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Japan's Original "Gay Boom"

Introduction

In recent years, the internationalization of gay, lesbian and transgender identities and cultures has been the focus of at times heated debate in both popular and academic contexts.¹ Some have taken the development of lesbian and gay media, particularly literature and film, as well as characteristically western modes of activism and visibility such as LGBTQ organizations, film festivals and parades in societies as diverse as Taiwan, Hong Kong and Japan, to be evidence of a "global queering" (Altman 2001: 86-100). As Dennis Altman points out, "globalization has helped create an international gay/lesbian identity, which is by no means confined to the western world" (2001: 86). This interpretation, drawing on globalization studies' paradigms, understands the emergence of ostensibly western "lesbian" and "gay" identities and modes of consumption beyond the boundaries of the western world as part of a process of "sexual westernization." Assuming the centrality of western approaches and paradigms, this model posits globalization as a process through which "the Rest" variously imitates, appropriates, and resists "the West."

A second view, drawing primarily on ethnographic and historical sources, offers a contrary analysis which tends to reify "traditional" cultures, positing non-western societies as repositories of imagined "authentic," "local" sexual identities. This binary opposition between what may be termed "unique local essentialism" and "global homogenization" analyses of "global queering" emphasizes the need for more critical theoretical work as well as for more detailed empirical accounts of the development of local Asian GLBTQ cultures and histories.

This chapter argues for a recently ascendant third position which challenges both of the above opposing views. Moving beyond the "transcultural reductiveness" of approaches which locate the sexual cultures and practices of "other" societies along a continuum of sameness or difference from those of the west while simultaneously resisting the tendency to see indigenous Japanese categories as somehow more authentic or natural than imported understandings, I argue that *both* western and non-western cultures of gender and sexuality have been, and continue to be, mutually

transformed through their encounters with transnational forms of sexual knowledge. In seeking to transcend the opposed binaries of unique local essentialist and global homogenization analyses of global queering, the hybridization model offers a more productive framework for understanding transformations of sexual cultures. Through an analysis of the emergence in the postwar period of one Japanese sexual category - that of the *gei bōi* (gay boy) - I argue that this identity is not a simple importation from the west, nor the residue of a fixed, unchanging premodern tradition which managed to “survive” in the face of globalization but instead is the product of hybridizing global processes.

In an earlier project (McLelland 2000), I traced the spread of the identity category *gei* (gay) in Japanese popular culture during the closing decades of the twentieth century. I argued that one of the key events which saw *gei* win out over a variety of other competing categories for male homosexuality was the "gay boom" of the early 1990s which saw mainstream media (print, television and film) interest themselves in Japan's sexual minorities. The result of the boom was that *gei* and *rezubian* became widely dispersed throughout the general population and have come to be used in a manner very similar to the identity categories "gay" and "lesbian" in English.

However, my subsequent encounter with Japan's postwar "perverse press" (McLelland 2005; 2004), a large number of monthly magazines published throughout the 1950s with titles such as *Fūzoku kagaku*, *Fūzoku zōshi*, and *Fūzoku kitan* has considerably complicated my understanding of the development of the Japanese category *gei*. The perverse press, specializing in stories of "perverse desire" (*hentai seiyoku*), is a resource barely tapped in either Japanese or English research, and offers a detailed account of postwar sexual categories, identities and cultures, including many accounts written in the first person. Through careful archival work, I was able to trace the development of the Japanese category *gei* and uncovered a fact not previously reported that Japan's original "gay boom" (*gei būmu*), occurred in 1958, some ten years prior to the widespread adoption of the term "gay" in English media.

However, before giving an account of the transmission and subsequent popularization of the term *gei* in Japanese, it is first necessary to say something about the complex

set of understandings that positioned male homosexuality in the sexual culture of the immediate postwar period.

Japan's postwar homosexual culture

According to reports in the perverse press, the most visible homosexual category to appear immediately after the war was the *danshō* or cross-dressing male prostitute who adopted a style similar to the female-role performers of the kabuki, the *onnagata*, who had long been associated with male prostitution. However, the most common term for such "passive" male homosexuals was *okama*, a slang term for the buttocks (and thereby an allusion to anal sex) which can be traced back to the Tokugawa period (Pflugfelder 1999: 323) and which is still used to refer to homosexuals and other males who behave effeminately today (McLelland 2000: 8). Kabiya, for instance, notes that "When ordinary people speak about homosexuals in general, they refer to them as *okama*" (discussion cited in Ōta 1957: 421; see also Tanaka 1954: 19).

