

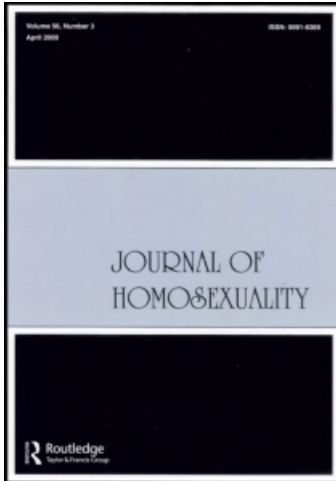
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BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

The Chrysanthemum and the Queer: Ethnographic and Historical Perspectives on Sexuality in Japan

EMERGING LESBIAN VOICES FROM JAPAN. Chalmers, Sharon. *New York: Routledge Curzon, 2002.*

COMING OUT IN JAPAN: THE STORY OF SATURO AND RYUTA. Ito, Satoru, and Ryuta Yanase. *Melbourne and Portland, OR: Trans Pacific Press, 2001.*

LOVE UPON THE CHOPPING BOARD. Izumo, Marou, and Claire Maree. *North Melbourne, Victoria: Spinifex, 2000.*

MALE COLORS: THE CONSTRUCTION OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN TOKUGAWA JAPAN (1603-1868). Leupp, Gary P. *Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995.*

BEYOND COMMON SENSE: SEXUALITY AND GENDER IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN. Lunsing, Wim. *London; New York: Kegan Paul, 2001.*

MALE HOMOSEXUALITY IN MODERN JAPAN: CULTURAL MYTHS AND SOCIAL REALITIES. McLelland, Mark J. *Richmond: Curzon, 2000.*

CARTOGRAPHIES OF DESIRE: MALE-MALE SEXUALITY IN JAPANESE DISCOURSE 1600-1950. Pflugfelder, Gregory M. *Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999.*

TAKARAZUKA: SEXUAL POLITICS AND POPULAR CULTURE IN MODERN JAPAN. Robertson, Jennifer Ellen. *Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998, ISBN 0520211510, 1998.*

QUEER JAPAN: PERSONAL STORIES OF JAPANESE LESBIANS, GAYS, TRANSEXUALS, AND BISEXUALS. Summerhawk, Barbara, Cheiron McMahill, and Darren McDonald, eds. *Norwich, Vt.: New Victoria Publishers, 1998.*

GREAT MIRRORS SHATTERED: HOMOSEXUALITY, ORIENTALISM, AND JAPAN. Treat, John Whittier. *New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.*

Until recently, there has been very little solid social science and humanities research on sexuality in Japan. However, as the cross-cultural study of gender and sexuality establishes itself more solidly in the disciplines of Anthropology and History and with growing public interest in alternate forms of organizing sex/gender, we are seeing a surge in manuscripts in this field. This essay reviews the last decade of scholarship and writing on Japanese sexuality in the English language: four ethnographic texts, three autobiographic works, and three historical monographs.

Various aspects of contemporary queer and anthropological theory are useful in that they direct us to view the categories of sex and gender as verbs rather than nouns—suggesting we examine how male-ness or lesbian-ness is *performed* rather than what men or lesbians *are*. This analytical move dislocates sexuality and gender as not only essential categories, but also from the realm of “social facts.” It further motivates us to question how people in the field are continuously producing or are produced into these categories in their daily lives.

For example, let us turn to the question of what it means to be “gay” or “homosexual” in Japan. What does one have to *do* in order to be understood as gay? Have sex with other men? What constitutes a sex-act and a non-sex act (oral, anal, intercrural, manual, or telephone/Internet sex)? So-called active or passive roles? What types of men (same age, younger, older, effeminate, masculine)? Can one be happily married to a woman, have children, and still be gay? Does the “epistemology of the closet” carry over to non-Western contexts? All of these considerations have been made invisible by discursive forces in the West that have produced and authorized the terms “gay,” “lesbian,” and “homosexual.”

