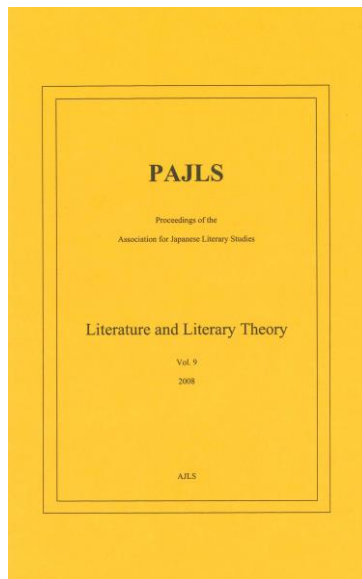


“Haunted by the Sexy Samurai: Ranpo’s
Mobilization of the Queer Past in ‘Shudō
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*Proceedings of the Association for Japanese
Literary Studies* 9 (2008): 101–109.



PAJLS 9:
Literature and Literary Theory.
Ed. Atsuko Ueda and Richard Okada.

Haunted by the Sexy Samurai: Ranpo's Mobilization of the Queer Past in "Shudō mokuzuzuka"

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Since the 1980s, one of the major thrusts of queer theory has been to encourage people to question any term that attempts to describe sexual acts, identities, preferences, and genders in terms that are allegedly universal and transhistorical. As many have argued, queer theory represents a post-structuralist reaction to the overly simplistic assumption on the part of gay liberationist and lesbian feminists that there was such a thing as a universal gay or lesbian identity and that there were necessarily continuities between people that engaged in same-sex eroticism, regardless of what nation, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, or historical era they came from.¹ Queer theory and queer studies have consistently challenged students and scholars to think in increasingly subtle and ever more fine-tuned terms about the ways that similar sexual acts have meant profoundly different things to different people at different times. As a result, a common theme has been to emphasize the differences in implications of sexual acts and subcultures that might, to critically untrained eyes, look similar. For instance, the classist David Halperin has written that when he wrote his now classic book *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, one goal was to show the differences between the cultures of contemporary gay men, which grew out of a category created by nineteenth-century medical psychological discourse, and Greek pederasty, which was partially a product of a culture of misogyny, class hierarchy, and discrimination.² Similarly, Gregory Plugfelder's studies of the seismic shifts in the conceptualization of male-male eroticism from the Edo period through World War II showed us that when people in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries spoke of *shudō*, especially in the context of a martial and roughneck culture of male samurai bravado, they were drawing upon a profoundly different set of cultural assumptions than when twentieth-century Japanese spoke of "same-sex love" using words such as *dōseiai* and *dōsei ren'ai* that had originated in conjunction with sexological and medical discourse.³

Of course, differences do exist in the ways people have thought about sexuality at different moments in time; however, that does not mean that the past is entirely irrelevant to more recent attempts to understand sexuality. Eve Sedgwick notes in *Epistemology of the Closet* that contemporary discussions of expressions of sexuality, especially non-heteronormative sexuality, draw upon and reflect the influence of earlier, premodern models of sexuality in ways that are not always predictable or easily understood. She argues that when there are shifts in the ways that people think about sexuality, these ways of thinking do not simply replace one another, as if one construct of understanding sexuality were simply replacing an older, more outdated construct. Instead, earlier constructs rear up again and infiltrate later ones, producing instability

¹ For instance, see Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 72-83.

² David M. Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 14.

³ Gregory M. Plugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire: Male-Male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600-1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

and even contradiction with the latter. She points out that to try and write a history of sexuality as a series of successions of neat stages, each delineated by a specific date that represents a “turning point,” only creates oversimplified dichotomies between constructs of same-sex desire in the homogenized past and same-sex desire “as we know it today.”⁴

To complicate matters further, the kinds of cross-temporal conceptual interference that Sedgwick describes are not necessarily unconscious. Halperin has noted how often people in the present draw consciously on older historical models of same-sex eroticism as part of their political projects in the present. He notes a strong tendency, especially on the part of gender and sexual minorities, to assert bonds with people in other times, places, and cultures who engaged in seemingly similar experiences, even though the cultural ramifications of those experiences may be profoundly different. He argues that such identifications perform important queer work; one benefit of transhistorical and transcultural identification is that it can alter one’s experiences of the present, while a second benefit is to create links with “whatever features of ancient, exotic, or culturally distant societies that may be at odds with contemporary institutions, practices, and ideologies of homophobia.”⁵