Unlike the premodern paradigm of transvestite prostitution associated with the *onnagata* of the kabuki theatre, contemporary *danshō* were thought to have a predilection for passive anal sex which, although they may have been introduced to it while in the army, was part of their psycho-social makeup. Postwar writers largely followed paradigms established by the sexological writers of the Taisho period (1912-25) who, following German leads, had attempted to place the sexually perverse into distinct taxonomic categories based upon their supposed psychological or physiological constitutions. The category most commonly used to describe postwar *danshō* was "urning" (*ūruningu*), a sexological term that had been devised by German sexologist and homosexual, Karl Ulrichs (1825-95), to designate a "female soul in a male body" and which had achieved widespread currency in prewar sexological writings. Urning were considered to have woman-like bodies, small genitalia and an "innate" (*sententeiki*) desire for passive anal sex which led them to turn to prostitution as a way of fulfilling their desires as well as earning a living. They chose to practice as *transgendered* prostitutes because their constitution meant that they were already woman-like and they had a predisposition toward narcissism (*narushishizumu*) and took delight in dressing and making up like a woman.

Both *danshō* and *okama* were transgender categories strongly associated with prostitution. However, a variety of other designations were used by masculine-identified men who wrote in the perverse press about their own same-sex experiences. These include the neologism *danshokuKA* which conjoins an alternative reading of the traditional characters *nanshoku* (male-male eroticism) and the nominalizing suffix *ka* or "ist;" hence *danshoku-ist* or "practitioner of *danshoku*." Another term widely used in the immediate postwar years was *sodomia* from the English "sodomite" (or perhaps "sodomy") which derived from the Old Testament story of the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, supposedly on account of the poor sexual etiquette of their populations. In the postwar magazines, *sodomia* was not used to refer to anal or oral sex (the "unnatural crime" of sodomy), but was used to describe male homosexuality in general and could also be used as a designation for individual homosexuals. The term could be used as a noun for individuals identifying themselves as *sodomia* (homosexuals), as an adjective, as in *sodomia* "interests" (*shumi*) or *sodomii* relations (*kankei*).² *Sodomia* could also be used as a group designation or form of address as in "*sodomia no minna san*" or "all you homosexuals" and could be conceived of as a state that one could enter into as in "*sodomia naru*" or "become sodomitical."

The English term "homosexual" was also widely used in transliterated form as *homosekushyaru*, often abbreviated to *homo*. The Japanese translation of homosexual into kanji, *dōseiai* (literally same-sex love) which was widely used in the prewar press, also appears in the postwar publications, often conjoined with the suffix *sha* or "person." However, *dōseiai* frequently appears with the *rubi* (superscript indicating the pronunciation) "*homo*" written alongside. In fact, *homo*, used as an alternative reading for the characters *dōseiai*, or written separately in the katakana script for foreign loanwords, was, by the end of the 1950s, the most common designation describing all men with an interest in same-sex sexual acts.

As the variety of terms - both foreign and indigenous - suggest, in the immediate postwar period it is impossible to discern a pattern in their usage since they are often used interchangeably in the same discussion. For instance, the January 1954 edition of *Fūzoku zōshi* contains an article by Kabiya (1954) entitled "*Danshoku kissaten*" or *danshoku* "coffee shops" which introduces some of the "brand-new homosexual

(*sodomia*) meeting places" where both "homo" (*homo*) and "non-homo" (*homo denai*) customers can be found. Kabiya frequently switches between terms, speaking of "bars for homosexuals" where the designation is *sodomia*; mentioning also *danshokusha*, in which the suffix *sha* or "person" is conjoined with the traditional term *danshoku*, hence "male-male eroticism persons," and elsewhere using *homo*.

