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12 Occidental romanticism and English language education

This chapter examines the effects of Occidental romanticism in English language education, with a special focus on the context of Japan. The chapter begins by defining key concepts, and then reviews a body of research literature pertaining to the topic. In the third section I draw on my own study of Western men working as English language educators in Japan, before concluding with a discussion of the broader effects of Occidental romanticism in English language education.

Key concepts

In this chapter, I define Occidental romanticism as the projection of a racialised, and gendered ideal onto the body of the Western English language teacher. The term "Occidental", and its binary opposite "Oriental", I see as social and political constructs that carry the legacy of an earlier colonial history and echo a racialised view of humanity mapped onto a fictional division of the world between The West and The East. In this sense, "The West" and "The East" are both geographical and discursively constructed entities. These socio-cultural meanings draw on the work of Edward Said (1978) and the notion of *Orientalism* as an essentialising view, from the perspective of a colonising West, of non-Western places and cultures as exotic, sensual, feminised, and at the same time inferior and exploitable. Inversely, *Occidentalism* can be seen as an essentialising and often idealised view of Western places and cultures from the perspective of The East. In the context of this discussion, romanticism refers to a desire for an idealised, fantasy version of The West that may or may not be gendered and sexualised. For the purposes of the discussion in this chapter, however, I am focusing on an aspect of Occidental romanticism that carries an implicit heteronormativity and brings together, in an idealised and racialised pairing, a masculine West and a feminised East. Over the course of history, this coupling has been represented in personal accounts, in fictional narratives, and in scholarly research such as Kelsky's (2001) ethnographic study of Occidental longings amongst Japanese women at the end of the 20th century. In her study, Kelsky argues that the racialised and eroticised power of attraction for the West is embodied in a "fetish of the white man": "The white man is packaged and sold as romantic hero in Japan and globally, by both domestic and multinational corporations, in ways that make him "imaginable" as the

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agent of women's professional, romantic, and sexual liberation" (Kelsky, 2001: 132).

Although Occidentalism and Orientalism are social constructs, or "discourses" in the Foucauldian (1972) sense, they have very real effects in the material world in that they shape the ways in which people think about and behave towards racialised "others". These effects can be seen, for example, in popular culture and, of relevance for this chapter, in English language education (ELE) as a global industry: in the privileging of white, native-speaker teachers, in the promotion of Centre-driven pedagogies, and in the distribution of Centre-produced teaching resources (see, for example, early work by Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994, 1998; Kubota, 2002). While other writers have explored the racialised and classed aspects of English language education in Japan (see, for an early example, Lummis, 1973) it is the concomitant gendered and sexualised implications of the English language enterprise that I explore in the following sections.

Histories of English language education and Occidental romanticism

Occidental romanticism has a long history, as does its twinned construct Oriental romanticism, and the narrative of romantic desire between Japan and The West, can be taken as a case in point.

The first major incursion of English-speaking Westerners in Japan occurred in the wake of the American Commordore Matthew Perry's arrival in 1853. Perry's arrival marked the end of Japan's two centuries of isolation, and represented a public performance in which white Western masculinity could establish racial supremacy and dominance over an infantilised and feminised East (Dower, 1999; Greenberg, 2005; Low, 2003, Rivers & Ross, 2013). The subsequent opening of trade between North America and Japan marked the beginning of the first "English boom" (Koike et al., 1978: iii), and under a new Japanese political regime, hundreds of English and American specialists – mostly men – were invited to Japan to teach Western concepts and English language. At the same time, the racialised and gendered aspects of relationships between Japan and Western nations were dramatised in Euro-American works of fiction, best known through the various renditions of the Madame Butterfly story. These stories of intimate relationships encapsulated the broader dynamics of political and economic power as perceived by the imperial West: in these narratives, Japanese women became increasingly associated with a fragile and submissive femininity and white Western men increasingly associated with a virile, forthright superiority.