The point is that queer theory has taught us how to be sensitive to difference, and as a result, contemporary thinkers have become increasingly skilled at examining the fine-tuned cultural concepts that have shaped the ways that people have thought about sexuality within various different temporal or ideological spheres. Nonetheless, queer theory has not finished the process of thinking through the ways that the past lingers with us, infiltrates our thoughts, shapes our existences, and interferes with our own neat attempts to create models to understand the present. In my estimation, this represents one of the greatest ongoing projects of queer theory and queer historical studies. As Halperin has noted, the study of influences, interferences, and consciously drawn continuities between past and present is just as crucial as that of historical ruptures, and “an adequate history of sexuality needs to make conceptual accommodation for both.”⁶

The need to think critically about the meaning of these forms of transhistorical interferences and identifications has immediate relevance to the ways that we as scholars think about artistic and scholarly projects in our time. To give one example from popular culture, the Japanese serial television drama *Dōsōkai* (The Reunion), originally aired in 1993, focused on the lives and problems of contemporary gay men in Japan, yet at one moment in the series, it showed images of boy-loving samurai from early modern Japan as the spiritual ancestors of gay men in the present. In doing so, were they engaging in ahistoricism, conveniently forgetting the fact that the culture of *shudō* was less about identity than a part of the culture of male-male bonding in a society that had more than its fair-share of misogynist male chauvinism? Or perhaps were the producers of *Dōsōkai* doing something admirable—something in the service of librating politics—by presenting prime-time TV viewers with an image of Japan where heteronormativity has not always been the norm?⁷ The way that we might read the ethics of this project will likely depend on our own thoughts about the political efficacy and overtones of that act of cross-temporal identification.

⁴ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 45.

⁵ Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality*, 16.

⁶ Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality*, 17.

⁷ On *Dōsōkai* and its cultural ramifications, see Stephen D. Miller, “The (Temporary?) Queering of Japanese TV,” in Andrew Grossman, ed., *Queer Asian Cinema: Shadows in the Shade* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2000).

Ranpo Reads the Samurai

This rather long introduction is a way at getting at some of the questions that I would like to pose in analyzing an article the mystery novelist Edogawa Ranpo (1894-1965) published in 1936 about male-male love and eroticism during the early seventeenth century. Ranpo was genuinely interested in learning about same-sex desire—both its manifestations throughout history and the ways that it manifested in the lives of contemporary men. In an essay written in 1953, Ranpo commented that the two major preoccupations of his life were detective fiction and collecting books having to do with “same-sex love.” The latter interest, which focused almost exclusively on male-male desire and its historical and literary manifestations, was driven to new heights by the belief that almost no one, except a few rare friends, appeared to be interested in the subject.⁸ As the recent scholarship of Jim Reichert has shown, one important effect of the development of a new “modern” literature during the Meiji period was the abandonment of open validations of male-male eroticism, which Japan, from the mid-Meiji period onward, treated as uncivilized—an abandonment that is symptomatic of or perhaps even complicit in the heteronormative desexualizing drive that reshaped male-male relations in the mid-Meiji period.⁹ All of this meant that by the time that Ranpo developed his interest in literature about male-male desire, there was relatively little contemporary writing that treated the subject in a straightforward and affirming way.¹⁰ In order to find frank treatments of male-male love and eroticism in literature and history, he had to look rather far afield to the literature of ancient Greece and early modern Japan. In fact, Ranpo felt so eager to talk to others about the subject that he joined the *Seishin bunseki kenkyūkai* (Group for Psychoanalytic Research) led by the psychologist Ōtsuki Kenji (1891 -1977), the Marxist critic-turned-psychologist who had completed some of the earliest Japanese translations of Freud. Ranpo began attending their meetings in 1933 and even contributed articles about same-sex desire in the life of John Addington Symonds to the earliest issues of their journal *Seishin bunseki* (Psychoanalysis).¹¹

At some point in the early 1930s, Ranpo developed a friendship with the mystery writer Hamao Shirō (1896-1935), who earlier in 1930 had written two unusually anti-homophobic explorations of male-male eroticism for the women’s magazine *Fujin saron*.¹² Ranpo’s memoirs describe Hamao as a well-read “researcher of homosexuality who had been influenced by [the

⁸ Edogawa Ranpo, “Watashi no shūshūheki,” in *Edogawa Ranpo suiri bunko*, vol. 60 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1987), 91.

