

Yutaka Kubo

“I Will Keep Planting Apple Trees: Reminiscing about Attending ALMS Berlin 2019 Queering Memory”

I am typing this blog entry in the small corner of the film archive of the Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum, reminiscing about every moment of participating in ALMS Berlin 2019 Queering Memory. I cannot stress enough how I found the whole conference experience amazing and eye-opening. It was such a privilege for me to be able to attend and learn immensely from all the presentations.

Despite being a film scholar specialized in queer film theory and practice, I have to admit that I was a bit nervous to attend the conference solely focusing on LGBTQ issues. But my anxiety was quickly eased down by the opening ceremony, which was full of great remarks that I kept for future quotes, and intriguing presentations for the next three days. I had never attended any conference where I felt as supported and encouraged while giving a presentation as ALMS Berlin turned out to be. Comments and feedback I received during Q&A session became a great resource that helped me reorganize a plan for a forthcoming special exhibition at our museum that would aim to reconstruct the Japanese film history from a queer perspective.

One of the panel sessions that especially garnered my attention was “Queer & Trans Elders: Memories, Collections & Libraries.” In Japan, queer aging has become an important issue to be discussed extensively since the early 2000s. But the low visibility of queer elders in media seem to make discourses of aging less important than other issues regarding same-sex rights. Since I have been interested in how socio-cultural discourses of queer aging actually affect representation of elders in media, SNS, and community-building practices, this panel helped me compare and contrast cases in Japan with cases illustrated in this panel.

Looking back, I believe my experience at ALMS Berlin would continue to inspire me. Besides presentations, it was also an honor to join the discussion at “Queering Town Twinning” session where we not only had meaningful suggestions but also faced some difficulties surrounding, for instance, issues of differences between Global North and

South. Including the critical comment we heard in the closing ceremony, we do have a long way to go. Even so, I would like to remain optimistic and find an act of continuing is our best solution as ALMS founder Jean Tretter ended his talk in the opening ceremony: “We’re out there planting apple trees.”