an ultraviolet image in lieu of the blacklight tube illuminating a painted mural, and there were adverts for various glow-in-the-dark sexual aids such as an ultraviolet activated massage gel. Blacklight technology also proved to have a pragmatic use, in that it aided the cleaning process by revealing bodily fluid stains.[27] Furthermore, the earlier prudishness on the part of Leisure Hotel publishers Sogo Unicom surrounding advertising of a more explicit nature was evidently weakening in the mid-1990s as the demand for items for sexual stimulation grew: adverts for sex seats complete with cartoon images indicating their *modus operandi*, S&M handcuffs, 3D hologram pornography, aphrodisiacs and novelty lingerie all proliferated during this period as love hotels bid harder to keep businesses ticking over even as the economy was in steep decline.

From a cultural perspective, by the turn of the century there were sharp contrasts evident between advertising of a more inherently pornographic nature and the steady growth of luxury product advertising in *Leisure Hotel*, indicating two main gambits in operation to maintain the love hotel business: sexual titillation and aspirational consumer vending. Love hotels were beginning to become franchise units for goods such as Louis Vuitton handbags, Hello Kitty soft toys and expensive brand-name lipsticks. The extraordinary diversity of advertising content captures the particular dynamic that was taking place between the *kawaii* and kinky sides of the love hotel business. Other advertisements give indications of new ways in which love hotels were coming under pressure to upgrade their offer according to raised consumer expectations of experiential quality, among them companies starting to offer card-operated coloured lighting systems, leather-upholstered reclining chairs, Italian coffee machines and huge plasma TV screens.

Not only was the average love hotel operator being encouraged to buy into luxury market values through refurbishing and re-equipping interiors, but the market has in the past few years also been flooded with new features to be incorporated into the external presentation of love hotels, through the addition of pop

fountains, high-intensity laser beams that project up into the night sky, lighting display systems that look like fireworks going off, and the increasingly ubiquitous realistic-yet-fake silk plants and palm trees. On the more prosaic side of the market, other regular advertisers featured in the pages of *Leisure Hotel* offer products aimed at solving the kinds of problems routinely encountered behind the scenes: high-pressure cleaning jets, large-capacity washing machines, ceiling-mounted air fresheners and deodorisers, water tank descalers and aggressive cleaning agents. It is clear from analysing the contents of twenty-five years of advertising in *Leisure Hotel* magazine that love hotel product lines reflect the changing business issues and preoccupations of its main operators, and demonstrate a culture of competitive innovation. The status of a love hotel is sustained by the extent to which it can afford to buy into new technologies and facilitate new pursuits.

Implicit in this advertising content are the different opportunities for employment in the love hotel industry. Articles posted online reveal a picture of relative servitude, with low-paid menial positions filled mainly by immigrants. The average love hotel payroll speaks little Japanese and has problems of high staff turnover. The main kind of work is at first glance similar to that of a chambermaid; however, due to the high occupancy rates of rooms, the task of cleaning the rooms and changing the beds must be undertaken at great speed by a trained team. Some commentators have likened the process to a pit crew of a formula one racing team, and these particular circumstances led to the emergence of 'training' videos on the market which are intended to help initiate new staff who are not fluent in Japanese and to demonstrate how to achieve the desired level of cleanliness. One posting online describes the experiences of Jong Pairez, a twenty-seven-year-old from the Philippines earning ¥700 per hour, who commented, 'working in a love hotel is an adventure in that you are learning something you never knew about before. . . . We are obliged to clean a room strictly in five minutes if there is no available room for waiting guests. . . . During ordinary days we can expand our time to six or seven minutes.'[28] The labour angle of the love hotel industry provides an interesting insight into the way in which foreigners can gain a foothold on the Japanese employment ladder with little or no language skills, and also reveals that as a workforce they are relatively unprotected and marginalised members of Japanese society. This situation represents in microcosm the effect of labour shortages in Japan during periods of economic boom, which in the case of the love hotel were experienced not only on the operational side, but also in terms of the availability of labour in the construction and refurbishment of love hotels.

A largely foreign cleaning force has a secondary managerial advantage for love hotel proprietors: when Japanese is not the native tongue, employees are less likely to talk among themselves and create an atmosphere that could undermine staff morale and hence productivity: one *Leisure Hotel* article points out:

> the most important thing is [the workers'] sense of harmony with each other and the job they are doing. Without this harmony, a good, positive approach

> would be impossible, lowering the quality of the cleaning. So, comments on their work only come from the managers. If the workers comment on each other, the team spirit is lost, as the workers begin to doubt each other.[29]

Thus even in the murky area of immigrant labour, love hotels have learned that in order to sustain their manageability, it is necessary to consciously foster an ethos of mutual trust and social cohesion in the workplace.

The notion of service represents an interesting example of confused and conflated Western and Japanese. At one level, the love hotel is rated differently from other forms of hotel accommodation in terms of its service standards, which are judged to be successful on the basis of how impersonal they are, rather than the requirement for personal service at a normal hotel. The word *sabisu* in Japanese commercial terms is something that the management offers for free as a gesture to the customer, for instance, in a restaurant or bar when complimentary food or drink is served. However, a more Western nuancing of the word carries the expectation of an additional payment, for services rendered, usually taking the form of a small fee that is added to the bill at the end of the meal.

A survey of 10,000 leisure hotels was conducted in 1992 by *Leisure Hotel*, and in analysing the range of services provided in love hotels across Japan, the editors' summary clearly articulates service as an emergent cultural issue:

> Most hotels said they provided karaoke as a service to their customers, yet most karaoke is charged for. As an extra charge over and above the room rate, can it really be classed as a service? If it really is a service, it should be free. If it isn't free, it can't be a service.[30]

Regardless of this argument, at that time, almost two-thirds of love hotels were charging customers for the use of karaoke as an extra facility. This is understandable given that it was calculated to generate four times the appeal of other room accoutrements, such as jet baths, sauna, large TV and VCR, and as such was a high-value service customers were willing to pay for. In today's market, while karaoke is still popular in the love hotel industry, it is no longer considered an 'extra,' and the cost of such trappings has been built into the room rates. However, consumable 'service' items which can be vended in the room or foyer tend provide lucrative additional revenue streams, and this modification of the love hotel business model is indicative of a cultural shift that has taken place during the 1990s, when the love hotels were enduring the tightest patch of an economic cycle. This has meant that the Western notion of service has taken precedence over the Japanese in order to shore up collapsing profit margins during this period.

In the 1990s, the love hotel trade coined the term 'service time' or *sabisu taimu*, which created a new socio-cultural event or category similar to 'happy hour,' whereby love hotel customers could take advantage of cheaper rates during slower times of the day. *Sabisu taimu,* which according to Yukari Suzuki

started in Osaka,[31] is strictly speaking a pseudo-loan-word that is particularly associated with the love hotel. In many establishments, *sabisu taimu* has replaced the standard dual price-charging formula of the love hotel, namely 'rest' (*kyūkei*) or overnight 'stay' (*shukuhaku*). Nowadays, customers need to study the small print carefully, as pricing structures vary considerably across the day and week, with different structures sometimes coming into effect during holiday periods. The norm used to be a one-hour rest, with overnight prices effective from 10 p.m. onward. Some love hotels in Osaka offer a thirty-minute 'rest,' which has made Osakan sexual prowess the butt of many Japanese jokes, whereas a less expedient approach to love-making may be inferred from the more languorous two-hour rest which typifies Kyoto love hotels. The ultra-classy Hotel Aroma in Ikebukero has maintained the idea of rest and stay, but offers a three-hour rest period (see Figure 5.2). Clients can shop around to find the best deal during service time, with neighbouring love hotels staggering the start and end times of this period set aside for daytime use.

The introduction of *sabisu taimu* now provides a degree of latitude for the love hotel operator to alter the 'supply' of daytime use according to demand, varying the cost or length of time periods in relation to different times of the day, week or year, and is another indication of the love hotel moving on to a more industrial footing, where careful analysis of profitability in relation to room occupancy has gone beyond a simple daily percentage to something which is more akin to a sophisticated form of economic gearing. The existence of a

Figure 5.2 Rest/stay sign for Hotel Aroma, Ikebukero, Tokyo.

points scheme, whereby each rest or stay enables patrons to obtain the equivalent of air miles, indicates a collectivised and collaborative industry status, with all the benefits of conferred exclusivity: membership carries the connotations of a privileged status, making a love hotel seem more upmarket.

The introduction of service time to allow variable periods of daytime occupancy has brought about the need for other additional services. Typically, love hotels offered little more than snacks and mini-bars in the way of food and drink, but gone are the days when customers considered it acceptable to have to bring their own sustenance to a love hotel, and in any case this practice represents a significant loss of potential revenue for love hotel operators. Since many establishments lack the necessary space to set up a kitchen and provide even a rudimentary form of room service, other solutions have to be sought. In David Mitchell's novel *Number9Dream*, this aspect is touched on in the narrative, when the roguish Daimon comments to his rather more naïve friend Eiiji, 'I use a quiet East Shinjuku love hotel near the park, attached to a four-star place so you can order up decent food from the kitchen.'[32] This is one way in which the love hotel has improvised a solution through indirect association with a neighbouring establishment. In Mitchell's story, the adjacency of the kitchen eventually turns out to be Eiiji's saving grace, as Daimon leaves with his girl the following morning without paying, leaving the penniless Eiiji to plan his escape route. This passage thus also reveals typical anxieties experienced by love hotel patrons about the slightly menacing style of management (an ex-sumo wrestler mans the front desk) that comes into play where settling unpaid bills is concerned, and about the unfamiliar configuration of love hotel circulation space (navigation routes are only clearly marked to show you the way *to* your room). So when Eiiji receives a call from the front desk enquiring about his time of departure and method of payment, he responds thus:

> I try to open the window, but it isn't designed to open, and anyway I can't crawl down the sides of buildings. I see people in the littered streets and envy every single one of them. Could I start a fire? Trigger alarms and sprinklers? I follow the fire alarms to the end of the corridor, just to feel I'm doing something. 'In the event of fire, smoke alarms will automatically unlock this door.' Uncle Tarmac says love hotels are designed to stop people doing runners – the elevator always takes you straight to reception. What else do people do in movies? 'Out the back way' they hiss. Where is this 'back way'? I try the other end of the corridor. 'Emergency stairs. No way out.' Back ways are through kitchens.[33]

Doors and stairs are successfully negotiated, and eventually Eiiji finds himself in the kitchen of the neighbouring four-star hotel, is mistaken for the new employee, and promptly reprimanded by the chef for reporting late for work. The episode not only characterises the experiential and multiply layered differentiation of *omote* (open/front) and *ura* (closed/back) of a typical love hotel, but also the difficulty of negotiating a passage between the two.

Media

While only hinted at in Mitchell's novel, the love hotel has seen its fair share of criminal activity, making it an integral part of three other industries, all media-orientated: news, adult videos, and internet dating, including various forms of 'hotel health' and compensated dating. Japanese news agencies will always cover a good love hotel story. In February 2001, a twenty-eight-year-old singer and karaoke instructor was found dead in a love hotel room in Kyoto's Higashiyama district. Her body had been underneath the mattress for more than a week before a cleaning maid found her: the body's presence in the room had not been detected by the couples who had been using it in the meantime. Police investigating the case treated it as murder, but no perpetrator or motive was ever identified and the case remains unsolved.[34] A second, more recent tragedy occurred in June 2005 at a love hotel called Goddess near a naval base in Yokosuka, in which a nineteen-year-old girl was found dead in the bath. The receptionist tried to intercept a man fleeing the scene, and it appeared the death was drug-related.[35] The bald facts are sad but hardly compelling, yet the media's appetite for love hotel stories remains strong, mainly because there is always a suspicion that many crimes which take place in love hotels go unreported.