With the exception of Gregory Pfulgfelder, all the authors reviewed in this essay use the terms “gay,” “lesbian,” and “homosexuality” to specify their subjects, sometimes after a brief discussion in the introduction about how the terms are used as a convenience or shorthand. Of course, there are problems both methodologically and conceptually surrounding the use of this gloss. First, if we imagine sexuality in the categories that are found in the West—categories that are constructed as temporally stable and object-choice-specific—will we not be blinded to other types of sexuality that may be prevalent in the field but invisible? When we begin the process of translation that lies at the heart of anthropology or history, the recycling of Western categories seems to too easily allow for slippage.

This issue becomes infinitely more complicated when informants use English loan words such as “*gei*” or “*rezubian*.” Just as in the United States which has used a variety of terms such as homophile, homosexual, gay, queer, lesbian, fag, faerie, butch, tom, etc., there are a plethora of terms that refer to non-normative sexualities in Japan. It took a certain amount of political, discursive power to establish “gay” and “lesbian” as the central organizing categories in America, and yet they still remain contentious terms. What differentiates Japan from the United States is that that this type of coalescing/foundation building has not happened in the academe, in the streets, or in activist quarters. Each community talks about sexuality a different way, but does this indicate different discourses? The ethnographer quickly finds him/herself in a hornet’s nest of semantic issues.

The aforementioned Pflugfelder, the historian of Tokugawa Japan, rather than avoiding this issue, makes it the center of his research:

This study, then, is a constructionist analysis of sexual cartographies. Put another way, it offers a personal mapping of other people’s mappings . . . In speaking of sexual desires and practices between males, I use the term “male-male sexuality” rather than the more familiar “homosexuality” for deliberate reasons. To begin with . . . inhabitants of the Japanese archipelago before the last century did not usually draw a conceptual link between male-male and female-female forms of erotic behavior. Thus, to adopt the term “homosexuality,” which implies an inherent connection between the two, is to accept uncritically the effects of a discursive process whose very emergence demands historical accounting . . . Even the word “sexuality” invites misinterpretation, so clarification is in order. By “sexuality,” I do not mean a fixed sexual orientation as twentieth-century speakers of English tend to do . . . For much of the period

examined in this study, the notion that each individual possesses a deeply rooted personal identity based on the biological sex of the preferred sexual object or objects, and the tripartite taxonomy of sexual types that has resulted from this construction [homo-, bi-, heterosexuality], held no currency in Japan, nor had they yet emerged even in the West. (Pflugfelder 1999: 4-6)

However, in discussing the other texts, this review essay runs into a meta-analytical problem. Do I use the terms gay/lesbian/homosexuality to refer to the subjects referred to in the books? That is, should I use the native terminology of the ethnographers, or the native terminology of the ethnographic informants? My decision has been to do the former and to use the language used in the texts themselves, rather than trying to second-guess the language that the original informants in each case might have used.

This essay approaches the 10 texts surveyed by breaking them into three avenues of research in sexuality in Japan. The first are texts that use participant/observation or ethnographic research as their primary source of information. The second are autobiographical texts of self-described Japanese gays and lesbians. And the third are historical monographs based on archival and literature sources.

ETHNOGRAPHIES [CHALMERS, LUNSING, AND MCLELLAND]

Based on long-term participant-observation fieldwork, ethnographic works capture the ground-level experiences of individuals within cultural systems. That being said, from my own experience I have found fieldwork on sexuality in Japan to be extremely difficult, not for a lack of informants, but to use Pflugfelder's cartographic analogy, the terrain is differentiated and difficult to navigate. The women in Japanese lesbian groups and the men in gay ones rarely talk to each other. Those who inhabit the bar scene are not involved in the political movement. The academics do not work within social communities, the activist communities largely ignore the academics (and one quickly finds in Japan that the people who best know the history of Japanese sexuality are the foreign academics). People who work closely with international/transnational organizations such as IGLHRC (International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission) will frame their situations differently from a community centered around a local Women's Center.

Older generations do not mix with younger generations. And to top it off, the categories of male and female are hardly stable in Japan with many sub-variations and sub-specialities (more on this later). While the ground is also complex in the United States, at least there are several academic and culture industries active in the production of gay-ness and lesbian-ness, helping to reinforce the center and bounds of the imagined community.