Changes in national and international politics towards the mid 20th century meant that English language education declined in the years leading up to the Pacific War, and in 1942 all British and American lecturers in Japanese universities were dismissed (Fujimoto-Adamson, 2006). During the war, the learning and teaching of English was discouraged, but this decline in Japanese English education was sharply reversed at the end of the war as a result of the US Occupation from 1945 to 1952, when English regained its former level of popularity and prestige (Stanlaw, 2004). The arrival in Japan of the male-dominated American-led Allied forces in 1945 ushered in another intensified phase of gendered and racialised power relationships between Japan and the West. The depiction of Japanese women being liberated from centuries of male oppression and gaining new rights under American guidance renewed the imperial fantasy of a potent, masculinised West coupled with an exotic, submissive, and feminised Orient. For the Allied forces, wartime victory and invasion represented the successful culmination of a forthright, muscular discourse of masculinity on the world stage, complemented and softened by a self-image of chivalry and gender equality. During the seven-year Occupation, intimate relations between the occupying forces and the Japanese were thus informed by colonial-like ideologies of race, gender and sexuality, and the "maintenance of white male prestige" was reinforced by the discursive feminisation of Japan (de Matos, 2012).

Regardless of whether the relationships between Japanese women and Western men were conservative, exploitative, or liberating, they proliferated during the Occupation, and peaked in the late 1950s. Between 1956 and 1957, one hundred marriages between Japanese women and American GIs occurred every week, and by 1972 between 50,000 and 60,000 "war brides" had been brought to the USA (Leupp, 2003: 218). And yet Leupp concludes, on the basis of "sociological analysis", that these international marriages, and those occurring in subsequent recent decades, have been generally unhappy due to the mixed cultural and gendered expectations on either side:

> Western men expecting their wives to provide love and emotional support have instead complained of coldness and lack of affection; Japanese women expecting husbands to be hard-working, successful bread-winners have complained of the men's inadequacies and their supposed emotional dependence. Each spouse initially projected onto the other qualities thought to be lacking in partners of their own nationality, yet both bring into the marriage expectations based upon the traditional union in their own society. The western male, expecting unconditional and undemanding love, in fact finds – to his consternation – that his wife's affection is highly contingent on his performance as a bread-winner. (Leupp, 2003: 220–221)

In a similar vein, Ma (1996: 164) has argued that "intercultural couples who base their attraction for each other on stereotyped images" of submissive Oriental dolls and chivalrous Western knights "may be heading for [mutual] disappointment".

In the decades since the Allied Occupation, further shifts in the economic and political power between the West and Japan have continued to affect both English language education in Japan and relationships between Western men and Japanese women. Throughout Japan's ascendancy as a global economic power after WWII, and during the subsequent bubble-era economy of the 1980s and 1990s, a small sub-culture of Japanese women became associated with a recurrent discourse of romantic desire or longing (*akogare*) for the West, the English language, and Western men (see, for example, Kelsky, 2001). In response to these desires, Western men working as language educators in Japan have been perceived to embody an idealised, romanticised version of the West, and to offer an appealing path to English language learning (Bailey, 2006; Kelsky, 2001; Kubota, 2011; Piller & Takahashi, 2006; Takahashi, 2013).

Yet the idealisation of white Western men in English language education has a dark side. As Bailey (2006: 106) has observed, Japanese women's romantic desires have been harnessed by a profit-oriented industry that markets English language learning as an "eroticised, consumptive practice" and "commodifies and exploits whiteness and native speakers" as cultural specimens. Such consumptive practices are evident in marketing materials that regularly depict English language education as a coupling of Japanese female learners and white Western male teachers, a coupling that exemplifies powerful Occidentalist fantasies that are historically rooted and socially hegemonic (Bailey, 2007). In the higher education sector, the dark side of Occidental romaticism is also evident in Western educators' accounts of objectification and subsequent marginalisation from mainstream academic status and conditions (see, for example, Bueno & Caesar, 2003; Burrows, 2007; Hall, 1994, 1998; Houghton & Rivers, 2013; Kiernan, 2010; McVeigh, 2002, 2003; Seargeant, 2005, 2011; Stewart, 2006; Whitsed & Volet, 2011; Whitsed & Wright, 2011). In these accounts, discourses of "Japanese nationalism" and "Japanese uniqueness" are said to draw "a very thick line... between Japanese and non-Japanese faculty and students" (McVeigh, 2003: 144), creating "lines of exclusion and opposition" in which the foreign teacher is always automatically positioned as "the outsider" (Kiernan, 2010: 173).