The ability of the Japanese written language to use characters signifying a certain meaning alongside superscript designating a non-standard pronunciation is a cause of further confusion. While "traditional" terms such as *danshoku* lived on well into the postwar period, the meaning of these terms had obviously shifted. The non-traditional use of nominalizing suffixes such as *ka* (-ist) or *sha* (-person) now used to designate specific types of sexual being were employed alongside the use of *rubi* to suggest new readings of old terms. In the August 1953 edition of *Fūzoku kagaku*, for instance, *danshoku* appears with the reading *sodomia* printed alongside.³ What nuance this linguistic play added to these terms, or if such nuances were understood in the same way by all readers, is very difficult to discern but is a clear indication of the hybridity of postwar Japanese sexual categories. Old-fashioned terms such as *urning*, hangovers from early twentieth-century German sexology, lived on alongside indigenous terms such as *okama* and *danshō*. *Sodomia*, a Latin term which in Europe had strong associations with the Church and was generally used to designate oral or anal acts of "sodomy," in Japanese became a general rubric for describing all men with same-sex sexual interests and, despite its disparaging connotations in English, was frequently used as an identity category and a form of address. This very confused situation is evidence of Fran Martin's contention that the circulation of global sexual categories results not in the displacement of native categories by foreign but in "densely overwritten and hyper-dynamic texts caught in a continual process of transformation that occurs with the ongoing accretion of fresh discursive traces" (2003: 251) - a trend illustrated by the popularity of another hybrid term, the *gei bōi*.

The rise of the *gei bōi*

The mainly American Allied troops who occupied Japan from 1945 to 1952 and who continued to be based in the country throughout the Korean War included many men with homosexual as well as heterosexual interests. Although the sexual services that

were set up during the Occupation to cater for heterosexual men have been well studied (Tanaka 2002; Dower 2000), little attention has been paid to the sexual interactions that took place between members of the Occupation forces and Japanese men. One of the main results of this interaction was the transmission and widespread dissemination in Japanese culture of the English term gay (*gei*) - an interesting example of cultural "glocalization."

"Gay" as a signifier for homosexual men was not widely understood in the US in the 1950s and did not become widespread even in Anglophone societies until the Gay Liberation Movement of the early 1970s. The term had only just established itself as a common referent among homosexual subcultures in the US as a result of the mass mobilization during the Second World War which brought a diverse number of homosexual men and women together from all parts of the country and helped to standardize homosexual slang (Faderman 1992: 163; Berube 1990: 117; Cory 1951: 107-8). Yet, as Cory points out, even in the early 1950s the term was "practically unknown outside of homosexual circles, except for police officers, theatrical groups and a few others" (1951: 108).

Compared with the slow dissemination of the word gay throughout Anglophone societies where it was to take another twenty-five years before becoming general currency, the rise of *gei* in Japanese was meteoric. Gay (*gei*) entered Japanese immediately after the war via gay men in the Occupation forces who referred to their Japanese partners as *gei bōi* or "gay boys" (Kabiya 1962a: 146) and by the mid 1950s *gei*, especially as part of the compound *gei bōi*, was being used in mainstream Japanese media to describe effeminate homosexual men. The sudden popularity of the term was largely due to the fact that *gei* (written in the *katakana* syllables used to transcribe foreign loanwords) is a homophone of *gei* (written with the character for "artistic accomplishment" - as in *geisha*). Gay boys were sometimes spoken of as *gei wo uri*, that is "selling *gei*" and it was easy to make a semantic slip between *geinōjin* (an entertainer, where *gei* is written with the character for artistic accomplishment) and *gei bōi* (where *gei* is a transliteration of gay). *Gei bōi* therefore came to be understood, at least in part, as an occupational category, in a manner similar to *onnagata* or *geisha*.

Unlike the *danshō* who were essentially street prostitutes, the *gei bōi* sought employment in the bar world. In 1957 sexologist Ōta Tenrei published an edited volume entitled *Dai san no sei* (The third sex) based on research he had conducted into the *gei bā* that had sprung up in Tokyo after the war, pointing out that such bars had not existed before the war. One of the earliest, *Yakyoku* (Nocturne) in Shinjuku, was reportedly opened as early as 1946 and was much frequented by foreigners (Kabiya 1962b: 102-3; Fujii 1953: 189). In the immediate postwar period, the small bars where young Japanese men went to meet potential partners or clients had been referred to as *danshoku kissaten* (coffee shops) or *sakeba* (drinking spots) but in 1952 a staff member of a Shinjuku *danshoku* bar named Adonis who disliked these old-fashioned designations began to refer to his establishment as a *gei bā* (gay bar). The term quickly caught on and by the mid 1950s was widely used, even in the mainstream press. While the earliest bars seem to have been more informal, by the early 1950s, the bars were staffed by between three and seven professional hosts known as *gei bōi* who served drinks and provided conversation for customers, often making themselves available for after-hours assignations (Ōta 1957: 306-10).