The adult video industry is well established in Japan, and love hotels provide a popular location for a film shoot, with many porno narratives revolving around a love hotel. A typical soft porn storyline focuses the action on a couple who are filming their antics when visiting a love hotel, the amateur camcorder aesthetic heightening its erotic impact. Even reputable directors have turned to the love hotel as a setting which supplies dramatic tension and poignancy to a narrative: actor and director Juzo Itami's 1980 film *Yūgure Made* (Until Evening) features a scene in which a college professor takes a young virgin to a love hotel. *Motel Cactus*, Park Ki-Yong's debut film set in a Seoul love hotel, is about four unhappy heterosexual couples bickering and having sex in room 407 as the rain lashes down outside. Philip French describes the protagonists as:

> A young businessman and his girl whose affair is crumbling; a pair of students making a graduation movie who copulate while waiting for the cameraman to arrive (the girl appears to be a virgin); a couple of drunks who listen to a song on the radio with the refrain 'Why am I drunk on tears again?'; and a man having a miserable reunion with an old flame who now lives in Canada, and is enticed by the garishly furnished room, especially the lifesize etchings of Botticelli's Venus on the three glass panels that enclose the bathroom, and a kitschy 'living painting' of a waterfall that hangs on the wall.[36]

The love hotel industry also functions as an extension of soapland, in that there has been an illegitimate proliferation of the large and legitimate 'fashion health' industry which encompasses love hotels in the form of *hoteruheru* (hotel health). 'Fashion Health' is a euphemism for various sexual services which come under

the Public Morals Act and require police certification, but these services are spilling over illegally into unlicensed venues as *hoteruheru*. The love hotels concerned are paid a retainer for exclusive use of certain rooms. A further offshoot of this line of business is the use of love hotels for *enjo kosai*, or compensated dates, between men, and, for the most part, schoolgirls, who meet via *telekura* (telephone clubs). The clubs, which have largely been superseded now by internet cellphone technology, are usually located within the vicinity of a love hotel district, providing easy access to rooms once the fee for a 'date' has been agreed over the phone. For many young women, their first experience of a love hotel interior will have been as part of an *enjo kōsai*. The statistics on this practice vary considerably, but it is certainly widespread, and caused enough governmental concern to pass the 1999 Child Prostitution and Pornography Act, making it illegal to have sex with anyone under the age of eighteen. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs documentation stated that the telephone club 'causes a problem by such establishments becoming a hotbed for damages by sexual intercourse and sexually problematic acts such as prostitution because girls who see the advertising leaflets may call the service, out of curiosity, and there is a serious anxiety about the negative influence on the juvenile.'[37]

Love hotel operators have to balance the enhanced income from allowing such use of their facilities and the negative impact it might have on their brand image and more desirable sources of custom. Equally, operators have found to their cost that magazine advertising can just as easily harm business as well as generate custom: advertisements and editorial appearing in titles considered too lowbrow can adversely affect brand identity. An article in *Leisure Hotel* draws attention to the fact that 'in soft pornographic publications, the purpose of advertising can be confused, and it's difficult to get across the good points of a hotel. They are looked at half-heartedly and have the feeling of illicit sex. The demerits are too numerous.'[38] Since the target market is primarily female, magazine advertising is more effective located in women's magazine titles where the emphasis is on services and facilities.

The love hotel is not an easy proposition to market, yet it is one which has proved to be relatively durable. The quality of love hotels can also vary considerably, and while hotels encourage browsing by customers viewing room panels in the lobby, this is not the most effective or lucrative way of achieving maximum occupancy. As Suzuki has pointed out, the best form of advertising is the building itself.[39] Historically, love hotels demonstrate consistency in their choice of marketing gambits to their *kanban* roots, that is to say bold, self-evident forms of signage in and around the love hotel area, at the nearby railway station, or flyers that are available on lamp-posts. Despite the fact that the average love hotel tends to restrict entry to certain kinds of customers, charges rates which vary across the working day and the working week, and is highly technologised in its managerial systems, its complexity and uniqueness still needs to be pitched.

The types of ambient advertising used by love hotels have tended to fall into three categories: billboards, local directional signage and perishable flyers.

Leisure Hotel editorial suggests that the first type is mainly used outside cities primarily along major highways, positioned on curves in the road where traffic is forced to slow down. The editors recommend that this form of signage 'should advertise the strong points of the hotel clearly.'[40] There were very few advertisements of this type in urban areas, with the exception of Dōtonbori in Osaka where there were one or two on the blank gable walls of buildings. Directional signage attached to electricity poles tends to be used to aid prospective customers to locate a love hotel, and is typically a simple graphic device with the name of the hotel and an arrow indicating the most direct route for the pedestrian or motorist. This form of advertising can prove expensive, with a monthly charge payable to the regional electricity board in addition to the cost of affixing the sign in the first place. Third, perishable or disposable signage – *sute dan* – is illegal, and relies on the same kind of guerrilla tactics as other forms of flyers used by the prostitution industry: printed on to paper or cloth and temporarily posted on telephone boxes, lamp-posts and telegraph poles, this variety of love hotel literature announces new openings and refurbishments, new management, special deals and occasions or local festivals which love hotel proprietors are supporting. Many of the more recent urban love hotels have sanitised this practice by employing a more personal form of *sute dan*: packets of tissues that are given away primarily to female commuters on stations such as Shibuya and Harajuku which carry advertisements for love hotels inside or on the packaging. Students are also often paid a nominal fee to hand out colour-coded discount tickets for love hotels outside major train stations, but as one author points out, 'women are more likely to take tissues than just discount tickets.'[41] These tickets typically give discounts in the region of ¥500 off the usual price of a hotel room.

Nowadays, customers are encouraged to wait for the room of their choice and are typically provided with an adequate array of diversions in the love hotel lobby, but if they have to wait too long or are disappointed because their favourite room is taken for the night, they may not come back for a repeat visit, and valuable time and money is being lost while they are not accommodated in a room. Equally, if the waiting area is not comfortable and well equipped, they may go to another hotel nearby and their custom is lost altogether. The emergence of love hotel guidebooks is not only indicative of the desire on the part of consumers to plan their visit to a love hotel in advance, but is also a sign that the industry has moved into a mature phase, where independent review is both needed and accepted, and where marketing and public relations are now seen as a necessary aspect of the love hotel business. The standardisation of the formatting of the guides has developed over the past ten years, and descriptive room profiles are now accompanied by a detailed iconography of on-site facilities, so that potential customers can comparison shop between the pages with ease, and potentially make a reservation from their desk at work. Most city bookshops and convenience stores stocked the guides, and at the last count there were around a dozen currently in print, published by half a dozen different publishing houses, and covering most parts of Japan geographically. The number of love hotels covered by each guide appeared prominently on the front cover, and the term

butikku hoteru was the preferred way of referring to the contents. Three of the guides had been revised once if not twice since the mid-1990s, and some were clearly sponsored by love hotel groups, since their hotels were given privileged status at the front of the publication.

The typical love hotel guide is pocket-sized, dedicates a single or a half page to each establishment profiled to confer broad presentational equivalence, and, for the purposes of comparison shopping, guides tend to show a single wide-angle image of a typical room with the bed as a central element, and render the pricing, contact information, range of facilities and amenities into an easily navigated iconographic lexicon. Drawing on a mix of *manga* heritage and homewares marketing, the love hotel guide covers employ one of two identifiable graphical strategies: calm, pastel and feminine, or vivid and cartoon-like: tulips, gerberas and a couple holding hands adorn the covers of the first type, while solid orange, red or dark blue with heart-shaped bullet points mark out the second type. The Western format of binding and page numbering appears to be being superseded by the Japanese formatting in the most recently published examples, and clippable coupons are increasingly being bound into the back pages, thereby shortening the shelf life of the guide while guaranteeing more sales. The most useful aspect of the guides are the maps which locate each establishment within its respective cluster in an urban neighbourhood, providing graphical information that is not available on tourist maps or in any other documented form.

Love hotel guides and magazine reviews are now tending to focus on meal and snack provision, with images of their fare alongside photographs and descriptions of rooms. Complimentary breakfasts have become quite typical in modern urban love hotels for those staying overnight, and a few lobbies now sport bars and clubs for the sale of alcoholic beverages. Given the construction of a typical evening date and the love hotel's location relative the entertainment districts complete with a multitude of eateries, the need for a proper restaurant as part of the love hotel foyer is unlikely to become the norm. However, where proper meals and an extensive menu is available, the main type of cuisine depicted in the dating magazines is *washoku*, Japanese-style food, thus further breaking the exclusively Western mould with which the love hotel was formerly associated. Not surprisingly, it is the Kansai area (its capital, Osaka, is often referred to as 'the kitchen of Japan') which is leading the field in terms of introducing the concept of fine dining to the love hotel industry. Ryan Connell reports that love hotel Moshi Moshi Pierot headhunted a top chef from a five-star hotel to prepare free meals, and quotes the owner, Koichi Tamanaga, as saying, 'an average business hotel makes about 60,000 yen a month on average per room. We're about double that. And the reason for that extra income is because we offer a free steak to visiting couples.'[42]

Most love hotels now also have a web presence, especially when they are part of a group, in which case it will manage the website on the individual love hotel's behalf, and often provides interactive information with an online room-

booking facility. A few, more enterprising service providers have sought to profit from the fact that love hotels are not represented on maps of Japanese cities, and offer information to mobile phone users as to the whereabouts of the nearest love hotels using GIS technology. These i-phone networks are reputedly used by adulterous customers as a way to avoid detection when trying to organise a discreet trip to a love hotel.

The more interesting use of the internet in relation to the use of love hotels, however, has been the practice of weblogging. On such sites, customers upload images and text about their love hotel exploits in a public forum, and gain an insight into the activities and experiences of other love hotel users in the process. The first Love Hotel Mobloggers ('mobile phone loggers') conference was held in July 2003, in conjunction with the First International Mobloggers Conference in Tokyo. Posted online as a permanent record of the event is a strangely innocent and reticent collection of images showing couples posing shyly for their mobile phones or photographing each other's tattoos. Some used the weblog as an opportunity to provide feedback to other love hotel patrons, and the site therefore feels at times like a users' review forum, advising others to choose or avoid particular establishments, or to take advantage of new services available.

For the Japanese, the practice of mobile phone logging or moblogging is a way of reaching and communicating with a peer group which is entirely disparate and offers a non-synchronous means to share thoughts about a topic not suitable for water-cooler-type conversations. As such, it opens up a channel of communication between one love hotel customer and another, and constitutes a virtual form of group behaviour in a social context where this is the norm. The practice also constitutes the equivalent of word-of-mouth publicity for love hotel patronage. In terms of a liminal interpretation of the love hotel, blogging produces a form of virtual kinship and therefore removes some of the transgressive, anti-group qualities of frequenting a love hotel. The act of blogging a love hotel experience effectively brings it back into the social fray, reaggregating it as an everyday experience, rather than a rite of passage that stands outside everyday experience. Some Westerners have also taken the initiative to upload information about their experiences of staying in a love hotel in the form of a web review, such as one posted by an American couple Notkin and Tuttle in 1990:

> The big excitement this week was our second anniversary. We went to dinner at a nice soba place in nearby Meguro. It was the first place we've eaten at that didn't have plastic food outside. After dinner we checked out one of the local 'love hotels.' . . . There were only four or five rooms available out of about three dozen (this was about 9 p.m. on a Tuesday night). We picked a 'rest' in a 4-star room (the cheapest one left). It cost 8,500 yen, nearly $60. There were only one or two available rooms when we left, and we saw three or four couples walking in as we left. What a business! What a couple of hours! What a country! What an anniversary![43]

In 2006, an American living in Japan launched a website, www.rabuho.com, and is in the process of uploading details of love hotels a batch at a time. The site is specifically aimed at non-Japanese living in Japan – in an email the creator explained that he wanted foreigners to be able to access information about different establishments and to know which love hotels welcomed non-Japanese.

