

PostGender

PostGender:
Gender, Sexuality and Performativity
in Japanese Culture

Edited by

Ayelet Zohar

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

PostGender: Gender, Sexuality and Performativity in Japanese Culture,
Edited by Ayelet Zohar

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All images in Chapter 13, are frames taken from Alain Resnais’ film *Hiroshima, Mon amour*, 1959

PREAMBLE

This volume carries the title of an exhibition and a conference that took place at the end of 2005. In 2002, Mr. Nissim Tal, the general director of Haifa Museums, invited me to curate an exhibition of Morimura Yasumasa's photographic work and the art produced by the younger generation that followed Morimura's footsteps in constituting gender representations/performances in contemporary Japanese art. The process resulted in the outstanding exhibition *PostGender: Gender, Sexuality and Performativity in Contemporary Japanese Art*, a collection of contemporary representations of gender and sexuality in Japanese photography, performance and video art.¹ The exhibition was shown at the Tikotin Museum of Japanese Art in Haifa, Israel, from September 2005 through January 2006, was accompanied by an extensive catalogue² and garnered much attention from Israeli audiences and media.³

During the exhibition, Mr. Tal kindly agreed to expand the scope of the issues represented by the exhibited artwork, opening the arena to a collection of intellectual contributions from scholars around the world who would be interested in expanding the context of gender discourse in Japanese culture.

Fifteen papers were accepted to the conference, of which twelve were presented in person. Of these original presentations, eight articles constitute the heart of this volume. These are the articles by Jennifer Robertson, Michiko Kasahara, Jason Herlands, Leslie Winston, Ayala Klemperer-Markman, Kinneret Noy, Sayumi Takahashi Harb and myself. To expand the questions and views offered by the conference participants, I invited several academics in the field to contribute their scholarship and insight on issues regarding the performance, construction and representation of gender in Japanese culture. Among these are Tamaki Saito, Maki Isaka, Ory Bartal, Bracha L. Ettinger and Kyoko Gardiner. Therefore, the reader will be aware that the time gap between the original conference presentations and the publication of the book carries the inevitable consequence that some details that were relevant at the time of presentation may be outdated today.⁴

The book advances the direction of inquiry drawn by postmodern and postcolonial critiques, and, simultaneously, the articles and theoretical tools presented create exciting new research possibilities—not just to

differentiate and consider cultural specificity as a sufficient ground for alternative terminology that may expand the language of gender, sexuality or even psychoanalysis, but also to work in a direction oppositional to psychoanalytic discourse. Some of the alternative models and cultural suggestions elaborated here may attempt to develop models that are presently, at best, entirely absent from current psychoanalytic discourse, and at worst, considered as perversions in psychoanalytic thought.

The texts in the volume

The articles in the book together comprise a multifaceted look at issues of gender construction and the representation of sexuality, tackling the multiplicity of matters around the sexualised body and gender performance from theatre to visual arts, literature to graphic design, medical sciences to anthropology, film studies to *manga* and *anime* representation, psychoanalysis to history. The variety of fields and discourses at hand notwithstanding, all of the texts elaborate on questions of the body, looking at its interactions and consumption in Japanese culture and society.

The book opens with **Jennifer Robertson's** consideration of time, timelines, historicity and temporality, and their flattening in a Japanese context. Robertson questions the representation and consequences of history-as-dehistorisation in Japan, as exemplified by the Mori Museum's *Happiness* exhibition of 2003 and in the works of Takashi Murakami and Yasumasa Morimura. Robertson links these recent productions to early 20th century nativist nationalism as well as to such popular institutions as the all-female Takarazuka revue.

Maki Isaka's text examines cross-gender performance in *kabuki* theatre, particularly the performance of femininity by *onnagata*, or men playing women's roles. *Onnagata* became indispensable for *kabuki* after 1629 when female performers were banned from the stage, making the performance of femininity central to the development of *kabuki* ever since. Isaka's article reconsiders this often talked-about feature of all male *kabuki* theatre, giving an overview of *onnagata* artistry and introducing the major features of this practice. Simultaneously, by examining how the gender performance of *onnagata* has been understood, conceptualised, and theorised, this article presents an example of how the concept of femininity and an economy of gender construction are configured in a localised context.