The exclusion and marginalisation reported by this group of teachers is said to rest on practices of essentialisation that reduce foreign teachers to an embodied identity by focusing on whiteness, Western (mostly North American) cultural origin, native speaker ability in English, and a "fun and games" pedagogical style little suited to serious academic work (Rivers, 2011). Whereas Japanese teachers of English are mostly employed to teach the grammar and written language that form the basis of formal examinations, native speakers of English are generally engaged to teach spoken language and conversation, which are generally accorded little importance in the traditional examination system. Marked as a racialised minority, and confined to a teaching area with little academic status, their experience and positioning is quite different to that of white Western teachers who enjoy racialised privilege in white-dominant societies, a situation which has to date been the focus of most research and in critical race and whiteness studies.

Several scholars have presented a different perspective on these issues, noting that white native-speaker privilege is a persistent factor in Japanese ELE (for example, Kobayashi, 2011; Kubota, 2002), and arguing that foreign teachers' desires for "success, status and power" are unlikely to ever be adequately fulfilled in English language programmes "whose status and prestige are generally among the lowest for teaching staff within the university" (Harshbarger, 2012: 4). Along similar lines, Ma (1996: 34) has suggested that Occidentalist discourses have given many Western men working as language teachers "an exaggerated view" of their personal and professional importance that may be at odds with the reality of their experience and employment qualifications. In such situations, low status and limited opportunities for advancement can lead to resentment, frustration, and bitterness amongst foreign teachers "caught up in the honey trap of tenure" and reluctant to risk departure from the relatively comfortable conditions available to foreign instructors in Japanese higher education (Harshbarger, 2012: 13).

In all sectors of English language education, then, white Western men may be associated with a set of stereotypes that are not always palatable. They may be fixed by the stereotype of being "just" an English language teacher, unable to find more reputable and highly skilled professional work; they may be objectified as simply an object of superficial and transient erotic desire; they may be stereotyped as promiscuous and predatory playboys; or they may be commodified by an industry that requires teachers to fit a racialised and gendered ideal. For those men who stay in Japan as English language educators these stereotypes can be a source of oppression that limits their opportunity to achieve the personal and professional status and respect they desire.

Although the discussion has so far focused on the situation of white Western men in Japan, a parallel set of conditions has emerged in research studies of Western men working elsewhere in Asia. In China, for example, although white Western men may enjoy social and sexual success with willing Chinese partners, they may also be stereotyped as "loser English teachers" and "white trash" by expatriates with more prestigious and specialised professional skills and job prospects (Farrer, 2010, 2011). Likewise, in a study of Westerners working as English language teachers in a Chinese university, Stanley (2012: 22) found that although

many of the men embraced the über-masculine sexual success they enjoyed with Chinese women, their alignment with a "superhero phenomenon" had "more negative than positive outcomes" in the longer term. Some felt objectified and exploited in sexual relationships they feared were merely "transactional"; some were troubled by ethical concerns regarding their own predatory promiscuous behaviour with students; and some were frustrated and demoralised in their work as low-status English language teachers, particularly when they were unqualified for any other sort of work. Similarly, in a study of Western expatriates in Taiwan, Lan (2011: 1686) found that many white, male English language teachers "reported increased popularity in their romantic or erotic pursuit of local women in Taiwan in comparison to their dating experiences back home". They nevertheless felt trapped by their occupational "ghettoisation" in a "feminised", low-status, and "powerless" job that offered no prospect of entering a higher status profession (see also Moskowitz, 2008 regarding Westerners in Taiwan). In South Korea, Cho (2012) found a romanticised stereotype was also attached to American men of Korean ethnicity working as English language teachers, who eventually saw themselves as "English prostitute[s]", stuck in a life of aimless leisure in Korea, yet afraid to return home and start over in a competitive American job market where their experience as English teachers had little value.

