

Transnational Sexualities and Genders Symposium

Thursday 2 May 2013, 12noon to 4.15pm, South Lecture Theatre, Old Arts, The University of Melbourne

Program

- 12noon: **Introduction (Audrey Yue)**
- 12:15-1pm: **Mark McLelland** (University of Wollongong)
Regulation of Manga Content in Japan: Is there a future for Boys Love (BL) comics?
- 1-1:45pm: **Vera Mackie** (University of Wollongong)
Queer families and the straight state: The legal regulation of family forms in contemporary Japan
- 1:45-2:30pm: **Katherine Sender** (University of Auckland)
Sex Museums across Cultures: Gender, Sexuality, and Nationhood
- 2:30-2:45pm: **Afternoon Tea**
- 2:45-3:30pm: **Peter Jackson** (Australian National University)
Markets, Media and Activism in the Making and Remaking of Queer Bangkok
- 3:30-4:15pm: **Fran Martin** (The University of Melbourne)
The gender of "portable personhood": Chinese women students in Melbourne and transnational self-making

Regulation of Manga Content in Japan: Is there a future for Boys Love (BL) comics?

Mark McLelland University of Wollongong

Despite a tradition of inflammatory remarks in the Western press concerning the unregulated nature of extreme sexual and violent material contained in Japanese animation, comics and gaming, these products are in fact subject to the same "obscenity" tests as are other media in Japan. Manga, in particular, have often been signalled out by moral campaigners and, as Sharon Kinsella points out, there have been "recurrent bouts of institutional interference in the moral, educational and political content of manga" across the twentieth century. Since the late 1980s, following on from a moral panic occasioned by the serial killing of four infant girls by avid manga-collector Miyazaki Tsutomu, manga and animation content has been governed by a code of industry self-regulation. Until recently most public debate has been over the sexual and violent content of boys' manga but in recent years girls' manga, too, have come under increasing scrutiny. This paper looks at two recent developments in Japan: the 2008 furore over the large number of BL titles available for loan in a library district in Osaka, and the 2010 debate in Tokyo over the "Non-existent youth" Bill. It is argued that until recently debate about manga content in Japan was largely about protecting children and young people from supposedly harmful adult themes. However, due to growing international pressures, the debate has now shifted to the supposedly harmful depictions of children and young people in manga themselves. Given that BL is a genre that specialises in the sexualisation of its youthful characters, this paper argues that it is likely to come under increasing attack from conservative lobbyists in Japan and overseas. It is argued that the concerns over the supposedly dangerous effects of BL manga need to be dispelled by increased academic study of the genre and its audiences.

Mark McLelland is an incoming Future Fellow and Professor of Gender & Sexuality Studies at the University of Wollongong, and was the 2007/08 Toyota Visiting Professor of Japanese at the Center for Japanese Studies at the University of Michigan. He has published widely about gender and sexuality in Japan in books such as *Male Homosexuality in Modern Japan* (Routledge 2000); *Genders, Transgenders and Sexualities in Japan* (Routledge, 2005); *Queer Japan from the Pacific War* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2005) and *Love, Sex and Democracy in Japan during the American Occupation* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); and on the global spread of Japanese popular culture, most recently in a special themed edition of the journal *Intersections* on "Transnational Japanese Fandoms and Female Consumers".

Queer families and the straight state: The legal regulation of family forms in contemporary Japan
Vera Mackie University of Wollongong

The family in Japan is constantly changing. The state, however, attempts to codify an ideal family form through the Civil Code and the family registration system. The current normative family form is a relatively egalitarian two-generation nuclear family based on a heterosexual married couple with children. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, although most people still spend some stage of their life in a nuclear family (during their childhood or when they form their own family), the nuclear family with two parents and one or two children is no longer the prevalent form of household. Single-person households are increasing, for example, particularly among the elderly. There are also myriad situations where the actual practices of family life cannot be dealt with adequately under the current legal system. These include international relationships, same-sex partnerships, transgendered parents, the use of assisted reproductive technologies, surrogacy arrangements, and international surrogacy arrangements. For the purposes of this paper, I refer to all of these non-normative family forms as 'queer families', and track what happens when these 'queer families' come up against the 'straight state'. The family is constantly being transformed, but legal change works on a much longer and slower temporal cycle. The Japanese state, like most other modern nation-states, works according to assumptions of heteronormativity. By tracking the specific mechanisms of this particular state, and noting places where contradictions and gaps appear, we can start to map the contours of the 'straight state' in Japan and consider these mechanisms in a transnational frame.