Ōta discovered nine *gei bā* in Asakusa, seven in Shinjuku and one each in Ginza, Shimbashi, Ikebukuro, Shibuya and Kanda, a total of twenty one in all (Ōta 1957: 306). Even compared with a city like New York at this time, this was already a large number. However, according to Ōta's account, most of the bars were modest watering holes with only basic amenities since earlier attempts to provide more high-class surroundings had failed. This was all to change very suddenly in the next few years as Japan saw a "boom" in *gei* life resulting in a proliferation of bars as well as a significant shift in the kind of clientele they attracted.

Japan's original "gay boom"

In the early 1990s Japanese media were swept by a "gay boom" (*gei būmu*) which saw a rapid escalation in the amount of attention given to minority sexuality issues in the press, on television and in movies. While this development has been widely discussed in English (see for example, Hall 2000: 37-43; Lunsing 1997) and Japanese (Yajima 1997; Fushimi 2002), no commentators seem to have noticed that Japan's first gay boom, using precisely this term, had actually taken place thirty-five years previously,

in 1958. While, in the early 1990s, the concept *gei* was beginning to be articulated in a more political sense, often in the context of discussion of a *gei* and *rezubian* "movement" (*undō*), the late 50s use of this term was quite different and is a clear illustration of how the meanings of terms can shift radically over even short periods of time.

The most significant event that enabled the rapid expansion of the *gei* subculture took place in 1957, when, after years of campaigning, women's groups forced the government to pass an anti-prostitution bill. As many businesses that had relied on heterosexual prostitution closed down or restructured their activities, space was opened up in former red-light areas for new sex-related businesses, including those catering to homosexual men and cross-dressers. Since the law was targeted at the open and conspicuous world of mainstream heterosexual prostitution, its impact upon more covert homosexual practice was less severe and to an extent allowed homosexual operations to move into former heterosexual red-light areas. Since neither homosexuality nor cross-dressing was illegal in Japan and homosexual meeting places were not raided by the police, as was routine in Anglophone societies, Japanese *gei bōi* were able to go about their business without fear of police harassment. The only restriction on *gei bā* intermittently enforced by the police, was the 1948 Entertainment and Amusement Trade Law which ostensibly forbade trading between midnight and sunrise. Consequently, Shinjuku Ni-Chōme (Shinjuku's second ward), which had been a heterosexual red-light district, was gradually taken over by *gei* businesses from this time and now houses the largest collection of bars catering to a homosexual clientele in Japan (Ōtsuka 1995: 14-19; Fushimi 2002: 247-258).

While in 1957 there had only been twenty or so *gei bā* in Tokyo catering primarily to a clientele of homosexual men, in 1958 the mainstream press began talking about a "gay boom" (*gei būmu*) that had seen the number of *gei bā* shoot up to nearly sixty, largely due to the cross-over appeal of these establishments to a clientele outside the homosexual world (*Shūkan taishū* 1958: 24). *Gei bōi* were no longer catering to an exclusively male (or homosexual) clientele but also provided companionship for women. Ōta points out that while a large majority of the *gei bōi* working in the bars were by temperament "urning," there were also boys who were not homosexual (*homo de nai*) including students and other "semi professionals" who simply worked

for a time in the bars in order to earn money (1957: 308-9) and were happy to entertain both male and female clients. Indeed, by the early 60s, evening editions of the tabloid papers regularly featured over twenty advertisements recruiting "boys" or "beautiful boys" to work as hosts in private clubs for "gentlemen." Known as "assisted boys" (*enjō sareru shōnen*) (Satō 1960), these youths anticipated the "compensated dating" (*enjō kōsai*) schemes later devised by Japanese high-school girls by some quarter of a century.

The growing popularity of the *gei bā* among a more mainstream clientele makes it difficult to equate these institutions with the developing gay bar subculture in the US and other western countries. As Nancy Achilles points out, widespread sodomy laws and restrictions on indecent behavior (such as members of the same sex dancing together) made it difficult for gay bars to advertise their presence in the 50s and early 1960s in the US and news of their opening tended to be passed on via word of mouth (1967: 232-33). Esther Newton (1979), in *Mother Camp*, an investigation of 1960s drag shows in the US, does draw a distinction between "gay bars" where homosexuals met and the more upmarket "tourist clubs" which put on drag shows for a predominantly heterosexual clientele, but the latter were comparatively few and remained largely subcultural with little impact on mainstream culture. In Japan, however, the early 60s witnessed widespread media interest in the *gei bōi* phenomenon.

