

# GALE Newsletter Winter 2004

Newsletter of the GALE Special Interest Group (SIG) of  
the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT)



**Editors: Steve Cornwell and Andrea Simon-Maeda**

| TABLE OF CONTENTS   |         |
|---|---------|
| editor's notepad . . . . .  | page 1  |
| news and announcements . . . . .  | page 3  |
| FEATURED ARTICLES   |         |
| Japanese "boys-love" comics and heterosexual female identity<br>by <i>Wakana Yokota</i> . . . . . | page 10 |
| Gender, Sexuality and Culture: A Class Project<br>by <i>Aya Murakami</i> . . . . .                | page 21 |
| Report of a course in progress: Gender and society<br>by <i>Jane Joritz-Nakagawa</i> . . . . .    | page 27 |

## Editor's Notepad

**Dear GALE Members:**

Happy New Year! Here's hoping that 2005 is all that you wish for. Personally, we are looking forward to a year that is a little saner, a little more balanced than last year. We also hope that it is a year where GALE can offer more to its members and can collaborate with different groups to raise awareness of gender issues. We are approximately a year away from the JALT conference, so it may seem early to make the following appeal, but we urge (read "beg") you to consider taking an active role in GALE. There are various officer positions available none of which take an excessive amount of time. And, GALE is open to having co-positions, so you and a friend can share a position. Anyway, as we begin 2005, please consider if next fall wouldn't be a good time to become more active in GALE. In this issue of our newsletter, we have several announcements of colloquia, conferences, and workshops that will be occurring in the spring:

**TUJ Applied Linguistics Colloquium, Temple University Japan - Tokyo Center,  
Sunday, February 13, 2005;**

**The JALT Pan-SIG Conference 2005, Saturday, May 14<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, May 15<sup>th</sup>,  
2005, Tokyo Keizai University; and**

**Special Spring Workshop at Temple University Japan, Issues in Gender and  
Sexual Identity: What Educators Should Know, Cynthia Nelson (University of  
Technology, Sydney, Australia), In Tokyo March 12-13 and in Osaka March 19-20**

**SEXUALITIES, GENDERS, AND RIGHTS IN ASIA  
1st INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ASIAN QUEER STUDIES  
Bangkok, Thailand, 8-10 July 2005 (Not Spring, but why not plan ahead!)**

And we also have call for paper deadlines:

**The JALT Pan-SIG Conference 2005, Saturday, May 14<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, May 15<sup>th</sup>,  
2005 , Tokyo Keizai University , **Deadline for Proposals: February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2005**, Call  
for papers: [www.jalt.org/pansig/2005/Call.htm](http://www.jalt.org/pansig/2005/Call.htm)**

**JALT 2005, Sharing Our Stories, October 7 – 10, 2005, Granship: Shizuoka  
Convention and Arts Center, Shizuoka, JAPAN, **Deadline for submissions: February  
28<sup>th</sup>, 2005** <http://conferences.jalt.org/2005/index/call>**

Finally, we are fortunate to have three interesting articles, two “student” papers by some  
GALE members former students, (**Japanese "boys-love" comics and heterosexual  
female identity by Wakana Yokota** and **Gender, Sexuality and Culture: A Class  
Project by Aya Murakami**) and **a report on a gender and society course in  
progress by GALE’S own Jane Joritz-Nakagawa.**

(We editors hesitated to write the word “student” in quotes since the authors, one an  
up-and-coming artist and the other a budding translator, are much more than former  
students and do not deserve to be positioned as student; both have much to share with  
us.)

We hope you enjoy these articles and welcome any comments or discussion on the gale mailing list [GALElist@yahoo.com](mailto:GALElist@yahoo.com).

YOI OTOSHI WO OMUKAE KUDASAI!

Steve Cornwell and Andrea Simon-Maeda

Co-Coordiators, GALE

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### **Business Meeting at JALT**

We had a good turnout for the business meeting at JALT 2004. GALE wants to thank Jan Ossorio for her service as Publicity Chair and are glad that she agreed to continue serving as a member-at large. The following officers were elected:

**Co-Coordiators:**

Steve Cornwell

Andrea Maeda

**Program Chair:**

Roibeard O'Mochain

**Treasurer:**

Susan Bergman Miyake

**Membership Chair:**

Diane Nagatomo

**Publicity Coordinator:**

Andrea Simon-Maeda

**E-mail List Coordinator:**

Jacqueline Beebe

**Member at Large:**

Deborah Mazerolle  
Jan Ossorio

We brainstormed many ideas on how to be of more service to our members including trying to have a discussion topic posted on the email list each month with a discussion leader to try to encourage or help facilitate conversation.

We are also excited by a distinguished lecture that Temple University is sponsoring. Cynthia Nelson is coming to speak on *Issues in Gender and Sexual Identity: What Educators Should Know*. More information is provided later in the newsletter.

### **TUJ Applied Linguistics Colloquium**

**Temple University Japan - Tokyo Center**

**Sunday, February 13, 2005**

**10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m**

**Note: We are not sure if it is still possible to submit a proposal; to find out email Megumi Kawate-Mierzejewska at [mierze@tuj.ac.jp](mailto:mierze@tuj.ac.jp).** However, even if it is not possible, the TUJ Applied Linguistics Colloquium is well worth attending for the depth and breadth of topics you can learn about in one day.