Professor Vera Mackie is an ARC Future Fellow in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Wollongong. She is currently working on a research project on Human Rights in the Asia-Pacific Region. Vera has varied teaching, research, administrative and supervisory experience in the fields of Japanese language and linguistics, Japanese history, gender studies and cultural studies. In addition to previous positions at Swinburne, the University of Adelaide, the University of Melbourne and Curtin University of Technology, she has been a Visiting Professor at Victoria University, Ochanomizu University and Hitotsubashi University. She is a member of the ARC Cultural Research Network and the ARC Asia-Pacific Futures Research Network, and was a member of the Australian Research Council College of Experts, 2003-2005.

Sex Museums across Cultures: Gender, Sexuality, and Nationhood
Katherine Sender University of Auckland

This paper draws from a work in progress that considers the global spread of sex museums (and other institutions that display explicitly sexual materials) across Europe, China, Korea, Japan and the US. Data from museum visits, interviews with curators and directors, and online and marketing materials demonstrate that sex museums offer a rich context to explore the intersections of gender, sexuality, and globalization. It is unsurprising that artifacts, displays, and signage take male heterosexuality as an imagined standard to which women and queer visitors must adjust their behaviors and investments. Exhibits privilege the phallus, the male gaze, and vaginal penetration as the telos of sex. Less obvious are the ways that women's and queer sexualities are situated in global flows of sexual discourse in a nation-building project. I present some preliminary findings that appear to counter hegemonic masculine heterosexuality in order to assert cosmopolitan modernity.

Katherine Sender is professor of Media Studies at the University of Auckland. She has written extensively on gay media and marketing, reality television, audience research, and reflexivity in media production and consumption. Her most recent book *The Makeover: Reality Television and Reflexive Audiences* is published by New York University Press (2012) and she is completing a documentary on the same topic.

Markets, Media and Activism in the Making and Remaking of Queer Bangkok

Peter Jackson Australian National University

In this presentation I argue that capitalism, mass media and queer activism were formative influences in Bangkok's emergence as an Asian queer metropolis in the 1970s, and that transformations in all three fields have driven dramatic changes in the physical and cultural landscapes of Queer Bangkok in the early 21st century. I compare: (1) the formative role of mass print media in the 20th century with the transformative impact of 21st electronic media; (2) the changing face of queer capitalism in Bangkok since the end of the Cold War, the ascendancy of neo-liberal economic policies and the rise of Asian economic power; and (3) the significant roles of multiple transgender, lesbian and gay forms of activism since the early 1970s in reforming public discourse on queer issues in Thailand.

Peter A. Jackson (Ph.D., Australian National University) completed his PhD on the life and thought of the Thai philosopher monk Buddhadasa *Bhikkhu* in 1986, and he is currently Professor of Thai history and cultural studies in the Australian National University's College of Asia and the Pacific. He has conducted research on Thailand for over thirty years and has written extensively on modern Thai cultural history, with special interests in religion and sexuality. Peter Jackson was editor-in-chief of the *Asian Studies Review*, flagship journal of the Asian Studies Association of Australia, from 2009 to 2012 and he founded the Thai Rainbow Archives Project, which has collected and digitised Thai gay, lesbian, and transgender magazines and community organisation newsletters (see <http://thairainbowarchive.anu.edu.au/index.html>). His most recent books are *The Ambiguous Allure of the West: Traces of the Colonial in Thailand* (Hong Kong University Press 2010, with Rachel Harrison), *Queer Bangkok: Twenty-First-Century Markets, Media and Rights* (Hong Kong University Press 2011) and *Thai Sex Talk: The Language of Sex and Sexuality in Thailand* (Silkworm Books, Chiang Mai 2012, with Pimpawun Boonmongkon). He is currently collaborating with Dr Narupon Duangwises (Princess Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre, Bangkok) on an edited collection on *Cultural Pluralism and Gender/Sex Diversity in Thailand*, writing a history of the Thai trans category of *kathoey*, and preparing a revised, expanded version of his 1989 study *Male Homosexuality in Thailand: An Interpretation of Contemporary Thai Sources*.