For instance, an unsigned article in the April 1963 edition of the magazine *Ura Mado* refers to the "touristization" (*kankōka*) that was sweeping through Japan's *gei bā* scene wherein "homosexuals" (*homo*) were being displaced by "ordinary customers" (*futsū no kyaku*) including many women.⁴ An article in *Fūzoku kitan*, also published in April 1963, warns homosexual men who visit "gay bars" in the expectation of making assignations with the boys working there that some boys also "service" women.⁵ The author suggests that when referring to such boys, *panpan bōi* (after the *panpan* girls who catered to GIs during the Occupation), would be a better designation; although he does point out that rather than "servicing" female clients "as a man," the boys "receive caresses like pets." Transgender artist Miwa Akihiro reported that at the beginning of the 1950s *gei bā* were rather furtive establishments where customers could be seen passing to and fro waiting for a quiet moment to slip inside (Itō 2001: 2), but by the

end of the decade such bars had become avant-garde places of entertainment for a more mainstream clientele.

In 1958, the popular magazine *Shūkan taishū* (Weekly popular culture) wrote about Japan's "gay boom" (*gei būmu*), describing it as "the best in the world" (*sekai ichi*). Unlike the previous category of *danshō* who were street prostitutes working by night, *gei bōi* were considered to have "evolved" a new kind of "gay style" (*gei sutairu*) - one that could "parade itself in an imposing manner even in daylight." Communities of *gei bōi* were developing around *gei bā* all over Japan, estimates running to 2500 in Tokyo, 1000 in Osaka, 500 each in Kyoto and Kobe and another 1000 or so spread throughout the rest of Japan (*Shūkan taishū* 1958: 25). These reports encouraged the conception that *gei* was very much a commercial category, with there being "in excess of 5000 persons to whom the name gay (*gei*) is applied professionally" (*shokugyōteki ni*).

While the "feminine" style preferred by *danshō* had been a retrospective one, consisting of women's kimono and wigs in which long hair was tied up in a chignon reminiscent of geisha, the *gei bōi* were more contemporary, even pioneering in their self presentation. They had little interest in passing as women and did not see themselves as female impersonators, considering their androgynous (*chūsei*), boyish style to be "a new disposition" (*atarashii keikō*), more in keeping with the modern world (Satō 1960: 60). *Gei bōi* were mostly in their late teens and early twenties, and although born during the war, would have remembered little from this period. They had no nostalgia for Japan's imperial past but looked abroad instead for inspiration when fashioning their self identities. In the late 1950s, *gei bōi* were sporting the short-style "Cecile cut"⁶ popularized by actress Jean Seberg, the androgynous star of *Saint Joan* (1957), *Bonjour Tristesse* (1958) and *A Bout de Souffle* (1959). They wore light makeup and dressed in newly fashionable slacks, under which they wore women's pantyhose. They also had a preference for perfume, especially Chanel no. 5. Jean Seberg represented a new, more androgynous model for women than had previously been popular and the *gei bōi* saw themselves as "cultural women" (*bunka josei*), that is, they had acquired their femininity by incorporating particular sartorial codes and modes of behavior associated with cultural constructions of the feminine. *Gei bōi* pointed out that while the basic categories of "man" and "woman" had not changed

since the time of Adam and Eve, they represented a new "sexual idea" (*sei kannen*) - the cultural woman who constituted a third sex (*dai san no sei*).

