

Introduction: Remembering Mark McLelland

[James Welker](#) and [Vera Mackie](#)

Sociologist and cultural historian of Japan Mark McLelland passed away on 18 November 2020 in Wollongong, New South Wales, at the age of fifty-four.^[1] In addition to being a renowned scholar who made significant contributions to many fields, Mark was also a dear friend to both of us and to the other contributors to this special issue of *Intersections*, 'Queering our Worlds: Remembering Mark McLelland.' Accordingly, in this issue, the contributors reflect both on Professor *Mark McLelland* as a scholar and *Mark* more personally, as our research collaborator, our mentor, our mentee, our friend.

As a scholar, Mark McLelland was well-known for his groundbreaking and influential work across a range of fields, including the cultural history of sexualities in Japan, the global history of the internet, and media and cultural studies. He was the author of several important monographs and responsible for numerous edited collections.^[2] He also made scholarship from Japan accessible through various translation projects, including some of these collections, and thus supported scholars whose first language is not English.

McLelland graduated from the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom in 1988, majoring in Theology and Religious Studies, after which he spent two years in Japan as a Japanese Government Monbushō Scholarship holder affiliated with the Department of Sociology at the University of Tokyo, where he researched new religious movements in Japan. After completing a graduate diploma in Japanese language studies at the University of Sheffield and an MA from Cambridge, he went to the University of Hong Kong, where he completed a PhD in Japanese Studies in 2000. From this time, he became known for his research on male homosexuality in twentieth-century Japan.

McLelland held two consecutive postdoctoral fellowships at the Centre for Critical and Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Queensland, the latter of which was an Australian Research Council (ARC) postdoctoral fellowship. He then began his career at the University of Wollongong as a Lecturer in Sociology in 2006, being promoted to Professor of Gender and Sexuality Studies in 2012. McLelland was named Professor Emeritus in 2020, following his early retirement due to illness after thirteen years at Wollongong. In recognition of his contributions to the university, the Sociology Program at UOW has established a prize in honour of Mark McLelland, to be awarded to the author of the best Sociology Honours thesis every year.



Figure 1. Mark McLelland's garden, photograph by Vera Mackie.

In addition, McLelland held teaching and research positions in Japan and the United States, where he was the 2007–2008 Toyota Visiting Professor of Japanese at the University of Michigan. He also received numerous grants and fellowships, including an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship, which he held from 2013 to 2017.

Over his career, McLelland served on a number of advisory and editorial boards and brought a

wide range of scholars together through his organisation of conferences and symposia as well as his many edited collections. He was particularly supportive of graduate students and early career researchers as well as scholars working outside Anglophone academia. He was a founding member of the Australia-based AsiaPacifiQueer collective in the early 2000s, which held pioneering conferences and workshops and produced several edited collections.^[3] He served as a member of the Australian Research Council's College of Experts between 2015 and 2018. McLelland was elected Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia in 2019.

Near the end of his life, McLelland was working on an in-depth study of mid-century sexologist Takahashi Tetsu (1907–1971) and his contributions to Japanese sexology. He had been researching Takahashi for a number of years and had amassed a considerable collection of rare publications, which he had recently begun to write about.^[4] Mark expressed regret that he was unable to see the project through to completion.

McLelland demonstrated his ongoing commitment to the study of Japanese sexualities as well as his strong support of early career researchers via a generous bequest to the US-based Association for Asian Studies (AAS) to establish a short-term research grant for early career researchers to help fund scholarship on the history of Japanese sexualities to be awarded annually through the AAS's Northeast Asia Council starting in 2022.^[5] Mark was quite clear in his discussions with James Welker on the establishment of this grant that he was interested in funding historical research—with a preference for archival work—focused on Japanese sexualities specifically, a subject that has tended to be elided in contemporary scholarship concerned with gender issues, even when framed as Gender and Sexuality Studies.

In this special issue of *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, we remember Mark McLelland as a scholar, a mentor, a colleague and a friend. The essays in this special issue provide a combination of reflections on our personal relationships with Mark and considerations of McLelland's contributions to various scholarly fields.

It is appropriate that these essays should appear in the journal *Intersections*. Mark—like many of the other contributors here—had a long association with *Intersections*, which has provided an accessible open-access forum for the scholarly discussion of Gender and Sexuality Studies in Asia and the Pacific since 1998.^[6] You will see references to special issues of *Intersections* in several of the essays below. In her contribution, Carolyn Brewer, editor of *Intersections*, which was originally founded by Carolyn and Anne-Marie Medcalf, reflects on her and Medcalf's collaborations with Mark McLelland and how he helped influence the focus of the journal.

