

the *noro* and her associates, there are also clan priestesses numbering about a dozen. Somewhat confusingly, the *noro*, the village priestesses, and the clan priestesses can all be called *kaminchu* or *kami-sama*. They perform ritual relating to the island as a whole, to villages, and to clans, according to a traditional annual calendar of rites. In addition to these traditional ritualists, there are also other religionists performing a variety of rituals when consulted by a client: *yuta*, a shamanic role; *ogami*, those who perform commercialized prayer ritual, and *ekisha* (also called *uranaishi*), who are diviners and fortune tellers. Of these, the *kaminchu* are most closely connected to the *yuta* who are regularly called upon to issue a judgment (*bandan*) when a woman is in the process of being identified as someone who is meant to become a *kaminchu*. Elsewhere in Okinawa the priestess system has begun to decline and *yuta* are becoming more prominent; on Henza it would seem that the *kaminchu* are clearly in charge.

Sered's principle interest in Okinawa was to identify factors associated with female religious predominance, and to pursue that aim she has constructed the first half of the book as an extended ethnography of gender. She found that salient factors in women's ritual predominance included the following: "village endogamy, extended male absence, a central role for women in subsistence work and commerce, lack of substantial inheritable property, marriage and childbirth patterns that enhance women's longevity, weak political structures, aversion to hierarchy and rules, and strong integration among women" (p. 5). She is impressed with child rearing practices which train children in gender-appropriate behavior, but in a very mild way by comparison with Israeli society. There is no preoccupation with virginity at marriage for either sex, and both would typically have several partners before marrying. Everybody on Henza has been married twice.

The chapters of the second half of the book focus on different religious rituals and a study of the life-course of the priestesses, especially the role of initiatory sickness in the decision to become a priestess. Sered describes the role of the priestesses as mainly consisting of being present at the particular ritual, more than in the performance of specific actions. The *kaminchu* "emit good spiritual energy" so that villagers want them to be present on a variety of occasions. "Priestesses concentrate, represent, and embody divinity" (p. 147). It is not that the priestess performs the ritual, but that her presence itself *is* the ritual. In general, the presence of priestesses guarantee the world's equilibrium, social harmony, and individual health. The priestesses embody specific *kami* and if other *kami* are required for a particular ritual purpose, the *kaminchu* invites them to be present. Initiatory illness is a clue to be unraveled (p. 154), not a transforming experience but a sign. Thus, it can be quite mild by comparison with shamanic illness elsewhere. Illness mildly weakens the woman's body so that she can fuse with *ka-mi*-ness. Sered confirms this analysis through examination of many detailed life histories.

This book is a genuine eye-opener for students accustomed to the characteristic preoccupation with hierarchy and rules seen in studies of mainland Japan. Full of insights in its own terms, it also offers a salubrious outsider's perspective on Japan as a whole. It challenges readers to reconsider the apparently immutable character of basic social structures and highlights the medium of religion for establishing a society's pillars of gender construction.

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Mirror: The Fiction and Essays of Kōda Aya. By ANN SHERIF. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999. 224 pp. \$42.00 (cloth); \$16.95 (paper).

Kōda Aya (1904–1990) was a critically acclaimed female writer and essayist who began her career at the age of 43, for purely commercial reasons, and whose life and writing is closely identified with her father, the writer-philosopher Kōda Rohan (1867–1947), Japan's first recipient of the Medal for Cultural Merit. Ann Sherif's *Mirror: The Fiction and Essays of Kōda Aya*, which is based upon her dissertation is the second full-length work on the author. It follows Alan Tansman's 1993 *The Writings of Kōda Aya, a Japanese Literary Daughter* (Yale University Press), which is an excellent close reading of twenty or so of Kōda's works. Part 1 of *Mirror*, "Life and Writing," consists of six chapters: "A Literary Life," "The Father: Kōda's Autobiographical Tales," "*Flowing* and the Literature of the Demimonde," "Narrative Authority and the Postwar Realm: Two Exemplary Short Stories," "Torn Sleeves and the Anti-Oedipal Family," and "Epilogue." Of the four short stories translated by Sherif and collected in part 2, two of them, "Translations," "The Medal" and "Dolls for a Special Day," also appear in Tansman's work. His translations of these same stories have superior readability and literary quality, whereas Sherif appears to have aimed to capture every nuance of Kōda's aesthetic and essay-like style.

In part 1's sympathetic and thoughtful biocritical analysis of Kōda's autobiographical essays, two of her short stories and her two novels (*Flowing*, 1955; *Kimono*, 1966), Ann Sherif brings into play insightful discussions of many aspects of the Japanese literary landscape, among them postwar literature and criticism (for example, Kojima Nobuo's *Embracing Family* and Eto Jun's *Maturity and Loss: The Collapse of the "Mother"*), *zuibitsu* (random notes or essays), the aesthetics of *iki* (chic), the kimono as cultural icon, *haikai*, and the demimonde. The essay-like short story, "A Friend for Life" (Mono iwanu issho no tomo, 1966), provides Sherif with her title. We learn that Kōda wrote this piece "for a special issue of *Fujin Kōron* (Women's Forum) on the subject of mirrors," and therefore "the central image of the story came about . . . largely as a matter of circumstance" (p. 122).