In Japan, in contrast, there is almost no discourse manufacturing at the grand scale—no Minnie Bruce Pratts, no Randy Shilts, no Judith Butlers, no *Out* magazines. Only recently, some minor celebrities have emerged as queer. Sharon Chalmers uses one to provide *Emerging Lesbian Voices* (2002) with a foil, and us with a needed first iteration into Japanese lesbian communities. Chalmers begins her text with a quote from Kakefuda Hiroko, who came out in Japan in 1992 with her book *Rezubian de aru to iu koto* (roughly, “What it means to say that I am a Lesbian”). Kakefuda argued that minorities were tolerated in Japan as long as they did not challenge the dominant structure. Chalmers went on to frame the existence of Japanese lesbians within the structure and limitations of the Japanese household and hierarchical society, noting that “[o]ne of the major aims of this book is to challenge [Kakefuda’s] myth of ‘tolerance’ by critiquing the apparent overwhelming desire to create the impression of harmony and consensus through ‘sameness’ within Japanese society (2).”

Unfortunately, Chalmers’ project suffers from a key limitation, aside from using Kakefuda as her straw-woman. She only had 10 women in her sample, with her book making use of seven (three of the women dropped midway out of her study). Chalmers exhibits an interest in some of the critiques emerging from feminist ethnography evinced for example in her use of “narrator” instead of the standard “informant,” but it is odd given that Chalmers never gives her narrators an opportunity to narrate a coherent narrative. Instead, framed in her theoretical ruminations, her text “examines narrative themes rather than individual life stories (3).” We do not learn the personal backgrounds of the narrators, where their quotes fit in within their narratives, the questions that prompted them, or issues that may have come up in translation. This flows from Chalmer’s assumption that the lesbian experience in Japan is universal in regards to availability to multiple discourses, age, geographic locale, and life experiences. In her schema, all lesbian voices merge into a unified voice that disrupts the dominant hegemony. While a fine political stance, it does not represent an exhaustive survey of Japanese lesbians.

Wim Lunsing presents us with a more traditional ethnography with his (2001) *Beyond Common Sense: Sexuality and Gender in Contemporary Japan*. He did his fieldwork with a much broader array of people, with 38 gay and 21 lesbian informants and 109 total (the remaining 50 are presumed heterosexual, bisexual, undecided, or ambiguous). Lunsing's central concern is understanding "how gay and lesbian people, women's and men's liberationists, singles and other people, such as transsexuals, transvestites, and hermaphrodites, whose ideas, feelings or lifestyles are at variance with Japanese constructions of marriage and inherently the construction of life, live in Japan (2001: 2)."

The "common sense" referred to in Lunsing's title refers to the mechanisms by which cultures instill a sense of behavioral correctness and normativity. By using this concept, Lunsing manages to avoid asking what gays and lesbians *are*, by asking them what they *are not*—that is, how they resist societal expectations of marriage and family. In doing so, he creates an argument that brings together gays, lesbians, feminists, and transgendered persons without assuming a shared substance. They are unified because they are all different from the mainstream.

The only flaw in Lunsing's text is that the 411-page volume is only available in hardcover at a rather exorbitant price (US\$144.50) that negates all but institutional research library purchases. When producing a revised edition for paperback, Lunsing would be strongly encouraged to hire a professional copy-editor as the quality of editing is rather uneven and the monograph could be pulled together much tighter. A slimmer text would encourage the publisher to choose a price-point which would make this volume affordable to graduate seminars in Japanese gender and sexuality, where it would most probably find its most ready audience.

Mark McLelland attempts a comprehensive account of contemporary male-male sexuality with his *Male Homosexuality in Modern Japan: Cultural Myths and Social Realities*. This text emerges out of a dissertation in Japanese Studies from the University of Hong Kong, and has strong roots in participant-observation fieldwork. The book can be roughly divided into four sections. McLelland begins with a short introduction detailing the problems incurred with using the label "homosexuality" to refer to forms of sexuality in Japan. From there, he progresses with a very rapid 20-page history of male-male sexuality in Japan.