Culture

In terms of an industrial cycle of production and consumption, a point of maturity is reached at the moment when the manufactured products begin to be recycled and revalued, and more positive meanings become ascribed to what was formerly discarded. The love hotel industry is at just such a point in its development, whereby an element of nostalgia is emerging as some of the older hotels are closing down, and there is a growing feeling that, as a part of Japanese heritage, something of the love hotel needs to be preserved. In cultural terms, this has given rise to two travelling exhibitions about love hotels in the West in the past few years: one was an exhibition of Kyoichi Tsuzuki's photographs in spring 2002 entitled *Satellite of Love*, which was shown at Columbia's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, and is still featured on the School's website. Tsuzuki's beautifully composed images captured for a Western audience the plushness and exuberance of a dying art, and the online essay *The Lost Dreams of Love Hotels*[44] underscores this feeling of loss and lament, instilling a sense of urgency right up to the last line: 'better hurry, before another one goes and you realize too late what's been lost.'[45] Elsewhere, Tsuzuki states:

> the interesting things are going away pretty soon. A lot of sex-museums are closing down and the old-style love hotels are closing down. And if I don't catch them, they're all gone. It's like, you know, you go out to the jungle and take photos of some rare animals or something.[46]

This notion of the love hotel as a rare and endangered species is highly emotive, and Tsuzuki's role in documenting them carries a sense of responsibility towards future generations who might be denied the pleasure of knowing what a love hotel was really like.

A nostalgic attitude towards the past, and the idea of salvaging and celebrating historic artefacts, is becoming more prevalent in Japan, but is more usually encountered in relation to a nostalgic impulse to preserve one's *furosato*, that is to say, native place or old village. Jennifer Robertson, who has carried out research into the making and remaking of historic Japanese villages, a practice which goes by the name *furosato-zukuri*, remarks: 'the dominant representation of *furosato* is infused with nostalgia, a dissatisfaction with the present on the grounds of remembered or imagined past plenitude.'[47] She explains that *furosato-zukuri* is therefore about 'reproducing native/national aesthetics in the face of pervasive urbanisation and environmental pollution.'[48] It seems ironic

that the love hotel, as an element in the built environment that might be construed as something which actually contributes to (social) pervasion and (visual) pollution in Japanese cities, might now be regarded in a new light as it begins to recede from view. It remains to be seen whether Tsuzuki's photographs galvanise a preservation initiative that goes beyond hankering after the look and feel of some lost interiors, to a point where measures are introduced to preserve a love hotel and give it museum status, along the same lines as the Sumida Museum in the Shimabara district of Kyoto, a former brothel, or in the way that Las Vegas has turned its former 'boneyard' of discarded signage into a neon museum. As Robertson reflects, 'the socio-psychological catalyst for *furosato-zukuri* today is a nostalgia for nostalgia,'[49] and it is this impulse that will fuel the progression towards the love hotel becoming perceived as a part of Japanese culture worth keeping.

The other exhibition, held in the autumn of 2001, was entitled *Commodity, Firmness and Delight*, curated by Mark Daniels for Northern Architecture at the Globe Gallery in North Shields in the UK (later exhibited at the RIBA in London and at the CUBE gallery, Manchester). The catalogue notes state that the exhibition was:

> Organized around notions of reception, room and reward. The 'guests' can peruse a selection of rooms from a touch screen display before hurrying past the robotic jellyfish bobbing in the water feature. They will find a room with a revolving pink PVC futon bed, pillow cases hand-embroidered with *manga* drawings, all nestling under a mirrored ceiling studded with fibre optics. An array of convenience items will be at hand to cater for all foibles, plus when the mood takes them there is a plasma screen showing Japanese TV and an innovative motion controlled 'hand jive' game for the PlayStation 2. On departure the 'guests' can peruse a selection of Japanese collectibles, designer homes and goods that can be theirs if they have enough points left on their love hotel customer loyalty scheme card.[50]

In this constructed amalgam of experiential hands-on exhibits, what was emphasised was the love hotel in its older, more titillating guise, mixed through with some other cultural motifs that are not specific to the love hotel per se. This assemblage of influences is both an act of heritagising the Japanese love hotel through a collection of disparate elements, and also an act of bricolage for an inquisitive Western audience. In an orientalist sense, the format panders to orientalised cultural preconceptions about Japanese popular culture with its combination of high-tech elements (touch screen, fibre optics, loyalty card scheme) as well as craft-based or traditional elements (embroidery, futon). This ties the love hotel into a global industry of cultural representation and display, making it perform vicariously, symptomatically and remotely for the Westerner, for whom Japanese attitudes to sexuality are both strange and fascinating. In its innovative construction, the exhibition conveyed a sense that the love hotel was available to be re-consumed, and moreover that this act of re-consumption was itself

incentivised to the point where the museological artefacts were seen as synonymous with items that gallery visitors could buy and acquire.

This theme of re-consumption is also at work in the case of two well-known female Japanese artists, Kaori Yamamoto and Mariko Mori, both of whom have made photographic artworks that directly reference the love hotel. In Yamamoto's exhibition entitled *Private Room II*, one reviewer, Monty DiPietro, describes how she 'turned her camera on the atmosphere of the times' to create her *Ai no Heya* (Room of Love) series of black and white self-portraits, which

> find the twenty-three-year-old posing in a wide variety of personas in a wide variety of love hotels. In one shot Yamamoto is a pony-tailed innocent kneeling on a bed, while in another the office lady uniform suggests an after-work tryst.[51]

DiPietro is impressed by the fact that

> even when Yamamoto poses as pregnant in one of her lusciously-toned prints, postmodern detachment is still all over her soft round face. If they are intended to comment on the superficiality of contemporary sexual relationships, Yamamoto's pictures, all of which are mounted in distressed metal frames, succeed.[52]

In *Ai no Heya* (1997), the image is cropped such that Yamamoto is shown lounging in a love hotel interior which does not reveal the bed, and its love hotel-ness is indicated by other cues: the patterned carpet, the mirrors and the ornate furnishings. Toshihiro Asai, curator of the exhibition in which *Room of Love* was featured, drew attention to the framing and narrativisation of love hotels in Yamamoto's work:

> Whilst love hotels are an undeniable aspect of our culture, they exist on the fringes of society and are seldom talked about as part of everyday life. However, their exterior and interior design is rich in a kitsch sense of style, which is truly individual to Japanese culture. Yamamoto is not just aiming to catalogue love hotels. She dresses up in different guises, portraying women in different images, and takes photographs which tell the stories of 'love' which are played out between men and women in those rooms. She has not chosen modern love hotels, which are called 'Fashion Hotels', instead she has chosen images of seedy women, such as Office Workers who are having an affair, or High School girls engaged in prostitution, or prostitutes themselves who come to shabby, run-down hotels.[53]

Mariko Mori's piece *Love Hotel* (1994) is similarly focused on the older type of love hotel interior from the definitive period of its development, featuring a circular pink and grey *dendō* bed framed with slender white Corinthian columns. Mori invests the room with a futuristic quality, one which is accentuated by her

own presence in the image wearing a silver wig and shoes, but she also references erotic tropes by wearing a costume that is based on Japanese school uniform. Mori has stressed that in these images, 'the women are cyborgs – there is the "School Girl," the "Office Lady" and the "Prostitute." I call them cyborgs to speak metaphorically of the woman's role in Japan – it's a kind of social comment.'[54] As a former model and fashion student, Mori wanted to use self-portraiture as a means of expressing some of her frustrations about Japanese society. When she left Japan, first to study in London and then to live in New York, she claimed, 'I was looking for freedom – freedom to express myself – on the outside and as a whole. Japan is a unified society that does not allow for individualism. It was difficult for me. I was relieved when I went to London to study because of the opportunity for individualism there. In Japan people try not to behave outside of common standards. You are constantly reminded not to step out of line.'[55] The love hotel supplied a suitable context in which to portray this need to express individuality, a liminal context in which Mori could convey the impossibility of side-stepping contemporary Japanese social mores, particularly the enforced group behaviour. She situates the room as a ludic space within which her presence exerts a childish yet coquettish appeal. The notion of time is ambiguous: the image of the room is both historical in that it refers to a typical pre-1985 love hotel room, but is stylistically futuristic through its silver coloration and her choice of clothing. In constructing an apparent image of the future, the love hotel interior is envisaged as a space that will not only endure, but whose liminal status will also prove enduring.

Both Yamamoto's and Mori's work falls into the category of photographic self-portraiture, in which the *mise-en-scène* is played off against the dressing up as a way of revealing the codification of Japanese female roles. The images which Yamamoto and Mori have produced offer an ironic commentary on feminine role-play and both anticipated and precipitated the practice of *kosupure* associated with love hotels. Mori's assertions regarding her cyborg status are also intriguing, making her interpretation curiously at odds with Donna Haraway's classic feminist characterisation of the cyborg. Haraway argues that the cyborg is 'a creature of the post-gender world,'[56] one that is capable of breaking down nature–culture and human–machine boundaries. Mori is less concerned with these boundaries than with those which exist between one culture and another culture, and between the male gaze and the female gaze. Haraway states: 'I am making an argument for the cyborg as a fiction mapping our social and bodily reality and as an imaginative resource.'[57] Mori uses this imaginative resource in *Love Hotel*, capturing the hopelessness she experienced as a Japanese woman in terms of opportunities to project and inhabit other kinds of meaningful identities. Her use of the love hotel establishes it as a limit state for identity formation as a form of othering, in that one cannot go beyond a stage of constructing an image. The status of the love hotel as a zone of evaporation is thus unmasked by the piece *Love Hotel* as being incapable of supporting a real rite of passage. It is therefore not a genuinely liminal space but a *liminoid* space,

that is to say one which appears to offer a means to disaggregate from society, but in reality maintains its functional connection to that society.

The issue of visuality is as pertinent to the debate about Japanese sexuality as it is in other cultures, and shows how the love hotel has had its own part to play in what amounts to a pornographic scopic regime. While *Love Hotel* and *Room of Love* both operate in this same sphere, they also portray something which is never found in the kinds of images of love hotel interiors seen in guidebooks and magazines: a space which is occupied, where the focus is on a person and the narrative their presence suggests. On one level, Mori's and Yamamoto's portrayals of love hotels therefore function as a simple acknowledgement of the desire for narrativity within Japanese society, and on another level it is only by referencing the love hotel that these women artists have found a way to bring other social and cultural issues to attention.

The narrative potential of the love hotel has not only featured in the work of Japanese artists. Three Western artists, Steffi Jüngling from Germany, Linda Wallace from Australia and Peter Bellars, an Englishman who resides in Japan, have also made artworks around the idea of the love hotel. Steffi Jüngling collaborated with a real love hotel in Asakusa, the Sunflower Hotel, and created three portals or doors into her artwork; the first was to feature actual stories taken from Roland Barthes' book *Fragments d'un Discours Amoureux* and to place one in each of the hotel's thirty-nine rooms, where she suggested 'they act like lucky charms or titles for each room.'[58] The second was a website, *Room4love*, which captured one room from the Sunflower Hotel and invited people to contribute their own love stories. The third portal was via an art gallery in Tokyo, where Jüngling set up an actual 'room4love' for visitors to experience.

