In Memoriam - David S. Holloway (1981-2021)

Discussion published by Joanne Bernardi on Thursday, August 5, 2021

We share with sadness the news that David Sands Holloway, scholar of contemporary Japanese literature, culture, and gender studies, passed away on June 25, 2021 in Rochester, New York. Professor Holloway was an alumnus of Washington University in St. Louis (BA ’03 and PhD ’14, Japanese Language and Literature) and the University of Colorado Boulder (MA ’07). At the time of his death, he was a tenure-track assistant professor of Japanese in the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures at the University of Rochester, where he also directed the East Asian Studies program and taught core courses in the Susan B. Anthony Institute for Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies.

Professor Holloway joined the University of Rochester in 2015 as a visiting assistant professor and quickly became known as a popular and admired teacher, a respected mentor, and an ideal colleague. A prolific and promising scholar, he completed eleven articles and contributions to edited volumes during his time at the University of Rochester, while teaching a broad range of courses that spanned over 1000 years of Japanese literature and culture. His recently completed manuscript, The End of Transgression in Japanese Women’s Literature: Gender, Body, Nation (under contract with Routledge Press) studies the works of Natsuo Kirino, Sakurai Ami, and Kanehara Hitomi against the backdrop of Japan’s lost decade and the culture of precarity that it engendered. Professor Holloway reads these works against the grain, arguing that the “trendiness of taboo”—shocking violence and sexual exploitation—had become commonplace for these writers, no longer serving to catalyze protest. Paradoxically, their work uses transgression as a “safe literary maneuver” to restore rather than explode the status quo.

In addition to transgression and the precarity of the “lost decade,” Professor Holloway’s academic interests included youth cultures and subcultures; the intersection of Japanese literature with gender, media, and fantasy; millennial issues; tattoos, body alterations, and self-presentation; and manifestations of Japan’s AIDS crisis in 1980s and 1990s popular culture and media. Ever concerned with equity and social justice, he taught courses in Japanese literature and culture at the Five Points Correctional Facility in Romulus, New York through the Rochester Education Justice Initiative. A first-generation college student, Professor Holloway was passionate about mentoring students from all walks of life. Students in turn gravitated toward him because of his evident enthusiasm for whatever subject was at hand. As a keen
observer of human nature, he was also genuinely attuned to his students’ interests and needs, and adept at meeting everyone at their level, no matter how disparate their interests or opinions.

Professor Holloway was also a creative writer and specialized in short form flash fiction. “An Encounter in Aokigahara,” his short story that draws on the folklore figure of the “old woman in the woods,” was published in *Yamamba: In Search of the Japanese Mountain Witch* (Stone Bridge Press, 2021) just a few days before his death. An equally accomplished photographer, his prize-winning photographs still grace the walls of the Comparative Literature Department at his alma mater.

Professor Holloway’s colleagues and friends hope to shepherd to completion those works that he still had in the pipeline. Together with his published work, they represent significant contributions to Japanese literary and gender studies. Similarly, Professor Holloway left his mark on the University of Rochester by advancing the profile of its Asian studies curriculum. The many students who worked with him will carry with them moving forward their experience of his knowledge, his generous spirit, and his compassion, insight, and thoughtfulness. His friends and colleagues will be forever grateful for all these things, and for our memories of his ready humor and warm and friendly smile.

*In lieu of flowers*, please consider donating to either of the David Holloway Memorial Endowment Funds established by the family at the Dept. of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Rochester or the Dept. of East Asian Languages and Cultures at Washington University in St. Louis. For further information, please contact Professor John Givens, Chair, Dept. of Modern Languages and Cultures, 408 Lattimore Hall, PO Box 270082, Rochester NY 14627 ([john.givens@rochester.edu](mailto:john.givens@rochester.edu)); or Professor Rebecca Copeland, Dept. of East Asian Languages and Cultures, Washington University in St. Louis, CB 1111, One Brookings Drive, St. Louis MO 63130-4899 ([copeland@wustl.edu](mailto:copeland@wustl.edu)).

*Condolences* can be sent to Prof. Holloway’s mother, Sandra Holloway, at [sandraholloway2010@gmail.com](mailto:sandraholloway2010@gmail.com), or by mail to either of the two departments listed above, where they will be forwarded to the family.

*Tributes* at the University of Rochester and University of Washington in St. Louis:

Obituary, University of Rochester: [https://www.rochester.edu/newscenter/professor-of-japanese-remembered-as-a-proliﬁ](https://www.rochester.edu/newscenter/professor-of-japanese-remembered-as-a-proliﬁ)
Dept. of East Asian Languages and Cultures, Washington University in St. Louis:  
https://ealc.wustl.edu/news/remembe-thing-david-holloway

Dept. of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Rochester:  

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