The two primary sections then follow. First, McLelland discusses the "gay boom" of the 1980s and 1990s where there was a plethora of what he sees as largely negative images of gay men in Japanese media. He explores the mass culture image of the homosexual man in Japan as

cross-dressing buffoons (*okama*), beautiful boys in comic books (*bishōnen*), and as the ideal marriage partner for heterosexual women (such as in the Nakajima's [1994] film *Okoge*). McLelland balances these outside stereotypes with how male homosexuality is represented internally by the gay media in Japan as “sons, brothers, fathers, and lovers (144).”

The media studies aspect of the first two-thirds of his book is followed by the remaining third which gives the autobiographical accounts of 16 gay men followed by McLelland's analysis of various sub-themes found within those narratives, such as the coming out experience, gay identity, community, marriage and family life, etc. He ends the volume by asking whether there is a “Japanese gay identity” and concludes that there is still significant disagreement within the various homosexual communities over the need for or shape that such a gay identity would take.

If there can be said to be a flaw in McLelland's text, it would perhaps be an unfair critique for an anthropologist to make, but one wonders whether using self-reported narratives are the most effective way of determining how identity is used. After all, there are often significant disruptions between what people say they do and what they actually do. Self-reported narratives tend to gloss over incongruities and inconsistencies. With this in mind, though, the sheer number of stories in his collection encourages a diverse reading of Japanese male-male sexuality and sexual experience.

McLelland notes that he had a degree of sample bias because most of his informants were those with foreign experience or those who were attracted to foreigners (*gaisen* or “specializing in foreigners”). As a side note, many sexually active people in Japan (straight as well as queer, men, and women) talk about their sexual attraction in terms of specialities (*senmon* or *sen*), such as *fukesen* (attracted to older people); *wakasen* (younger people); *ajisen* (non-Japanese Asians); *debusen* (fat people); and so forth. This is object-choice and not personal identity. Within male-male relationships, *gaisen* is a recurring trope. It is unfortunate that McLelland did not take the opportunity to analyze this fragmentation of sexuality further, given his rich fieldwork experiences.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVES [ITO/YANASE, IZUMO/MAREE, SUMMERHAWK, AND TREAT]

Given the difficulties facing ethnographic research by non-Japanese, one might assume that autobiographical narratives are unproblematic

and solve the issue of researcher cross-cultural bias quite nicely. After all, would not they be the *prima facie* case for the “native” speaking directly? Anthropologists have played with the direct voice experimentally. *I, Rigoberta Menchu* or *N'ai Story of a Kung Woman* are two that immediately spring to mind, as well as the problems in reception that both faced.

Satoru Ito and Ryuta Yanase's (2001) *Coming out in Japan* is an compilation translation by Francis Conlan of two of the couple's earlier books: their (1993) *Otoko Futarigurashi* (“Two men living together”) and their (1994) *Otoko to Otoko no Ren'ai Nôto* (“Male: Male Love Notes”). *Coming Out in Japan* details the process by which Ito came out to his family and to his workplace, how he met his lover Yanase, their lives together, and the *dôseiai* (literally, same-sex-love) movement that they envision and enact with their Sukotan Planning group (www.sukotan.com). This group publishes books on sexuality, gives public lectures, is on the television talk show circuit, and has an Internet presence.

William Tierney has suggested that the genre of auto-ethnography “confronts dominant forms of representation and power in an attempt to reclaim, through self-reflective response, representational spaces that have marginalized those of us at the borders” (1998: 66). The problem with reading Ito and Yanase's book as auto-ethnography is that they do not give any sense of the larger social context in which the narratives are embedded. Ito says that he struggled for three decades with his homosexuality and that when he first met Yanase, he was afraid of meeting him in coffeehouses for fear of being seen together. Ito talks about the immense self-loathing that he had to overcome in order to reach the point where he is now, a man happily in love with another man, living together. However, the naïve reader does not know whether these emotions are normative or represent particular fears of gays and lesbians in Japan. The text is autobiographical to a fault and needs careful framing.