The organizing committee of the Temple University Applied Linguistics Colloquium invites second language acquisition researchers to submit proposals for presentation at the Seventh Temple University Applied Linguistics Colloquium to be held at Temple University Japan in Tokyo on Sunday, February 13, 2005, from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Two types of proposals will be considered: reports on completed research and work in progress.

Submissions should include: 1) one cover page with the title of the paper, names and affiliations of all authors, full mailing address of the primary author, phone and fax numbers of all authors, and e-mail addresses of all authors; 2) a fifty-word summary of the presentation; and 3) three copies of a one-page, 150-word abstract of the presentation [please include the title of the presentation but not the name(s) of the author(s)].

Please send the above materials as soon as possible to: Dr. Megumi Kawate-Mierzejewska, Temple University Japan, 2-8-12 Minami Azabu, Minato-ku, Tokyo 106-0047. For further information please contact Dr. Megumi Kawate-Mierzejewska at the following e-mail address: [mierze@tuj.ac.jp](mailto:mierze@tuj.ac.jp)

**The JALT Pan-SIG Conference 2005  
Announcement and Call for Papers**

**Dates:** Saturday, May 14<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005

**Time:** 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM

**Location:** Tokyo

**Venue:** Tokyo Keizai University

**Deadline for Proposals: February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2005.**

Call for papers: [www.jalt.org/pansig/2005/Call.htm](http://www.jalt.org/pansig/2005/Call.htm)

GALE members are urged to submit proposals for this conference. The more we share ideas on how to increase gender awareness in our classrooms, the more gender awareness there is within JALT. Some people might want to submit a MyShare type presentation/forum where different types of successful activities are shared. Feel free to use the GALE email list to discuss possible presentations:

<GALElist@yahoogroups.com>.

**Description:** The GALE SIG is a co-sponsor of the JALT Pan-SIG Conference 2005, which will be held at Tokyo Keizai University, May 14-15, 2005.

The two plenary speakers are tentatively Curtis Kelly of Osaka Gakuin University, who will talk on adult teaching methods, learning contracts, needs assessment and learning theories, and Mike Bostwick of Katoh Gakuen, who will talk about bilingual education based on his experience as Director of the English Immersion Program K-12 at Katoh Gakuen and his involvement with the program from its beginning in 1992.

GALE can nominate a featured speaker to address gender issues. If you have ideas for

a good speaker please email Steve Cornwell <stevec@gol.com> or Andrea Maeda <andrea-m@nifty.com> and/or post your idea to the gale email list <GALElist@yahoogroups.com>.

For more information, visit the 2005 JALT-Pan-SIG Conference Website. The deadline for abstracts is February 20, 2005. Guidelines for submissions are available at <[www.jalt.org/pansig/2005/Call.htm](http://www.jalt.org/pansig/2005/Call.htm)>

Cost for JALT members : 5,500 yen

Cost for JALT non-members: 7,000 yen

## **JALT 2005**

### **31<sup>st</sup> Annual International Conference on Language Teaching and Learning & Educational Materials Expo**

Sharing Our Stories

October 7 – 10, 2005

Granship: Shizuoka Convention and Arts Center

Shizuoka, JAPAN

#### **Deadline for submissions: February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2005**

Life is stories. The things our students learn, and the things we learn become stories we build on and use to grow as teachers. That's why *Sharing Our Stories* is the theme of the 31<sup>st</sup> annual JALT International Conference. Stories can be the content learners think about as they, for example, read books or do listening tasks. Or they can be the conversations students have with each other. Or the ideas they write. At the conference, we teachers will share our experience, ideas, research, successes, and challenges. All of these are types of stories. And of course, the *sharing* is the key. This call for presentations is your invitation to share your own stories.

#### **Special Spring Workshop at Temple University Japan Issues in Gender and Sexual Identity: What Educators Should Know**

Speaker: Cynthia Nelson (University of Technology, Sydney, Australia)

In Tokyo March 12-13 and in Osaka March 19-20

We (some of us who studied at Temple and who are also members of GALE) lobbied TUJ to bring Cynthia Nelson in for a workshop so it would be great if as many GALE members as possible turned out for the workshop. It will help us the next time we try to bring in a speaker to focus on gender issues. If you are planning to attend, please email the gale list; maybe we can organize a dinner or drinks after the workshop. You can attend the first 3 hours for free and it is only 11,000 yen to audit for the entire weekend.

What does it mean to be an educator at a time when sexual identities (straight, gay, lesbian, transgender, queer, questioning) are becoming increasingly prominent in public discourses? How do divergent local/global practices and perspectives play out in the classroom in terms of what sexual identities are understood to be, and how (or whether) they get discussed? What challenges and opportunities arise when teachers and learners do engage in class with topics about sexual identity? How can teachers frame discussions of sexual identity issues in ways that help to further the learning objectives of the class? What theories (e.g., poststructuralist, queer, postcolonialist) might be of practical use to teachers in thinking through such questions in relation to their own teaching practices?

