



Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures
Polish Academy of Sciences



ACTA ASIATICA
VARSOVIENSIA
No. 31

Warsaw 2018

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*Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia no. 31 was granted a financial support of the
Ministry of Science and Higher Education, grant no. 772/P-DUN/2017.*

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Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw 2018
PL ISSN 0860-6102
eISSN 2449-8653
ISBN 978-83-7452-091-1

ACTA ASIATICA VARSOVIENSIA is abstracted in
The Central European Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities,
Index Copernicus, ProQuest Database

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Gender Acrobatics: The Questionable Liberalism of Popular Culture and the Emergence of Alternative Masculinity Patterns in Late-modern Japan

Abstract

This paper focuses on the skillfully designed and highly merchandised figure of the otokoyaku – that is, the female impersonator of male roles in Takarazuka Revue, a hugely popular musical theatre in Japan, which celebrated its centennial in 2014. Takarazuka Revue’s version of *Gone with the Wind* (officially inspired by Margaret Mitchell’s novel, but in fact heavily relying on its film adaptation from 1938) is taken as an example of the ways in which producers of popular culture promote patterns of gender and race. The ambivalence of otokoyaku embodies both the struggles of masculinity as an ongoing project of defining the self in its own core identity and the fantasies of feminine power as a field of desire, resistance and negotiation in the modern world – Japan included. Premiered in 1977¹ and subsequently staged repeatedly over the next decades due to its unexpected box-office success, Takarazuka Revue’s *Gone with the Wind* displays Japanese visions on love, family, historical heritage, gender roles and race hierarchies, thus transcending its American origins. It employs the otokoyaku in both main characters, the makeup and outfit visually highlighting Rhett Butler’s idealised masculinity, on the one hand, and simultaneously reinforcing Scarlett O’Hara’s ‘failed femininity’, on the other hand. In light of current discourses on ‘herbivore men’ (sôshoku[kei] danshi) and the loss of ‘masculinity’ in late-modern Japan, Takarazuka Revue version of *Gone with the Wind* from 2013 is critically observed, in the pursuit for answers to the question whether otokoyaku’s highly stylised stature is a symbol or a symptom of the process of a fading ‘white obsession’ and the emergence of a ‘masculinity of self-sufficiency’ occurring currently worldwide.

Keywords: cultural consumption, Japan, love, *Gone with the Wind*, men’s Studies, Takarazuka Revue

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¹*Kaze to tomo ni sarinu* [*Gone with the Wind*, moon troupe], Takarazuka: Takarazuka Kagekidan, 1977.

Introduction: popular culture and the ideal of “the enlightened community”

The Takarazuka Revue was founded in 1913 by Kobayashi Ichizō (1873-1957), one of the most significant entrepreneurs in pre-war Japan. In 2014 it celebrated the 100th anniversary since its first performance in 1914 with *Don Burakko*, based on the famous folk-tale of Momotarō, the boy born from a peach in Japanese folklore. The Takarazuka Revue is today the most popular Japanese musical theatre: its hallmark is an all-female cast, which makes the stress ratio between *otokoyaku* (female impersonators of male roles) and *musumeyaku* (female impersonators of female roles) fundamental for the creation, promotion and implementation of specific gender roles and social models in modern and contemporary Japan.

This paper focuses on the skillfully designed and highly merchandised figure of the *otokoyaku*: the Takarazuka Revue’s version of *Gone with the Wind* (officially inspired by Margaret Mitchell’s novel from 1933, but in fact heavily reliant on its film adaptation from 1938 with Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh in the leading roles) is taken as an example for the ways in which producers of popular culture construct patterns of gender and race, as the ambivalence of *otokoyaku* embodies both the struggles of masculinity as an ongoing project of defining the self in its own core identity and the fantasies of feminine power as a field of desire, resistance and negotiation in the modern world – Japan included. The unsettling androgyny of the *otokoyaku* is enhanced by ‘racelessness’, mirroring the instability and ambiguity of Japanese modernity as a reputed monolith and challenging the Takarazuka Revue’s self-assigned position as a self-conscious icon of modern Japan and a unique synthesis of Japanese spirit and Western knowledge/technology due to her all-too fluid identity representations.