In sum, although Western men working as English language teachers may find easy access to employment and romantic encounters in East Asian countries, in the longer term they may also experience the oppressive effects of being trapped at the "bottom stratum of Western expatriates", and unable to convert their years of experience into profitable or prestigious employment on return to their home countries (Lan, 2011: 1676; see also Collins, 2014).

Occidental romanticism and Western male teachers of English in Japan

To illustrate in further detail some of the potentially oppressive effects of Occidental romanticism in English language education, I now draw on a qualitative research study that has investigated the mixed effects on the Western men who live and work as English language teachers in Japan (Appleby, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2014b). The study draws on ethnographic data from field trips to Japan from my home country of Australia (2008–2012), and on semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and written correspondence with 54 male and female participants.

From the outset, the study focused explicitly on the ways in which intersecting discourses produced and positioned white Western men teaching English in Japan as particular types of subjects. So, for example, the study focused not just on stereotypes attached to men and masculinity, but on the ways in which stereotypes of masculinity *and* whiteness intersect; not just on imagined geographical (East/West) binaries and stereotypes, but on the ways in which these are affected by gender *and* by interpersonal interaction across imagined geo-gender divides; not just on the socioeconomic stereotypes attached to English language teaching and teachers, but on the way these affect the masculinity status of Western men; not just on the effects of marriage to a Japanese spouse, but on the effects of marital and economic status, heteronormativity, and racialisation. At the intersection of all these constructed differences, lies Occidental romanticism.

My initial interest was in the personal and pedagogical effects of the hero status conferred on white Western men in Japan, where analysis of the data pointed to benefits enjoyed by Western men in Japan in terms of privileged access to employment opportunities and heightened status and success in personal, romantic relationships with Japanese women. For Western women, on the other hand, the benefits accruing to Western men did not appear to apply. In Japan, Western men outnumber Western women in jobs and in marriages to Japanese spouses, and while various rationales are put forward to explain this imbalance, analysis suggests that underlying this imbalance are various benefits relating to race, gender and sexuality that apply differentially to Western men and women in this context.

My study also uncovered significant difficulties and complications in the men's professional lives. These were primarily to do with the ways in which white Western men working as English language teachers are situated within discourses that threaten their social status and their desire to achieve an acceptable masculine professional identity. These threatening discourses relate to the objectification of whiteness and masculinity, the employment of white Western men in a lowly-regarded but ubiquitous occupation of English language teaching, and the ascribed reputation for sexual promiscuity with Japanese women. These discourses potentially position Western male language teachers as the "white trash" of Asia (see Farrer, 2010: 84).

In the discussion below, I focus on visual displays that illustrate discourses of Occidental romanticism, and on the experiential accounts of white Western men (referred to here by pseudonyms) who worked within the two main areas of employment for English language educators in Japan: the conversation schools, and higher education institutions. In these typical accounts, the men's lived experience is affected by intersecting discourses of whiteness and masculinity, Occidentalist romantic desire, and professional status.

Teaching in conversation schools

English language conversation (*eikaiwa*) schools in Japan have long had a reputation as a site of ready employment for white, native-English-speaking Westerners, the majority of whom are men (Kubota, 2011). And, as Piller and Takahashi (2006) have shown, the white male body has been frequently used as a selling point to attract customers to English conversation schools. My own ethnographic data confirms and extends this finding. In marketing materials for conversation schools the pairing of white male teacher with Asian female learner is a common visual trope, interrupted only when the learners are young children paired with a white female teacher. Inside the *eikaiwa* schools, photos of teaching staff are frequently displayed in the lobby. In a pattern that was similar across several *eikaiwa* chain schools, the staff profile board in one large school I visited displayed the head and shoulders photograph of each teacher, set against a background image of their home country. These 25 teacher portraits told a story of racial and gender homogeneity. By far the greatest number of teachers were men (19 in total, or 76 %) and, of these, most were white males from North America (12 in total, or 63 %). These portraits were prominently positioned at the top of the staff board. All of the male teachers were from "inner circle" countries (Kachru, 1997) and all but one could be categorised as "white". The portraits of the seven female teachers showed greater diversity in terms of skin colour and country of origin. Only one was white and North American, and one was white and British; a third was white and from a non-English speaking European country. The greater number of women (four of the seven) were non-white and only one of these was from North America. The photographs were supplemented by short written descriptions that emphasised the teachers' leisure pursuits (hobbies, pets, sports, music interests, and favourite food) rather than any disciplinary or pedagogical qualifications and experience. In these descriptions, the ideal teacher type was shown to be fun and personable, with little emphasis on professional capacities. Indeed, when I questioned one of the male teachers about this emphasis on hobbies and personality, he surmised that an alternative focus on professional qualifications would risk creating an unwelcome and unnecessary hierarchy amongst the teachers.