This seminar will begin with a readers-theater performance of **Queer as a Second Language**, a play that has proved popular with audiences at conferences and universities in Australia and the United States (and at a conference in Sapporo, where the concept for the play was first canvassed). The playscript derives from research transcripts, so the characters are not fictional but are composites of actual EFL/ESL teachers and students who were observed and interviewed. The performance will lead to a discussion of what it might mean to teach in queer and transcultural times.

This seminar is part of TUJ's Distinguished Lecturer Series. Note that each seminar is actually 2 days long, apx. 7 hours per day. The **first three hours of each seminar are free and open to the public**. To attend both days of the weekend seminar costs 11,000 yen for the general public.

Date: Saturday, March 12th, 2005

Time: 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Location: Tokyo

Venue: Temple University Japan, Tokyo Center, 2-8-12 Minami Azabu; Minato-ku, Tokyo

**Contact Tokyo TUJ Campus:**

URL: <http://web.tuj.ac.jp/newsite/main/tesol/pg-tokyo.html>

Temple University Japan:

tesol@tuj.ac.jp

Phone: Office: 03-5441-9800

Fax: Office: 03-5441-9811

Date: Saturday, March 19th, 2005

Time: 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Location: Osaka

Venue: New Location: Osaka Ekimae Bldg. 3, 21st Floor, 1-1-3-2100 Umeda, Kita-ku, Osaka 530-0001 (tel:(06) 6343-0005)

Description: **Please note:** Starting from Spring Semester of 2005 (January 10, 2005) TUJ-Osaka will operate at a new location in central Osaka. The new TUJ-Osaka will be accessible directly from Umeda Station.

**Contact Osaka TUJ Campus:**

URL: <http://web.tuj.ac.jp/newsite/main/tesol/pg-osaka.html>

Temple University Japan:

tesol@tuj.ac.jp

Phone: Office: 03-5441-9800

Fax: Office: 03-5441-9811

**SEXUALITIES, GENDERS, AND RIGHTS IN ASIA**

**1st INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ASIAN QUEER STUDIES**

**Bangkok, Thailand, 8-10 July 2005**

COORDINATED BY The Office of Human Rights Studies and Social Development, Mahidol University, Bangkok and The AsiaPacifiQueer Network

An international interdisciplinary conference on studies of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, bisexual, and queer (LGBTQ) cultures and communities in

Asia will be held in Bangkok, Thailand, from Thursday 8th to Saturday 10th July, 2005. The main aim of the conference is to develop linkages between research about Asian LGBTQ cultures and communities and promoting recognition and respect for sexual and gender diversity in the region. A parallel goal of the conference is to support and defend the academic legitimacy of research and teaching about LGBTQ peoples in Asia.

**Conference Email Address:** [apqbangkok2005@anu.edu.au](mailto:apqbangkok2005@anu.edu.au)

**Conference webpage:** <http://bangkok2005.anu.edu.au/>



## **Japanese "boys-love" comics and heterosexual female identity**

**by Wakana Yokota**

*Wakana Yokota is studying film and animation at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston Massachusetts which includes additional academic work at Tufts University. She wrote this essay for a Sex and Gender class. Wakana is also an oil painter. You can see some of her other work here:*  
<http://tokyoprogressive.org/news/wakana.html>

Reading girl's comic books was always one of the biggest activities in my life as a young girl. In my childhood, my reading activities were certainly dominated by girls' comic books, and many of those mainly portrayed the romantic relationships between young boys and girls. Since the stories were intended to cover the lives of the characters, it felt natural and unavoidable for them to deal with "love," which we, meaning young girls who read these stories, saw as an essential part of one's life that most people would come to experience eventually. One time, when I was in my late teens, a question came to mind: why do so many girls' comic books revolve around love stories. The stories in girl's comics, especially those for younger teenage females, depend heavily on heterosexual love relationships that emphasize the difference between female and male roles in those relationships. In general, a lot of people even consider "girl's comic books" as synonymous with "love story comic books."

One obvious answer, from my experience, is that it is because those stories are the earliest opportunity for a young female adolescent to experience the excitement of

love relationships that they tend to revolve around love stories. As a young girl, psychologically I saw myself reflected in the female character who experienced a relationship with my favorite male character. What is interesting now is that I did not see myself reflected in my favorite *female* characters. My favorite female characters, who I did not particularly identify with, tended to reflect the role of a very close female friend. Instead, I chose primarily to identify with a particular female character based on which male characters I fantasized experience a love relationship with.

It was my psychological excitement over this love relationship with my favorite male character which gave me my earliest sexual identity as a “female,” rather than any identification with the female character herself. I was a woman though my love for the male character. In other words, reflecting on the excitement of a love relationship with a male character assured me of my female sexuality. But why did my excitement come from this relationship with a “male”? Is “female” sexuality always identified or defined by a relationship with “male” sexuality? If female sexuality is constructed by reflecting itself, by finding oneself in male sexuality, what specifically is it in this construction of “female sexuality” which is defined by “male” sexuality? My earliest curiosities about the role of romance in the genre known as girls’ comics have led me to this question.

