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Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Yokohama: Prints from Nineteenth-Century Japan* by Ann Yonemura

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English edition, places the emphasis on the value of Saikaku's homosexual works as social documents and disavows any reformist, prurient or other ulterior motive. By contrast, the English version appeared as volume seven of a series entitled 'Eastern Love' which consisted entirely of translations by Mathers, mostly second-hand translations from French versions. Furthermore, Mathers's output during his lifetime (1892–1939) is dominated by limited editions of translations of such works as Ovid's *Amores* and the *Arabian Nights*. There is more than a suggestion here of titillation, of high-class smut, and that is reinforced in the Tuttle edition by the new introduction, which states that, 'Saikaku describes Japanese love scenes of all kinds with a frankness that has made him a favourite with expurgators.' The English edition, at least, would appear to have been produced from motives other than those of sexual reform.

This new volume, a handsomely-produced complete translation of *Nanshoku ôkagami*, is therefore particularly welcome and it deserves to succeed in 'integrating the topic [of homosexuality] into scholarly discussion of Japan' (p. 45), as the author hopes it will do. The translations are fluent and stylish and, for those who must rely on translations for a glimpse of Genroku Japan, will show up yet another side of Saikaku. Schalow provides a health-warning, for he is concerned about 'Saikaku's misogynous tone, which many readers of this translation will find offensive' (p. 4), but he firmly rejects the suggestion that Saikaku was himself of misogynous nature, as well as repudiating the literalist view that in *Nanshoku ôkagami* Saikaku was revealing his true sexual preferences. Saikaku was not only an entertainer, he was also, as his other works show, adept at creating different personae for himself in his various works, and even within the same work: thus whereas story 2:2 in this collection is misogynist in tone story 4:1 is its opposite.

The subject of most of the stories is *nanshoku*, which Schalow translates a little oddly as 'male love'. What was *nanshoku*? By Schalow and by Japanese literary critics it is perceived as something different from *dôseiai*, or homosexual love. Schalow perceives it in terms of connoisseurship of boys, Ken Sato translates it as *pédérastie*, and these make it clear that *nanshoku* refers to the sexual engagement of an adult male with young boy, while *joshoku* refers to his sexual engagement with a woman. The perspective implicit in both words is that of an adult male besporting himself with a social inferior, either a female or a junior male. In extreme cases in *Nanshoku ôkagami* the adult male is a daimyô. It is for this reason that the word 'comrade' in *Comrade loves of the samurai* is singularly inappropriate.

Schalow has familiarized himself with some of the literature on homosexuality, particularly Dover's *Greek homosexuality*, and it is a pity that he did not in his introduction address the issue of the wider context of Japanese homosexuality. The homophobia of the Meiji period is well known, but the course of the transition from the heyday of *nanshoku* literature in the late seventeenth century through to 1800 when *nanshoku* seems to have vanished from

literature and on to the Meiji period is still to be charted.

Schalow refers in several parts of his introduction to Saikaku's *chônin* audience and their tastes and demands but this needs to be queried, although it is a familiar enough refrain in Saikaku scholarship. The illustration on the jacket of this book shows samurai in disguise attending a kabuki theatre in Edo, and this is an effective reminder of the fact that samurai constituted a substantial urban presence and a part of urban culture: it is not satisfactory to suppose that samurai simply yielded to the culture of their inferiors, for they themselves continued to be a part of the market for urban literature and this fact was as well known to Saikaku as it was later to Bakin. Several of the stories in this collection are set in Edo and, as Schalow notes in his introduction, this was the first of Saikaku's works to be published simultaneously in Osaka, Kyoto and Edo: was this simply a way of appealing to a larger *chônin* market, as Schalow suggests, or was it, given the preponderance of samurai in Edo, an attempt to infiltrate a large samurai market? I have one further quibble, with Schalow's suggestion (p. 19) that seventeenth-century Japanese publishers did not use movable type 'probably because they felt that movable type was incompatible with flowing Japanese script and did not produce an aesthetically pleasing product'. The so-called Saga-bon printed in Kyoto in the early years of the seventeenth century demonstrate quite clearly that movable type could produce works of very great aesthetic appeal; the real problem, though, was the cost, and it was the economics of the book trade in the seventeenth century that dictated the abandonment by commercial publishers of movable type.

There is a sense in which both Saikaku and Sôseki have now been overtranslated. Students offered nothing else are in danger of seeing Genroku Japan through Saikaku's eyes alone, and there is a need for more translations of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century prose. But this is not in any way intended as a criticism of this book, which raises challenging questions about the sexuality of seventeenth-century Japan and the participation of samurai in urban cultural life. I hope Schalow will write more on these subjects, for he has here given us only a glimpse of his scholarship and he clearly has much more to contribute.

P. F. KORNICKI

ANN YONEMURA: *Yokohama: prints from nineteenth-century Japan*. 198 pp., maps [on end papers]. Washington, D.C.: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery; Washington D.C. and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990. \$45 (paper \$26.95).

