

# “Feminists, Lesbians, Boys Love Artists and Fans”: Rethinking “Women” in 1970s–1980s Japan

## James Welker

In the early 1970s, Japan saw the emergence of three dynamic and overlapping communities of women and adolescent girls who challenged Japanese gender and sexual norms: the women’s liberation (ūman ribu) movement, the lesbian community, and a sphere comprised of artists and fans of queer shōjo manga (girls’ comics). In this talk, James Welker introduces his new monograph, *Transfiguring Women in Late Twentieth-Century Japan: Feminists, Lesbians, and Girls’ Comics Artists and Fans*, which examines these communities and their cultural import. As he shows, individually and collectively, they found the normative understanding of the category “women” untenable and worked to redefine and expand its meaning by transfiguring ideas, images, and practices selectively appropriated from the “West.” They did so, however, while remaining firmly fixed on the local. Welker argues that their transfiguration of Western culture into something locally meaningful had tangible effects far beyond these communities.

James Welker is a professor in the Department of Cross-Cultural Studies at Kanagawa University, Yokohama, Japan. His research examines gender and sexuality in postwar and contemporary Japan as well as the global spread of Japanese popular culture. He is the author of *Transfiguring Women in Late Twentieth-Century Japan: Feminists, Lesbians, and Girls’ Comics Artists and Fans* (Hawai’i, 2024). He is also the editor of *Queer Transfigurations: Boys Love Media in Asia* (Hawai’i, 2022), *BL ga hiraku tobira: Hen’yō suru Ajia no sekushuariti to jendā* (BL opening doors: Sexuality and gender transfigured in Asia; Seido-sha, 2019), and a special issue of the journal *Mechademia: Second Arc* on “Queer(ing)” (2020), as well as a co-editor of *Rethinking Japanese Feminisms* (Hawai’i, 2018), and *Boys Love Manga and Beyond: History, Culture, and Community in Japan* (Mississippi, 2015), among other publications.

This event is organized by David H. Slater (Professor of Anthropology, Sophia University).

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**October 25th**

**from 6pm-7:30pm**

**Room 301, Building 10,**

**Sophia University**

**In person only / No registration**