Vis-à-vis Tansman's work, Sherif's originality lies in highlighting Kōda's indebtedness to Rohan not in terms of his style or scholarship, but of his worldview. According to the author, under his influence Kōda learned to cultivate moral fortitude and an authoritative voice, a rare quality among postwar Japanese writers. Kōda the aesthete represents a "wise person with the authority to speak about the moral and symbolic order and with the voice that bears certainty" (p. 59).

Through an examination of thirty pieces of Kōda's writings, Sherif carefully attempts to disentangle Kōda from the commonly held assumption that she was compelled to idealize her father. Instead, Sherif focuses on the "evocative, highly idiosyncratic and refined nature of Kōda's style" (p. 13) and on Kōda's conception of the legitimate female experience. However, in spite of the fact that Kōda consistently wrote about women and female experience, it would be a daunting task for any critic to present her as a feminist sympathizer in light of her enormous popularity among male critics in Japan, her conservative upbringing and moral beliefs, and her purist aesthetic approach to the mundane objects of life. Nonetheless, Sherif makes every effort to do so throughout the book, not without success.

For example, in response to some Japanese critics who "have viewed Kōda's writings as icons 'of cultural conservative rejuvenation'," Sherif poses the question: "But, in the final analysis, is this the strongest reading?" (p. 132). She goes on to say that "Kōda's work does not reaffirm patterns of male domination, and . . . defies the 'claim of universal patriarchy.'" She points out that "the configurations of Japanese gender hierarchy . . . do not demand precisely the same reverence for the father/word/phallus" paradigm central to the Anglo-European feminist arguments. Kōda's non-

biographical works often “seek to disrupt male-dominated culture and deny the assumed centrality and universality of masculine values” (p. 133).

In countering some Japanese feminist scholars, Inoue Kazuko among others, Sherif argues that “[t]he fact Kōda’s conceptual basis lies apart from critical approaches such as feminism and gender studies does not make her antifeminist . . . it would be a mistake to obscure Kōda’s achievements as a writer simply because her writings do not fit neatly into familiar social and ideological frameworks of Anglo-European feminism” (p. 133).

To truly convince the reader that this is so, some definition of Anglo-European feminism(s), more extensive quotations of Japanese feminists, and an overview of Kōda criticism would have been helpful. Her conscious choice of the word “personhood,” rather than “womanhood,” also reflects the author’s ambiguous position and seems to contradict her frequent apologia for Kōda the not-antifeminist. Sherif’s point, that as a gazer the female protagonist in *Flowing* needs to become an asexual being like a nun in order to survive in the world of the geisha, challenges the feminist notion of female sexuality which allows women—whether married, single, or divorced, or mothers/homemakers—to be fully human.

Despite certain analytical gaps, then, and her relative inattention to the feminist context, Sherif’s *Mirror* is a valuable work for anyone who wishes to understand and appreciate the continuity of the Confucian aspects of the traditional Japanese artistic and literary heritage, a heritage that nurtures refinement of character, discipline, and the “rhetoric of humility and inadequacy” (p. 54).

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Great Mirrors Shattered: Homosexuality, Orientalism, and Japan. By JOHN WHITTIER TREAT. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. xi, 241 pp. \$27.50.

It was returning GIs, or the war-trained, who established what the English-speaking world knows as Japanese Studies. Men acquired Japanese wives as adjuncts to their scholarship, or retained fond memories of trysts. The institutionalization of structural disequilibrium, arrogation of representational power, and sexual fetishization—what we call Orientalism—was effected. The original explicator of this exegetic mode, Edward Said, dealt with the Arab world, but Japan offers something for study too. Said assumed heterosexuality to be the Orientalist’s governing orientation, which, even if true for Arabic lands, has never been so for operators in Japan. In fact, the overlap between Japanese Studies pundits and gays is remarkable, and has not ceased to be so with the demise of the Occupation generation. The concomitant way that homoeroticism must have colored aspects of our discipline is a theme never openly addressed, though no doubt often mused on. Any linkage is bound to be subtle. John Whittier Treat, now professor of Japanese Literature at Yale, is rightly scornful of those who assume gayness leads necessarily to attention to overtly sexual writers (pp. 88–89) or to “the hypersensitive, the perverse” (p. 201). We gay men are a varied lot. Thus, the triple nexus of homosexuality, Orientalism, and Japan is an enthralling subject. I must state that this book, couched as a “memoir” (p. ix) and deliberately shunning scholarly precision, is a missed opportunity to address it.