Premiered in 1977 and subsequently staged repeatedly over the subsequent decades due to its unexpected box-office success, the Takarazuka Revue’s *Gone with the Wind* displays Japanese visions on love, family, historical heritage, gender roles and race hierarchies, thus transcending its American origins. It employs the *otokoyaku* in both main characters, the makeup and outfit visually highlighting Rhett Butler’s idealised masculinity, on the one hand, and simultaneously reinforcing Scarlett O’Hara’s ‘failed femininity’, on the other hand. In light of current discourses on ‘herbivore men’ (*sōshoku[kei] danshi*) and

the loss of masculinity in late-modern Japan,² the Takarazuka Revue's version of *Gone with the Wind* from 2013³ has been critically observed in the pursuit for answers to the question of whether *otokoyaku*'s highly stylised stature is a symbol or a symptom of the process of a fading 'white obsession' and the emergence of the 'masculinity of self-sufficiency' occurring currently worldwide, concurrent with the merciless critique of "toxic masculinity", "patriarchal systems" and "white supremacy". The Takarazuka Revue version of *Gone with the Wind* from 2013 is chosen due to its particular ideologically loaded function: staged by the sky troupe, the youngest of the five, having been grounded in 1998, and implicitly the most progressive troupe at the Takarazuka Revue Company's main theatres in Takarazuka (27 September-4 November) and Tokyo (22 November-23 December), with topstar *otokoyaku* Ôki Kaname as Rhett Butler, the secondary *otokoyaku* Asaka Manato as Scarlett O'Hara, and *musumeyaku* Rion Misaki as Melanie Wilkes, it serves as a trend-setter in the Takarazuka Revue's tackling of masculine identity (particularly 2.2. *The otokoyaku: symbol or symptom?*). An exception to the rule of assigning a secondary *otokoyaku* to impersonate Scarlett O'Hara is the version from 2004 also staged by the sky troupe, with the *otokoyaku* Waô Yôka as Rhett Butler and *musumeyaku* Hanafusa Mari as Scarlett O'Hara, a case I come to discuss later in this paper (particularly in 2.3. *Gone with the Wind and the re-formulation of masculinity*).

Along its centennial existence, Takarazuka turned out to be both a faithful mirror of Japanese reality and an influential model for society. Curiously enough, the Takarazuka Revue is simultaneously conservative in its gender representation and progressive in its performance practice, becoming a contradictory symbol of Japanese modernity while standing out as Japan's leading figure in the entertainment industry. The Takarazuka Revue emerged from the syncretic, cross-gender tradition of the centuries-old classical Japanese stage arts such as Nô and Kabuki, and challenged that very tradition through the creative employment of Western music and dramatic plots as well as through its exclusive female casting. This new theatrical art

² Maki Fukasawa, *Sôshoku danshi sedai: Heisei danshi zukan [The Era of Herbivorous Boys: An Illustrated Guide to Heisei Boys]*, Tokyo: Kôbun-sha, 2009.

³ *Kaze to tomo ni sarinu [Gone with the Wind]*, Takarazuka: Takarazuka Kagekidan, 2013; *Kaze to tomo ni sarinu [Gone with the Wind]*, DVD, Takarazuka: Takarazuka Creative Arts, 2013.

reconstructs in a specific way asymmetric interactions between identity and alterity, model and copy, history and geography, obtrusively displayed in sparkling tunes, fairy-tale-like sceneries and gorgeous costumes. The last 44 years – since the world premiere of the blockbuster *The Rose of Versailles* in 1974 – have witnessed an unexpected tendency in the Takarazuka Revue’s public appearance, visible both in the lavishness of its performances and in the intensified commercialisation of the increasingly androgynous *otokoyaku* figures. In this paper, I take into account the multiple layers of the Takarazuka Revue’s administration and self-orchestration such as performance politics, the economic supervision of brand-related consumption, the socio-cultural management of actresses and fandom (fans and fan communities) as well as the performances themselves. My sources consist of the extensive archive research of Japanese documents and interviews with Japanese producers as well as with Japanese and Western consumers. A major focus of the paper is an in-depth literature review of the emerging field of Men’s Studies and its hermeneutic application to the critical phenomenon of Takarazuka Revue’s *otokoyaku*. It is both a curious inquiry into the ambiguous (often underlying the suspicion of double-standards) issue of the role and position of men and masculinity – or masculinities – in late modernity, and a theoretically grounded analysis of the challenges, contradictions and limitations that the concept of “man” and “masculinity” are facing in present-day Japan.

For clarity, I have divided the paper into three main parts.

1. Firstly, I’ll focus on the socio-cultural context of Japanese masculinity as staged by the Takarazuka Revue in its self-advertised position as an “icon of modern Japan” with its female impersonators of male roles as symbols of masculinity and pioneers of social change. This is embedded within the elaboration of my position as a Western researcher during my fieldwork over the past 3-4 years in this area (men and masculinities, both Japanese and Western).
2. Secondly, a detailed analysis of the Takarazuka Revue’s construction of masculinity across the decades is pursued as a critical example of the ways in which producers of popular culture construct and promote intersectional structures and hierarchies in Japan as well as their perception, processing and internalisation by consumers of those products.