The second section presents two articles that question familial and social structures in Japanese society. **Michiko Kasahara's** article looks at

the photographic endeavours of Miyako Ishiuchi in representing her mother, Hiroko Okada's representation of a frustrated housewife, Mako Idemitsu's work around the role and presence of wartime constructs of motherhood and the family, and Tomoko Sawada's self representations as a young woman whose identity is shaped by the regulating mechanisms of Japanese society, from schooling through her predetermined future as a bride. The series of projects examined by Kasahara critically look at the social procedures within Japanese society that regulate individual feminine identity, love relations, and family constructions that produce narrow routes of expected behaviour that school girls, brides, wives and mothers must navigate in order to become part of the submissive organisation that controls and standardises personal desire and any seeds of individuality. In Kasahara's analysis these projects question such social mechanisms by means of parody, ridicule, silence and repetition, posing an inverted mirror for reflection and reconsideration of the social structures of contemporary Japanese society.

Jason Herlands introduces *Domesticated Yapoo* (*Kachikujin yapû*), a work of "futuristic fantasy masochism fiction" written by (the recently deceased) Shôzô Numa in the late 1950s, covering a time period from the 120th century BCE to the 40th century CE. Numa's text unveils a white supremacist, matriarchal empire founded on the enslavement of blacks and the breeding of *yapoo*—an analogue to Japanese people—to support the sybaritic lifestyle of inhabitants of its outer-space domain. *Yapoo* uses parody and satire to both poke fun at contemporary geopolitics as well as situate the groundbreaking masochistic fantasy amid a panoply of classical texts from around the world. Herlands expands on Numa's expression of his fetish for blonde European women through the formalist tropes of masochism by structuring hierarchies so that the blonde women are objectified and worshiped as gods while the lowly *yapoo* are treated as subhuman receptacles for their bodily waste products. Herlands' analysis shows how scientific and historical discourses are manipulated to reinscribe racial and gendered hierarchies, and how the *yapoo* metaphor stands in relation to a broader sense of discrimination in different societies, with Japanese society at the core of this critique.

In the third section of the book the possibility of intricate sexualities suggests the ways in which gender multiplicities may be considered in relation to a complex view of sexuality, beyond its inscribed duality. **Leslie Winston** employs the figure of the intersexual as a lens through which to read the protagonist in Shûsei Tokuda's *Arakure* (*Rough Living*, 1915). Winston demonstrates how the literary production of both Shikin Shimizu and Shûsei are examples of a discourse that defines the sexual

dichotomies promoted by the science of sexology. By drawing the reader's attention to sex as spectacle in breaking the bonds between body and gender, Winston's text functions as the opening shot to a series of articles that destabilise and subvert commonly held concepts of sexual dichotomies and gender roles.

Winston's article is followed by **Ory Bartal's** enquiry into Makoto Saito's poster, *Love Mother Earth* (2001), an image that portrays a sideways view of female genitalia topped by a grass-covered sand mound resembling green pubic hair. Saito's advertisement utilises this female nude to promote a real estate company. By looking at female nudes in both Japanese and European art, Bartal identifies the territories where nudity is fulfilling voyeuristic fantasies and impulses. It is only the imprinted slogan "love mother earth" that reveals the poster to be an advertisement for a real estate company; otherwise, it could easily be viewed as a pornographic image. The article analyses the structures by which late consumer society has transformed conventional objects, such as a house, into erotically charged signifiers of desire. The questions at stake consider whether or not this is the old "Sex Sells" strategy, or, if there is something more sophisticated at work here. The text brings together high and low cultures, foreign and Japanese influences, traditional and contemporary sensibilities, and art and commerce, reassessing certain contemporary Japanese trends that aspire to be global and cosmopolitan while continuing to possess specific local character.

Following the introduction that questioned Freud's emphasis and crucial attention to the Oedipal structure, **Ayelet Zohar's** text in this section delves into another central pillar of psychoanalysis—the phallus. The symbol that famously serves as the signifier of the One, the singular, the *Name-of-the-Father* and the root of the signifying system, in a manner that comprises the binary system of Western thought, is dared in this text. Zohar performs the task she contemplated in the introduction—suggesting the *temporality* and *multiplicity* of the phallus/penis. By bringing together several mythological objects, contemporary visuals and textual metaphors, Zohar challenges the assumed universality of the psychoanalytic concept of the singular phallus. Working through the idea that the phallus cannot be separated from the penis, Zohar elaborates on the multiplicity of phani (an amalgamation of penis and phallus in the plural) as a central theme in order to undermine some psychoanalytical axioms, thereby presenting alternative accounts to the presumed narratives that constitute of the self.

