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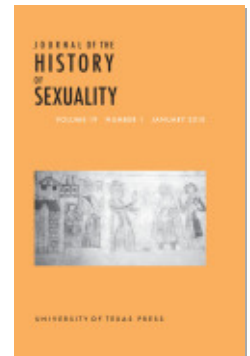
*Sexuality Down Under: Social and Historical Perspectives*  
(review)

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Journal of the History of Sexuality, Volume 19, Number 1, January  
2010, pp. 170-173 (Review)

Published by University of Texas Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/sex.0.0090>



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In *Geisha, Harlot, Strangler, Star* Johnston may not have offered the final word on the life of Abe Sada, but he contributes an important alternative to the understanding of the infamous Abe as a dangerous and sex-crazed woman. Using mainly police and trial records, medical reports, and newspaper articles, he does an admirable job with the difficult task of peeling away the myths that shroud her life and memory and attempts to get at her lived experience and her own voice. This first book-length study of Abe Sada in English is a fascinating foray into a history of gender, sexuality, and crime in early-twentieth-century Japan and deserves wide readership.

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*Sexuality Down Under: Social and Historical Perspectives*. Edited by ALLISON KIRKMAN AND PAT MOLONEY. Dunedin, New Zealand: Otago University Press, 2005. Pp. 304. \$39.95 (paper).

Ever since Michel Foucault's influential call for a reexamination of sexuality as a genealogical and epistemological enterprise in the 1970s, a wealth of scholarly material has been published that has both engaged with and enlarged the histories of sexuality, establishing sexuality in the context of burgeoning literatures from the health and social sciences as well as in relation to feminist, queer, anthropological, and cultural studies. The majority of these investigations have focused on the North Atlantic, that is, the United States and western Europe, but now *Sexuality Down Under* widens this scholarship by turning its attention to the South Pacific. Allison Kirkman and Pat Moloney admit in their introduction that this new scholarship faces a considerable challenge to establish itself. The problem is one of being a "suspect area of study," which has meant that contributing scholars have risked "personal and professional costs to pursue their research interests" (27). The editors identify four major discourses that run as a central thread through twelve diverse contributions, covering the fields of sociology, gender studies, history, media and art studies, and the political sciences, which influence the biomedical, liberal, conservative, and feminist discourses.

Following a brief introduction, the volume opens with Pat Moloney's fascinating chapter on the Maori and the racial issues that have a bearing on our understanding of their sexuality. The chapter draws an interesting historical comparison between the construction of sexual knowledge and the intertwining issues of race and ethnicity in Tahiti and New Zealand. This is a strong chapter, but one minor quibble is that there could have been a wider engagement with recent literature on the revisionist historiography on colonial sexual encounters and the construction of sexuality

(work by Lee Wallace, Philippa Levine, and Waltraud Ernst, to name but a few). For her part, Caroline Daley approaches a much-needed revision of the historiography of Puritanism in New Zealand in her chapter; however, her examination of the ubiquity of the popular New Zealand tabloid *Truth* and her assessment of how advertisements in Australian health and fitness magazines reflect the sexual desires of ordinary New Zealanders is not fully convincing. The historically laden relationship between Puritanism and homosexuality is discussed in successive chapters by Chris Brickell and Cameron Pritchard. Whereas Chris Brickell traces the emergence of a (Pakeha) gay identity from the late nineteenth century onward, Cameron Pritchard examines recent homosexual law reform in New Zealand. With much of the literature on this subject still coming from the United States, the question as to how much of the American medical model's treatment of gay identity has been transplanted to New Zealand remains open for discussion. (For example, STD clinics were already in place before the gay rights movement became fully active [92].)

The issue of morality surfaces again with Michel Hill's extraordinary piece, in which he revisits the infamous Civic *Crèche* case in Christchurch, where child care workers were accused of the sexual abuse of children, and extrapolates from it an argument about the uneasy fusion of popular with professional ideas about such abuse. Ideas about sexual behavior and sexual identity are also discussed in Allison Kirkman's chapter about lesbianism and female doctors. Using in-depth interviews with female doctors, Kirkman presents an interesting discussion on the relationship of gynecological examinations to the construction of gender. After an abrupt change that is somewhat characteristic of the volume, readers are next plunged into the issue of teenage sexual promiscuity and pregnancy, the latter having recently seen a steep rise in New Zealand. Giving voice to what Barbara Collins identifies as a lack in scholarship on the issue of teenage sexuality, she uses interviews with teenage mothers to bring out the agency of these young women. Although her work is commendable, the chapter could have benefited from a stronger discussion of the inconsistencies in the girls' responses, an issue that seems central to her overall argument (146–47).