Let me then inject some context. Ito and Yanase's publications in Japan are unusual in many senses. First, they use the older, medical terms *dôsei'ai* (same-sex-love) and *dôsei'ai-sha* (someone who engages in same-sex-love) to refer to themselves. Like “homophile” and “homosexual” in the United States, in my experience the people in Japan who tend use *dôsei'ai* are the older generation who evolved their identity separate from a community, or alternately people engaged in the medical profession or the media. Ito is thoroughly biologically essentialist in his writing and he assumes that *dôseiai* can be read unproblematically through across time and cultures (ancient Greece to

modern Japan in a single bound). Many gays and lesbians that I have met in Japan read Ito's publications with a wry sense of humor, wondering what the big deal is about—why does Ito agonize so much about “coming out” when he finds that most people do not really care or have already figured it out, including his own mother?

Mark McLelland (2001) notes in a review of *Coming Out* that the book overall—the translator's preface, introductory comments, and main text—frames Japan as terribly backward and oppressive. Ito and Yanase see themselves as the vanguard towards a new model of male-male love. They ignore Japan's own history and general social context of ignoring sexuality, and the many other generations of male-male lovers who have quite happily lived in Japan. While their own particularization of their situation could be forgiven in the Japanese text, the translator Conlan should have been more responsible in using the introduction to indicate the location of the text. Currently, the text with an introduction by a mayor of a small city in Australia does not serve to give readers any appreciation of the location of Ito and Yanase in Japan's complex sexual politics.

Ito and Yanase's Sukotan Planning is very much a culture producing machine in its own right. They are trying to produce a particular form of discourse of male-male sexuality, and to the extent that they serve as Japan's “professional” (in Goffman's sense of the term) “gay couple,” as they have been described by many media sources, we must be aware of how their identity is strategically located. They speak as though they speak for all gay experience in Japan, but this is certainly not the case.

In contrast, Marou Izumo and Claire Maree's (2000) *Love Upon the Chopping Board* is a charming compilation translation by Maree of Izumo's earlier *Manaita no ue no Koi* interwoven with additional chapters provided by Maree. Their story details through alternating chapters/perspectives, how the two women met and came to live together in Japan. In that sense, the book is broadly similar to Ito and Yanase's. However, because Maree is Australian and also the translator/ co-author, this book tries much harder to make itself understandable to the Western audience and unlike Ito/Yanase, can be assigned to undergraduate classes with much less trepidation as there are no speculations on the biological nature of homosexuality or endless paragraphs about the shame of being a homosexual man. There are no pretensions that this book is anything but autobiographical and through the reactions of the two families in Australia and Japan, readers are led to come to their own conclusions. The only glimpses of lesbian life, we see through Izumo and Maree's

eyes, they do not attempt to speak for the entire lesbian community or narrate a history beyond their own personal one.

Izumo and Maree are famous among lesbian activists in Japan for having produced the first “joint living arrangement” document. While there are no laws specifically forbidding same-sex sexuality in Japan (such as sodomy laws or the Defense of Marriage Act in the United States), compulsory heterosexuality is deeply woven into the legal and socioeconomic fabric, especially regarding joint tenancy and joint leasing agreements. Izumo and Maree challenged this system by legally binding themselves together with their joint living agreement, but opened themselves up to criticism from feminist quarters of Japan who saw this as an unwanted aping of heteronormativity. This section of the book will be of special interest to both scholars and students because it represents a disruption of the Japanese legal and social system at multiple levels.

Barbara Summerhawk, Cheiron McMahon, and Darren McDonald’s (1988) edited volume *Queer Japan: Personal Stories of Japanese Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and Transsexuals* has long served as a resource for courses in Japanese sexuality. The 18 life stories and interviews provide a broad array of subjects—men, women, transgendered, and multiple ways of organizing sexual preference, although the categories are used uncritically. While some of the chapters are amateurishly written or translated, others provide particularly vivid examples of the complexity of life in Japan. For example, the chapter “A Married Woman” by Anonymous (97-107) is the autobiographical account of a married woman who falls in love with an American woman, who coincidentally had previously been married to a man. The narrative resists a simple reading of sexuality and pulls the reader into understanding the complexity of love and marriage in contemporary Japan. Other chapters in the book provide rare glimpses into transsexual and bisexual life in Japan. My main difficulty in using this text has been that undergraduate students in the United States are too wont to use a particular chapter as *the* example of what gay/lesbian/transsexual life is like in Japan. Each chapter is myopic in its own regard, and as none of the authors are academics or professional writers, the book suffers from a general lack of context and editing.