3. Thirdly, *Gone with the Wind* is hermeneutically analysed, with particular focus on the performance staged in 2013. The goal is to illustrate the Takarazuka Revue's renegotiation - including its administrators' and directors' - of masculinity and gender patterns in late modernity, within the all-too ambiguous and fluid framework of US-Japanese historical exchanges.

While it has been repeatedly argued that the Takarazuka Revue – a huge institution within the highly corporationist entertainment industry in Japan – represents a typical phenomenon of cultural-intellectual hybridisation which has been occurring since 1868 and dovetails with the prevailing social-political agenda by reinforcing aesthetic-ideological patterns officially endorsed by the Japanese establishment, this paper looks at the Takarazuka Revue's public self-advertisement policy as a “world of love” in which “friendship, hard-work and (individual) excellence”⁴ serve the greater ideal of a dynamic community based of compassion, respect and trust among its members – the supreme goals of any enlightened society in the late-modern era.

The Takarazuka Revue and the cultural construction of masculinity

Within Japan's dynamic modernisation, the Takarazuka Revue emerged as part of the *shinkokumingeki* (New People's Theatre) movement in the early 20th century. Created along the model of *kokugeki* (National Theatre, coined by the theatrologist Tsubouchi Shōyō in 1904⁵), the Takarazuka Revue underlies the dialectics of the *kokumin'engekai-undō* (movement of the people's theatre), strongly

⁴Yoshitsugu Ueda, *Takarazuka ongaku gakkō* [The Takarazuka music academy], Osaka: Yomiuri-Life, 1976, p. 34.

⁵Roland Domenig, 'Takarazuka and Kobayashi Ichizō's Idea of 'Kokumingeki' in Sabine Frühstück, Sepp Linhart (eds.), *The Culture of Japan as Seen through Its Leisure*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998, p. 267-284, p. 269; Yoshio Ōzasa, *Nihon gendai engekishi* [The History of Japanese Modern Theater], Tokyo: Hakusuisha, 1995, p. 74; Jennifer E. Robertson, *Takarazuka: Sexual politics and popular culture in modern Japan*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, p. 124; see Tomoko Iizuka, Takarazuka Kageki – Rebyū no ōsama: Shirai Tetsuzō, 1900-1983 [Takarazuka Revue – The King of the Revue: Shirai Tetsuzō, 1900-1983], in Obara, T. (ed.) *Nihonjin no ashiato – Seiki wo okoeta "kizuna" motomete* [The Footsteps of the Japanese People – On the Quest of the Connections which Have Overcome the Century], Tokyo: Fusōsha, 2002, p. 479-510/p. 490.

defended by Ôyama Isao and Iizuka Tomoichirô, pre-war theatre historians and critics, in the late 1930s as “mass theatre for family entertainment”, in opposition to pre-modern Kabuk. ⁶ The *shinkokumingeiki* was supposed to consolidate Japan’s cultural homogeneity and preserve the construction of the Japanese national identity. Kobayashi rejected specific structures of the Japanese traditional theatre, such as music, which he considered unsuitable for powerful military marches or impressive chorus, and, thus, adopted Western (popular) music, even in Asian or Japanese plots, where popular melodic clichés were mixed with Western sounds. His goals to create a theatre ‘for the people’ and to offer them models of discipline and hard-work, on the one hand, and to support the imperialist levelling efforts, on the other hand, can be summed-up as it follows: “entertainment (*kairaku*), education (*kyôyô*) and assimilation (*dôka*) of the audiences can be attained through manners (*girei*), social interactions (*shako*) and friendship (*shinwa*)”.⁷ It is within this complex framework that the Takarazuka Revue’s performative construction of masculinity and its powerful impact outside of the entertainment industry are to be observed.

Theoretical background: Men’s Studies into Japanese Studies

The theoretical preoccupation with “men” as a social phenomenon – and roughly half of the world’s population – as well as the definition of “masculinity” in terms of an historical perspective emerged by the late 1970s and early 1980s in Western scholarship as a

⁶ Takarazuka Revue adopted elements such as *ginkyô* (the silver bridge), the cross gender representation, and the concept of a “total art-work” from Kabuki and Richard Wagner’s “Gesamtkunstwerk” (Benito Ortolani, *The Japanese Theatre – From Shamanistic Ritual to Contemporary Pluralism*, Princeton/New Jersey: Princeton University, 1995, p. 273; Jennifer E. Robertson, *Takarazuka: Sexual politics and popular culture in modern Japan*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, p. 29).