The close relationship between female and male sexual identity can be recognized in historical Western texts. Close analysis by Roy Porter of the popular 17th century guide to reproduction *Aristotle’s Master-piece* (which probably gained legitimacy by including the name of a famous philosopher in the title), gives us insight into common notions about the relationship between female and male sexuality that can help us to understand how human sexuality has been viewed historically. *Aristotle’s*

*Master-piece* was actually a series of publications by different authors which were widely read by ordinary people in seventeenth and eighteenth-century England (though upper class people had the most accessibility) to teach themselves about sex (Porter, 1). Porter says that it is hard to confirm the original purpose of this publication, which some believe was partly pornographic and which eventually came to be a series of over twenty editions (2). Although each edition focuses on a somewhat different notion of sexuality, such as the 1690's version focusing on sex as an act of procreation, whereas a much later version emphasized marriage as an *institution* devoted to procreation (5,6), the common notion was still that sex is for the purpose of reproduction, which indicates that female sexuality is deeply associated with female pregnancy (7).

Porter's argument from his analysis of the nature of *Aristotle's Master-piece* may imply that male and female sexuality historically has been defined within the framework of reproduction, or as Porter says "sex forms part of the larger plan of the preservation and multiplication of the species (6)." In other words, female sexuality is defined within the context of the ability to reproduce. For instance, female sterility is attributed, in Version 1 of 1690 edition in London, to the natural constitution of females, women being less vigorous than men (7), whereas male impotence was not considered a cause of sterility. The constitution of each person's body is, of course, not the same, neither for all females or males, so there were certainly cases where women did not get pregnant, and the causes were medically diagnosed as being due to women's body constitution naturally being less vigorous than that of men. In these cases, the cause of sterility was generally medically ascribed to female sexuality, not male, for instance of their being too dry or too cold (12). It sounds like an irrelevant argument from the general contemporary point of view, but Porter assures that it was understood to be a

medical possibility for sterility (7).

Female sexual pleasure was viewed as a consequence of the love of the woman for the child that would be born out of the sexual act (6). In other words, female desire for pleasure in sex was being derived from wanting to be a good mother, not out of a need for satisfying her physical and emotional need (15). These views of female sexual desire and the constitution of female body within the medical concept of reproduction seems to confirm the historical notion that women are “naturally” passive and men are more aggressive.

Thus female and male relationships tend to be understood in terms of “passiveness” and “aggressiveness,” which is attributed ultimately to reproduction. This feature can be noticed also in early pornographic literature, such as *The Academy of Women* written by Nicolas Chorier in early seventeenth-century France. This is a story of two females, Octavie and Tullie, who engage in an act of sex to help educate Octavie, who is soon to become a wife, about sex. What is interesting is, first of all, that the story, which uses an exclusively female sexual relationship in order to teach about male-female reproduction, is the product of a male author. In addition, we can recognize in their depictions, the relationship between the “passiveness” of the female and “aggressiveness” of the male. For instance, Tullie, representing the male, expresses her sexual desire for Octavie as part of a role play to teach her, but Octavie does not understand what intention Tullie has in teaching her about sex.

TULLIE: Yes, my heart, I love you, or rather I languish and die for love of you. And I even assure you that my passion equals that of Pamphile [Octavie's fiancé].

OCTAVIE: What do you mean by that, my cousin? For I can't imagine what the friendship you have for me and the love

Pamphile might have for me have to do with each other.  
(110).

Later, when the two have sex, female sexual “passiveness” and male “aggressiveness” can be recognized in this exchange:

OCTAVIE: Oh, pull back, Tullie, you’re putting your hand too low. Oh, oh, you’re pinching my buttocks. Why are you tickling that part so hard... that you’re staring at so fixedly?

TULLIE: I’m contemplating, my love, with keen pleasure the field of Venus. I admire its beauty. It’s the gods down to earth. (111).

And later:

TULLIE: You’re the one, rascal, who has a garden in which Pamphile will pluck the flowers and taste fruit more delicious than the meat of the gods.

OCTAVIE: I don’t have any garden that you don’t also have, as abundant in fruits as mine. What do you mean by this garden, anyway? Where is it planted? What are its fruits? (111).

In this literature too, female sexuality’s association with reproduction can be seen from the fact that Tullie ultimately educates Octavie about sex with males with procreation being its consequence. In addition, Octavie, who has just received an orgasm from Tullie, says:

“Oh, my cousin, I’m beginning to feel a little tickling and a certain itching in that place that’s giving me a lot of satisfaction, but I think that it isn’t anything if this pleasure’s compared to what we receive from men when they sleep with us” (113).

And Tuillie’s response to the pleasure of sex in marriage indicates the point of view that pleasure of female sexuality always goes along with reproduction.

TULLIE: Apart from pregnancy, childbirth and a thousand other inconveniences that are the fruits of matrimony, by contrast, there is a bold and serene satisfaction that isn’t found in others. Moreover marriage is a veil that hides and covers the faults in our behavior, since we can assume ourselves without fear or risk once we are dressed in it. Thus there are some pleasures for virgins as well as for those not in a state of celibacy (113).

In addition, the fact that this was written by a male may suggest a consideration of how the relationship between female and male sexuality was historically understood to be in the sphere of marriage or reproduction.