John Whittier Treat’s *Great Mirrors Shattered: Homosexuality, Orientalism, and Japan*, is a difficult text to place. A semi-fictional autobiographic confessional, it details Treat’s experiences and ruminations as an American scholar during the course of several years of research in Japan. Writing in a rich, fluid style that blends the Japanese

shishôsetsu (autobiographical) genre with that of American gay fiction, Treat chronicles his love life, his fear of having caught the AIDS virus, and the significance he attaches to allowing himself to be inserted barebacked by a Japanese gay man. Inexperienced readers will not realize the allusions and inside references that Treat writes against the foil of Edward Said's (1979) *Orientalism*. As with all of the autobiographical works, Treat's book lacks the signposting and contextualization that would make it useful as a primary teaching tool for scholars of Japan Studies. However, *Great Mirrors Shattered* has had much more significant impact in Gay and Lesbian Studies where the literary allusions to American gay fiction are more apparent to the readership.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ***[ROBERTSON, LEUPP, AND PFLUGFELDER]***

Within the purview of this essay, there are three texts on the history of Japanese sexuality that have emerged in the last decade that are of particular note—one by a historical anthropologist and two by historians of Japan.

Jennifer Robertson is a historical anthropologist who has been writing on the all-women's Takarazuka Theatre for the past decade. Her (1998) *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan* explores sex and gender on the stage in the first half of the twentieth century. Her primary interest is exploring how colonialism and the colonial mentality affected gender roles, gender performance, and Japan's depictions of South-East Asia and Europe during this period. She uses primarily historical archival material to build an argument that androgyny and gender blurring (especially by women) were a subject of grave concern by the government and social critics. The Takarazuka stage, where women play male roles, provides the foil for Robertson to articulate her argument that the fears of androgyny in public were coincident with concerns over the ambivalent position of Japan between its colonies on one hand, and the West on the other. Because this work is a compilation of some of her published articles on these topics, it lacks the larger topical and temporal coherence of the other academic monographs.

The works by the two historians track roughly the same time period and both texts deal almost exclusively with male-male sexuality (although occasional paragraphs and footnotes detail issues facing women). Gary Leupp's (1995) *Male Colors: The Construction of*

Homosexuality in Tokugawa Japan (1603-1868) ends slightly earlier than Gregory Pflugfelder's *Cartographies of Desire: Male-Male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse (1600-1950)*. The choice in time periods is not accidental. The beginning of the 1600s represents the start of the Tokugawa period in Japan, an era noted both for its feudal social structure as well as the importation of Western (mostly Dutch) scientific knowledge. The Tokugawa period lasted a remarkable 250 years before it fell apart with the Meiji restoration of 1868, when Japan began to emerge as a military, industrial, and colonial power in East Asia.

Pflugfelder produced a meticulously researched monograph with *Cartographies of Desire*. With surgical precision, he maps the terrain by time period and source of discourse generation. The chapters in the volume focus on (1) Edo-period popular discourse; (2) Edo-period legal discourse; (3) Meiji legal discourse; (4) Meiji popular discourse; (5) Edo through early twentieth-century medical discourse; and, (6) early twentieth-century popular discourse. By breaking apart the areas this way, the readers gets a very detailed sense of how various components of Japanese society, from politicians to medical doctors to mass media, each contributed to particular ways of talking about sexuality. As a history of sexuality rather than of sexual persons, no personal narratives are used, but within the interstices of how people *talk* about sexuality, one can infer a strong sense of how sexuality was *lived*. One finishes the book with an encyclopedic grasp of the history of the discourse on male-male sexuality in Japan, but wishing that Pflugfelder continued his analysis into the late twentieth century.