⁹ Jim Reichert, *In the Company of Men: Representations of Male-Male Sexuality in Meiji Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

¹⁰ Ranpo’s first full-length mystery *Kotō no oni* (The Demon on the Isle, 1929-30) appears to be an attempt to rectify this lacuna. The work revolves around a male character who prefers sex with men, yet when depicting this character’s desires, the text swings back and forth between sensationalizing and relatively sympathetic rhetoric. Ranpo’s essays suggest that he grew dissatisfied with his attempts in this novel to explore the subject of male homoerotic desire, apparently because of constraints placed upon him by the conventions of mystery fiction. See Jeffrey Angles, “Writing the Love of Boys: Representations of Male-Male Desire in the Literature of Murayama Kaita and Edogawa Ranpo” (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 2004), 201-23.

¹¹ Edogawa Ranpo, “J.A. Shimonzu no hisoka naru jōnetsu,” in *Seishin bunseki*, vol. 1, no. 1 (May 1933); vol. 1, no. 2 (Jun 1933); vol. 1, no. 4 (Aug 1933); and vol. 1, no. 6 (Oct 1933).

¹² Hamao Shirō, “Dōseiai kō,” in *Fujin saron*, vol. 2, no. 9 (1930); Hamao Shirō, “Futatabi dōseiai ni tsuite,” in *Fujin saron*, vol. 2, no. 11 (1930). On Hamao and his work, see Jeffrey Angles, “Hamao Shirō’s ‘The Execution of Ten’ichibō,’” in *Critical Asian Studies*, vol. 37, no. 2 (2005), 307-08. On Hamao’s own writing about male-male homoeroticism, see Angles, “Writing the Love of Boys,” 227-41.

British socialist and homophile] Edward Carpenter and others.”¹³ In fact, Hamao lent Ranpo Carpenter’s 1908 book *The Intermediate Sex*, a work that Hamao had praised in 1930 as the best study of the social ramifications of male-male desire in modern society. Throughout his writings, Ranpo acknowledges that Carpenter’s writings greatly encouraged his own interest in the subject, but he appears to have been especially interested in the final chapter of Carpenter’s treatise *Intermediate Types Among Primitive Folk*, entitled “The Samurai of Japan and Their Ideal.” There, Carpenter argues that the chivalrous ideals of *bushidō* were rooted in the personal, amorous relationships between warriors. He writes, “It was not so much the fair lady of his dreams, or even the wife and family at home, that formed the rallying point of the Samurai’s heroism and loyalty, but the younger comrade whom he loved and who was his companion-at-arms.”¹⁴ Carpenter demonstrates the central role of male-male desire in Japanese military life by quoting the work of German ethnographer Ferdinand Karsch-Haack (1853-1936), who had published a study in 1906 that surveyed a number of Japanese works of fiction. Among them were *Nanshoku ōkagami* (The Great Mirror of Male Love) by Ihara Saikaku (1642-1693) and *Shizu no odamaki* (The Humble Bobbin) by an unknown Edo-period author.

Both novels were familiar to Ranpo, but Carpenter also discusses one work Ranpo had never heard of: *Mozuku monogatari* (Tale of Weeds in the Sea), an allegedly true tale of two beautiful young men who committed suicide together in the early seventeenth century.¹⁵ Surprised to learn about this story from an author from “far-away England,” Ranpo decided to locate the original. He found versions in two collections of texts compiled in the Edo period, and he learned that the humorists Ōta Nanpo (1749-1823) and Kyokutei Bakin (1767-1848) both knew the text intimately and had written postscripts to different versions of it.¹⁶ Moreover, the story appears with minor modifications in Saikaku’s *Nanshoku ōkagami* and the anonymous *Nanshoku giri monogatari* (Tales of Male Love and Obligation).¹⁷ Several Edo-period essays, guides to the city, and histories also mention the story, implying that it was well known before the Meiji Restoration.