As the historical texts imply, and looking at the present, it seems that this perspective of female sexuality has been quite dominant over the centuries. While I am not certain without further analysis how much linkage there is between these Western texts and the nature of sexuality as it has developed in Japan, referring to girls’ comic books, we can see the same traditional roles of female and male sexuality in a recent phenomenon, the growing popularity of so called “boy love” comic books in Japan. Considering that there are comic books which suit the traditional taste of boys

and for girls, it is interesting to note that this new “boy love” comic is actually a sub-genre of traditional girl’s comics, which have until now tended to depict heterosexual love. Relationships in this genre have always been from the perspective of female sexuality and are generally conceived of and produced by women. The new boy love comics address sexual relationship between boys, but they are still produced mainly for consumption by heterosexual females readers, like all comics for girls.

In order to appreciate the new “boy love” comics, we need to look at traditional girl’s comic books more closely to see why the new form has developed as it has. Although there are various stories and artistic styles, girls' comics are generally targeted towards a particular age group. For instance one girl’s magazine, “Margaret,” is largely read by junior high and senior high school girls, but another magazine, “Chorus,” is intended to be read by those in their late teens and twenties. Each comic tends to have different themes and features love relationships that reflect the sensibilities of each generation, yet all share certain qualities. For instance, in terms of art form, the characters usually have an attractive physical appearance: it is especially rare in girls’ comics but not boys’ comics to find a drawing style in which the male or female protagonists are not portrayed as attractive. Since girls’ comics are produced mostly by heterosexual females targeting other heterosexual females, it is hard to argue that male sexuality is also reflected in the heterosexual relationships depicted in girl’s comics. Male sexuality in girl’s comics tends, in fact, to emphasize the idealized qualities of male sexuality that appeal to heterosexual female desire.

With this background, it is necessary to ask what is reflected upon in the “boy love” comic genre, which basically depicts “homosexual relationships” between boys and yet is still marketed to young girls. Why are love stories about “homosexual

males” popular among heterosexual females? First, it is important to look at how the concept of depicting love relationship between boys has been integrated into girls' love comics.

The term “boy love” which first appeared in the mid 90s currently indicates, as I have said, a general category of girls' comics which address the love relationship between boys. Some of the depictions are explicitly sexual and some of them are not. Perhaps we can see an influence in some of cartoon artists of the 70s whose works introduced love relationships between boys, which was different from the heterosexual love relationships that had been presented before this period (Yamane). But what was depicted in love relationships between boys in those 70s comic is a little different from what is depicted in contemporary “boy love” comics. In the 70s works, the main theme of boys love relationships tended to be “rejection”: in other words, they focused more on the struggle and anguish of boys whose love for someone of the same sex was not accepted by the other boy (Yamane). Those 70s girls' comics were considered to have been a revolution in the genre in how they dealt with human sexuality through boys' relationships as opposed to the more commonly treated heterosexual ones (Yamane).

Since the 70s revolution, the concept of boy-boy love relationships has been gaining popularity and expanding its boundaries with the public. What followed the 70s' boy-boy comics was a parodying of popular boys' cartoons that showed boys in heterosexual friendships with other boys. These parodies, initially done by talented amateurs who were for the most part female, showed these well-known heterosexual boy cartoon characters involved in love relationships with other popular boy characters. This further led to the development of a new sub-genre of amateur cartoonist-writers creating original stories about love relationships between boys (Yamane), eventually

leading to integration of boy-boy love into girls' comic books on a large scale. It indeed seems that the integration of the two has been accepted by a lot of people given the noticeable change in bookstore layouts in the last few years. In many bookstores today, there is a dedicated sub-section of boy-love comic books within the girls' comic book section, which is a relatively new development. This is evidence that boy love comic books are gaining public popularity as a girls' comic book genre. Conversely, boy-love comics can be seen as a factor that has expanded the definition of girls' comics, which traditionally have dealt only with heterosexual love relationships.

Love relationships in current boy-boy love comics are rather similar to heterosexual love relationships in the girl's comic genre in general. For example, the love relationship between the two main characters, Dee and Ryo, in *FAKE* is treated with almost the same degree of tenderness and sensitivity seen in stories about heterosexual relationships. Dee represents the traditional male role; his character implies masculinity, portrayed as tough, aggressive. On the other hand, Ryo's character, who is Dee's work partner (both are detectives) and who becomes Dee's love interest, is a feminine, gentle, and passive figure who is always confused by the enthusiastic expression of love of Dee's character.

The couple's everyday life roles are also based on traditional heterosexual love or marriage relationships. Dee is the less domestic figure; for instance, he is never in the kitchen, as opposed to Ryo, who is often depicted in cooking scenes. What is a very symbolic representation of the traditional heterosexual love relationship is their respective sexualities. Dee is sexually aggressive and passionate; he actively approaches Ryo in acts of sex most of the time. In depictions of sex scenes, Dee is always placed on top of Ryo, who is less sexually active and tends to be presented as a

sexually “innocent” figure compared to Dee. For instance, Ryo is very confused when Dee sexually approaches him for the first time and always insists that “he is not ready” for intercourse. Those characteristics of their relationship imply that Ryo’s character is depicted as a figure who is “being penetrated” by Dee’s aggressive and passionate sexuality. In one of Ryo’s dialogues, he actually expresses his feeling of “being penetrated” when he is looked at by Dee:

“ And when he does look at me that way I, well.... I feel as if I might get swallowed up whole, all my emotions, everything I am, and I hate it. I don’t want to lose myself. What I thought I was. I can’t look back at him...I just have to look away” (Match)

This perspective of symbolic male and female sexualities, which consists of one who is penetrating and the other who is being penetrated, may indicate how female sexuality tends to be defined only within the relationship, within a response to male sexuality. In a sense, it is possible to see the growing popularity of boy-love comics as a liberation force for a female sexuality that is trying to detach itself from a passiveness as defined by the norms of heterosexual love. On the other hand, the heterosexual role distinctions that we see in homosexual relationships depicted within “boy-love” comics may indicate the unfinished struggle of female sexuality to detach itself from male sexuality in order to achieve its independence.