The elided term 'lovehotel' is employed by artist and media specialist Linda Wallace to provoke new thinking about interaction, and is the title of a short video piece. She describes the project as being

> like a telephone conversation on a line unravelling towards another time, seeking new flesh-formations to engage in different ways. 'love' and 'hotel' finally come to mean the same thing: a coupling of tendencies which is also a meeting-place. *lovehotel*: a 'shimmering doorway', a glimpse of the future between words, gestures and images; but also a choreography of mutating sensations responding to the deformed gestures of an Intelligence or Body which can only express itself as an aberration of the conventional.[59]

Both Jüngling and Wallace focus on the point of access, and construct the act of entering their notional love hotel as a critical gesture, which allows others access to an intimate space and in the process expands not only awareness of practices which might take place there, but also extends the possibilities for occupying the space from purely physical to virtual forms of use and inhabitation.

Taking the critical appropriation of the love hotel a step further, Peter Bellars, a British artist who has lived and worked in Japan since the early 1990s, has

Figure 5.3 Impression Sunrise 93, 1993 (plastic, cutting sheet, aluminium) 65 × 45 cm, by Peter Bellars (photo courtesy of Peter Bellars).

used the love hotel as a means to offer a critical commentary on the Japanese gallery system in a 1993 piece entitled *Impression Sunrise* (Figure 5.3) exhibited in the show *Ginburart*. Bellars posted a carefully made 'rest/stay' sign on a wall in the streets of the Ginza, the area flush with rental galleries. As part of the same piece, Bellars also tagged five or six Ginza rental galleries on which the rest/stay pricing structure had been based, with signatures of Claude Monet on luggage labels. In an interview with artist Kengo Nakamura, Bellars commented:

> the title of the work is 'Impression Sunrise' quoted from Monet's work. In other words, it's my impression of Japan. It refers to the rental gallery system, where the artist pays per day or week for the space – a form of exhibiting unique to Japan. I expressed that by copying the shape of a 'love-hotel' sign. An artist being able to show his work based on not his talent, but his economy … I think this system is really strange. This way, true artists will not develop.[60]

Further pieces by Bellars involved remaking other forms of street signage, each one a subtle form of deterritorialisation by virtue of its construction or the location in which it was displayed, one example being *Lay Lines* (Figure 5.4). Nakamura interprets Bellars' approach as one which involves 'extracting images

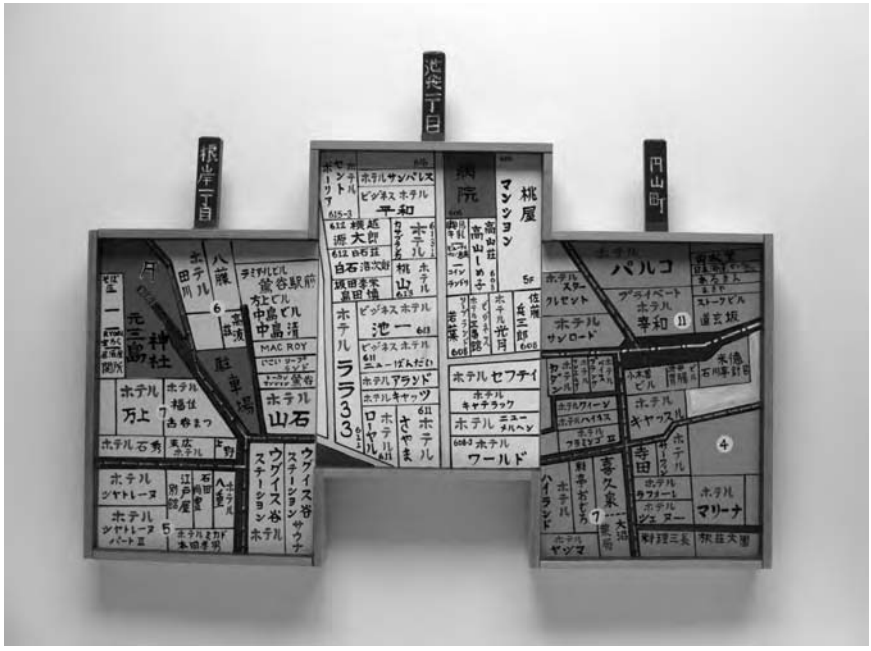

Figure 5.4 Lay Lines, 1991 (enamel on wooden panels) 45 × 36 cm, by Peter Bellars (photo courtesy of Peter Bellars).

encroaching on all parts of society, and emanating from the media, but which are not recognized because it is so much a part of the lives of us Japanese.'[61] As such, the love hotel becomes part of a critical economy of images, capable of drawing attention to an issue and eliciting a more thoughtful reading of the city and the actions of its citizens.

Investment

It is not only in the image economy that the love hotel is making an impact: over the past two or three years there has been a quantity of newspaper and online articles regarding the arrival of the love hotel on the money markets. Prior to and during the Bubble years, love hotels were financed by private investment, or with money borrowed from loan-sharks with *yakuza* connections. It was not an area of business that other lenders would contemplate, despite its high levels of turnover. Earlier attempts at investment on the part of big business had not paid off: the entrepreneur behind Nintendo, Hiroshi Yamauchi, set up a love hotel in the early 1960s, and reputedly used one of the rooms himself on occasion; however, like his previous venture of instant rice it did not take off, and he did not try to grow the business any further, turning his attentions instead to the then-nascent game industry.

The long and unprecedented recession in the 1990s gave cause for a reconsideration of many business opportunities. In 2003, the *Aine* group, having achieved a credible market position where it owned more than 100 love hotels, managed to raise ¥30 billion by selling bonds that were backed by revenue from its love hotel portfolio.[62] However, love hotels are still seen as 'pink real estate,' and as such found it difficult to secure financial backing especially after a recession. In 2004, an article appeared in *Japan Inc.* stating:

> the love hotel business is in trouble. Due to over-expansion during the bubble of the late 80s and early 90s, a time when rooms cost up to $1 million each to build and furbish, a number of industry leaders and small chain operators are now in serious financial distress. It seems that the only way out for many of these companies is either substantial restructuring, or closure and sale of their assets.[63]

Of the 300 or so love hotels in the study sample, nine were closed, apparently for good, four in Osaka and five in Tokyo. A further six (2 per cent) were temporarily closed and undergoing refurbishment (see Figure 5.5 of Hotel La Tiffarna under wraps). Of those that appeared permanently closed, one in Uehonmachi on a site between a cemetery and a recreation ground was utterly derelict and overgrown, while the others were simply boarded up but largely intact. Several more in Shinjuku and Shibuya were very run-down and seemed to be struggling to remain in business. What was interesting was that in each case where a closed or struggling love hotel was encountered, it was in the vicinity of several brand-new or thriving establishments, and the proximity of the decrepit ex-neighbour did not appear to have any detrimental effect on the new love hotels' business takings. Indeed, the latter seemed to thrive on the sharp contrast between the old and the brand new afforded by its cheek-by-jowl location: in Shinjuku, the brash new Atlas is situated immediately opposite the fading Tōhō Hotel and Hotel Lovely; similarly La France and G7 continue to trade right opposite the derelict Hotel Mandarin, while Grand Chariot occupies the site next to New Tabiji, which is now looking far from new. In Umeda, the thriving Candybox rubbed shoulders with the long-since closed Goldengate, and in Uehonmachi, two boarded up love hotels were right opposite possibly the most magnificent one in Japan: Belle des Belles. The presence of the older love hotels may also have given the areas concerned a certain kudos in terms of longevity, although one person I interviewed thought that the residual presence of the closed hotels was a bit 'spooky' and off-putting, particularly for women. Certainly, the existence of older buildings right next to brand-new constructions is not unusual in Japanese cities, and something which attracts less attention than it would in the West, where wholesale redevelopment of areas is more common than in Japan.

The reason for most of the closures is predominantly a case of 'grandfathering out'[64] as West explains. After 1985, as soon as a pre-1985 love hotel wished to refurbish, it could only do so by re-registering and removing all the trappings of its definitive or statutory status, according to the terms of the law. If it wished

Figure 5.5 Hotel La Tiffarna under reconstruction, Uehonmachi, Osaka.

to continue trading as it was, it could only do so by not refurbishing, and given that most love hotel rooms need to be renewed every two to three years due their high levels of occupancy, it was not long before many of these older hotels were too shabby to attract any customers, and lacking the means for a complete overhaul, they were therefore forced to close. Official figures show that in 1985 there

were 11,000 'statutory' love hotels, but by the year 2000 only 7,000 of these remained in business. The figure is likely to be a little over half this number today – some estimate that for every new love hotel opening, two are closing,[65] and this accounts for the claims that love hotels are becoming extinct. In the old definition of the love hotel this is true, but other statistics show that the number of non-love hotels operating in the manner of a love hotel has actually grown in the same period.

The changing fortunes of the love hotel industry during the Bubble years and afterwards offer a revealing picture of the cultural impact of an overheated Japanese economy. Not long after the regime change was imposed following new legislation in 1985, ambitious love hotel projects that had been planned to be executed in the early 1990s were beset with problems of build costs rising to twice or three times the original valuations. As a consequence, specifications were pared back, as too were profit margins. In 1989, with land, wage and construction costs spiralling upward, love hotels continued to be built as a way to secure and develop parcels of land and generate turnover. Reports show that during this period, as well as freight and apparel industries capitalising their assets by investing in love hotel businesses, individual professional people were also seeking short-term returns in their own right, with instances of doctors and lawyers putting up their properties as collateral and investing in love hotel projects.[66]

In terms of a literal economy of images, love hotels have recently been targeted as a suitable new source of investment material for consumer finance firms. Prior to this, many love hotel developers had experiences like that of Haniuda, who

> paid for the construction of Hotel Colorful P&A as well as three other hotels he owns in nearby Shibuya, with a loan from Hiroshima Bank, a regional lender 420 miles away in western Japan, because bigger banks turned him down.[67]

Another love hotel developer complained that 'pachinko parlours and love hotels can't get loans from the major banks, not even with collateral.'[68] Now it seems that love hotels, which were once synonymous with loan sharking, 'have become reputable and profitable with the backing of international investors.'[69] There is recent evidence that the love hotel's 'pink real estate' associations might finally be on the wane, given that Shinsei Bank, which was represented at the 2005 Leisure Hotel Fair in Tokyo, has announced that it is open to the idea of the love hotels and pachinko parlours as investment material for the securities market: Thierry Porte, the chief executive of Shinsei Bank, advised that:

> I do think securitization will become a significant form of finance in both those particular activities – you have to study them carefully, you have to work with the right counterparts, you have to structure them well, and then you have to price them properly.[70]

Shinsei Bank specialises in bundling assets such as land and buildings into a tradable investment. In this form of financial trading, love hotel loans or mortgages are pooled and then sold in portions as 'securities' on a secondary market. Nowadays, it has been reported that 'in spite of their strong revenues, many hotels are going cheap because their operators, cold-shouldered by banks and barred from the Tokyo stock exchange, are desperate to offload mortgages taken on rashly during the bubble years.'[71] This unsustainable level of borrowing was the product of wild over-confidence in the Japanese leisure market, such that the mortgages were far greater than the love hotels' actual worth when the economy started to collapse.