Tamaki Saito's text utilises Lacanian terminology and interpretation to understand the sexuality of the *otaku*, a term that refers to those taking great interest in the fictional worlds of *manga*, *anime*, figurine collections

and computer games, usually accompanied by a certain level of social withdrawal. Saito describes the inner worlds, imaginations and sexual desires of these fans, comparing differences between male and female *otaku* and offering an analysis of the images at the focus of their attention: the homosexual love affairs that appeal to female *otaku* and the nature of the *phallic girls* that are at the hub of male *otaku* attention. Saito calls for a clear understanding that these fans are non-paedophilic and concludes with a critical view of the attempts to limit the fantastic imaginations and creative minds of these fans.

The next article combines the views of two contributors —**Michiko Kasahara** and **Ayelet Zohar**—in a discussion of fictional representations of male pregnancy. Kasahara brings to the fore Hiroko Okada's video *The Pregnancy by Male* project (2003) and her photo series *Future Plans*, while Zohar expands on this endeavour with an analysis of Yasumasa Mornimura's *Mona Lisa in Pregnancy* (1988) and Vigil Wong's *POP! The First Human Male Pregnancy* (1999). By presenting the possibility of male pregnancy as reality, the four projects at hand show that what once seemed like the last frontier of s differentiation can become a productive arena for the discussion of future possibilities of gender equality.

Kinneret Noy's chapter looks at the Japanese avant-garde dance *butoh* as a space of cross-gender experimentations. *Butoh's* main interests and themes, especially those dealing with the marginal, the subconscious, and the irrational, have led many male dancers to depict female roles, through which they have sought out the experience of the ultimate *Other*. Noy discusses the function and possible readings of cross-gender roles as they are reflected in the works of *butoh's* two founding fathers, Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno. After a short discussion of the historical and political aspects of cross-dressing on the Japanese stage, Noy examines specific works — Hijikata's *Revolt of the Flesh* and Ohno's *Admiring La Argentina*—pointing at the political, philosophical and aesthetic aspects that emerge from the potential conflict and the ideal harmony that exist between femininity and masculinity in these artists' works.

Sayumi Takahashi Harb re-reads Yoko Ono's influential 1964 work *Cut Piece* by thinking through Buddhist and philosophical discourses of *The Gift* and the psycho-economies of giving in the contemporary global arena. Takahashi demonstrates how the depth and complexity of Ono's re-working of feminist and identity-based political commitments can be appreciated more fully when one considers how the poetics of giving both engage with and supersede the logic of categorisation, possession, acquisition and fetishistic exchange.

Ayala Klemperer-Markman considers the history of prostitution in Japan in terms of contesting concepts and debates between feminist theorists and social commentators. Klemperer shows that few, however, have asked prostitutes themselves what they have to say about their own social territory. By using an art project—*Made in Occupied Japan* (1998)—created by Yoshiko Shimada and sex-worker Bubu de la Madeleine, a graduate of Kyoto City University of Art, whose personal life path has led from performance art to prostitution and sex-activism, Klemperer opens the door to let in a prostitute's voice, outlook and opinions. Together with Shimada, they perform in video and photo based works that explore Japanese history, women, violence, nationalism and the representation of memories. In *Made in Occupied Japan*, they created a video-projection that aligns Bubu's personal experience as a prostitute with an historical aspect of her profession, namely, Japanese prostitution during the Allied Occupation of Japan (1945-1952) and the effects it may still have on contemporary Japanese society.

The book concludes with **Bracha L. Ettinger's** and **Kyoko Gardiner's** exploration into Alain Resnais' film *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959), a narrative of a relationship between a French woman and a Japanese man who meet in Hiroshima after the war. Resnais' film (and Marguerite Duras' text upon which the film was based) is the point of departure for their discussion of affectuous encounters and matrixial borderlines. The particularity of the city of Hiroshima, floating in the after-effects of the atomic bomb, and the memory of trauma and loss the protagonists carry within them, create a sphere in which these personal wounds are made accessible and become shared experiences. In this co-authored commentary, Ettinger and Gardiner create another layer of encounter, of two intertwining voices that touch, take from, and feed into each other. It is therefore not just a reading of the film but also a re-creation of a phenomenon that the film witnessed. The text invites the reader to immerse herself in the experience of matrixial encounters and the process of communicating, inspired by such encounters.