⁷ Nobuyuki Takaoka, *Kokumin engeki no tenbô* [A Vision of the People’s Theater], Tokyo: Yoshi Bundô, 1943, p. 194; see Roland Domenig, “Takarazuka and Kobayashi Ichizô’s Idea of ‘Kokumingeiki’”, in *The Culture of Japan as Seen through Its Leisure*, Sabine Frühstück, Sepp Linhart (eds.), Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998, p. 267-284/pp. 274-277; Benito Ortolani, *The Japanese Theatre – From Shamanistic Ritual to Contemporary Pluralism*, Princeton/New Jersey: Princeton University, 1995, p. 274; Jennifer E. Robertson, *Takarazuka: Sexual politics and popular culture in modern Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, p. 28; Hiroshi Watanabe, *Takarazuka Kageki no hen’yô to Nihon kindai* [Takarazuka Revue’s metamorphose and the Japanese modernity], Tokyo: Shinshokan, 1999, p. 39.

means to re-consider gender roles and gender positions in light of the established Women's/Gender Studies⁸. Its theoretical transfer to Japan as the only non-Western nation that has attained Western standards of civilisation within a record time-framework since its re-opening to the world community in 1868, implies both a geopolitical aspect of Japan's historical development and the sociocultural adaptation of this observation.

While Japan's fixation with masculinity was a contemporaneous obsession of the 19th and 20th century that intersected with Western preoccupations in both the pre- and postwar periods, particular elements in analysing patterns of masculinity/masculinities in late-modern Japan impose an object-oriented endeavour, so that the specific details of the concrete quotidian reality in the field – in this case, Japanese society – do not get lost in the rush of theoretical considerations⁹. There are, in this approach, six main reasons for choosing the Takarazuka Revue as the topic of illustrating the shape and various layers of the project of masculinity construction in modern Japan:

1. As a mass-media phenomenon the Takarazuka Revue has a central historical position in Japanese cultural consumption and is considered a foundation of the Japanese entertainment industry, both ideologically and aesthetically.
2. The Takarazuka Revue continues cross-gender stage representation based on the premodern tradition of all-male stage arts such as Nô and Kabuki, within a very strict hierarchical and educational system.¹⁰
3. Considering the competitiveness of the Japanese entertainment

⁸ see Connell W. Raewin, *Masculinities*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005; Connell W. Raewin, James W. Messerschmidt, 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept', in *Gender and Society*, Vol. 19, No. 6, 2005, p. 829-59.

⁹ see Amano Masako, 'Sôron: 'Otoko de aru koto' no sengo-shi: Sararîman, kigyô shakai, kazoku' ["General introduction: A post-war history of 'being a man': White-collar workers, corporate society and family"], in *Dansei-shi 3: "Otoko-Rashisa" no Gendai-shi [Men's History, Vol. 3: A Modern History of "Masculinity"]*, Abe Tsunehisa, Ôhinata Sumio, Amano Masako (eds.), Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Hyôron-sha, 2006, p. 1-32; Romit Dasgupta, *Re-reading the Salaryman in Japan: Crafting Masculinities*, London/New York: Routledge, 2013; Tomoko Hidaka, *Salaryman Masculinity: The Continuity and Change in Hegemonic Masculinity in Japan*, Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2010.

¹⁰ It appears among other cross-gender phenomena in late-modern Japan, such as the TV personality Matsuko Deluxe (prompting Japanese citizens to talk about "men, women and Matsuko Deluxe") and a great part of the *visual-kei* movement (boys-bands dressed up as women in glamorous rococo outfits, with glittering makeup and extravagant hairstyles).

system, the Takarazuka Revue's longevity (115 years since its foundation in 1913) is an exceptional phenomenon that warrants further analysis.

4. The Takarazuka Revue's ability to both reflect public opinions and to create new trends to be taken over by other mainstream media (TV and cinema, *anime/manga*, video games, social network channels, etc.) has been repeatedly noticed by scholars of the interactive exchanges between producers and consumers of popular culture, as an unusual example how "artistic value" is the result of a continuous negotiation between these two main parameters of the entertainment industry.
5. The Takarazuka Revue has been fulfilling a major function in mediating non-Japanese content to Japanese audiences (in the vast majority, 95-97%, female citizens between 35-60 years old, belonging to mid- and upper middle class) and impacting upon them in their perceived roles as mothers and primary educators (as well as consumers with a huge financial power).
6. My own preoccupation with the Takarazuka Revue as a cultural phenomenon for more than 15 years, accompanied by long-term extensive fieldwork, pursued mainly from a gender, feminist perspective, and strongly influenced by Cultural Studies.