Graeme Turner, founder and former Director of the Centre for Critical Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Queensland (UQ), remembers Mark's early days in Australia. Mark moved from the University of Hong Kong to UQ in 2000 to take up the first of two postdoctoral fellowships. Graeme remembers Mark as an exemplary colleague, whose influence and relationship-building activities extended far beyond the CCCS.

Gerard Goggin also held a postdoctoral fellowship at CCCS, and this led to a long-term collaboration in the field of Global Internet Studies. Mark and Gerard were keen to challenge the Eurocentrism and Anglocentrism of earlier internet research, collaborating on the edited collection *Internationalizing Internet Studies* and the reference work *Routledge Companion to Global Internet Histories*.^[7]

Tomoko Aoyama also reflects on Mark's influence as a colleague at the University of Queensland, where they collaborated on various projects, and where he was supportive of her interdisciplinary scholarship. Like some of the other contributors to this issue, Aoyama's essays appeared in

several of McLelland's edited collections.

Taniguchi Hiroyuki looks back on how his encounter with Mark at UQ when they were both postdoctoral fellows helped shape his own career trajectory. Mark emphasised the need to disseminate scholarship about Japan in English and supported scholars such as himself as they worked to overcome barriers including the issue of proficiency in English.

Vera Mackie, since 2010 Mark's colleague at Wollongong and friend and collaborator many years longer, calls for recognition of Mark McLelland's work as an editor and translator who facilitated the appearance of the work of early career researchers, queer scholars, scholars from non-English speaking backgrounds and the work of independent scholars and activists working outside academia.

Kristine Michelle L. Santos describes what it was like to complete a doctoral dissertation at Wollongong under Mark's supervision; how he addressed hitherto peripheral topics in his own research; and how he provided inspiration for her own research journeys. Santos worked closely with Mark on the Manga Futures conference held at the University of Wollongong in 2014, designing the posters and booklets and co-curating an exhibition with Agnieszka Golda.[\[8\]](#)

James Welker reflects on Mark McLelland's various contributions to English-language queer studies on Japan. In so doing, he recalls how Mark supported and provided opportunities to him at a very early stage in his career and how this was part of a pattern of generosity that typifies Mark's relationships with many new scholars trying to get their bearings and set off on new career trajectories.

Katsuhiko Suganuma considers how Mark McLelland constantly resisted the exoticisation and orientalised representation of sexual cultures and subcultures in Japan in Anglophone media and scholarship. Through rereading some of McLelland's Queer Studies scholarship, he considers the importance of remaining cognizant of our privilege and responsibilities as researchers.

Kazumi Nagaike ponders her relationship with Mark alongside McLelland's critical work on censorship, queerness and manga. In his writing and in life, Mark's call for others to reject censorship and embrace *hentai* (perversion) and queerness inspires Nagaike to chart her own course in her scholarly and personal identifications.

John Whittier Treat contemplates his friendship with Mark, a friendship centred around academic interest in Japan as well as personal delight in camp. In so doing, he ponders how being an openly gay man in Asian Studies, particularly one who writes about queer topics, invites various inclusions and exclusions. At the special AAS Roundtable which formed the basis for many of the essays here, Treat commented that it was probably unprecedented for a queer scholar to be recognised in this way in this field. We are all indebted to then AAS President Professor Christine Yano for initiating this event.[\[9\]](#)

Laura Miller, like many other contributors, describes Mark's ability to challenge various preconceptions, in this case the pathologising of female fans of boys love (BL) manga. Miller also notes Mark's role as a facilitator of conference panels, workshops, conferences and publications, with particular reference to the Manga Futures conference, held at the University of Wollongong in 2014, and related conference panels focused on difficult and controversial issues.[\[10\]](#) In these ventures, Mark was always alive to the ethical issues involved in research and teaching on sexuality studies outside the Anglophone sphere.

Alisa Freedman similarly reflects on Mark's influence as a collaborator and facilitator with particular reference to *The End of Cool Japan* collection. She suggests that McLelland's work has been provocative in the very best sense and has had an important impact on our understanding of the significance of Japanese popular culture both in scholarship and in the classroom.

Peter A. Jackson relates the formation of the AsiaPacifiQueer collective, which convened several important conference panels, workshops and conferences and made their scholarship available in special journal issues and edited collections, many of which appeared in *Intersections*.^[11] Jackson also reflects on Mark's Buddhist beliefs, which helped him to come to terms with the evanescence of life and with death.

As these contributions help illustrate in sometimes personal ways, Mark McLelland will be long remembered for his intellectual curiosity, his collegiality and his scholarly generosity. Mark will be sorely missed by us all.

Notes

[1] The first part of this essay is a revised version of James Welker, 'In memoriam: Professor Emeritus Mark McLelland (1966–2020),' *Association for Asian Studies*, 9 August 2021, URL: <https://www.asianstudies.org/in-memoriam-professor-emeritus-mark-mccllelland-1966-2020/>, accessed 25 August 2021.

