local histories to recognize the presence of multiple and varied actors, we again can contribute to telling the story of Japanese history in a less deterministic way that places more emphasis on variation in both process and outcome, and hence provides an image that is less predetermined and perhaps more human.

In discussion during and after this symposium, Professor Donald Hata, California State University, Dominguez Hills, has noted that the images we create of Japan’s history bear on the way in which Japanese immigrants to North America are perceived. A sound understanding of Japanese history helps us to understand the Nikkei residents’ experience as they adapted to and became more fully assimilated in their new homeland. A greater sense of diversity in the Japanese historical experience can help break down the sense that Japanese immigrants were all part of a “perfect minority” and increase our understanding of Nikkei as having diverse experiences. Such a new direction helps to correct a stereotyped image of Nikkei as seen from without, and consciously cultivated by many Japanese-Americans themselves.

Whether in the restricted field of Japanese history, in the broader application of our subject to the fields of public images of Japan, the Japanese and Japanese-Americans, or in the field of public education, continued studies of the sort presented here have a substantial and positive role to play in helping improve our appreciation of the diverse Japanese.

For those interested in the ever-expanding discourse in early modern Japanese gender and sexuality issues, it seems that the temperature has risen a few degrees over the past year. In English, Timon Screech has published *Sex and the Floating World: Erotic Images in Japan, 1700-1820* (Honolulu: U Hawaii P, paper ed. 1999) to supplement the version translated into Japanese by Takayama Hiroshi, *Shunga: Katate Lawrance Marceau University of Delaware*

**Book Introduction: Questioning Edo as a Free-Sex Paradise**

Two wooden Buddhist sculptures by Enkū 円空, d. 1695.
In the wake of all of this publishing, Koyano Atsushi 小谷野敬 has taken the bold step of critiquing what he refers to as the "praise" of sexual practices in the early modern period. In his book, *Edo gensō hihan—"Edo no seii" rai-sanron wo utsu 『江戸幻想批判—「江戸の性愛」礼讃論を撃つ』"('Critiquing the Edo Fantasy: Shooting Down the Discourse in Praise of 'Edo Sexual Love'," Tokyo: Shin'yōsha, 1999), Koyano attempts to stifle what he sees as a "love fest" of praise for a view of sexuality in early modern Japan that he considers uncritical, fad-driven, and highly distorted. In his "Afterward" Koyano states that he first realized he couldn't believe the claims on Yoshiwara as a cultural mecca, and by extension, the idealized view of early modern Japan promoted by the "Edo Boom-ers" when he learned at an exhibition at the Edo-Tokyo Museum that Yoshiwara courtesans (=prostitutes) average age of death was 23 (p. 200). It seems to Koyano ironic that the same "leftist" scholars who have so severely criticized the official cover-up of the "Comfort Women" issue, would turn around and embrace early modern Japanese sexuality, and its visual depiction in books and prints, in such a broadly uncritical manner.

Koyano's study is worth reading, given that he reviews many of the classic studies of early modern Japanese culture of the past twenty years. One way in which he connects individuals to schools of thought is reflected in how he presents a kind of "genealogy" of these studies, by relating two works he views as the most groundbreaking to the female author and her male mentors. In the first case he identifies Tanaka Yūko with Hitotsubashi professors Hirose Tamotsu and Mat-suda Osamu, while in the second he connects Saeki Junko with her Tōdai professor, Haga Tōru. (Note that Koyano himself undertook his graduate study in the same Tōdai Faculty of Comparative Literature and Culture as had Saeki in the previous decade.) However, at the same time, the first half of his book seldom rises above the level of personal invective, while the second half, which presumably presents examples of early modern Japanese cultural studies as they "should" be done, falls far short of the insights and conceptualizations explored in the various books Koyano criticizes so severely in the first half.

Koyano raises serious objections to the tendency to idealize Japanese sexuality, especially in the early modern period. It is now up to the historians, including those in literature, art, and thought, to reconstruct and conceptualize a more accurate, albeit complex, view of social interaction, and its presentation in early modern Japan.