While observing the Takarazuka Revue in its entirety as a mass-media form either obliterating smaller theatrical agencies or heavily influencing their approach to live-performances and public advertisement, its version of *Gone with the Wind* struck me as particularly powerful in its message of the ambiguous construction of masculinity in modern Japan.¹¹

On a different note, there has been recently a plethora of popular, rather than academic, publications referring to 'herbivore men' (*sôshoku[kei] danshi*) and the loss of 'masculinity' in late-modern Japan, specifically over the past 30 years.¹²As will be discussed further

¹¹ The Takarazuka Revue follows a special business model in comparison to regular mainstream media, relying heavily on a pre-established fan community with specific experiences and expectations, rather than pursuing endless growth and innovation through expansion and conquering new audiences and areas of artistic expression (Iwahori, Yasumitsu. *Isai Kobayashi Ichio no shôhō: Sono taishû shikô no rejâ keiei shuhô* [The specific business strategy of the genial Ichizô Kobayashi: His mass-oriented leisure enterprise methods], Tokyo: Hyôgensha, 1972, pp. 56-87).

¹² Masako Amano, 'Sôron: 'Otoko de aru koto' no sengo-shi: Sarariman, kigyô shakai, kazoku' ["General introduction: A post-war history of 'being a man': White-collar

below, my question is whether the Takarazuka Revue's version of *Gone with the Wind* from 2013, with a fallible and soft Rhett Butler, while keeping its highly stylised stature, is a symbol or a symptom of the process of a fading 'white obsession' and the emergence of what I call a 'masculinity of self-sufficiency' occurring currently worldwide. The phrase 'masculinity of self-sufficiency' refers to the widening gap between the expectations and experiences of men and women as a consequence of a growing liberalisation of education, workplace and quotidian activities, with both genders becoming increasingly independent of each other while simultaneously complaining about lack of compatibility, inter-gender communication and mutual understanding. Between Rhett Butler (the epitome of classic masculinity, with its sense of endurance and emotional aloofness as well as efforts to prove one's worth by means of external achievements and validation) and Scarlett O'Hara (the supreme model of feminism *avant-la-lettre*, of the "self-made woman" with her obsessively displayed independence, mental coolness and self-asserted sexuality), there is the ambivalence of a strong belief in traditional ideals: the *otokoyaku* as ideological model and embodiment of self-styled idiosyncrasy confirms the identity confusion in postwar Japan, a fact highlighted by the *otaku* phenomenon on a social level. The *otaku*, and its more recent version, "herbivore men," is the individual replication of the historically accomplished transition from premodernity to postmodernity without a sufficient modernisation, as Morikawa Kaichirô put it in 2003.¹³ The *otaku*"herbivore men" culture is marked by the conscious abandonment of message and focus on media through the projection of one's own emotions upon two-dimensional, symbolic simulacra constituted by separate elements contained in databases, as Azuma Hiroki wrote in 2001.¹⁴ The reality of the *otaku* and of the "herbivore men" is, in fact, the reality of one's own manually crafted metaphorical work, and symbolically pushes forward

workers, corporate society and family"], in *Dansei-shi 3: "Otoko-Rashisa" no Gendai-shi [Men's History, Vol. 3: A Modern History of "Masculinity"]*, Abe Tsunehisa, Ôhinata Sumio, Amano Masako (eds.), Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Hyôron-sha, 2006, p. 1-32; Maki Fukasawa, *Sôshoku danshi sedai: Heisei danshi zukan [The Era of Herbivorous Boys: An Illustrated Guide to Heisei Boys]*, Tokyo: Kôbun-sha, 2009.

¹³ Kaichirô Morikawa, *Shuto no tanjô: Moeru toshi Akihabara* [Learning from Akihabara: The birth of a personapolis]. Tokyo: Gentôsha, 2003, p. 53.

¹⁴ Hiroki Azuma, *Dôbutsuka suru posutomodan: Otaku kara mita nihonshakai* [The self-animalising postmodernity: the Japanese society seen from the perspective of the *otaku*], Tôkyô: Kôdansha, 2001, p. 87.

the collapse of the reality of the general society. It is indeed a romantic, friendly metaphorical work softly melting fantasy and substantiality into one. Takarazuka Revue's *otokoyaku* as desire object and projection site transforms the *otaku* cliché into a hero. The *otokoyaku* reacts with the reinforcement of her position as a mirror of the self and a window to the other, the female counterpart, while internalising her position as a female impersonator of male figures.¹⁵ In doing so, the *otokoyaku* metamorphoses into a figure of longing and, paradoxically, belonging – which is the essence of “self-love” as initially postulated by Erich Fromm in *The Art of Loving* more than 60 years ago: a concatenation of self-acceptance, self-compassion and self-respect, compounded by courage and integrity-and kindness.¹⁶

The *otokoyaku*: symbol or symptom?

