The catalogue format inevitably imposes its own constraints. The discrete treatment of each artist and his work inhibits consideration of the larger political, economic, social, and factional issues involved, as well as the crucial role of local institutions, officials, and patrons. Moreover, the Way collection does not include any of the signature works that these artists painted for major exhibitions, nor any of their more radical attempts to encompass Western modes of expression. However, it does provide a more reliable means of gauging the kind of painting they produced for their private patrons.

"The Way collection suggests a unique perspective on Kyoto-school painting," writes Uchiyama Takeo, the Director of The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto. He concludes his assessment of the collection with this observation: "Offering a fresh view of the history of Kyoto *nihonga*, this exhibition and publication will give the contemporary Kyoto art community something to think about" when the exhibition travels to Japan in 2001 (p. 10).

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Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan. By JENNIFER ROBERTSON. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. xvi, 278 pp. $40.00 (cloth); $15.95 (paper).

The seductions and frustrations that the Takarazuka Revue places before the researcher are manifold. Whether as genuine fan or postmodern kitsch-lover, male or female, hetero- or homosexual, it is easy for anyone to fall for the spectacle of this all-female Japanese revue and lose sense of (or simply not care about) its greater social, cultural, and political contexts—in other words, to acknowledge its entanglements with specific historical practices. On the other hand, the critical observer is bound to face obstacles when trying to excavate those contexts that disturb the Revue's carefully constructed and guarded dream-world image, which works to keep it apart from the muck of the mundane. In her study of Takarazuka, Robertson negotiates both hazards masterfully. Her unrelenting attention to historical archival research, as well as contemporary anthropological analysis, saves her (unlike other commentators) from being played by the Revue's allure and its official history and allows her to produce a superbly nuanced consideration of a playful and fascinating pop cultural form without abstracting it to death, as is too often the case when high-powered critical theory meets popular culture.

"Playful" in reference to the Takarazuka Revue does not mean frivolous. Robertson disabuses us of this notion as she sets out to explore "the overlapping discourses of gender, sexuality, popular culture, and national identity as they erupted in the world framed by Takarazuka" (p. 23). Before these discourses, however, is the question of their terminology. After providing a thumbnail history and explanation of basic terms related to Takarazuka—founded in 1913 by railroad and department store magnate Kobayashi Ichizō—Robertson's introduction usefully clarifies the relationships and distinctions among sex, gender, and sexuality. While common knowledge for specialists in gender studies, this primer is perfect for students new to the field. Likewise, the first chapter, "Ambivalence and Popular Culture," clearly explicates concepts of "popular culture" as they have been employed by Euro-American and Japanese commentators. Popular culture, Robertson explains, comprises

an interactive social field of producers and consumer-producers whose interests and agendas may collude or collide (pp. 35–36). Correspondingly, it is marked by excess and ambivalence that keep it from being easily bounded or aligned to any single set of practices and significations. This characterization of popular culture—spectacularly evinced by the phantasmagoric display of Takarazuka performances and fan engagements with them and their stars—sets up the intertwining discussions of gender, sexuality, and national identity which follow.

Although Robertson necessarily takes up the players of female roles in her treatment of gender and sexuality, it is the *otokoyaku*, the players of male roles, who take center stage. In contrast to Kabuki's *onnagata* (male players of female roles) who were theorized as "becoming Woman" to enact ideals of femininity that real females were urged to follow, Takarazuka's *otokoyaku* did not "become Man." They merely put on overdetermined surface markers of "maleness," which Kobayashi and other (male) Takarazuka theorizers never intended to be continued off-stage, either as models for real males or as fashion in a Takarasienne's (or a fan's) daily life. In fact, insofar as it involved an understanding of "male psyche," the training of so-called *shōjo* (postpubescent but unmarried females) to do "male" gender was advertised as a practical step toward becoming a "Good Wife, Wise Mother" once the actor left the theater and assumed a "normal" heterosexual married life, as they were expected to do. In other words, Kobayashi's revue theater aimed at supporting the dominant gender ideology, despite the charges by its detractors of nurturing deviant masculinized females and encouraging "abnormal" intimacy among actors and fans alike (sometimes in the form of actor-fan lesbian affairs that became fodder for tabloids and sexologists in the 1920s and 1930s). At the same time, however, the androgynous effect of the *otokoyaku*—indeed, her distinctive appeal to fans who do not see onstage an ideal man, but rather "a female body performing in a capacity that transgresses the boundaries of received femininity and masculinity" (p. 82)—creates an ambivalence that has opened the way for unintended appropriations of the Revue. In short, critics and fans of Takarazuka, as Robertson convincingly argues in chapters on "Fan Pathology" and "Writing Fans," have since its founding contributed, intentionally or not, to the writing of a lesbian and/or antipatriarchal subtext within Takarazuka's patriarchal text. In so doing, they have aided in one of the tasks Robertson sets for her book, the dismantling of stereotypes of Japanese women and men, as well as the image of a culturally homogenous Japan that underwrites such stereotypes.