In 2004 an important financial threshold was crossed, when foreign direct investment in Japan surpassed Japanese direct investments outside Japan, perhaps signalling the end of the practice of Japanese companies buying up overseas business interests. The cost of real estate in Japan has halved since 1995 and interest rates have dropped significantly, making opportunities such as hotels, golf courses and retailing attractive to foreigners. As a consequence, one enterprising company, MHS Capital Partners, with funding from several unnamed European institutions, established a pilot project in 2004 to buy up to five love hotels and planned a $100 million fund to securitise the cashflows from more. Miro Mijatovic, the Australian head of MHS Capital Partners, declared that he wanted to attract foreign investment in particular, but remained realistic about the possibilities, given the love hotel's 'pink' connotations:

> Sanitising love hotels is unlikely to be easy. Hotels are, in part, plays on Japanese land prices, which have fallen in each of the past thirteen years. Another worry is that cash flows can be suddenly sucked away by innovations elsewhere, as creativity in the sector is endless.[72]

A second problem is that love hotels do not come up for sale through the usual real estate channels in Japan, making it difficult to identity a suitable project to buy up, as MHS partner Hamish Ross admits: 'this is not an industry where you can go out and buy a list of real estate available for sale. By the time the public knows of a property becoming available, it's been well and truly picked over.'[73]

As the love hotel begins to take shape as an investment opportunity, its relative status will be enhanced, and it is not surprising that those seeking to develop a credible market for investment in love hotels intend to perform an effective upgrade in terms of their image. One business analyst describes this process as 'more five star,' intimating that this would lead to a formula based on 'less plastic, better food, fine wine, thicker towels, wireless internet and a widescreen TV.'[74]

Conclusion

While some aspects of the love hotel industry are now undeniably well established, with high levels of business awareness informing quality decision-

making, it is still an industry beset with perceptual problems relating to the love hotels' often quasi-illegal status and the structural debt they incurred during the 1990s. At this hard-nosed end of the spectrum, financiers are slowly beginning to participate in the process of bailing out the love hotel, and may in the process reverse any remaining negative impressions of the sector. Profitability is by no means certain, as the love hotel industry is vulnerable to changes in the sexual habits of the Japanese: an article in *USA Today* suggested that there has been a drop in sales of condoms (down 40 per cent in ten years since 1993) and in business at love hotels (down 20 per cent since 1999), owing to a growing culture of sexual abstinence or apathy.[75] Love hotels have responded robustly to this emergent scenario, however, by encouraging the use of rooms for other purposes through the addition of 'party' rooms and facilities such as computer gaming. That said, it may be that as a business, love hotel suppliers are having to accept lower profit margins due to increased competition between love hotels and decreased overall demand. A representative from the company France Bed, who still make the revolving *dendō* classic, complained at the 2004 Leisure Hotel Fair that the love hotel industry was overheating: 'everyone's slashing prices to stay in the market. There's not much room for big-ticket items like revolving beds.'[76]

The word 'sanitisation' crops up frequently in these kinds of discussions, and it is clear that however much Japanese consumers have overcome the inhibitions of an earlier generation about frequenting love hotels, particularly after the change in legislation in 1985, the worlds of banking and finance are more conservative in their outlook, and may take longer to accept the legitimacy of this line of business. In the meantime, a secondary love hotel industry is emerging, which trades not on its assumed profitability but on a mixture of cultural critique and nostalgia. Through media and artistic channels, the love hotel has now achieved a particular cultural status, capable of representing simultaneously ideas of interiority and outsideness, futurity and pastness, spontaneity and premeditation; and it is through these multiple representations that the love hotel has entered the consciousness of fine art to become part of its critical horizon. What is being celebrated as part of a Japanese cultural industry is, however, the seedier statutory love hotel, and it is obvious that this is the image which most Westerners have in mind when they hear mention of the love hotel. It would seem that in terms of cultural capital, the more banal, cleaned-up leisure hotel is less attractive, while in terms of economic capital it is the more lucrative.

6 Towards a conclusion

In documenting the many sites, practices and features associated with Japanese love hotels, certain patterns and interpretations have emerged, which together muster a provisional cultural history.[1] My overall sense is that the love hotel exists as a loose but distinctive semiological landscape, which is simultaneously visceral and virtual, real and representational, operating at a variety of different scales and contexts, from the city as a whole down to the minutiae of the love hotel interior. The love hotel now exerts a presence within Japanese culture in the street, at the newsstand, in the art gallery, at trade fairs, in the money markets, at home and at work, from the train and from the car, on television and on the internet. It draws together not just different clientele, but different publics,[2] functioning as a communicative site or sphere of interaction. More specifically, love hotels constitute what Ikegami calls 'counter-publics,' which 'consisted of light-hearted, cheerful representations of the sensual pleasures of urban sophisticates,'[3] commonly identified in the Tokugawa period as *akusho*, bad places. This is not to say they were 'counter-sites' in the sense that Foucault inferred in his writings on the heterotopia:[4] rather than a space that is segregated from the everyday, the *akusho* has been shown to interact directly with its surrounding context. Indeed, Tamotsu Hirosue has argued that '*akusho* constituted a non-everyday site . . . yet it impinged on the everyday in subtle ways . . . it was a non-everyday place that existed in an everyday way . . . these places were real places.'[5]

The love hotel, as a contemporary *akusho*, performs its continuity with the everyday not so much through its spatial or material configuration as through the movements of people in and out of the building itself. Couples frequenting love hotels are continually stitching them back into the spaces of the city through their comings and goings. With a seemingly contradictory spatial logic, everything pertaining to the act of entering a love hotel is signalled as a departure from the everyday, and a movement away from social norms and behaviours, and everything involved in exiting from a love hotel is about a return, an integrative moment that reinforms and reconnects with day-to-day reality. To sustain and articulate this logic, the love hotel is configured to prolong the sense of arrival utilising delay tactics provided by the attenuated entry zone, the ritual of masking car and registration plates, the selection process in front of the room

guide panel, and the opportunities to wait in the lobby. Conversely, the moment of return is characterised by a highly efficient set of systems for extracting payment and assisting prompt check-out. Any dalliance on the way out is confined to the process of retail consumption, where souvenirs available for purchase aid the process of social reintegration following the couple's sojourn at a love hotel. Couples may enter the love hotel lobby as many times as they like, but they can leave their room only once, forfeiting further access. The love hotel may therefore be compared to a one-way valve, which only allows passage in one direction, and which resists movement in the opposite direction: once they have left the premises, customers may not return. This implicit aspect of the love hotel's operational strategy has spawned the tactic of picnicking: couples know they will not leave a room once they have paid for it, and invariably make their own arrangements to stave off hunger where there is likely to be an absence of room service. Both strategy and tactic underscore the singularity of the experience of the love hotel interior: other kinds of hotels have rooms which couples return to after a day out in the city; the love hotel is a room which you go to once, and afterwards return to the city.

At the height of the love hotel's cultural influence, its status as a commanding counter-public challenged Japanese authority in the same way as *kabuki* did centuries before, in that it served to 'encourage the formation of ritual enclaves in which the authority of the discourse of the dominant public [was] temporarily nullified.'[6] The love hotel's wider urban role has contributed to the development of the *sakariba* (pleasure quarter) as a zone of liberty and evaporation, and eventually caused the state to tighten up on sexual expression through addressing zoning restrictions and functional categorisations. While the 1985 measures weakened the nature of the love hotel as a specific enclave with a capacity to nullify social norms, the new legislation, quite apart from restricting the proliferation of the love hotels in Japan, actually allowed them greater scope to occupy other parts of the city, particularly when they took on the identity/alibi of the city hotel or non-love hotel. This situation may be viewed in two ways: either the love hotel is suffering encroachment on the part of the rest of the hotel industry anxious to increase profit margins, or the love hotel is infiltrating other parts of the city in a new guise, passing relatively unnoticed. Either way, it is undergoing a process of dispersal, in which the love hotel starts to appear beyond the confines of designated pleasure quarters and begins to affect corporate and domestic contexts. Indeed, there are now features in Japanese dating magazines on how to turn an apartment into a 'love nest' – evidence that the love hotel has raised and shaped aspirations regarding an appropriate setting for love-making in Japan, and moreover offers a whole visual, spatial and material vocabulary from which to draw. I use the term vocabulary rather than language: the love hotel's semiological landscape is composed of spaces in use, of architecture as common parlance. Its signification is understood only in the moment, meaning that 'the hunt for the signified can therefore only constitute a provisional undertaking.'[7] The love hotel's particular tactic in an urban *parole* is parenthetical: it draws its patrons deftly aside from their more prosaic concerns and

lends a short-stay space in which to encounter 'the a-social character of *jouissance*.'[8]

In contributing to the erotic dimension of the city, the love hotel does so neither by creating its own cultural economy nor by impacting negatively on existing cultural spheres and activities. On the contrary, as Barthes argues in *The Pleasure of the Text*, 'neither culture nor its destruction is erotic; it is the seam between them, the fault, the flaw, which becomes so.'[9] In this seam, signs and spaces intersect and collide, blend and mesh to create complex shades of meaning, meaning that is only fully understood through spatial practice. The love hotel may therefore be conceptualised as a productive flaw or fault. Barthes' distinction between two different kinds of bodily pleasure, *plaisir* and *jouissance*, facilitates a useful indexation of changes to the love hotel experience, and moreover of its urban role. Whereas at one time the love hotel was intended to support experiences at the orgasmic or *jouissance* end of the spectrum, evidence suggests that Japanese people today would prefer a more circumscribed experience of *plaisir*, and that the love hotel is regarded as a place that is comfortable and enjoyable, but not necessarily arousing and titillating. I have shown that love hotels are operating within a context of diminishing levels of sexual activity, evidenced by a drop in sales of condoms and fertility rates. When polled, young people are admitting to a preference for a single life of moderate celibacy,[10] part of a wider picture of fears about AIDS and increased opportunities for cyber-sex. Whatever the reason, the logical implications for the love hotel trade were clear: in terms of demand for space to indulge in sexual liaisons, they faced a declining market.

However, I have shown that there are now some counter-intuitive reasons to stay at a love hotel, for example, as time-out for singletons, as a space for group bonding, and as a funky place for families to accommodate and entertain their brood after a day out in the city. Takuro Sunaga, a PR agent for several Shibuya love hotels, reported that

> at P&A Plaza, an average of three families a month use one of the seven rooms that feature a swimming pool complete with poolside chairs and a table, while an average of three groups, consisting of a maximum of twenty people, visit weekly.[11]

The 2006 FIFA World Cup brought the urban love hotel enhanced occupancy, as rooms were hired to Japanese fans wanting to watch matches with their friends on a state-of-the-art television. In the words of one blasé love hotel operator,

> the game was on a Monday night, which is normally a bad time for the business, but on that day we got several phone calls from the early afternoon on from people asking whether we had rooms free for the night. . . . Of course, love hotel rooms now nearly all have large screen plasma TVs, karaoke functions and 5.1 surround stereo sound systems. There's now nothing special about TVs built into rooms with Jacuzzis in them as well.[12]

This temporary function as a space to watch football begs the question as to whether this is consistent with a definitional shift towards *plaisir* on the part of the love hotel, or whether in fact football is what passes for an experience of *jouissance* in a culture that is becoming more sexually abstinent. Regardless of the nature of their pleasure-seeking, the use of love hotels by groups of men for the purposes of social bonding represents a new departure, and one which repositions the love hotel as a form of urban meeting place, and a suitably equipped venue for informally convened drinking and socialising. Enticing groups of women to make use of 'party' rooms necessitated a slightly different strategy, one based on the model of the 'sleepover.'