While the *gei bōi* were clearly keen to differentiate themselves from the *danshō*, both identities illustrate how the feminine was not reducible to the female body, but could be seen as a set of practices able to be expressed by either male- or female-bodied individuals. The femininity of the *gei bōi* was, however, by definition modern and both forward and outward looking. The *danshō*, in continuing to dress and wear their hair like "traditional" Japanese women, had carried over prewar modes of transgender identity and performance but, when it came to the performance of femininity, *gei bōi* presented themselves as quintessentially modern. Matsumoto Toshio's 1969 movie *Bara no sōretsu* (Funeral parade of roses), the vehicle that launched *gei bōi* "Peter" on his career, features a fight scene between Peter and his *gei bōi* companions and a gang of real girls whom they dismiss as *tada no onna* - "merely women" - in a move recalling earlier paradigms which regarded kabuki *onnagata* as more accomplished performers of femininity than female actresses.⁷ Following Judith Butler we may ask whether this is "a colonizing 'appropriation' of the feminine" - a question which only has moral force in a belief system which "assumes that the feminine belongs to women" (1990: 122). Historically, this has not been the case in Japan where sexual tension had long been generated by the "dissonant juxtaposition" of feminine gender performance played out with male bodies. *Bara no sōretsu* itself plays with this dissonance in a scene where Peter (or Eddy as he is named in the movie) and his *gei bōi* companions enter a male toilet and stand together at the urinals - much to the consternation of the other male users. As Newton points out "drag questions the 'naturalness' of the sex-role system *in toto*; if sex-role behavior can be achieved by the 'wrong' sex, it logically follows that it is in reality also achieved, not inherited by the 'right' sex" (1979: 103). What Peter and the "real" girls are fighting over is not therefore some residual or authentic expression of an inner femininity but rather the right to enact femininity as a style, or even "way" of being in the world, a project to which biology has little to contribute.

Although *gei bōi* stressed their modernity, they had much in common with their prewar counterparts and their popularity was enabled by enduring assumptions about gender, particularly as it was played out in the entertainment world, which had

survived into the postwar period. Drawing upon previous paradigms of transgender performance developed in the kabuki theater, there was a tendency to view *gei* not so much as a sexual orientation but more a kind of artistic skill. The fact that, unlike *danshō*, *gei bōi* were not primarily prostitutes but worked in the bars taking care of and providing entertainment for guests - similar to female hostesses in regular bars - enabled them to develop skills as performers. One aspect of this performance was heightened transgendered behavior, a trend that accelerated in the next decade. In 1961, for instance, *Fūzoku kitan* (1961a: 63) described the "flourishing" business for "geisha boys" at high-class restaurants in Tokyo who, dressing as *onnagata*, performed for an elite clientele. Also in the early 1960s, nightclubs such as Tokyo's Golden Akasaka were frequently staging "imitation girl contests" which gave contestants drawn from the country's *gei bōi* the opportunity to compete with each others for prizes (*Hyakuman nin no yoru* 1963b). In both cases *gei bōi* (homosexual) elides into *geisha bōi* (entertainer) where the stress is not on sexual orientation so much as artistic performance.

Hence, at a time when homophile organizations in the US were keen to stress the "normality" of the homosexual, developing a quasi-ethnic understanding of "gay identity" based on citizenship and rights (Epstein 1998; Plummer 1995: 90), Japanese *gei bōi* actually embraced paradigms which emphasized their difference. By the late 1960s, emerging US gay activism was characterized by its militancy and chauvinism, rejecting effeminate gender performance and "discredit[ing] camp and other evasive techniques" (Levine 1998: 26). Transgender paradigms of homosexual identity expression were rejected in favor of a more masculine or at times hypermasculine mode of self-presentation (Levine 1998).

Japan's *gei* culture was, however, going in entirely the opposite direction, capitalizing on the *gei bōi*'s exotic difference. Nineteenth-century German notions positing male homosexuals as a separate "third sex," contemporary European codes of androgynous beauty and traditional Japanese understandings of transgender performance were fused to create the figure of the *gei bōi*. Japan's *gei bōi* were cultural innovators who, via their role as entertainers, were able to have an impact on society far wider than the confines of the homosexual subculture and whose influence was to remain strong until the early 1980s.

Conclusion

During the late 1950s Japan underwent a "gay boom" which saw an explosion of homosexual discussion and representation in the popular media unparalleled by developments in any Anglophone society until the early 1970s. *Gei* had already been established as a term for effeminate young men who worked in the entertainment industry by the mid 1950s - some twenty years prior to the adoption of the term gay in English-language media. While *gei* is certainly related to the use of gay in English - this latter term had *itself* only won out as a preferred term for self-designation within US homosexual communities during the war and was not picked up by mainstream media until the early 1970s. Hence, while it is clear that Japan's encounter with the Allied Forces during the Occupation resulted very quickly in the generation of new types of sexual discourse and the proliferation of new modes of homosexual practice and identity, these Japanese subcultures were very different from the developing "gay" subcultures in the US at this time, not least in terms of their apparent openness and the freedom with which they were discussed in the press.