The most central and mediated structure in the Takarazuka Revue is the *otokoyaku*, the female impersonator of male roles: a site of ambiguous projections and expectations coming from the (predominantly) female audiences, and of artistic expression and curious explorations, as the (overwhelmingly) male producers (composers, directors, trainers, designers, managers) construct it. The *otokoyaku* in her postwar version (since 1945) presented a credible counter-image to all current relativising social and gender roles, positions as well as sexualities and identities, precisely in this stress ratio between producers and consumers. To the disempowered maleness represented by *otaku* and recently highlighted by discourses on ‘herbivore men’ (*sōshoku[kei] danshi*) and the loss of ‘masculinity’ in late-modern Japan, the Takarazuka Revue's *otokoyaku* reacts with romantic masculinity, clinging to classical elements of male existence. As an ideal of the new male in the female imagination, the *otokoyaku* ideologically embodies a male figure which, on a physical level, collects externally all the characteristics of male idols from Clark Gable to James Dean and Elvis Presley (strong bodies, compact attitudes, elegance) and possesses internally all kinds of positive qualities (composed, courteous, kind, considerate, faithful, chivalrous and brave) imposed by the samurai/warrior code of honour. It fundamentally lacks the “bad boy allure”. An *otokoyaku* may not simply contain all these characteristics like a statue, but must also show weakness along the course of her

¹⁵ Julia Kristeva, *La révolution du langage poétique*, Paris: Seuil, 1974, p. 145.

¹⁶ Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving*, New York: Harper & Row, 1956.

development and must reach the right decision at the right moment – even when this causes pain, according to a centuries-old romantic codex still present in the consciousness of most audiences. As a blatant antagonism to the image of the *otaku*, which is by now omnipresent in Japan and from Japan has been spreading worldwide, though mostly as a positively connoted site of symbolical belonging, the *otokoyaku* version of masculinity appears as a charismatic individual capable of abnegation and sacrifice, as fans, that is female fans, repeatedly underline in their statements. However, the unsettling androgyny of the *otokoyaku* is enhanced by her ‘racelessness’, which competes with the status of other cross-gender representations, such as *onnagata* in Kabuki (that is male impersonators of female roles), regarded as highly stylised symbols of femininity in premodern Japan and infusing Japan’s reality until nowadays, as well: *otokoyaku* is clearly constructed as a role, and not as a model or role-model. The slender, fragile stature of *otokoyaku* mirrors the instability and ambiguity of Japanese modernity as a reputed monolith and challenges the Takarazuka Revue’s self-assigned position as the self-conscious icon of modern Japan and a unique synthesis of Japanese spirit and Western knowledge/technology due to her all-too fluid identity representations.

This becomes painfully obvious in the character of Rhett Butler from *Gone with the Wind*. Unlike in the original novel and its film adaptation, Rhett Butler turns into the main character, thus replacing Scarlett O’Hara who is downgraded to the status of a secondary character, even below Melanie Wilkes. *Gone with the Wind*, more precisely the version from 2013, becomes Rhett Butler’s life story, and employs the *otokoyaku* in both main characters (Rhett and Scarlett), as commonly dealt with since 1977. Rhett Butler’s struggling masculinity clashes against Scarlett O’Hara’s intimidating personality, while Melanie’s soft vibrant femininity is presented as a standard to be internalised individually and promoted publicly. *Gone with the Wind* is Rhett Butler’s “way of life”, even “the way of life named Rhett Butler”, as officially advertised in the performance poster and on the DVD released after the performance. Moreover, Rhett Butler metamorphoses into the prototype of the “new man”, deeply in touch with his emotions and conflicting loyalties, so that he can face painful realities and take uncomfortable decisions, like breaking up with Scarlett in the aftermath of the death of their daughter, in spite of his feelings of love and affection for her. This reading is revealed in the last song of the entire

performance, “Farewell in the sunset”, performed by Rhett Butler, after he has left Scarlett crying in the living room—a further major change from the US-American versions with Scarlett having the last famous lines (“Tomorrow is another day.”).