New avenues of research can be found in the next two chapters: Libby Plumridge writes on the emotional side of prostitutes' lives, and Jan Jordan examines sexual assault. By specifically looking for the gaps and disjunctions in her interviews, Plumridge effectively draws the reader's attention to the still little-investigated aspect of emotional love in prostitutes' work, a question that allows for diversity in sexuality discourses (163). Juxtaposed in an interesting way with Plumridge's chapter, Jan Jordan's essay, based on his former PhD dissertation on rape and the police, examines an approach to the construction of rape that has only recently received general historical attention. Jordan has gained access to police files in cases that did not proceed and uses them as vehicles to outline the construction of sex and

rape by the authorities. In places the author's valid argument is unfortunately undermined by his tendency to take his inside knowledge about the cultural and political life of New Zealand for granted; for example, what was so special about the serial rapist Joseph Thompson?

The last three chapters explore media influences on the histories of sexuality in the context of aspects of advertising (Rob Cover), film (Tina Varies), and art (Jenny Harper). While Cover analyzes the contextualization of sexuality in advertisements, Tina Varies follows the intriguing history of Viagra. Viagra has recently come under fairly intense academic scrutiny, and New Zealand represents an interesting case study because it is the only country in the world apart from the United States to allow direct consumer advertising. Yet it is not quite clear how using interviews with nine men after they have been required to watch the *British* sitcom *My Family* effectively contributes to the essay's underlying aim, which is to demonstrate the construction and embodiment of diversified New Zealand male identity. Harper's chapter is a fascinating account of the controversies that erupted over sexually explicit art exhibits in New Zealand and, by extension, discusses wider questions of sexuality and the intricacies of cultural politics, thereby effectively interweaving New Zealand's cultural politics with other cultures at large.

As is so often the case with edited collections, differences in style, persuasiveness, and the use of theory emerge in *Sexuality Down Under*. While some chapters engage in a discussion of theories of the body and of sexuality, others pay them only scant notice. At times the movement from one chapter to the other is very abrupt; furthermore, some chapters could have benefited from better editorial work to improve their quality and style. That said, the disjunctions between the chapters sometimes allow for new and interesting connections; for example, pairing the discussion of the emotional side of teenage mothers with a discursive reading of rape keeps one thinking long after finishing the book. Despite the apparent problems in conducting this kind of research, the volume does not shy away from controversial topics, such as the construction of child sex abuse or the personal pleasures that prostitutes derive from their work; here the volume is at its best by pushing back the frontiers of academic discourse.

Kirkman and Moloney do not claim to be comprehensive; indeed, they emphasize that the volume has some major omissions, that it lacks, for example, any study of age and ethnicity. In fact, there are many difficulties in addressing issues of race and sexuality for fear of reinstituting discrimination or because of the long-standing notorious problem of obtaining access to historical sources. However, because the authors claim to provide a "survey of sexuality down under" (26), it must be noted with regret that this survey includes only one chapter that discusses Maori sexuality. This might remind us how much more research there is still to be done.

Taken together, however, these chapters make for an interesting collection not only for scholars specializing in studies on sexuality but also

for all scholars interested in the sociocultural and political makeup of New Zealand. The book probably has limited appeal for those seeking wider theoretical or epistemological contributions on sexuality, however. What are we left with, then? Clearly, there is a great deal more work to do to research still understudied topics such as heterosexuality, old age, identity, pleasure, ethnicity, and race. The volume will certainly work as a stepping stone for future research by identifying these vital research grounds.

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*Queer Japan from the Pacific War to the Internet Age.* By MARK McLELLAND. Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005. Pp. 372. \$84.00 (cloth); \$36.95 (paper).

During the late 1990s I worked as a volunteer interpreter for a group of Japanese gay activists called OCCUR. We traveled extensively, meeting with other activists and attending conferences in the United States, Europe, and Asia. While the Western activists we met with invariably expressed a sense of solidarity with the movement in Japan, their support was usually mixed with a more or less patronizing assumption that Japan was “behind” the West in the struggle for the rights of sexual minorities. I do not know how many times I found myself translating comments like “What you describe in Japan sounds like the way things were here twenty years ago” or “It’s so exciting to hear about the work that your organization is doing and to see that Japan’s gays and lesbians are *finally* starting to fight for their rights.”

Such statements, while well intentioned and for the most part well received, were nonetheless rooted in two problematic assumptions: the notion that identity categories such as “gays and lesbians” are transhistorical and universal and the idea that their absence in any given cultural context is to be explained in terms of a temporal logic of belatedness rather than cultural and historical difference. They assume that the story of sexual oppression and liberation is a universal one, an inevitable and teleological movement from darkness into light, from hatred into tolerance, and that the progress made on this journey by any given society can be mapped as points along a single trajectory. It is a dynamic as old as Japanese modernity itself.

Japan plays the perpetual adolescent with “the West” (usually the United States) as its patient tutor. The group I worked for, as Mark McLelland points out in the book under review here, was itself prone to represent itself as a pioneer in gay and lesbian activism and to downplay not only the role of earlier activists but also the diversity of other queer voices in Japan at