Perhaps because Pflugfelder is dealing only with secondary sources and avoids textual analyses of works written by Japanese men engaging in same-sex sexuality, he pays closer attention to the *discourses* on how sexuality is constructed and used productively and repressively rather than trying to identify the practices of individuals. One of the advantages of this top-down perspective is that the State imagines sexuality much more coherently than its constituents. However, it suffers from the flaw that it is difficult to ascertain merely from external sources what the lived experiences were like during that time.

Gary Leupp's *Male Colors: The Construction of Homosexuality in Tokugawa Japan* focuses on a narrow section of history than Pflugfelder, beginning in 1603 and ending in 1868 just as Japan overthrows the feudal shogunate and prepares for colonialism, militarism, modernization, and industrialization. The section of history chosen is erudite, as Tokugawa Japan was a period of relative cultural coherence and stability. Leupp explores how men engaged in sexual activities with other

men through a broad reading of historical archives, diaries, novels, encyclopedia of manners, kabuki and other theatre performances, legal edicts, religious texts, woodblock prints, and other cultural media.

His conclusion was that for the most part, male-male sexuality in Tokugawa Japan could be considered a normative part of a range of male sexuality which also included sex and marriage with women, although one is suspicious of his use of the term “normative” in this context. From the earlier samurai *nenja-wakashu* (older-younger male) to the Buddhist priest-acolyte tradition to later forms of theatre patron-actor relationships, none of these were particularly flagged as troublesome—except when they led to excess passion, financial ruin, or, most troubling to the government, excess mixing of the social classes. Leupp’s method of weaving various types of textual and visual sources (the book includes 32 wonderful woodblock prints) provides a convincing image of the varieties of male sexuality in the period, as well as ways of thinking how sexuality has changed since then. The main key variable was age ranking with older men generally the active partner to younger; with social class a very distant second. Most surprisingly, gender and gender performance were not necessarily linked to sexual desire, thus a woodblock print depicts a theatre patron having anal sex with a kabuki actor who plays very masculine samurai roles on stage, while a female impersonator powders her nose nearby.

CLOSING REMARKS

The various texts raise the question of whether queer theory derived from the Western gay/lesbian experience is relevant to the discourse on Japan. For example, can we assume that Judith Butler’s reflections on mimicry are applicable to drag in Japan? At first glance, it would seem that the best approach would be to engage in a four-way conversation between the Western queer experience, Western queer theory, Japanese queer experience, and Japanese queer theory (using queer here as a gloss for gender/sexuality). However, the situation on the ground is infinitely more complex as Japanese activists and scholars are actively engaged in translating and reinterpreting Butler, Foucault, Derrida, Pratt, and other thinkers. While not arguing for the search for a pure Japanese queer theory, it is puzzling that there are few Western authors who have read the Japanese scholarship on gender and sexualities, except for an occasional reference to feminist scholar Ueno Chizuko, who has published in English. This leads to an odd *ménage à trois*

between Western queer experience, Western queer theory, and Japanese queer lives.

In the literature on sexuality in Japan there have always been two major elisions. The first has been the absence of research on women's sexualities and the second is the lack of solid research on the sexuality of mainstream Japanese men. In terms of Japanese women, there have been many ethnographies of Japanese housewives (e.g., LeBlanc 1999; Bernstein 1983), Japanese office ladies (e.g., Lo 1990), and even some of hostess bars (e.g., Allison 1994). However, few have focused on the question of sexuality directly in the context of women. Jennifer Robertson's (1998) *Takarazuka* explores women's sexuality within the context of the Takarazuka Revue, but does not speak more broadly to women's sexuality in general. Anne Allison's (2000) later book centers around women's sexuality as a subject, but deflects a direct examination by looking at women's sexuality through the media, manga comics, and so forth. We still await focused monographs on the history of women's sexuality as well as their lived experiences.

There have been many studies of Japanese male non-heterosexualities and this review essay explored a number of recent ones. Oddly though, there is a relative absence of an analysis of Japanese male heterosexuality in the literature. This has recently been repaired by Roberson and Suzuki's (2003) edited volume, *Men and Masculinities in Contemporary Japan: Dislocating the Salaryman Doxa*. However, Leupp's *Male Colors* suggests that male sexuality in Japan may be more variegated and less mono-sexual than previously imagined; thus, further research in this area is greatly needed.

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