The challenges faced by the men working in the conversation schools related to the ways in which they were objectified by the industry and commodified by students-as-customers. Several men echoed Kubota's (2011) observation that many commercial conversation schools are best described not as educational institutions, but as businesses that package white Western men as products to be sold to Japanese female consumers, whose interests lay in an exotic experience and a romantic dream, rather than acquiring English language skills. In Mike's words:

> Those conversation schools, they're really just money-making machines, you know, the students, mostly young women, get sold a kind of a dream, you know, "come and learn English and you'll have a better chance of meeting a Western boyfriend and becoming someone that you see on TV or in the movies". I think that was even part of the sales pitch. (Mike)

Several of the men expressed a growing sense of resistance in response to such marketing tactics. Eddy, for example, expressed the common complaint that the schools "make a commodity of the teacher" in order "simply to keep the students happy and interested" and thereby "achieve some sort of competitive advantage". Joel, too, recalled that male teachers were "sexualised" by female students who were quite explicit in the expression of their desires for male teachers as products. As a consequence,

> I just felt very commodified and sort of- it was all just a bit meaningless [...] in many ways you feel like a whore I suppose being involved in it. So it's like [being] a glorified hostess". (Joel)

In this situation, Mike observed that some "Western guys thought that [...] they were Lotharios, [but] in fact they were the ones that were being stuck on the belt of these women". And in this sense, Japanese women's desire could present something of a threat to masculine agency, authenticity, individualism and self-awareness. The men's accounts suggested that to be seen as an *object* of the Occidentalist gaze, a decorative accessory, or a victim of aggressive and indiscriminate sexual conquest, was damaging to one's identity as properly masculine.

Further capitalising on students' Occidentalist desires, some conversation schools offered activities where students could pay to socialise with teachers outside the classroom at parties. Although they were overtly designed as immersion experiences to enhance language learning, these offerings implicitly boosted the conversation schools' reputation as dating agencies for Japanese women to meet Western men. One teacher reported that his school provided these sorts of parties in order "to retain customers or attract new customers", but admitted that many of the teachers were becoming reluctant to attend and perform as cultural specimens in this grey area between social and workplace domains (cf. Seargeant, 2005). Similar schools also sold students a package of lessons that included an individual lunch with their teacher of choice. Once outside the institutional location, pedagogical restraints were loosened and the teacher and student may encounter a much more "uncontrollable environment" where the textbook scripted language lesson is left behind in favour of "free conversation" that could easily lead both student and teacher into an uncomfortable and potentially sexualised relationship (Evan). These quasi-social encounters blurred the boundary between professional and personal domains and were ultimately seen

to serve the commercial interests of the school, for whom teacher-student relationships were only perceived as a problem if a student-as-customer complained. In other words, teacher-student liaisons were constructed as a commercial consideration, rather than a moral issue. Individual men thus faced the challenge of negotiating a fine line between frisson and infraction.

Adding to the challenges faced by conversation school teachers, the monetary rewards for working in the industry had diminished over the years since the peak of the English boom in Japan in the 1980s and 1990s. Many of the men reported that wages for *eikaiwa* teachers had stagnated or fallen, and many were aware that there was a stigma attached to their work in an industry where racialised and gendered characteristics were more highly valued that professional qualifications and expertise. In effect, the schools' commercial imperatives and cost-cutting competition resulted in what Joel described as "a low paid crappy job" with "crappy conditions, contract work, no stability, superannuation". Such conditions, combined with the schools' generally poor educational reputation, meant that for many men I interviewed a sense of emasculating shame was eventually attached to classroom teaching in the commercial conversation school industry. The circulation of such negative discourses put the men who remained in the conversations schools in an invidious position, where they were potentially perceived as lacking the ability or drive – fundamental attributes of masculinity – to pursue a more prestigious career. Several articulated a sense of glum resignation that for a native speaker of English, married to a Japanese woman with family ties in Japan, teaching English was the only possibility for work, with no prospect of escape.