The gender of “portable personhood”: Chinese women students in Melbourne and transnational self-making

Fran Martin University of Melbourne

Educational travel is a significant vector of transnational mobility today, and the gendered dimension is particularly notable, with a majority of transnational students from East Asian nations now being women. Increasingly, young, educated urban women in PR China see themselves as pursuing dreams of wealth, freedom and individual happiness through travel, consumption, career, and a self-scripted life project. Animated by more than just the pursuit of a high-quality education, young Chinese women students in Australia are working on gendered self-making, elaborating “portable personhood” (Elliott & Urry, 2011) and accumulating “mobility capital” (Kaufman et al 2004) through their educational travels. In this paper, based on in-depth interviews, I show how the young urban women who comprise China's female knowledge diaspora are located at a point of turbulent confluence between conflicting conceptions of possible and desirable female personhood. My 15 young interviewees framed transnational education as part of a neoliberal-style project of enterprising self-making through geographic mobility. But due to the naturalization of women's caregiving role and the social expectation in China that a woman should marry by 30, they face the risk that their ascribed gender identity will interrupt the self-making project in which overseas study is seen as the first step. This reveals the strongly gendered dimension of the ideal of “portable personhood” in this context, and indeed suggests that feminine gender may mark a limit to such students' material realization of this form of imagined identity.

Dr. Fran Martin's research focuses on television, film, literature and other forms of cultural production in contemporary transnational China (The People's Republic of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong), with a specialization in transnational flows and representations and cultures of gender and sexuality. Fran received both her BA (hons) and her PhD from Melbourne University. Fran is fluent in Mandarin, having begun learning the language in primary school in Australia. She later spent two years studying Chinese language and literature at Beijing Second Foreign Languages Institute and East China Normal University (1989 - 1991). She then spent a further two years researching in Taiwan, most recently at National Taiwan Central University's Center for the Study of Sexualities (2005). Prior to joining the Cultural Studies program at the University of Melbourne, Fran lectured in the Cinema Studies program at La Trobe University.

followed by

Queer Singapore and Queer Bangkok Book Launches

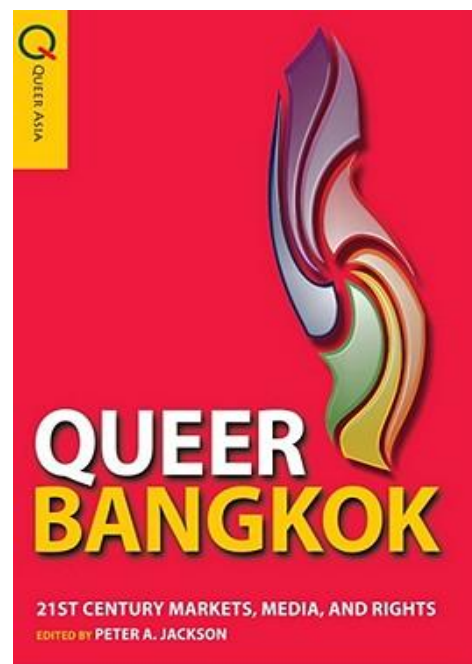
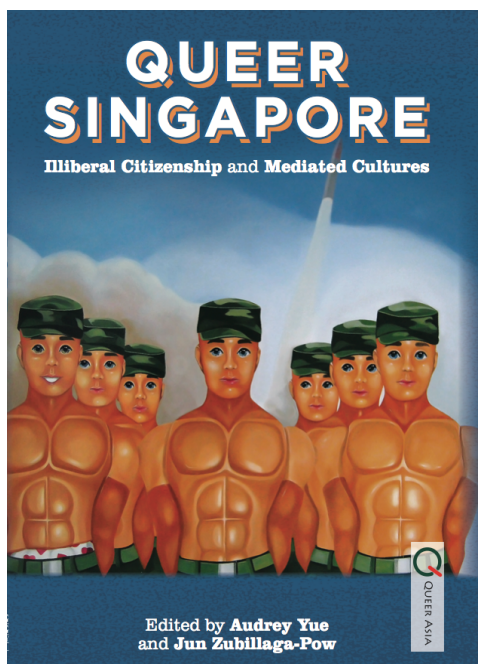
Thursday 2 May 2013

5.30pm for 6pm start

Arts Hall, Old Arts,

The University of Melbourne

Introduction of Queer Asia series by Professor Peter Jackson and launch
by Professor Vera Mackie



Organised by Associate Professor Audrey Yue.

Hosted by School of Culture and Communication and Faculty of Arts, The University of Melbourne.

RSVP: Contact Lucy Rash (lucy.rash@unimelb.edu.au) on or before Monday 29 April.