Ranpo presents the fruit of these bibliographic searches in the essay “Shudō mokuzuzuka” (Mokuzu Mound Commemorating the Way of the Youth) published in *Bungei shunjū* (Literary Arts Spring and Autumn) in 1936.¹⁸ In his memoirs, he recalls that this essay

¹³ Edogawa Ranpo, “Tantei shōsetsu yonjū-nen,” in *Edogawa Ranpo zenshū*, vol. 20 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1979), 334.

¹⁴ Edward Carpenter, *Intermediate Types Among Primitive Folk* (1919) (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 146-47.

¹⁵ Ferdinand Karsch-Haack, “Das gleichgeschlechtliche Leben der Ostasiaten Kulturvölker: Chinesen, Japaner, Koreer,” in *Forschungen über glesichgeschlechtliche Liebe* (Munich: Seitz & Schauer, 1906), 111-13.

¹⁶ Bakin’s edition appears with a postscript by him in Kyokutei Bakin, “Mokuzu monogatari,” in Iwamoto Sashichi, ed., *Enseki jishshu*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Higashi shuppan, 1976), 380-95. Also see Shokusanjin (Ōta Nanpo), “Amayo monogatari,” in *Misonoya*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1917), 411-32. Ranpo mentions that the popular writer Ryūtei Tanehiko (1783-1842) also owned a version of the story. Edogawa Ranpo, “Mokuzuzuka,” in *Edogawa Ranpo zenshū*, vol. 17 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1979), 57.

¹⁷ See Ihara Saikaku, “Nanshoku ōkagami,” in *Ihara Saikaku shū 2, Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū*, vol. 67 (Tokyo: Shōgakkān, 1996), 398-406; Ihara Saikaku, *The Great Mirror of Male Love*, Paul Gordon Schafow trans. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 143-50. Ranpo owned a copy of *Nanshoku giri monogatari* published after 1640. A facsimile of Ranpo’s personal copy is available as Yoshida Kōichi, ed., *Nanshoku giri monogatari* (*Tsuki: shudō monogatari*), (Tokyo: Koten bunko, 1955), 1-106.

¹⁸ Edogawa Ranpo, “Shudō mokuzuzuka,” in *Bungei shunjū*, vol. 16, no. 9 (1936), 320-26. In later reprintings, the word *shudō* was dropped from the title, which became simply “Mokuzuzuka.” This essay works primarily with the version available in the 1979 edition of Ranpo’s complete works.

was one product of his interest in “writing on same-sex love” (*dōseiai bunken*) and represented the culmination of much research. He proudly states, “It is not the kind of essay that one can write in a single night. Reports based on extensive readings of documents are seen as relatively worthless compared to creative fiction, but in my opinion, my essay is equal to ten fatuous pieces of literary hackwork.”¹⁹

After describing in “Shudō mokuzuzuka” how he first learned about the tale, Ranpo summarizes the story and corrects a number of small textual errors in Carpenter’s retelling. The main figure of the story is the pageboy Itami Ukyō who, in his early adolescence, is so attractive that when Funegawa Uneme, two years his senior, catches a mere glimpse of him, it is enough to make Uneme fall madly in love. In fact, Uneme is so taken with Ukyō’s beauty that he develops a mysterious ailment no doctor can cure. Uneme’s lover at the time, Shiga Samanosuke, pressures him to state what is troubling him. (In Carpenter’s version, Samanosuke, whose name is misspelled, is only a close friend of Uneme.) Uneme confesses his new love but states that since a relationship is impossible, he has no choice but to wait for death. Samanosuke takes pity on Uneme and contacts Ukyō on his behalf. Ukyō replies with a favorable response, which heals Uneme’s illness instantly. Even though they must dedicate themselves to their lords and therefore have few chances to see one another, they pledge their love to one another. This state of affairs continues until another warrior named Hosono Shuzen also falls for Ukyō. The latter rejects Shuzen’s advances, and Shuzen is so humiliated that he vows to kill Ukyō. Meanwhile, Ukyō finds out that he is in danger and takes action into his own hands by going to Shuzen’s own quarters and killing him. Although the authorities exonerate Ukyō, Shuzen’s father presses the case and has the boy condemned to death by ritual self-disembowelment. When Uneme hears that his beloved is to die, he rushes to Keiyōji Temple in Asakusa, where they exchange tearful words and commit suicide together. At the end of the tale, the star-crossed lovers are buried together in a mound on the temple grounds.