Teaching in higher education institutions

Because the negative stereotype attached to white Western masculinity and hypersexuality – particularly in the conversation schools – was presented as a problem for many of the men I interviewed, most expressed a desire to adopt a more respectable masculinity by progressing to employment in a more prestigious educational institution. The opportunity to move out of the lower-level conversations schools and into the university system held the promise, however illusory, of allowing these men to construct and perform a higher-status professional identity unencumbered by racialised, gendered, and sexualised embodiment.

Universities are generally regarded as "elite" institutions that confer academic status on teachers employed within that domain (Acker & Dillabough, 2007: 297); nevertheless, the accounts of white Western men working in Japanese higher education indicate a continuing struggle to construct and perform a legitimate masculine identity freed from the racialised and sexualised taint of Occidental romanticism. First, several of the men suggested that racialised stereotypes (and associated identity markers of national origin and native speaker English) set them apart from their Japanese academic colleagues, and hindered their career prospects within the higher education system. Being native speakers of English, they saw themselves pigeon-holed as "talking heads" (Luke), employed in "grunt work" positions (Blake) as English language teachers, unable to achieve the full academic status they desired. Without legitimate academic status, they felt marginalised by university students who approached the compulsory study of English language with resentment and apathy, or with an expectation of "fun and games with the native speaker" (Joel). In these accounts, the men echoed the complaints of marginalisation that are evident in much of the research literature, published predominantly by Western men working in Japanese universities, where racial and linguistic difference is said to perpetuate the outsider status of Western teachers in Japanese higher education (for example, Bueno & Caesar, 2003; Houghton & Rivers, 2013).

Second, the men's accounts suggest that the sexualised identity associated with male teachers in the conversation schools was also not easily discarded by simply entering university employment. Under the sway of Occidental romanticism, the marketing and recruitment practices of universities were seen by some participants as perpetuating the eroticised stereotype of white Western masculinity that had been valued in the conversation schools. In particular, Brad suggested that the universities' deliberate pairing of white Western men (as teachers) and young Japanese women (as students) in marketing images was designed to attract enrolments, but presented a challenge for Western men's attainment of an academic identity.

> Interactions of this nature [between Western men and Japanese women] are often intentionally engineered by universities despite them having no direct connection to good language-learning pedagogy. The image of the assumed heterosexual male (often white and dressed in business attire) interacting in a playful manner with an attractive young female (Asian) student is widely used to promote courses through PR brochures. (Brad)

For Brad, these images of "intentionally engineered" intimacy – simulated and commodified by the university – were set in contrast to the professional expertise implied in "good language-learning pedagogy", and serve to reinforce "an accepted [institutional] structure which is charged with a kind of forbidden sexual energy". As a consequence, and using a description that resembled Joel's account of performing as a "hostess" in the conversation school, Brad reported that he felt "exploited" and "more like a male escort than a teacher through my forced participation in such scenarios." Far from wielding institutional power,

as might be expected of a professional, middle-class masculinity (Beynon, 2002) the male subject in this instance is seen as an embodied entity available to serve the capitalist interests of the institution. In this sense, Occidental romanticism continues to operate through vectors of racialisation, gender, and sexuality, combined with the forces of capitalism, in ways that impact on the subjectivities and professional experiences of English language educators.