All these new initiatives betray the love hotel's current status of unremarkable everydayness, and raise methodological questions about how best to deal with a project involving observations and analysis of emergent customs and practices when they are so often implicit or down-played by Japanese society. Architect Wajiro Kon encountered something similar in conducting his own project of *koogengaku*, or 'the study of consumption in life' in the 1920s: Kon looked upon the city as a 'storehouse of memory' and concerned himself with recording styles of conduct, clothing, housing, that characterised what he called a 'moving present' (*ugoki tsutsu aru*).[13] By focusing on the trivial, and using observational and visual techniques of analysis, Harootunian shows how Kon got close to notions of everydayness in 1920s Tokyo, but perhaps not close enough: he concludes that 'while Kon's phenomenological investigations brought him into a close relationship to the details and commodities dominating modern everyday life, his method prevented him from looking beyond the surface to discover what lay beneath them.'[14] This stems in part from Kon's emotional relationship towards his subject matter: he was perhaps too optimistic and idealising in a way that typified the Taisho era in which he lived.

The postwar period during which the love hotel came to the fore, however, displayed a more troubled worldview, and I have argued that everyday life was as a consequence conditioned by a greater sense of unhappiness and unease, causing a more layered and masked relationship to the present. As such, while the aspiration to record something before it becomes history is still relevant, any study of the Japanese love hotel needed to be carried out in such a way as to acknowledge and account for that which underlies its apparent triviality. This has meant attending as much to the invisible as the self-apparent aspects, and to the passage of time as much as moments in time. In the love hotel business, where physically and stylistically nothing lasts long and the traces of inhabitation are so visceral, time is more keenly felt than in other spaces of contemporary culture. This is in part because all the diurnal repetitions, all the arrivals and departures, all the cleaning, replenishing and maintaining of a love hotel, are performed at an enhanced rate, which contrasts powerfully with the perception of the love hotel interior as a space that represents respite from work.

After conducting my own fieldwork in the manner of *kōgengaku*, there was a need for sifting and grouping the data collected to allow for cultural analysis. Here I found the inherently aphasic nature of the relational database a useful

means to distance myself for a while from considerations of meaning: the act of loading the raw data into discrete fields enabled me to correlate and extrapolate information afresh. In probing the data, regional differences were empirically laid bare in list view, love hotels could belong simultaneously to several thematic categories according to name type, façade type, threshold type, and their relative location, size, stance and popularity could be correlated and queried to produce new constellations of determinants that may or may not 'mean' anything. This process is semi-ludic and depends on the malleability of its invented fields and codes, working at a level of detail that might otherwise remain hidden, but which permits a fuller kind of cultural analysis.

Forty years ago, inspired by a similar set of cultural conditions, Barthes observed:

> in Tokyo, certain parts of the same neighbourhood are quite homogenous from the functional point of view: we find there only snack bars or places of entertainment. Yet we must go beyond this first aspect and not limit the semantic description of the city to this unit: we must try to dissociate microstructures in the same way we can isolate tiny sentence fragments within a long period; hence we must get into the habit of making a very extended analysis which will lead to these microstructures.[15]

In similar circumstances, no doubt Michel Foucault would have preferred the term 'micro-politics' to describe how the love hotels manage to cultivate from such sentence fragments a sense of agency – even a sense of urgency – within the context of the Japanese city.

The complex interactions between official and unofficial definitions, between legal and illegal practices in the case of the love hotel renders it simultaneously politically active and ambivalent. Its micro-politics have arisen from an explosive combination of local business initiatives, *yakuza* connections, government stipulations, neighbourhood opposition, market fluctuations, consumer pressure and public predilections. Together these have succeeded in putting the love hotel in a conflicted terrain, from which it has not often managed to emerge as 'the good guy.' Current measures to bring about its aesthetic and operational rehabilitation will, however, effectively reduce the political impact of the love hotel, thereby lowering its public profile within Japanese society. However, while the urban presence of the love hotel is slowly diminishing, its cultural impact is becoming simultaneously more systemic, making its presence felt throughout Japanese society in more contexts than ever before. In particular, the steady increase in the number of online articles on the love hotel industry is evidence of a new kind of newsworthiness emerging, which is due to issues other than exotic appearance or erotic purpose.

The love hotel has been shown to play an important role in the Japanese city, mainly because it contains and facilitates what cannot be easily accommodated or absorbed into the spaces of domesticity: homes are as crowded as ever, family values are changing quite slowly, and behavioural boundaries are still important.

It offers a rare opportunity to side-step the social conditioning of group-orientated patterns of behaviour, in a format that is convenient and highly codified so as to minimise social embarrassment. I have shown that the codification of love hotels applies not only to social protocols, but also engages colours and materials, scripts and naming conventions, goods and services in order to articulate their position within contemporary Japanese society as that of self-appointed outsider. Features and strategies such as polychromy, masonry, *romāji*, *gairaigo* (loan-words), beds, ultraviolet lighting, Jacuzzis and lockable doors all form part of the love hotel's ur-code. When interrogated further, this ur-code is shown not only to gather together a panoply of borrowed or imported items pertaining to the erotic, but reconceives and recasts them as semi-indigenised in the same way as the culture houses did half a century before.

On closer inspection, the particular effect of codification is revealed to be subtle and complex: love hotels do not simply register in the Japanese mindset as an alternate space aside from normal life in which aspects of one's identity can be fashioned or performed in private. They may also be seen to discipline the body as a central part of their remit, by providing an appropriately equipped and controlled context for the private exploration of sexuality and human emotion. In other words, the love hotel elicits in the individual what Michel Foucault called 'technologies of the self.' Foucault stated that technologies of the self

> permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality.[16]

While Sada Abe, through the gruesome final act of her lover's murder in 1936, laid claim to having achieved all of the above states, in more normal circumstances, technologies of the self would tend to limit behaviours bordering on pathological while still enabling personal transformation. The love hotel, in this respect, plays a distinctive role in a panoptic social system, and manages to convey the expectation that moments of transgression should stay within certain limits, in the sense that the technologies it purveys, and those which frame the experience of a visit to a love hotel, prescribe what is expected and inculcate compliant usage. This is evidenced by diagrams showing the 'correct' use of sex chairs and toys, by articles in dating magazines advising men on how to ensure their girlfriends gain maximum enjoyment from their visit to a love hotel, and by the publicly accessible documentation of other people's experiences of staying in love hotels, whether as blogs online, or handwritten diaries found in the love hotel room bedside drawer. These practices perpetuate a desire to instil civility: guidebooks and how-to manuals have always been a staple of the Japanese publishing industry, and commend to their readers certain *kata*; that is to say, the proper ways of going about something. Relating the constitution of an ideal bodily state to the notion of *kata* in respect of the love hotel does not yield the

image that might be expected, namely one of perfect and sustained arousal. Rather it is a bodily state where the observance of protocols is assimilated and elevated to a different order of consciousness, such that the enjoying body derives pleasure not only from its polished gestural participation but also from the awareness that the body is disciplined by the experience.

As a context which aids and abets technologies of the self, the love hotel secures self-discipline in its clientele by underscoring the transitoriness of human existence: sexual release is close to death (often referred to as a '*petit mort*'), and the time-conscious nature of the love hotel experience makes it difficult for anyone to lose a sense of duration. This sense of duration has also changed with the introduction of *sabisu taimu* (service time) and more differentiated opportunities for use. Nowadays the love hotel interior facilitates a whole range of therapeutic and experimental activities that keep bodily awareness in the moment and are intended to promote a sense of well-being. As such, today's love hotels present opportunities for enhanced care of the self in a fast-paced world, with relaxation, pampering and leisure pursuits driving the marketing pitch for most love hotels, making sex an optional extra.

Beyond the elaborated confines of the bedroom, the love hotel has also been shown to discipline other spheres, making an impact in the art world and the financial world, as a curatorial opportunity and an investment prospect respectively. Here the emphasis has been on technologies not of the self but of society, in which the love hotel gains status as a cultural icon and as a bankable asset. In both arenas, the public's image of the love hotel is called into question, opening up debate not just within Japan, but globally. Touring exhibitions have tended to 'stage' the love hotel rather than situate it, where an over-emphasis of its performative status evidences the difficulty of presenting the material in other formats. However, Peter Bellars' détournement of the love hotel's rest/stay logic in his piece *Impression Sunrise* in order to condemn the commodification of artists in Tokyo renders the act of staging more critical, and, at the same time, deterritorialises more upmarket parts of the city that are unused to the tropes and props of the love hotel.

Taking the love hotels 'upmarket' is the primary intention of those seeking to invest in them and reap a return. This involves recognising not simply the love hotel's worth as a piece of real estate, but its enhanced value as a business due to high rates of occupancy. Just as love hotels are starting to place greater emphasis on personal grooming as part of the experience, love hotels are themselves being groomed, not to say gentrified even, for re-entry as a economically viable player at the securities end of the property investment market. This necessitates revising media images and public perceptions of love hotels' primary purpose, removing that which was hitherto lasciviously anecdotalised, to present the love hotel as contiguous with other forms of urban property. It remains to be seen whether this venture will pay off.

The average love hotel visit has been thoroughly rationalised, and is now a well-orchestrated formula that broadly conforms to George Ritzer's McDonaldisation thesis:[17] like a fast-food restaurant, a present-day love hotel offers, albeit

rather more charmingly, an experience that is *efficient*, *calculable*, *predictable* and *controllable*. Selecting and staying in a love hotel amounts to an extraordinarily efficient sequence of events, supported by websites, guidebooks, magazine listings, room panel guides, automated key issue and automated billing. 'Portion size' has been carefully calculated: rooms of different sizes and levels of opulence attract proportionally different charges, constraints are imposed on the length of time one can spend in a room at a given time of day, and the backlit room panel is no different to the display above a fast-food counter in terms of the mode of visual inspection and selection involved. The pre-selection of a love hotel room from a published guide affords a level of predictability, giving couples the opportunity to filter out undesirable aspects of their experience through a simplified iconography that reproduces all love hotels as equivalent and minimises their apparent variation to a matter of detail. In terms of control, furniture in the rooms is designed to be easily maintained, there are high levels of surveillance (some of which have even been co-opted as part of the sexual experience), and couples are expected to vacate the room for another customer after their allotted time period, so that it can be expertly cleaned according to a manual of prescribed procedures and levels of cleanliness.

Similar to the limited range of food options at a McDonald's, nowadays there is barely sufficient product differentiation to warrant the love hotel guides; indeed the guides themselves appear to be what actually sustains these minimal differences between neighbouring hotels. Variation is now operating on a reduced scale, based on the differing level of room accoutrements, which in turn are price-sensitive. The customer uses the guides to obtain best value, determining which creature comforts are required and at what price. Vending machines anonymise and automate the experience of purchasing further goods and services once inside the love hotel bedroom, and these machines make the love hotel seem contiguous with the Japanese streetscape outside, while at the same time maintaining the ethic of minimal social interaction which is an important part of the love hotel experience. Where genuine uniqueness is encountered, it is presented as an exception to the love hotel type rather than its normative expression. The Meguro Club in Tokyo occupies this category, partly due to its longevity, its stand-alone and highly visible position in the urban context of Tokyo, and partly due to the mythology it has generated. In terms of its opulence and imageability, the same is true of Belle des Belles in Osaka, which stands out in its vicinity and is spectacularly floodlit at night.