Ranpo recounts that he found himself “gradually becoming so taken with this story of Uneme and Ukyō’s love” that he decided to locate the mound where the two were buried. After some research, he learned that Keiyōji Temple had moved several times before finally settling in Imado. Armed with the address, he made his way to the desolate site.

Guided by the priest who lived and worked there, I entered the vacant lot at the back where the main building of the temple had burned down, leaving only its stone base behind. When I asked about “Mokuzu Mound,” he said that it was right there. Alongside the stone platform of what was formerly the main building, a large number of unrelated gravestones had tumbled over. They looked like fallen corpses. Among them was a naturally shaped stone about two and a half or three feet in width. It was dirty, covered with weeds, and lay pitifully on its side. The characters “Mokuzu Mound” had been carved deeply into its surface in angular characters about five inches high.²⁰

Ranpo found himself so moved by the sight of the commemorative stone, which stood in lieu of the mound itself, that he visited the temple grounds three or four more times. On his most recent

¹⁹ Edogawa Ranpo, “Tantei shōsetsu yonjū-nen,” in *Edogawa Ranpo zenshū*, vol. 21 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1979), 17.

²⁰ Edogawa, “Mokuzuzuka,” 61.

visit, he found the stone surrounded by blooming flowers. The essay ends with the following description of the dejected place:

With the summer flowers as its offerings, the monument to the two boys lay forlornly on its side. It lay there with an oblivious look to it.

Someone had drawn some meaningless angular and curved lines on the stone with white ink. This was probably the naughty handiwork of the neighborhood children. For the children, this monument was no more than a hunk of stone worthy of their graffiti. For the adults too, this was no longer anything more than a single piece of stone.²¹

Implicit in this ending is a quiet lament for this all but forgotten love story. For Ranpo, the stone represented a symbol of the powerful male-male love that had faded with the decline of *shudō*-style relations. Located in the forgotten rubble of a graveyard behind a ruined building, the commemorative marker and the feelings it represented struck him as belonging to an entirely different age.

Returns of the Spectral Past

In standing before the grave, Ranpo appears to be haunted by the ghosts of the past—those ghosts of Uneme and Ukyō who speak to him of their erotic and passionate love from beneath the stone. Ranpo's essay implies that like the stone itself, this kind of love between men lies almost completely out of view, relegated to a peripheral position by the changes in cultural mores that had accompanied Japan's entry into the modern world. Still, their story refuses to remain suppressed and returns like a ghost in unexpected ways, finding its way back to the Japanese consciousness through an unexpectedly roundabout route of transmission: Karsch-Haack to Carpenter to Ranpo, who shares it with the Japanese reading public.

Ranpo's goal in writing this essay appears to be to show that Japanese culture has not always relegated male-male desire to the margins of respectability, and in the writings of Carpenter as well as the quiet cemeteries of Tokyo, he has located those sites of ghostly return where those forms of desire have made themselves felt. Between the lines of his essay, one reads a thinly veiled hope to honor and redeem their past, no doubt in the hopes of creating a present in which queer men could celebrate their passionate and erotic relationships while still remaining a part of society. Still, Ranpo does not go so far as to say this outright. He never turns the story of the samurai lovers into the lynchpin of any argument for a reconsideration of the pathologization, feminization, and general lack of understanding that plagued queer men in interwar Japan. (This is not because queer men were not experiencing those things. A few years earlier in 1930, Hamao Shirō had eloquently argued in *Fujin saron* that the pathologization of same-sex desire had been enormously damaging to the self-image of queer men and had eroded their ability to participate as full fledged members in society.)²² Instead, Ranpo allows his specters to walk onto the stage of history without presenting any programmatic vision of what their experiences might mean for contemporary politics or the future.

In *Spectres du Marx*, Derrida develops the metaphor of spectrality to talk about the ways that the past continues to exist in the present, making its continued presence felt among the

²¹ Edogawa, "Mokuzuzuka," 61.