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## **Gender, Sexuality and Culture: A Class Project**

**Aya Murakami**

### **Introduction**

I completed my Bachelor's degree in Australia as an international student from Japan having transferred from a junior college in Japan. As a part of my degree program, I enrolled in the anthropology subject called "ANTH 1020: Gender, Sexuality and Culture", and wrote one cultural artefact exercise for the subject. For the exercise, the lecturer asked students to analyse one cultural artefact selected according to their individual interest. Due to my great interest in the subject, working on the assignment was very interesting and an impressive experience. Sharing the information in class also contributed to enhance my interest in the assignment. It was, for instance, interesting to know the artefacts other students selected. I remember that a few students selected body piercing for their topics, and one of them selected penis piercing. I learned there were various "sexy" artefacts created in our society to analyse and learn from.

For my artefact assignment, I selected one advertisement for tampons that was in my favorite magazine called "Cosmopolitan (Australian version)." I used to enjoy reading the magazine when I was in Australia mainly because I could always sense cultural differences between Australia (that has a Western perspective in a broader sense) and Japan. I enjoyed making cultural comparisons. It is difficult to generalize, but I feel that people's attitudes towards sex, gender and sexuality are very different between the two spheres. Regarding my essay, it was difficult for me to describe and

analyse the artefact in 500 words as students were assigned to do (I had much more that I wanted to write on!). The most important thing was, however, that I enjoyed the process of completing the essay and I learned how clearly certain cultural artefacts reflect people's attitudes towards sex, gender and sexuality (although popular culture often does not make clear the distinctions amongst them). My assignment follows basically as I turned it in.

## **Assignment I: Analysis of Cultural Artefact**

### **Introduction**

In this artefact exercise, I use the contemporary Western artefact, one particular advertisement for tampons. Through the semiotic analysis of this artefact, this paper reveals dominant socio-cultural values and the structure of the contemporary West. The focus of the exercise is, in this light, particularly on sex, gender and sexuality.

### **Description of the Artefact**

The advertisement is primarily divided into two sections. In the smaller section, [at the bottom of the ad] there is a photograph of three tampons of different sizes (mini, regular and super), which are wrapped in different colours (green [mini], blue [regular], and red [super]) according to their size. In the larger of the two sections of the advertisement there is a photograph of three men standing in front of the bar [facing the camera] (note that drinking in public connotes the possibility of sexual encounter in the West) wearing different coloured trousers, which are the same colours as the tampon wrappers. Below the photograph appears the phrase, "If only you could tell the size of

everything by colour.”

### **Analysis and Discussion of the Artefact**

Notably, the two sections in the advertisement consist of significant parallels that are chief keys to reveal the contemporary socio-cultural values and structure of the West. The wrappers of tampons are comparable with the trousers, and hence the tampon is itself comparable to the penis. Here, firstly, it is significant to note that as the tampon is by design supposed to fit in the female vagina, the penis is also depicted as the object that *inevitably* (for most women) fits into the vagina. Being strongly affected by the nativism assumption, it is in this regard that the artefact exposes the dominant Western assumption on sex, gender and sexuality that one’s biological factors *inevitably* determines one’s gender (the person with female body is categorized as a ‘woman’) and even sexuality (‘woman’ only wants and matches with ‘man’ as a sexual partner) without being questioned. Based on this assumption, moreover, the advertisement discloses the predominant socio-cultural norm in the West, heteronormativity—the social system that privileges heterosexual practice. The artefact hence explicitly shows a firm and even inseparable link between sex, gender and sexuality in the contemporary Western socio-cultural arena. Overall, this popular Western practice clearly opposes the social constructionist viewpoint (for instance, Foucault) on sex, gender and sexuality.

Secondly, the above parallels in advertisement disclose another important aspect of the contemporary Western socio-cultural value and structure. In the artefact, both tampon and penis (and thus men) are depicted as objects that ‘women’ can choose. Hence, the artefact reveals one significant aspect of the contemporary socio-cultural practice of the West, which recognizes the female body or ‘woman’ as the potentially active sexual agent. This significantly contrasts with the traditional Western assumption

that female body or 'women' are passive participants in the sexual realm. Additionally, in this light, it is important to note that the tampon itself is fundamentally a symbolic material that gives women a great control over their biological determinations.

Moreover, it is also significant to note that women are targeted as the potential consumer of goods (here tampon and penis are depicted as objects) in the 21<sup>st</sup> century capitalist system.

### **Conclusion**

This paper critically analysed the contemporary Western artefact, one particular advertisement of tampons, and revealed significant aspects of both the dominant socio-cultural values and the structure of the contemporary, namely specific spacio-temporal, West in regards to sex, gender and sexuality.