Higher education, then, was a site where young female students could potentially pose a threat to an academic ideal of the rational, asexual teacher, and where desires that might overwhelm the male body must be controlled. This potential threat was partly mitigated by representing university students, in contrast to their conversation school counterparts, as immature and somewhat naïve. Thus, according to Joel "universities aren't places where students come to find [Western] boyfriends", and so the relationship between teachers and students in higher education was "a whole different dynamic" to the eroticised relationships of the conversation school industry. Grant, for example, described his reaction to unwelcome signs of irrational erotic desire from his young first year students:

> I get goo-goo eyes from some of the girls, I'm like, "go away", you know, I feel like a geezer nowadays, an 18-year-old girl looking at me with goo-goo eyes. I'm [in my 40s], I'm like, "God, I could be your father!" (Grant)

Grant's aim was not to be "put on a pedestal" as the embodiment of erotic white masculinity, as someone who might be involved in sex with students, and in this sense he resisted the position of the white man as "fetish" (Kelsky, 2001). Instead, his desire was "to be respected" for his academic status, and to be seen in a professional light as "equal to any other [Japanese] faculty member".

For Brad, however, positioning himself as a detached, asexual professional was not a simple matter, and in email correspondence he described his internal struggle to resist the bodily attractions of female students:

> As a heterosexual male I find it uncomfortable (and a potential threat to my continued employment) when having to talk to female students who dress in what I can only described as a revealing manner. This feeling is intensified when the students act in a way which could be seen as flirtatious.
>
> On most days I constantly have to consciously think where I am looking (or more accurately where the female student thinks I am looking) and make sure that I present a detached version of myself – which hinders the development of positive and professional relationships between human beings. [...] I cannot deny that I am drawn toward the excessively exposed skin of young adult females, although I really do not want it to be. I then feel guilty and unprofessional for finding adult female students attractive and in many ways I [wish I] could suspend my heterosexual masculinity when working. (Brad)

In Brad's account, the female students, by "revealing" their bodies and being "flirtatious", are represented as dangerous sirens deliberately enticing the male teacher who is then obliged to control his own instinctive, male responses. His hold on an academic identity (through "continued employment") is threatened; yet although Brad is, in this sense, the victim (of a dangerous female sexuality, and of his own sexual desires), his ultimate success lies in the achievement of self-discipline, and the performance of an alternative, non-romantic, non-sexualised model of masculinity. For Brad and several others, self-discipline was a reflexive response conditioned by the imagined gaze of other men. As Brad explained, "when talking with such girls I am also sensitive to the observations of the male students or other male teachers who I fear will see me as a predatory foreign man if I engage in carefree conversations with the female students". A similarly reflexive response was described by Frank: "given that there are many white men who are indeed the sleazy womanizers, [...] I want to be careful not to do anything that might be inadvertently misconstrued in such a way". In these accounts, the white male body has become an object for society's "panoptic gaze" (Foucault, 1975), and is subject to external regulation and normalising judgments that can categorise "foreign men" as sexual predators. For these men, then, there is a fundamental reliance on the gaze of others (in this case Japanese women and Western colleagues) to validate – and potentially destroy – one's professional academic identity.

Discussion

The study described above highlights the impact of Occidental romanticism in the lives of white Western men working as English language educators in Japan. In the men's accounts, a complex web of racialised, gendered, sexualised and socioeconomic or occupational discourses affected the ways in which the men saw themselves and others as participants in the English language education system in Japan. In both the conversation schools and in higher education, this combination of discourses were seen as oppressive, and limited participants' opportunities for professional advancement as language educators.

In the conversation schools, Occidental romanticism has produced an eroticised, white, Western ideal for male teachers, to be displayed as an object and commodity for Japanese customer-students. In these sites, the intersection of racialised/gendered/sexualised Western male embodiment may initially appear as an advantage, offering a potent new sense of self, easy access to employment, and interpersonal adoration. Yet the interplay of commercial, socioeconomic,

and romantic discourses in this occupational space meant not only that aspirations for the adoption of an alternative, professional or academic identity were constrained, but that participants could be subject to the occupational effects of low social status and economic exploitation. Similarly, in the higher education sector, Occidental romanticism is reproduced in marketing images, is evident in the men's self-surveillance and surveillance of others, and is present in the perceived relationships between teachers and students. Here, too, embodied discourses within Occidental romanticism are oppressive in that they threaten to limit the ways in which white Western men are able to perform as rational, professional, and skilled educators.