The book's centerpiece chapter, "Performing Empire," is on the surface the least integrated with the tone and content of the others. In fact, however, it crucially depends on the notions of ambivalence, popular culture, androgyny, cross-dressing, and gender performance developed in previous chapters. It is also the chapter that would likely appeal most to historians and should find a place in modern Japanese history courses in need of fresh and exciting material. Robertson offers here a persuasive argument for the consideration of popular theater in general as a "technology of Japanese imperialism" (p. 90) and Takarazuka's cross-ethnic performances in particular as "an extension of the official rhetoric of assimilation" (p. 97). Tapping into a trove of empire-related revue scripts and images which—like the "scandalous" material on actors' sex lives—the Takarazuka administration has generally kept from wide public view, she unearths a neglected stratum of cultural history of Japan's empire-building and war mobilization. Capitalizing on the Revue's montage form, its typically exotic content, and its mass popularity, Takarazuka founder Kobayashi enthusiastically adapted it to serve Imperial Japan's assimilationist

colonial policy by staging Pan-Asian spectacles such as those inspired by the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere: *Mongol* (1941), *Peking* (1942), *Return to the East* (1942), and *Children of East Asia* (1943). Colonialism, as Robertson points out, likewise possessed its own theatrics, whether involving Japanese soldiers in Burma donning grass skirts to do the "East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere South Seas Dance" or conceptualizing colonial territories "as a newly constructed stage fitted with Japanese sets and backdrops on which native actors would speak their lines in Japanese and perform their lives as if they were Japanese" (pp. 101–4). The "as if" is crucial in this connection. "Cross-ethnicking" Japanized colonial subjects brought into the fold of the Empire were analogous to cross-dressing masculinized *otokoyaku*: both represent a "sanctioned form of passing" (as Japanese, as male), but without the freedoms and opportunities afforded real Japanese and real males (p. 96).

These kinds of connections and insights are what make *Takarazuka* an exemplary demonstration of how popular cultural productions implicate wider discourses and deeper meanings. The book's breadth exceeds the bounds of what a short review can contain. In the recent minor boom in Anglophone studies of Japanese popular culture, very few have successfully steered between heavy-handed critical analysis that saps the life (and frankly, the fun) out of its topic, and unreflective flippancy born of either head-over-heels fandom or a dismissive haughtiness. Robertson's work here is a notable exception that should be widely read for its model approach and its eye-opening content. All it lacks is an accompanying DVD of Takarazuka performances.

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Women of the Sacred Groves, Divine Priestesses of Okinawa. By SUSAN SERED. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. $55.00 (cloth); $19.95 (paper).

Susan Sered has written a captivating ethnography of Okinawan female priestesses on an island called Henza. Based on a total of thirteen months in residence there during 1994 and 1995, she presents a highly engaging study of her subjects with whom she very clearly enjoyed excellent rapport. Her study presents a number of life histories in a very readable style that manages to be both jargon free and closely tied to the theoretical nexus she has established.

JAS readers who do not immediately recognize Sered's name can be forgiven; her work to date has focused on women's roles in Judaism and on studies of religious groups or cultic associations in which women predominate. She has previously written on "religious cultures in which women are the leaders" (p. 4), such as the Zar cults in Africa, spirit cults of northern Thailand, Korean shamanism, Candomble and Macumba in Brazil, Christian Science, Shakerism, and others. This is her first study of Japan.

Sered wanted to study Okinawa, she writes, because while the groups just named exist outside the dominant social and religious mainstream of their respective societies, on Okinawa the priestesses constitute the mainstream and are "independent of any kind of overarching male-dominated institutional framework . . . Okinawan women are the acknowledged and respected leaders of the publicly supported and publicly funded indigenous religion in which both men and women participate" (p. 4). She undertook a village study, because, she writes,