### **In Retrospect**

Recently I found that there is a Japanese version of Cosmopolitan. When I found it in a bookshop, I took the magazine and opened the pages in excitement. I then had a huge disappointment. It was a magazine from Japan, the excessively and notoriously male-dominated society compared to many other parts of the world. I'm not saying that Australian (or broadly speaking, Western) society is free from the issues I'm dealing with here. In fact, Australian or Western society do have various issues that need help to solve. However, the comparison of a particular magazine published in two cultures inevitably underscores the highly discriminative nature of Japanese society against "women." Due to my lack of academic experience in this area, I'm aware of the fact that I'm not capable of claiming any determined academic viewpoints here. I'm also aware of the fact that it is a complicated issue to deal with. As a general reader who

is interested in the topic with a cross-cultural experience, however, I dare to make some brief comments here. In the Australian version of Cosmopolitan, “girls” or “women” are sexual subjects and agency. In the Japanese version of Cosmopolitan, it tries to deal with them as such to some extent, but I see the deep-rooted social values and ideals that have been developed in a male-biased culture. Popular magazines, as a type of cultural artefact, reflect society.

Coming back to and living in Japanese society, I often have difficulties to face with and in dealing with discrimination against “women” (this is how society categorizes me as one of them--women). I have, however, been armed (nonviolently) with the education I have received in my life. I know where I stand in Japanese society, and thus I have enough skills to challenge oppression and discrimination against “women” when necessary. To create a better society in terms of gender and sexual discrimination, and also to fill both my academic and non-academic interest, I’ve been intending to make some contribution to society through my future work. I’m interested in translating between Japanese and English literature [in peace and gender studies among other areas]. This is because I have felt there have been less developed intellectual discussions and dialogues between Japan and Western intellectual spheres compared to those shared and developed amongst Western countries. Although there must be various underlying causes to hinder the development of intellectual discussions (e.g. patriarchal culture of Japanese society), an increase in translated material should help solve the issue. Also, I’d like to write academic essays that empower “women’s” lives. Although I want to do more study and research on issues that affect my life as a “woman,” I have not developed specific interests at the moment. Instead, I have variety of interests in the area.

Note: Aya recently found the following article on the internet which looks at western and eastern versions of the same magazine, *Consaba Gal* vs. *Cosmo Girl* Japanese love "cute," Americans love "sexy":

<http://www.jrn.columbia.edu/studentwork/nymagreview2002/japan.asp>



## **Report of a course in progress: Gender and society**

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This year I was given the opportunity to teach a one semester (15 week) elective course called Jendaa to shakai (Gender and Society) to university students majoring in intercultural relations. An overwhelming number of students who choose this area of studies at our university are female. Approximately five males and twenty females registered for the course. Some students are in their third year, although it is strictly speaking a 2nd year student course.

Students were asked to buy a book (Yoshihara, 2002) with bilingual (Japanese and English) readings, and were also told there would be many additional materials in the form of handouts, plus materials found on their own. Students were additionally told that each weekly 90 minute class meeting would have a general thematic focus, though this would be somewhat flexible (negotiable), and subtopics within the broader categories could be chosen by the students themselves; in other words, students could propose weekly topics for discussion. Further, it was explained that each class meeting would be a combination of small group discussion including (randomly chosen by me) group spokespersons reporting their findings to the whole class, and brief lectures or presentations given by the teacher and sometimes by students.

Our first class meeting was an introduction to the course plus a brief introduction to Hofstede's (1998) notion of feminine and masculine cultural attributes. Competitive,

materialistic, militaristic, gender-segregated societies are by Hofstede's definition "masculine" or masculinized. Feminine societies are anti-militaristic, pro-gender-equality, cooperative, unwilling to compromise the environment for economic progress, supportive of welfare, etc. Students were asked to look at a list in table form of feminine/masculine social characteristics based on Hofstede's model, and choose which characteristics they believed typified Japan. Consonant with Hofstede's findings regarding Japan, students identified a much larger number of masculine as opposed to feminine characteristics. (The USA and other countries are also found in Hofstede's research to tend toward masculinization, with Scandinavian countries being in the group of the most feminine of those Hofstede studied.) Students received another table showing the country by country rankings along the masculine dimension reported by Hofstede in which Japan was ranked as highly masculinized (see Hofstede, 1998, for further information).

Students were asked to brainstorm key words that described traditional images of "masculine" and "feminine" in Japan, and then to put these up on the whiteboard. Examples of words associated with masculinity were: strong, don't cry, be successful, active, logical; words associated with femininity were: skirt, make-up, empathetic, kind, smile, and others.

I gave students a tentative plan for the semester which included these broad thematic areas:

- Gender roles and marriage; family issues

- Gender and education (treatment of boys and girls in school, gender and literacy, etc.)

Gender and employment

Gay, lesbian and transgender rights / sexuality

Gender and violence (including physical and mental violence e.g., domestic violence, FGM, sexual harassment, etc.)

Gender and war (including issues such as war and rape, "comfort women", gender of military personnel, etc.)

Gender and sex work (prostitution, pornography, etc.)

Gender and beauty standards (including dieting and eating disorders, cosmetic surgery, media images of women and men, etc.)