The song and the scene in its entirety contain both feelings of sadness and loss and of hope that she is happier and better-off without him. Previous to the final song, Scarlett tries desperately to convince him to stay (as in the novel and the movie), but unlike in other media, the Takarazuka Revue version reveals the impossibility of half-hearted returns, of ethical compromises and of consumption-driven happy-ends, and instead reinforces the tragic necessity of moving forward, both individually and historically. Classical rules of behaviour and identification are no longer valid, and new existential standards require the inevitable flexibility to mentally handle the hardships and to emotionally overcome the challenges.

***Gone with the Wind* and the dialectical re-formulation of masculinity**

By the mid-1970s, simultaneously with Japan’s rise and establishment as an economic superpower, a sensitive shift in the classical display of masculinity via its impersonation in the Takarazuka Revue’s *otokoyaku* took place, particularly since Oscar François de Jarjayes from *The Rose of Versailles* (which world premiered in 1974). On the one hand, there is a sensible softening of male ideals, inaugurated by Hans Axel von Fersen (Marie Antoinette’s lover from *The Rose of Versailles*) and his inability to save his pride as well as his lover from the storms of destiny.¹⁷ On the other hand, Rhett Butler (from *Gone with the Wind*, 1977) is a pathetic character expressing the dissolution of identity borders and the declining definition of humanity in consumer society: in spite of his aggressive masculinity, he is unable to be together with the woman he loves and is eventually compelled to give her up. There is an illusionary attempt in the 1980s at a last revitalisation of male ideals in the figure of Bill Snibson (from *Me and my Girl*, 1987, based on the musical by Douglas Furber, L. Arthur Rose and Noel Gay from 1937); however, he is an import from prewar Great Britain with its artificially preserved aristocracy. The charismatic,

¹⁷*Berusaiyu no bara* [The Rose of Versailles], Takarazuka: Takarazuka Kagekidan, 1974; see *Berusaiyu no bara* [The Rose of Versailles], Takarazuka: Takarazuka Kagekidan, DVD, 2001.

extroverted *Tôto* [German: Tod], interpreted as a death god (*shinigami*) in the Takarazuka Revue adaptation *Elisabeth: The rondo of love and death* (1996) of the Vienna-premiere *Elisabeth* (1992), expresses the failure to reinforce clear ideals in the here and now, followed by the Shinto god of the sea and storm, Susano-o (from the eponymous performance in 2004), who accentuates the crisis of human beings in the era of general liquefactions: of identity, of culture, and of gender.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the employment of classical, archetypal characters as symbolised by Shirasu Jirô (from *Reimei no kaze: Samurai-jentoruman Shirasu Jirô no chôsen* [A morning breeze: The challenge of Jirô Shirasu, the samurai-gentleman], 2008), one of the most important businessmen in postwar Japan, means the acute re-actualisation of the *wakon yôsei* [Japanese spirit, Western knowledge/technology] slogan which he embodies in his synthetic figure. Though educated at famous schools in England, Shirasu Jirô bares his soul for Japan's welfare and defies Douglas MacArthur with the words: "Japan has lost the war, but that doesn't mean Japan has been enslaved." He dashes like a "morning breeze" through the turbulent twentieth century, firmly determined to devote himself entirely to Japan's postwar reconstruction and to the restoration of its sovereignty.

Contrastingly, also starting with Oscar from *The Rose of Versailles*, there is the gradual empowerment of female figures impersonated by *otokoyaku*, and not by *musumeyaku*, as had been traditionally pre-assigned. Performed by an *otokoyaku*, Oscar herself is a girl raised and educated as a boy in order to inherit and protect the family's name and wealth. Oscar's failure to define his/her own identity in the tumult of history is continued by Scarlett O'Hara, symbolising the strong, self-made woman of modernity and her overwhelming energy which erases prejudices, contradictions and obstacles.¹⁹ Scarlett O'Hara is a crucial moment in the Takarazuka Revue's endeavours to define gender and identity: she struggles for the continuity of family and history, but her struggle itself is a negation of traditionally transmitted

¹⁸ Maria Grajdian, *Flüssige Identität: Die postmoderne Liebe, die Takarazuka Revue und die Suche nach einer neuen Aufklärung*, Bucharest: National Music University, 2009, p. 274; see Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid modernity*, Cambridge: Polity, 2000, p. 131; Leonie Stickland, *Gender Gymnastics: Performing and consuming Japan's Takarazuka Revue*, Melbourne: Trans Pacific, 2008.