While in the postwar period in the US gay was associated with the development of essentialist, masculine male homosexual identities, in Japan the development of *gei* as a primarily *transgender* and also a *commercial* category encouraged a movement in the opposite direction. The convenient homophony of *gei* as "gay" and *gei* as "artistic accomplishment" only served to reinforce the hybridized manner in which this term came to be used in Japanese to signify a new kind of sexual being - the *gei bōi* who was defined more in terms of his role as entertainer than in terms of his choice of sexual partner. Consequently, the Japanese *gei bōi* was as different from the American gay man, as he was different from the *danshō* or male prostitute who had preceded him.

However in the mid 1980s two simultaneous developments led to a gradual revision in the way *gei* was understood in the Japanese media - the founding of in Japan of gay and lesbian rights' organizations which drew upon a now international understanding of "gay" as a self-referent for largely gender-normative homosexual men, and the emergence of the term "newhalf"⁸ which was to become the new identity category for

effeminate homosexual men who lived and worked in Japan's bar and entertainment world. The result was that by the time of Japan's second "gay boom" which swept the media in the early 1990s, *gei* had displaced *homo*, emerging as the most common self-referent among homosexual men in Japan. To understand this as a process whereby indigenous Japanese categories of sexual identity were displaced by foreign borrowings, however, would be to efface the complex history of the term *gei* in Japanese.

The fact that the *gei bōi* was able to emerge so rapidly as a "new sexual idea" in the postwar period was in large part due to the fact that prewar nationalist notions of embodiment had collapsed along with the government's rigid regulatory regime at the war's end. The ideology of the prewar regime was so discredited that space was opened up in the ruins of Japan's cities for the celebration of "the raw, erotic energy of Japanese bodies" (Igarashi 2000: 48) enabling the development of new forms of hetero- and homosexual practice and identity. The *gei bōi* rejected the aggressive masculine gender performance and the procreative imperative of the prewar regime but, instead aligning himself with discredited modes of "traditional" femininity embodied by the *danshō*, he sought to embody the new androgynous ideal of beauty emerging in Europe which was to dominate the cultural scene of the late 60s. The hybridized gender performance of Japan's *gei bōi*, then, which drew upon earlier paradigms of the transgender entertainer coupled with new western ideals of androgyny, is an instance of what Iwabuchi terms "transformative local practices" which result in "the formation of non-Western indigenized modernity" (2002: 40) and is further illustration of Fran Martin's observation that in modern societies sexual discourse is unavoidably "polyglottic and translational" (2003: 249). The *gei bōi*, like the American gay man, can therefore be seen as a mode of subjectivity enabled by changes taking place in postwar modernity but *gei bōi* is an indigenous Japanese category which arose in relation to local Japanese conditions, not some copy of a western original.

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¹ See for instance the various responses posted to Dennis Altman's (1996) On Global Queering, *Australian Humanities Review*, July, online <http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-July-1996/altman.html> (4 June 2003).

² *Sodomiya* occurs on page 103 of the February 1954 edition of *Fūzoku kagaku* whereas *sodomia shumi* occurs in a letter reproduced on page 168 of the November 1953 edition *Fūzoku kagaku*. The term is also occasionally spelt as *sodomii* as on page 89 of the October edition of *Fūzoku kagaku* which speaks of *sodomii kankei* and on page 102 of the September 1954 edition of *Fūzoku zōshi*. The rendering *sodomisuto* also occurs, although rarely, for example, see the reader's letter on page 60 of the August 1953 edition of *Fūzoku zōshi*.

³ "Sodomia wa ryūkō suru," p. 40.

⁴ Pp.138-9.

⁵ P. 125.

⁶ Cecile was the name of Seberg's character sporting this hairstyle in *Bonjour Tristesse*.

⁷ Since there was no indigenous tradition of women actors, women's roles in many of Japan's early films, from 1909 to 1919, were played by male actors trained as *onnagata* (Mitsuhashi, 2001: 5) which led to lively debates in the media about the relative abilities of male and female actors to perform as "women."

⁸ In 1982, Betty, the mama-san of Betty's Mayonnaise, an Osaka *gei bā*, introduced a new term, *nyūhāfu* (new half), as a designation for transgender performers. "Half" or *hāfu* in Japanese is used to signify individuals of mixed race, usually Japanese and Caucasian and Betty said of herself that "I'm half man and half woman, therefore I'm a *new half*." Like *gei bōi*, *nyūhāfu* was a trendy fusion of two English words, but with a very specific Japanese meaning, and it soon caught on in the press and began to be adopted as a self-designation by many transgender performers (McLelland 2004).