Notes

¹ I have written about the curatorial process and the preparation of the *PostGender* project in “The work of Curatorship in the Age of Digital Reproduction”, *Protocols: History and Theory*, Bezalel Academy of Art & Design, no. 2 - Contemporary Curatorship: New Approaches (available online) http://bezalel.secured.co.il/zope/home/en/1143538156/1143567844_en [accessed March 2009]

² Ayelet Zohar, *PostGender: Gender, Sexuality and Performativity in Contemporary Japanese Art*. Haifa, Israel: Tikotin Museum of Japanese Art, Haifa Museums, 2005. Exhibition catalogue.

³ The exhibition was warmly received by the print media as well as by television broadcasting and other electronic media. Special attention was paid to the show by gay circles who found a new voice for their concerns in the show. For more detail, please refer to the Hebrew name of the show *mofa ha'minim* מופע המינים. For example:

A fashion design show inspired by the exhibition, WIZO Haifa art school, <http://www.wizodzn.ac.il/article.asp?cc=0102040104> [accessed March 2009];

a review of the show on the gay forum GoGay,

<http://www.gogay.co.il/content/article.asp?id=3577> [accessed March 2009]

⁴ I am referring here to notes like Robertson's reference to the George W. Bush administration, etc.

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INTRODUCTION

ANTI-OEDIPUS, AJASE COMPLEX
AND *POSTGENDER*:
THE MULTIPLICITY AND TEMPORALITY
OF GENDERS

AYELET ZOHAR

Citizens, the briefest way to tell you
Would be to say that Oedipus is no more;
But what had happened cannot be told so simply –
It was no simple thing.
—Sophocles, *Oedipus in Colonus*, scene 8¹

When approaching the dilemma of post-gendered existence, as the theme is being discussed by the various authors participating in this volume, I find it indispensable to embark on the predicament by directing my attention to the myth of Oedipus, a story that constitutes the core of Freud's views of self and sexuality. With Oedipus, Freud solidified his analysis on the formation of the self, which he sees as tied together with the process of sexual and gender identification. The problem of Oedipus' presence, thus, remains an ongoing concern: it has become the central pillar of psychoanalytic thought, matched with Freud's decline to include any alternative or parallel formats that may articulate personal growth in formats differing from this meta-narrative.²

The role of Oedipus in shaping mainstream psychoanalytic discourse cannot be underestimated. Nonetheless, my essay seeks to question these postulations put forward by Freud and his circle, using cultural analysis and employing multiple sources that challenge the oedipal axiom. One of the main intentions of this process is to find out how, if at all, Freud's discourse on and around Oedipus could be relevant in contexts external to Freud's particular cultural circumstances, the specificity of his texts, and his claim for the universality of psychoanalytic discourse. Predominantly, I am interested in the case of Japanese society as a prism through which to

question the relevance Freud's convictions. Hence, in this introductory note I reassess the place and significance of the oedipal complex outside Western discourse,³ re-evaluating the importance of its terms vis-à-vis alternative conceptions and elaborations presented by a variety of radical thinkers from postmodern and postcolonial perspectives, enhanced with several Japanese standpoints on the matter.

My inquiry is therefore twofold: on one hand, I offer a close reading of the major texts that criticise the structured place of the oedipal concept in Western thought, including Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* and their discussion of *multiplicity* and *becoming*; simultaneously, I reconsider the early work of Japanese psychoanalyst Heisaku Kosawa (1897-1968), whose 1932 text on the *Ajase Complex*⁴ is an early suggestion of alternative modalities that could expand or substitute the oedipal construction in non-European contexts. With the exploration of the differing contributions of these two threads of thought, I arrive at the formulation of my concept of *multiplicity* and *temporality* of genders. Notably, while the introduction is structured as an interrogation into previously known models of gender construction and performance, the book itself, with the thirteen participating articles, serves as a set of examinations of the different aspects of gender performance and its *temporality* as practiced in various fields of Japanese culture.