²² Hamao, "Dōseiai kō."

living. What is especially important to Derrida is not simply that ghosts represent a sign of the past and the incomplete work of mourning; it is that ghosts serve as silent, barely visible presences that do not voice their own experience directly but continue to linger and haunt contemporary imaginations, sometimes provoking reconsideration of the present and perhaps even inspiring change.²³ In *Politics Out of History*, which presents an extended reading of Derridian spectrality, philosopher Wendy Brown notes that when people in the present confront the specters of the past, “We inherit not ‘what really happened’ to the dead but what lives on from that happening, what is conjured from it, how past generations and events occupy the force fields of the present, how they claim us, and how they haunt, plague, and inspire our imaginations and visions for the future.”²⁴

In her new book *Queer / Early / Modern*, Carla Freccero uses Derrida’s notion of spectrality to develop a model of engaging with the aspects of the sexual past that she calls “queer spectrality.” She follows Michel de Certeau in noting that one common function of engaging the “phantasms” of history is to bury them under meaning, “calming the dead who still haunt the present” and “offering them scriptural tombs” in histories that will hide their alterity by putting them in nice, neat coffins that fit our understandings of their experiences.²⁵ The challenge for “queer spectrality” is not to entomb the ghost of the other in the present but to allow that ghost to continue to exist on its own terms while attempting to understand our *own* reactions to those ghosts as we live with them. Freccero writes that doing “a queer kind of history means” allowing the past to exist in the present in the form of a haunting—being open “to the possibility of being haunted, even inhabited by ghosts.”²⁶ To be more concrete, one should not attempt to suppress the spectral visions of the pasts of others by forcing them into straightjackets of meaning. We should not, for instance, attempt to understand the sexual experiences of the samurai through recourse to modern concepts such as the notion of “same-sex love,” which as Pflugfelder has so eloquently showed us, has its own historicity. Freccero argues, in fact, that in order to allow the “object-other” of the past to emerge and to speak, “there must be identification, if not identity, between the subject and object. And yet, at the same time, for that object to demand, to become (a ghost), somehow to materialize, it must have a subjectivity of its own.”²⁷ We must allow it, in other words, to be other, to be different.

There are moments in Ranpo’s essay when he makes statements that come close to treading upon the difference of the “other,” especially in the beginning when he is summing up the work of Carpenter. There, Ranpo writes:

Carpenter speaks about the similarities between Japanese *bushidō*, Japanese military strength, and the military strength of the Dorians of ancient Greece; he explains that the secret of both lies in a Greek-style love of men (*Girisha-teki danseiiai*). This may sound somewhat odd to us in the modern era, but a far-away,

²³ See Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, Peggy Kamuf trans. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 37-48.

²⁴ Wendy Brown, *Politics Out of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 150.

²⁵ Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, Tom Conley trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 2.

²⁶ Carla Freccero, *Queer / Early / Modern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 80.

²⁷ Freccero, *Queer / Early / Modern*, 101.

third-party observer can sometimes say things that strike close to the bull's-eye, can't they?²⁸

Ranpo's rhetorical question is not a categorical statement of affinity between the two cultures of *shudō* and Greek pederasty, but it does seem like an overreaching statement that threatens to collapse the distance between the two cultures. Still, one should perhaps read this passage less as an attempt to cram the early modern Japanese practices of *shudō* into alignment with Greek homoeroticism than as a statement imbued with two important "queer" functions.

First, the alignment of Japanese warrior sexuality with martial strength levels a charge against the pathologizing twentieth-century rhetoric of *hentai seiyoku* (perverse sexuality) that described same-sex eroticism as an illness of the spirit that led to weakness and neurasthenia. One sees such statements in one of the great classics of Japanese sexology, *Hentai seiyoku ron* (On Perverse Sexual Desire), first published in 1915 by Habuto Eiji and Sawada Junjirō. Habuto and Sawada saw the historical example of boy-loving samurai as such a problem to their theory of same-sex desire leading to weakness, that they spent several pages explaining away what they see as the "mistaken" connection between samurai valor and their culture of male-male bonding. Their explanations range from the absurdly patriotic (people who link warrior valor to same-sex desire are simply forgetting about the "Yamatodamashii" that was so strong among samurai) to the illogically circular (healthy spirits lead to healthy bodies, so there was no way the "sick" spirits of those warriors who loved men could be healthy enough to contribute to the martial spirit).²⁹ Nonetheless, the sorts of rhetoric that they espoused had made significant inroads into the Japanese popular imagination by the 1930s when Ranpo was writing. Ranpo's essay represents a queer challenge to the paradigm of homosexuality-as-pathology that had been created by the institution of medical psychology.