The specificity of language education as a site that encourages and exploits eroticised interactions between male teachers and female students is of particular concern. As Kubota and Lin (2006) observe, English language education is somewhat unique in that it inevitably brings together people of different cultures, languages, and ethnicities in relationships inflected by power; and in circumstances such as Japan where language learning remains a feminised pursuit (Kobayashi, 2002) and the majority of native-speaker teachers are Western men, the insidious impact of an historically rooted Occidental romanticism can be both pervasive and invisible. As one teacher explained, the interactions he experienced with female students "certainly would be termed flirtatious if the same behaviours were observed between two adults beyond the workplace"; yet because these interactions occur "within the language education workplace it is never spoken of as such". In this way the English language teaching workplace – even in the university – was represented as always inherently imbued with a racialised, heterosexual desire that has become both taken-for-granted and damaging in its effects.

It should be emphasised that Occidental romanticism can have deleterious effects not only for white Western men, but also on a range of other participants in English language education. For Japanese female language learners, desire for the West, and for white Western men, can ultimately have a detrimental effect on their agency and independence (Piller & Takahashi, 2006). At the same time, the preferential employment of Western men who fit an Occidentalist stereotype can have the effect of limiting the career opportunities and conditions available to Japanese female teachers of English (Kubota, 2011). Similarly, in places where Occidental romanticism motivates employers to appoint Western men, fewer job opportunities may be available for Western women (Simon-Maeda, 2004). Indeed, as Lan (2011: 1686) points out in the context of Taiwan, the heightened social status attached to white Western ethnicity is not available to Western women, who may be stereotyped as "sexually loose" and may suffer disadvantage as a consequence of masculine privilege in cultural, professional and interpersonal domains. And finally, for white Western men who do not conform to the heteronormative stereotype implicit in Occidental romanticism, the pressure to perform according to normative expectations can be oppressive (Appleby, 2013b). The negative effects of Occidental romanticism are wide-ranging, and long-lasting.

Towards emancipation

Imagining emancipation in this field of intersecting -isms is a challenge, particularly given the long history of gendered intercultural activities that have preceded the present situation for English language educators in Japan, and the commercial interests that continue to benefit from that historical coupling of white Western men and Japanese women. Nevertheless, I tentatively propose three ways in which emancipation might be approached: through awareness, affiliation, and agency. The processes described here are nothing new, and are currently undertaken by some of the participants in this field.

First, to paraphrase Foucault (1988: 10), we might recognise that people "are much freer than they feel", and that themes, discourses and ISMs "which have been built up at a certain moment during history" can also be "criticized and destroyed". It follows, then, that participants in this context may benefit from continuing to interrogate the ways in which discourses position themselves and others, to recognise and raise awareness about the ways in which certain groups involved in English language education are both disadvantaged *and* advantaged by persistent gendered, sexualised, and racialised stereotypes. Oppression in this context is neither fixed nor absolute, and raising awareness of complexity in positioning is, I think, an important step in understanding one's place in a larger scheme of intersecting hierarchies.

Second, the negative associations that limit the professional aspirations of white Western men working as English language educators could be addressed by men exercising agency: to openly point out and oppose unhelpful displays of both sexist and sexualised masculinity as and when they arise. Silence in these situations, for example when Western men pursue sexual relationships with Japanese female students, can be regarded as tolerance or implicit approval. Men speaking out or discouraging such activities, while risky and difficult to do, may eventually have the effect of stalling the reproduction of practices that underpin Occidental romanticism.

Third, to further counter damaging discourses, it may be beneficial for Western men to investigate commonalities and form affiliations across groups that have traditionally been divided. For example, in order to counter discourses that sexualise and romanticise English language educators, and to promote an alternative

discourse of professionalisation, it may be useful to work across gender lines and to form alliances that address and oppose the reproduction of gendered stereotypes for commercial exploitation. This would necessitate Western men and women coming together, and in alliance with Japanese educators, in the interests of enhancing the professional status of all English language educators in Japan. Promoting and enhancing awareness, agency, and affiliation in these ways may serve to make some progress towards emancipation for all participants in this field of language education.

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