The official opening of Japan to Western foreigners other than the Dutch was, as it turned out, a major event in world history. Two side effects, one large and one small, resulted from this movement, and they form the subject

of this catalogue. The larger was the removal of the representatives of the 'Five Nations' in 1858–59 to a new settlement at the small fishing port of Yokohama. This was to grow rapidly, and is now one of Japan's six biggest cities. The smaller was the production by the Edo publishers of a spate of woodblock prints describing the foreigners, their ways, and the new settlement. These were designed by existing artists of the Utagawa school or followers of Ando Hiroshige (d. 1858), not all of whom seem to have actually visited Yokohama or seen foreigners in the flesh. These ephemera, made mainly in the period 1859–62, have come to be called 'Yokohama Prints' (*Yokohama-e*) although they were not actually produced in the new town at all. A further burst of related prints, this time more concerned with Japan's own modernization, followed in the decade 1870–80. The whole history of this minor form can be seen very adequately in Ann Yonemura's catalogue which reproduces 85 items in colour.

Whatever the criticisms which follow, it should be made clear from the start that this catalogue is a welcome addition to the English language literature on its subject. It will be of great use to any student library concerned with Japanese history, the history of Japanese-foreign relations, Japanese art, or Japanese woodblock-printing. It records well enough (but see below for some reservations) and with few inaccuracies the interesting collection of *Yokohama-e* made by William Leonhart, and its sectional introductions and full bibliography will be of real service to its readers.

It may even surprise some that so much effort and indeed money has gone into an exhibition of what in the end must be seen, in the context of the history of Japanese art, as minor and only semi-historical material. Yet one need look no further to understand this than the pre-eminently powerful position of private collectors in the world of North American museums and galleries, and the enthusiasm of Japanese sponsors to promote anything which points to historical connexions between Japan and other countries, especially those of the West. One should not, however, complain because something has been given ample resources. What is more regrettable is the fact, obvious from every page of this publication, that it has been dominated by the influence of the book-designer (Carol Beehler) and publisher exerting their powers, sometimes in contradictory directions.

The designer has done in some ways a very sound job. It is an ample, generous book with a good type-face on excellent paper, and some nice touches, such as the visual reference in the sectional headings to the *bokashi* technique of fading colour from strong to weak, much used by the traditional *Ukiyoe* printers. As far as one can judge, too, without seeing the originals of the particular woodblock prints, the colour reproduction is good and unmisleading. But for the scholar and art-historian there are major shortcomings.

The first is the way horizontal three-sheet prints (*sanmait Suzuki*) have often been reproduced across an opening of the catalogue, which is so tightly bound that a good deal of the centre is lost. This is really unpardonable, in spite of

the difficulties this format undoubtedly causes the maker of books. The alternatives are to print the triptychs much smaller on one page (the cheaper, and usual Western way also used in this catalogue) or to use inserted fold-outs (the Japanese, effective and expensive way). Whatever the choice, surely there is no point in reproducing something if the reader cannot see what it is. I imagine this was ultimately the publisher's decision.

The second shortcoming is related, because it, too, leaves the reader in some doubt about what is being reproduced. I refer to the trimming by the designer of certain prints so they will fit the page or simply look neater. Now, it was a fact of life of the Japanese *Ukiyoe* print that margins were left around the image on each sheet, whether it were a one-sheet or a multi-sheet composition. The publisher or later collectors might or might not trim them down to the margins, or even beyond. It is important for the scholar to know if this has happened. Here, there are instances where it is not made clear who has done this trimming, though it seems pretty certain it is the designer's work. This is particularly annoying in the case of the 'dictionary prints' (nos. 30–32), where the author accurately translates a text which appears incomplete in reproduction.

The third shortcoming must also be attributed to the designer. It is tediously clear, from time to time, that the arrangement of the plates has left a gaping hole which the author has been asked to fill in with unnecessary verbiage and frequent repetitions of the same information. A particularly notable example is no. 21 ('Picture of a Parlor in a Foreign Mercantile Firm in Yokohama'), where it is doubtful if the text tells us anything we cannot see, or has not been explained in great detail several times earlier.

Ann Yonemura's captions take rather to an extreme the too common assumption of art-historians that their readers are both blind and stupid. It really is patronizing to write sentences like 'The print is coloured almost entirely in black and grey, shades that impart a nocturnal ambiance' (no. 66) or to explain that the 'American Steam Locomotive' depicted there by Yoshikazu is actually a paddle-steamer. It is a pity, too, that she frequently overstates the powers of pictorial construction of artists who, mostly, are of very average powers; and produces a positive eulogy of Sadahide's panoramic map of Yokohama (no. 1), fine though it is as a tour-de-force of woodblock printing on a large scale. A lack of balance about the importance of *Yokohama-e* in the long and distinguished history of Japanese woodblock art and an almost complete absence of discussion of the finer points of printing technique and connoisseurship are the major faults in the text.

Nevertheless, Ann Yonemura has put together much information which we shall all use in the future, and the supplementary figures are well chosen and reproduced. The illuminating early photographs by Felice Beato are a special delight.

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