[2] Mark J. McLelland, *Male Homosexuality in Modern Japan*, London: Curzon, 2000; Mark McLelland, *Queer Japan from the Pacific War to the Internet Age*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005; Fran Martin, Peter A Jackson, Mark McLelland and Audrey Yue (eds), *AsiaPacifiQueer: Rethinking Genders and Sexualities*, Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008; Mark McLelland, *Love, Sex, and Democracy in Japan during the American Occupation*, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, doi: [10.1057/9781137014962](https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137014962); Nanette Gottlieb and Mark McLelland (eds), *Japanese Cybercultures*, Oxford: Routledge, 2003, doi: [10.4324/9780203219614](https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203219614); Mark McLelland and Romit Dasgupta (eds), *Genders, Transgenders, and Sexualities in Japan*, Oxford: Routledge, 2005, doi: [10.4324/9780203346839](https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203346839); Fran Martin, Peter A. Jackson, Audrey Yue and Mark McLelland (eds), *AsiaPacifiQueer: Rethinking Genders and Sexualities*, Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2007; Mark McLelland, Katsuhiko Suganuma and James Welker (eds), *Queer Voices from Japan: First-Person Narratives from Japan's Sexual Minorities*, Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007; Gerard Goggin and Mark McLelland (eds), *Internationalizing Internet Studies: Beyond Anglophone Paradigms*, Oxford: Routledge, 2009, doi: [10.4324/9780203891421](https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203891421); Mark McLelland, Kazumi Nagaïke, Katsuhiko Suganuma and James Welker (eds), *Boys Love Manga and Beyond: History, Culture and Community in Japan*, Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2015, doi: [10.14325/mississippi/9781628461190.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.14325/mississippi/9781628461190.001.0001); Mark McLelland and Vera Mackie (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Sexuality Studies in East Asia*, Oxford: Routledge, 2015, doi: [10.4324/9781315774879](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315774879); Mark McLelland (ed.), *The End of Cool Japan: Ethical, Legal and Cultural Challenges to Japanese Popular Culture*, Oxford: Routledge, 2017, doi: [10.4324/9781315637884](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315637884); Gerard Goggin and Mark McLelland (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Global Internet Histories*, Oxford: Routledge, 2017, doi: [10.4324/9781315748962](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315748962); and several special issues of the journal *Intersections*(see below).

[3] See [Peter A. Jackson's](#) essay in this volume.

[4] Mark McLelland, 'Takahashi Tetsu and the impact of popular sexology in early postwar Japan,' *Towards a Global History of Sexual Science 1880–1960*, edited by Veronica Fuechtner, Douglas E. Haynes and Ryan M. Jones, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2018, pp. 211–31.

[5] For details, refer to the postscript to James Welker, 'In memoriam.' See the announcement of the bequest at: 'Queering Our Worlds: A Tribute to Mark McLelland,' *Association for Asian Studies*, 25 February 2021, URL: <https://www.asianstudies.org/jobs-professional-resources/aas-digital-dialogues/queering-our-worlds-a-tribute-to-mark-mccllelland/#>, accessed 6 December 2021.

[6] Mark McLelland and Peter Jackson (eds), 'Featuring papers from the first AsiaPacifiQueer Conference,' special issue of *Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context*, 6 (August 2001), URL: http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue6_contents.html, accessed 9 Dec. 2021; Mark McLelland (ed.), 'Queer Japan,' special issue of *Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context*, 12 (January 2006), URL: http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue12_contents.html, accessed 9 Dec. 2021; Mark McLelland (ed.), 'Japanese transnational fandoms and female consumers,' special issue of *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the*

Pacific, 20 (April 2009), URL: http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue20_contents.htm, accessed 9 Dec. 2021.

[7] Goggin and McLelland (eds), *Internationalizing Internet Studies*; Goggin and McLelland (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Global Internet Histories*.

[8] 'Emerging artists exhibit work at UOW,' University of Wollongong, 23 October 2014, URL: <https://www.uow.edu.au/media/2014/emerging-manga-artists-exhibit-work-at-uow.php>, accessed 18 August 2021.

[9] This roundtable is accessible at: 'Queering Our Worlds: A Tribute to Mark McLelland,' *Association for Asian Studies*, 25 February 2021, URL: <https://www.asianstudies.org/jobs-professional-resources/aas-digital-dialogues/queering-our-worlds-a-tribute-to-mark-mcleveland/>, accessed 6 December 2021. [10] 'Emerging artists exhibit work at UOW'; McLelland, *The End of Cool Japan*.

[11] McLelland and Jackson (eds), 'Featuring papers from the first AsiaPacifiQueer Conference'; Fran Martin et al., *AsiaPacifiQueer*.

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