Underlying the processes of rationalisation prescribed by McDonaldisation is the issue of risk management. In the context of Japan's period of rapid growth, people faced enormous risks on a daily basis, and in fact lived with other risks of a more seismic nature. As Ulrich Beck puts it, 'in advanced modernity the social production of wealth is systematically accompanied by the social production of risks.'[18] During the 1960s and 1970s when Japan was still rising to the status of an economic superpower, many day-to-day experiences were still 'uneven', and love hotels were no exception: a pre-1985 visit to a love hotel was a risky experience predicated on trust in one's partner's choice or knowledge of the

particular establishment. It was characterised by a lack of awareness as to whether the love hotel was *yakuza*-run or not, or even by the perception that it was still illegal to frequent such an establishment. The room might not be clean, the room panel might not have had images to choose from, the management might have been rude, and if food was available, there were no guarantees as to its quality.

The 1985 revisions to legislation had the effect of legitimising the love hotel, making it more socially visible and hence less risky, simply by delineating the boundaries of its legal conformity. Risks were expunged on the part of the proprietor, who 'cleaned up his act' by removing specific items now legislated against, and the love hotel became a more seemly experience which ordinary couples could visit without the need to calculate the risks involved. Risk was reputedly the reason for abolishing certain items: revolving beds were seen to represent a hallucinatory risk to patrons, and the whole concept of the love hotel was seen by Japanese authorities to encourage the isolation of individuals, which risked the undermining of a society based on groupism. The risk of being caught visiting with a prostitute or having an extra-marital affair remained, but in a society where both are more often tolerated than in the West, the gesture of covering registration plates and not asking for guests to sign in is deemed sufficient.

It has been claimed that we live in a risk society, which is not to say one that is full of risks, but one in which risk is a dominant theme, requiring constant monitoring, ownership and mitigation. Beck claims: 'the risk society is characterised essentially by a lack: the impossibility of an external attribution of hazards. In other words, risks depend on decisions; they are industrially produced and in this sense politically reflexive.'[19] In the case of the love hotel, this reflexiveness where risk is concerned becomes part of its performative function: risk is not just minimised through new measures, but is effectively simulated as part of the experience, and in some cases even romanticised as in the extract from David Mitchell's fictional account. S&M themed rooms are perceived as kinky because of their potential exposure to risk, which is voluntarily entered into. Perhaps the only remaining true risk is one of perceived impropriety among older love hotel patrons.

In concluding, I offer three ways of making sense of my findings. The first is *typological*, where a series of operating principles are inferred from the love hotel's observed forms and practices, enabling me to summarise its factual and existential parameters across time and space. The second is *dialectical*, mapping the thesis, antithesis, synthesis configuration that Benjamin outlined in *Passagenwerk* on to the domain of the love hotel, and developing different themes in order to outline dialectical movements within the love hotel's cultural history. Lastly, I will present a *cyclical* reading of my material, gathering together as a pattern of ebbs and flows not only the developmental stages through which the love hotel has moved, but contextualising this movement as a discernible and repeating rhythm of cultural opening and closing in Japan.

Towards a typological conclusion

Observational data collected from the 320 establishments surveyed in the study sample in Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto revealed that, on average, love hotels were in good condition, located in a cluster mid-street, were of a medium size (twenty to forty rooms), arranged over three to five storeys, dated from the 1980s or 1990s, had a skyline sign with a foreign-inspired name, cost around ¥3,000 to ¥5,000 for a two-hour rest, had elements of neon and greenery, and more often than not had no parking facilities. The typical love hotel tended to have a 2m- to 4m-deep entry zone, entrances with automatic doors that were shielded rather than open, a sign written in *romāji*, a tile-clad upper façade, interesting textural or graphic elements on the lower façade, and windows that were in some way screened or obscured. Inside their lobbies, virtually all love hotels played a recorded welcome and/or musak, and offered a backlit room guide, displaying rooms which were predominantly plain and similar, with more than half of the rooms in use at the time of my visit.

This mean profile describes the physical parameters of the love hotel as a contemporary type, but it fails to capture how the love hotel may have changed over its fifty-year time frame. In a sense, there has been but one constant, which may be seen as an enduring principle shaping it as a type, namely the '*Principle of Accommodation*'. This principle, which is true of all phases of the love hotel's development as a building type, would state that the love hotel provides privacy, space, comfort and enjoyment in an appealing, convenient, discrete and well-appointed setting to accommodate the romantic and sexual needs of a couple spending short periods of leisure time away from home. This constant was borne out by detailed observational work as much as by anecdotal evidence.

In order to qualify the principle of accommodation and to map this generalised profile more diachronically, I have identified three axes of development, which are organised here in tabulated form. Table 6.1 lists the *grounding principles* of the love hotel, which governed the emergence of the earliest love hotel to form the definitive case, perhaps best represented by the Meguro Emperor. This set of eight principles together summarise the operational tactics of the love hotel in an unfettered context. They constitute the notion of a culturally situated 'ideal' type, the rider being that this is cast from a parochial male-orientated perspective. The kinds of forms and facilities that these principles elicit add up to an impression of social non-conformity from the point of view of the Japanese state, and this led to legislative change.

Table 6.2 contains a set of *corrective principles* which came about as a result of revisions to the Entertainment Law in 1985, effectively splitting and restructuring the market into statutory love hotels (of which there were around 11,000 at the time), and extra-legal love hotels which were registered as normal hotels and hence were required to comply with the usual regulations for a public building. This second set of principles includes those precipitated by state-determined strategies for controlling the love hotel and correcting or mitigating its perceived non-conformity; as well as some that were introduced in order to exert a

Table 6.1 Grounding principles

Principle	*Definition*	*Evidence*
Principle of Non-hospitality	Love hotel customers want to be able to obviate a social contract when interacting with love hotels to get a room, and to not be disturbed during their stay, i.e. they want to be able to escape from normal Japanese protocols	Automatic doors, semi-closed fronto (reception), recorded greetings, facilities to pay remotely
Principle of Discretion	Love hotel customers want to be able to enter the hotel discreetly, not disclose their car number plate, and not encounter another couple arriving when they are leaving	Buildings are separate entities with a closed façade, registration plate covers are provided, separate entrances and exits, sound-proofed rooms and lockable doors
Principle of Otherness and Escapism	Love hotel customers want to be able to lose themselves in a non-domestic bedroom environment and feel removed from everyday life	Exotic or non-indigenous appearance of exterior, including sham castle style, attenuated entry zones, complete fantasy interior, with no daylight or awareness of outside
Principle of Differentiation	Love hotel customers want to be able to have a variety of differently styled love hotels to choose between both from their external appearance and to be able to choose from a variety of different room interiors to appeal to different tastes and moods	Heavily themed interiors where every room is unique
Principle of Visual Identification and Selection	Love hotel customers want to be able to identify and choose a love hotel easily from its external appearance and once within to be able to peruse and select a room from a visual display	Easy to recognise externally as love hotel, backlit room panel as standard displaying all rooms with equivalence
Principle of Fixed Price and Duration	Love hotel customers want to be able to use the facility for as short a time as required, and only pay for the time they occupy the room	One or two hours as standard
Principle of Luxury	Love hotel customers want to be able to enjoy a greater level of creature comforts than are usually available either at home or in another kind of hotel, including amount of space and clutter-free nature of decor	Well-appointed rooms of generous proportions including duplexes, with en suite bathrooms
Principle of Titillation	Love hotel customers want to be able to avail themselves of a number of optional sexual aids if required	Rooms with mirrors and revolving beds, porn channels, voyeur CCTV, vending dildos, S&M, soapland chairs and stools, and leaky containment of space

Table 6.2 Corrective principles

Principle	*Definition*	*Evidence*
Principle of Enhanced Sociability	Love hotels should provide space for social interaction	Café tables and sofas in foyer, internet access booths, party rooms, bar areas and pop corn/ice-cream machines
Principle of Enhanced Propriety and Respectability	Love hotels should be less overtly sexually orientated	Reduction in amount and position of mirrors, legislation against dendō beds, signs proclaiming 'new' or since 1985 (kinkily themed rooms are now a rare novelty and not as competitive)
Principle of Mutuality and Heterosexuality	Love hotels should be used by normal mixed-sex couples	Signs posted controlling type of clientele, couples may be intercepted if they do not appear genuine
Principle of Hygiene Maintenance	Love hotels should be hygienic and easy to maintain	Wipe-clean surfaces, six minute room turnaround time
Principle of Regulatory Compliance	Love hotels should demonstrate full regulatory compliance	Prohibition of fabric wallpaper; fire detection, fire-fighting and fire escape measures, including proper signage fully implemented

stronger appeal for women. This second set of principles therefore represents the ways in which the love hotel as an ideal type was modified to accommodate changing market conditions and other rules and cultural expectations prevalent in the 1980s.

Lastly, Table 6.3 presents a more recent set of speculative or cosmopolitan *principles*, where love hotels align themselves spontaneously with attitudinal shifts present within Japanese society, reflecting changes in market conditions and rising levels of cultural capital. This third stage in effect marks the transition of the love hotel to a more self-reflexive type, and allows greater scope for variation in response to a growing awareness of different niches and target groups.

The three axes that these principles delineate are not non-sequential and a-geographic, and are encountered in differing combinations in different parts of Japan and in different areas, even different streets. The extent to which a love hotel adopts the grounding, corrective or cosmopolitan principles varies considerably; however, there is a general sense of a timeline at which different principles came into play. Taken together, these three sets of principles establish the love hotel as a vital and changing typology within a powerfully orchestrated urban setting.

Towards a dialectical conclusion

Walter Benjamin divided the development of the Parisian arcades into three phases in order to characterise the role they have played in terms of a cultural

Table 6.3 Cosmopolitan principles

Principle	*Definition*	*Evidence*
Principle of Cosmopolitanism	Love hotel clientele want to see their acquisition of cultural capital in terms of other places in the world and their travel experience reflected in a condensed intertextual format in the love hotel	Appearance of new hotels/renewals such as Bali Modern, Nangoku 2, Ganesha, with emphasis on ideal of 'resort'
Principle of Casualness	Love hotel clientele are increasingly relaxed and casual towards the configuring of their everyday lives, their attitude to work and the prospect of marriage	Less formal styles of décor, more open reception areas, party rooms, computer games, hanging out
Principle of Orchestrated Leisure Time	Love hotel clientele expect greater levels of satisfaction from their limited time off, and spend time planning in order to maximise their enjoyment	Dating magazines and love hotel guides aiding in the planning process to ensure that love hotel figures as an integral part of a high-quality leisure experience
Principle of Connoisseurship	Love hotel clientele have become more discerning as consumers and want to exert their ability to discriminate qualitatively at the level of their leisure options, where mere choice is not enough: personal service expectations are raised	Love hotels extending their range of services, increased availability of high-quality food options and brand-name beauty products
Principle of Cultural Equidistance	Love hotel clientele are establishing a new relationship to their own culture and expressing this through revised Japanese aesthetic coding	Love hotels turning to Japanese influences as new thematic, e.g. Yayaya, Aroma, Story, C-Heaven
Principle of Regular Patronage	Love hotel clientele want to experience greater levels of routine in their lives so as to experience greater feelings of settledness in an otherwise fragmented urban environment	Love hotels introducing loyalty card systems to make style more open and welcoming, incentivise brand loyalty and increase repeat business
Principle of Female-centred Consumption	Love hotel clientele want to feel that their needs and tastes are catered for (NB: women are now primary selectors of love hotels)	Brighter, well-lit foyers, feminine décor and colour schemes

awakening. The first phase, Benjamin's thesis for the arcades project, is when the arcade was 'flowering' as a 'place of splendour' under Louis Philippe, and was to involve a consideration of 'the panoramas, the magasins, and love.' The second stage, antithesis, delineates the decline of the arcades at the end of the nineteenth century into a 'place of decay,' supported by the themes 'plush, miscarried matter, the whore.' The third and final part of his dialectic, that is to

say its synthesis, occurs when the arcade changes from an unconscious experience to something consciously penetrated (Figure 6.1).