The *Oedipus* Triangle in *Third Space*: The Myth between Content and Structure, Universalism and *Différance*

[...] a structural Oedipus (3+1)⁵ that does not conform to a triangle, but performs all the possible triangulations by distributing in a given single domain desire, its object, and the law.

—Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *Anti Oedipus*⁶

The assertion that Oedipus lies at the heart of psychoanalytic discourse formed the core of the postmodern critique offered by prominent scholars such as Michel Foucault,⁷ Jacques Derrida,⁸ Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, expanded by various feminist intellectuals in the vein of Hélène Cixous⁹ and Luce Irigaray.¹⁰ A second wave of criticism was directed at Freud's universalist attitude, that is, at his perception that psychoanalysis was valid beyond personal history, cultural variations or social circumstances.¹¹ This claim was challenged by academics like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha, who call for culturally informed particularities of possible psychoanalytical investigations that consider

alternative formulations, complexes, terminology and even optional myths drawn from other literary canons.¹² With the above critiques in mind, I consider how other discourses and gender formations can inform a more open-minded, multifocal, postgendered sense of self and being.



Fig. 0-1, Jean-Antoine-Théodore Giroust, *Oedipus at Colonus*, 1788.
Oil on canvas , 64 5/8 x 76 3/8 in. Dallas Museum of Art, Foundation for the Arts
Collection, Mrs. John B. O'Hara Fund

Thus, this book advances the direction of inquiry drawn by post-modern and postcolonial critiques, and simultaneously, the articles and the theoretical tools presented create exciting new research possibilities—not just to differentiate or discuss cultural specificity as a sufficient ground for alternative terminology to the language of psychoanalysis, but also to work in a direction deviating to psychoanalysis. Some of the alternative models and suggestions elaborated here may attempt to develop models that are currently, at best, entirely absent from current psychoanalytic discourse, and at worst, considered as perversions in classic psychoanalytic thought. As a concrete illustration, considering how formulations like Judith Butler's articulations of *The Lesbian Phallus*¹³ may serve as an unconventional model for the description of homosexual parenthood, or how Heisaku Kosawa's *Ajase Complex* could offer a guideline for a complementary model of understanding single-parent families. Likewise, alternative myths and cultural structures could validate postulations that are informed by divergent cultural experiences, and may shape substitute models of family and/or personal dispositions that go beyond the classic

Freudian model of a nuclear family of father, mother and a child, as described in Freud's oedipal model, and reflects familial ideals of bourgeois life in Central Europe in his time.

Importantly, as part of his methodology, Freud appealed to myths, personal stories, visual objects and other texts drawn from the great body of Western culture. In doing so Freud encompassed a vast and diverse body of sources—from Greek mythology to Leonardo Da Vinci's paintings and biography, from the Bible to Shakespearean tragedies, archeological objects and mundane artifacts (like the 'mystic writing pad'). Thus, Freud's project is profoundly linked to the cultural products of Western tradition and one cannot separate his thought from this infrastructure as thoroughly manifested in his writings. Freud's claim for the universality of psychoanalysis can therefore be seen as an inherent part of the West's narcissist perception of itself as the centre, or only valuable culture, contrasted with the marginality of other cultures.¹⁴ Moreover, Freud's very desire was to establish psychoanalysis as a branch of positivist science aimed and geared towards the production of singular, absolute system of psychological inquiry which is valid in all instances. From the postmodern and postcolonial perspective adopted by the authors of this book, such an approach is challenging and disputable.

Thus, by way of this introduction, I follow Oedipus through its encounters with its critics and a number of suggested optional readings within and without Western culture, challenging Freud's singular path of sexual and gender identification, aiming to constitute alternative models that result in the articulation of gender *temporality* and *multiplicity*.

*

Among those questioning the place of Oedipus and its role in the psychoanalytic system, I find Shoshana Felman's work most helpful in understanding the place of a myth at the centre of a system that claims itself to be a "positive science".¹⁵ The problem can be put in this way: why Freud, who was keen to establish psychoanalysis as a scientific system, used a myth as the central pillar of his theory, and how can we understand the function of myth in the broader context of psychoanalytic theory and its relevance to cultures that do not share the approach of this specific myth? Felman, as a literary critic, is interested in the presence of Oedipus' myth in psychoanalytical theory in a broader sense that examines the relationship between narrative and theory, myth and science, structure and content. In her *Beyond Oedipus*,¹⁶ Felman quotes Jacques Lacan as the