Gender and language; masculinities and femininities

At the time of this writing, we are about to start the gender and war topic. Last week's discussion focused on sexual harassment. Some students shared personal stories. One story pertained to a female in our class who was being harassed by the company VP via touching and by being shown pornography at work, etc. When she complained to the president, the president suggested she find another job since he claimed he needed to keep his VP. Due to the lack of support, she ended up leaving the job.

Students discussed causes of and effects related to sexual harassment as well as potential solutions. Some students noted a lack of morality on the part of sexual harassers; other students tied the problem to the concept of a masculinized culture (as indeed Hofstede does; see Hofstede, 1998). A key point became the difficulty of an individual solving such problems on their own without the support of institutions to

intervene and take appropriate actions. Another issue among many raised by students was the need for consciousness-raising.

The week before, domestic violence was discussed. To supplement the students' knowledge of the topic, I summarized Prof. Nakamura's research results (which can be found in Roberson & Suzuki, 2002) showing common psychological traits of batterers around the world. Interest in this research appeared keen.

Previous weeks' themes were gender and schooling (including the issue of class lists where male names appear first as is still done in some schools in Japan, and gender and world illiteracy), gender and sexuality (especially GLBT rights), and gender roles in the family (such as the housework sharing issue). There was a refreshing diversity of opinions expressed in the class about nearly every theme raised.

For each class meeting thus far, students have come to classes prepared to discuss their ideas, questions and concerns relative to the theme/ subthemes. Homework readings and their own research plus sometimes writing summaries or drafting discussion questions are ways students prepare for each class. Usually I give a short presentation either at the beginning or end of class periods or both. If I give a presentation at the beginning of a session it is mainly to stimulate the small peer group discussions and thus tends to be very brief, or, I may give a quick recap of the previous week's lesson. Presentations given by me at the end of the session following the student discussions and reporting of their group's opinions and questions are first geared toward summarizing what I have heard them say (main points) and then introducing related findings from research or

offering elaboration of their main points. These also tend to be brief. I also bring to class for possible listening/discussion thematically related pop song lyrics (see Nakagawa, 2004 for a list of some I have used).

There is a fair degree of spontaneity in each class meeting since I never know what the students are going to say, or even what I will say, since many of my comments tend to follow and bounce off theirs. I find this way of working the course very agreeable. I prefer to be able to see what the students know, and then to provide information that might be helpful after finding out what that might be. Otherwise I could end up in a position of "teaching" things that students in fact know already or which lie too much outside their interests or knowledge level, etc.

Usually the weekly peer discussion groups are about 3 persons in size. As far as the power of teamwork for solving problems, as a Japanese proverb states "three people have the wisdom of Buddha" (sannin yoreba monju no chie). I rotate the group membership every session by shuffling the name cards I asked students to make that sit, tent-like, on the table tops, and placing them randomly in different configurations every week on tables so that students will talk with different people at different sessions. The spokesperson, whose job it is to summarize the small group discussion for the benefit of sharing the ideas with the entire class, is chosen randomly. Usually to do this I indicate a seating position, e.g., if students are seated three across (the chairs in this room are bolted to the floor) I might ask the person in the middle to be the reporter. Since the person's seat was randomly assigned by me through the card shuffling method that

determined that class meeting's seating arrangements, the reporter can be in this way chosen randomly with ease.

My impression of the students so far is that most have a genuine interest in gender issues; certainly they appear to enthusiastically participate in the small group discussions and many appear well-prepared for class and fairly well-informed on many issues. I have also been impressed by the analytical skills of many students.

Eavesdropping on their group discussions, peeking at their notebooks, and listening to the spokespersons gives me feedback into how students think, what they know, and what interests or concerns them. Of course, on the last day of the course, I plan to ask students to reply to a detailed course evaluation questionnaire, to find out what students feel and think about our activities.

Students were asked last week to think about their final project topics. For the final project each of the approximately 25 students has been asked to research a different specific gender issue and then to give an oral report on the topic in order to teach the class what they have learned. They will also furnish a written report on their chosen topic toward the end of the term (in 2005).

I am very much looking forward to the remainder of our sessions in December (2004) and January and February, 2005. The January and February sessions will be devoted mainly to the student research projects, helping them and having them help each other with their research and the writing of the reports as well as preparing the speeches in which they will teach the rest of us what they learned. If there is any additional time, we

will have class discussions about their research topics or other topics proposed by the students themselves. For the rest of this month (December) we will cover a few more themes together as a whole class, and all students will make their final topic choices for their research projects. We might discuss Prof. Taga's (a panelist for a GALE SIG Forum a couple of years ago [see report in Riley, 2002]) work on the attitudes of young Japanese men towards gender equality, and gender issues relative to languages such as Japanese, Chinese, English, French and German.

I am glad to see students proposing their own questions and attempting to answer them, creating new knowledges in small groups, and enthusiastically sharing their insights, on a weekly basis. Rather than just agreeing with each other or the text or handouts, students appear comfortable offering alternative, critical viewpoints and selecting subthemes that interest them for further investigation.

Working in a male dominated institution where general awareness of gender issues appears not to be high among many colleagues, it is great for me to see my students' considerable interest in gender issues; it is a pleasure to observe them seek to understand gender issues more thoroughly, accurately and deeply. The learning is a multi-directional endeavor. These students enrich me of course as well as each other.

written December 9, 2004

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