There is a similar dialectical schematisation at work in the development of the love hotel: having 'flowered' in the 1960s and 1970s during a period in which love was being newly championed in Japan (which I have been calling the emergent and definitive stages), the love hotels' originary status declined after 1985, brought about by negative valuations of their plush interiors and associations with prostitution, and entered what I have been referring to as the corrective period. Now, however, by way of a synthesis, many different people are awakening to the idea that love hotels are integral to Japanese popular culture (and its cultural heritage) on the one hand, and available as a form of business opportunity on the other. Both art and finance consciously penetrate the love hotel to serve their own ends, and bring about a new cosmopolitan stage in its development.

To extrapolate this dialectical reading of the love hotel further into the future and speculate about its ongoing role in the Japanese city, the love hotel's performative relationship to cultural difference and authenticity needs to be reconsidered. Given that there is a perceived need to shore up difference in the face of globalisation, in order to maintain some semblance of cultural and local specificity, the love hotel will have its part to play in mediating between the need to reference otherness (which was the starting point of its own radical differentiation in the Japanese cityscape), and also to utilise Japaneseness as the point of difference where the urban effects of internationalisation (*kokusaika*) and cultural homogeneity are becoming too dominant.

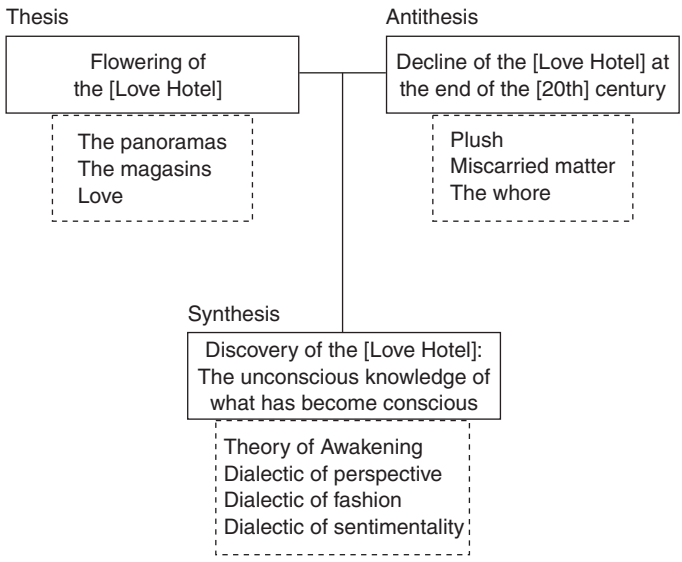

Figure 6.1 Dialectical diagram, after Walter Benjamin's diagram produced in materials for the Exposé of 1935 (*The Arcades* project, p. 910).

There is therefore a sense of urgency to think, as Homi Bhabha has suggested, 'beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These "in-between" spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself.'[20] The love hotel, with its particular associations to the *mu'en* spaces of earlier periods in Japanese history, is capable of prolonging the productive notion of in-betweenness, but only if something of its contested nature is allowed to persist. Golden Gai in Kabukichō, famous in the 1960s and 1970s as a dense collection of narrow streets and tiny bars, has achieved just this, as one local bar owner explains:

> generational changes are slowly taking place. We have a mix of long-time clients, who are loyal to their favourite bars. We also have new customers in their 20s and 30s who come to Golden Gai after hearing about it on television or in magazines.[21]

Golden Gai has thus survived both the Bubble years and the economic recession intact, thereby maintaining continuity with its progressive roots while allowing space for new performative identities to come into being.

The survival of *mu'en* spaces where identities are in a state of flux, as in Golden Gai and Japanese love hotel districts, is hugely important, in the sense that they are what Elizabeth Grosz calls

> the locus for social, cultural, and natural transformations: it is not simply a convenient space for movements and realignments but in fact is the only place – the place around identities, between identities – where becoming, openness to futurity, outstrips the conservational impetus to retain cohesion and unity.[22]

This conservational impetus is clearly getting stronger in Japan, and it may not be long before the love hotel attains the status of a historical artefact. However, it will not be possible to achieve this unless the question of authenticity in relation to popular culture and its inherent instability in terms of identity formation is adequately addressed. As James Clifford has pronounced, '"cultural difference" is no longer a stable, exotic otherness,'[23] which means that when

> intervening in an interconnected world, one is always, to varying degrees, 'inauthentic': caught between cultures, implicated in others. . . . A sense of difference or distinctness can never be located solely in the continuity of a culture or tradition. Identity is conjectural not essential.[24]

The love hotel has the capability to exemplify this conjectural, in between, unstable reading of cultural difference, and give it spatial and visual form

through the bricolage of mixed messages and cues it assembles. Only in this way can love hotels function recuperatively as 'places of ambiguity, hybridity and impurity [which] become valorised as sites for new spatial practices, for the production and performance of new identities and cultures in everyday life.'[25]

In terms of a quest for authorship rather than a quest for essences, Kim Dovey also suggests that 'the unstable, the nomadic, the slippery can be seen as authentic.'[26] Thus the slipperiness and nomadism of the Japanese love hotel, in passing from present into pastness as it moves into a historicised future, may exchange its image of inauthenticity for one of abiding authenticity and cultural authority. At that point, it is no longer a site of the everyday, and instead exists in an endangered form. This runs the risk of re-creating the love hotel as a fetishistic object, when in the past it fetishised its subject. Harootunian called attention to this possibility in championing a methodology that foregrounds the everyday: 'what drives this approach is a critical agenda that seeks . . . the place where alienations, fetishisms, and reifications produce their effects.'[27] The love hotel is always already reified in Japanese culture, but it is less and less instrumentally alien. It is no longer identified with the *unheimlich*, the strange and the bizarre. For the Japanese, exotic is found closer to home nowadays, with parts of Asia being more often referenced than more distant countries. As I have shown in relation to the love hotel's theming and naming, the past is a foreign country, and so is Japan. Its ancient motifs, scripts and calligraphic styles will offer a rich palette for love hotel designers for some time to come.

Cyclical conclusion

By way of a third and final set of concluding remarks, I offer a more rhythmic and temporal patterning of the information amassed on Japanese love hotels. This might seem the most culturally appropriate given Japan's Buddhist frame of reference, a Japanese penchant for seasonality and the precedents for periodic repetition present within traditional Japanese culture, best evidenced by the reconstruction of the shrine at Ise every twenty years.

A cyclical interpretation of the love hotel and its cultural context offers a dynamic structure within which to locate and view various pieces of information, and to organise a kind of spatialised chronology that is not so much linear and teleological as meandering and piecemeal, and without a particular destination. It also acknowledges the dramatic fluctuations in the Japanese economy, not just in the postwar period, but also as part of a larger pattern of ideological mood swings that Japanese foreign policy has precipitated.

Figure 6.2 thus sets up a wave formation, which is roughly periodised into a forty-year cycle, starting around 1935 and ending in 2005. The periods of cultural expansiveness and openness occupy the peaks, with corresponding phases of cultural contraction characterising the troughs. As a diagram it does not trace Japan's economic cycle in the twentieth century; rather it is supposed to delineate the cultural effects. In particular, it is a cycle that traces the cultural chronology of the waxing and waning of the love hotel. Beginning from the trough that

Figure 6.2 Cyclical diagram of formation and development of Japanese love hotels.

marked the official end of the postwar period in Japan, the love hotel emerges, crossing into expansiveness around 1964 when the Tokyo Olympics were held, and rising to a peak in 1974 after the Meguro Emperor opened. The cycle falls away after this point, as the impact of the 1973 oil shocks hit home, and as a prevailing culture of government opposition to the love hotels developed. The cycle crossed into a phase of contraction again in 1985 when the revisions to the Entertainment Law took effect, and bottomed out in 1995 when the love hotel hit its lowest ebb after the recession. This trough represents the 'lost decade' for the love hotel, which I have shown rising into a new period of expansion by 2005. Marked on to the curve are key cultural events that bear some relation to moments in the love hotel's history, namely works and institutions referred to in the preceding chapters such as Valentine's Day (introduced in Japan in 1958), *Psycho* (1960), *Empire of Signs* (1970), the first Japanese edition of *Playboy* (1975), *Ai no Corrida* (1976), *Yūgure Made* (1980), *A Taxing Woman* (1987), *Asleep* (1992) and *Ai no Kūkan* (1999).

What is also evident, looking back across the pre-war as well as the postwar years, is that the most fervent periods of *nihonjinron* (Japanese nationalism) occupy the downward segments of the cycle, while the more outward-looking *kokusaika* (internationalisation) phases align themselves with the upward segments. The periods of the greatest cultural excess are also neatly mirrored, with the peak of *ero-guro-nansensu* (erotic grotesque nonsense) in the mid-1930s being repeated by an equivalently flamboyant and excessive period in love hotel history in the mid-1970s. Each segment of the curve gives shape to the phasing of the love hotel's development sketched out in Chapter 2. Thus the mid-1960s to mid-1970s segment is seen as emergent, the mid-1970s to mid-1980s as definitive, and the mid-1980s to mid-1990s as corrective, and the mid-1990s to the present as cosmopolitan.

The love hotel has been shown to be operating cyclically in terms of its aesthetic repositioning in the context of Japanese taste, moving its emphasis from something *hade* (showy) and *gehin* (vulgar) in its definitive phase of the 1970s and early 1980s, through its corrective phase which is best identified with *amami* (sweet) and *yabo* (conventional) in the late 1980s early 1990s when *kawaii* culture exerted a strong influence, to a new cosmopolitan stage when the love hotel can begin to exhibit aesthetic traits associated with *shibumi* (astringency) and *iki* (chic). The example of *Gurei* not only indicates that the love hotel market has achieved a new level of cultural knowingness, but also indicates the love hotel's relative integration into the Tokyo landscape: a recent survey revealed that the colour which inhabitants most associate with the city is grey.[28] When monochromatic styling has begun to seem tired and dull, no doubt colour will reassert itself, and the love hotel will once again adopt the visual gaiety and fun-loving ethos of earlier periods of history.

As a diagram, it is intentionally loose rather than prescriptive, and what it reveals should be only tentatively grasped. Perhaps it is at its most useful in predicting the next decade or so of the love hotel's evolution, where we might be encouraged to think it will undergo a second wave of expansion before falling

away or mutating into something else as the 2010s draw to a close. The love hotel industry is hugely resourceful and responsive, and, like capitalism itself, has already shifted its territory to encompass the ordinary hotel. In the next forty years, with falling Japanese birth rates, online sex and an ageing population, it will be interesting to see what the future holds in store for a place in the city quietly set aside for sexual relations.

Meanwhile, this book, like any other piece of cultural analysis, is, as Clifford Geertz states, 'intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the more deeply it goes the less complete it is.'[29] But in the absence of other work on this fascinating cultural form, I hope to have produced an adequate account from my own culturally and professionally situated perspective. There are still many questions that remain to be asked and answers that remain to be elicited regarding the love hotel's future trajectory and past narrative. Its cultural history is not yet over, but the very act of writing a cultural history of the Japanese love hotel establishes it as a historical entity, moving its status from work to text, from unarticulated to annotated, from a 'region of darkness' to a place in the spotlight.

Notes

Introduction

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1 The urban context of love hotel districts

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6 Towards a conclusion

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Illustrations and terms which are unique to the love hotel are indicated in **bold**.