Second, Ranpo's essay presents a new, queer vision of the warrior class to his readers in the mid-1930s, when popular visions of samurai bravado were more likely to involve epic duels of swordsmanship, honor, and revenge than fights over the love of another man. Ranpo is subtly suggesting to his audience how little they might know of the lives of the samurai, even though the image of the intrepidly brave and valiant samurai hero played such an important role in the Japanese imagination. (Indeed, as Japan entered the era of rapid imperial expansion during the 1930s, the figure of the samurai became an increasingly important trope in the way that Japan imaged itself and described its action on the world stage in propaganda and popular culture.) The fact that Ranpo chose such a widely distributed and important forum as *Bungei shunjū* in which to publish his story meant that the article no doubt reached the eyes of tens of thousands of readers almost immediately, thus rousing Ukyō and Uneme's ghosts from the abandoned grave at Keiyōji and inviting them back onto the stage of the Japanese cultural imagination.

The Stakes of Historical Identification

Despite the welcome advances of queer theory and its emphasis on difference—or rather *because* of that emphasis—there is an acute need to continue to think about the ways the past is still with us and the ethics of identification in the deployment of historical paradigms of sexuality, even when in the service of positive goals. In the last several years, this has started to happen as queer theory has undergone what some have called "the affective turn." Instead of

²⁸ Edogawa, "Mokuzuzuka," 55.

²⁹ Habuto Eiji and Sawada Junjirō, *Hentai seiyoku ron* (Tokyo: Shun'yōdō, 1915), 320-24.

asking questions about how, when, and where queer people lived in the past, recent queer theoreticians and historians have shifted the terms of the debate, asking us why it is that people in the present care so much about the past. Although historians are still interested in uncovering how people lived in the past, the questions that are garnering as much attention in the critical press are “Why care so much?”, “In caring so much, what sorts of relationships is one trying to create with the past?”, and even more importantly, “What does this say about the person making the inquiry and their particular moment in time?”

Carolyn Dinshaw, the author of *Getting Medieval*, writes that one of the major impulses of queer historiography is to make cross-temporal connections between “on the one hand, lives, texts, and other cultural phenomena left out of sexual categories back then and, on the other hand, those left out of current sexual categories now.”³⁰ She correctly notes that such impulses are grounded in the attempt to extend “the resources for self- and community building into even the distant past,” and she describes her own wish for “partial affective connection, for community, for even a touch across time.”³¹ In *Feeling Backward*, Heather Love explains this desire for connection, remarking, “The longing for community across time is a crucial feature of queer historical experience, one produced by the historical isolation of individual queers as well as by the damaged quality of the historical archive.”³²

As mentioned earlier, one of the reasons that Ranpo dedicated himself with such devotion to the exploration of queer past is precisely that he felt male homoerotic desire had been so thoroughly relegated to the margins of respectability that he felt unable to find friends with whom he might discuss the issue openly. One should see his essay “Shudō mokuzuzuka” as his attempt—or perhaps even his séance—to evoke the ghosts of the past and show the world that the queer historical archive was not perhaps as empty as it might have seemed at first glance. “Shudō mokuzuzuka” represents one of his most important attempts to counteract this silence. Ranpo was, in essence, attempting to build what queer historians might call “an affective community,” one that would allow queer men in 1930s Japan to look across time and see other early examples of passion, love, and erotic devotion between men. At the same time, it is important to note this attempt at building an affective community involved the two queer functions mentioned above: the attempt to counteract the sexological association between male homoeroticism and effeminate weakness, and the attempt to queer the figure of the samurai in an age when the samurai was thought of the very epitome of masculine, Japanese vigor. In the end, Ranpo’s evocation of the historical was as much, if not more, about the present than any past he sought to uncover.

³⁰ Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 1.

³¹ Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, 1 and 21.

³² Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 37.