¹⁹ Kenko Kawasaki, *Takarazuka – Shôhi shakai no supekutakuru* [Takarazuka – The spectacle of the consumption society], Tokyo: Kodansha, 1999, p. 81.

family and history. Her inner misconception transforms Scarlett O'Hara into a tragic figure unable to attain her ideals and breaking down under their weight, while desperately clinging to the ideology of "tomorrow, I'll be sad tomorrow" which would deliver later on the foundation for Western feminist pragmatics. Compounded by Scarlett's rapacious drive to constantly move forward and her greed for bigger and flashier outcomes, this mentality of avoiding failure and overcoming difficulties at any cost, instead of possibly leaning back and reflecting upon one's role in the tumult of history and destiny, is what turns her, in the Takarazuka Revue's representation of masculinised femininity, into a classical symbol of meaningless struggles, while missing out on one's core humanity. Her song "When tomorrow comes" summarises this message, and simultaneously offers the solution to a healthier relationship with the self, both individually and as part of a greater whole.

明日になれば

悲しみは明日にしよう
 涙を堪え泣くのは予想
 人の世に別れはあれど
 この世に明日がある
 夜が来れば朝は近い
 冬が来れば春は近い
 明日になれば
 明日になれば
 月は沈み、日は昇る

苦しみは明日にしよう
 唇噛んで泣くのは予想
 人の世に嘆きはあれど
 この世には明日がある
 夜が来れば朝は近い
 冬が来れば春は近い
 明日になれば
 明日になれば
 月は沈み日は昇る

When Tomorrow Comes

Tomorrow, I'll be sad tomorrow.
 I can feel that the repressed tears will
 overwhelm me.
 In the humans' world, there are
 separations,
 But there is also the hope towards
 tomorrow.
 Only when the night falls, the morning
 comes closer,
 Only when the winter comes, the spring
 comes closer.
 When tomorrow comes,
 When tomorrow comes,
 The moon will go down and the sun will
 rise.
 Tomorrow, I'll be in pain tomorrow.
 I can feel that I'll bite my lips and cry.
 In the humans' world, there is pain,
 But there is also the hope towards
 tomorrow.
 Only when the night falls, the morning
 comes closer,
 Only when the winter comes, the spring
 comes closer.
 When tomorrow comes,
 When tomorrow comes,
 The moon will go down and the sun will
 rise.

Within the re-staging series of *Gone with the Wind*, two versions would create the space for the resurgence of the powerfully dialectic version from 2015. Interestingly, both versions took place exclusively as performances in different locations (the Nissay Theater in Tokyo during the nationwide tour), other than the Takarazuka Revue's main theatres in Takarazuka and Osaka, as regular performances, occur: the first one is the version from 2002 (Nissay Theatre, April 6-16 and April 18-29) of the star troupe with Yû Todoroki as Rhett Butler and Asami Hikaru respectively Sena Jun as Scarlett O'Hara in which the extreme display of masculinity patterns on stage by Yû Todoroki's Rhett Butler is counter-balanced by a powerful, aggressive Scarlett who would later become two of the most fascinating topstar *otokoyaku* actresses in

Takarazuka Revue's history. The second version is the one from 2004 (October 16–November 7) of the sky troupe, with Waô Yôka as Rhett Butler and Hanafusa Mari as Scarlett O'Hara, the only one to have a topstar *musumeyaku* impersonating the main female character.²⁰ One of the longest-lasting and popular “golden combinations”, as the pair formed by the topstar *otokoyaku* and topstar *musumeyaku* is formally labeled, provided a warmer and more empathetic Rhett-Scarlett couple, in which relying on each other and cooperating with each other replaced the competition and struggle for power between the two main characters (competitiveness and the effort for domination being two major elements in the classical interpretation of the Rhett-Scarlett duo, in the novel, the movie as well as in all theatrical representations). Thus, the 2013 version of *Gone with the Wind* with its fallible, humble Rhett and its self-reflexive Scarlett appears against the background of the socio-artistic tendency to bring the male and the female genders closer, in a move to teach them the value of mutual compassion, acceptance and curiosity.

Conclusion: towards a new sense of masculinity

It has been argued that throughout the Takarazuka Revue's postwar history and its staging of identity, it was mainly the androgynously charismatic and ambivalent figure of *otokoyaku* that transported its ideals. Indeed, compared to the apparently submissive and conformist *musumeyaku*, the *otokoyaku*'s position suggests a strongly dialectical movement between traditional role models and innovative consumption patterns. To begin with, one recalls Kobayashi Ichizô's statement that audiences should desire the *otokoyaku*, but identify themselves with *musumeyaku*.²¹ While he regarded feminism and women's empowerment or liberation as devious, Kobayashi Ichizô, the founder of the Takarazuka Revue, was aware of the power of femininity as the virtually leading-and procreating-force in society. He envisioned his new theatre as a musical, cultural institution for all social strata, including men, women and children, an entertainment place for

²⁰*Kaze to tomo ni sarinu* [Gone with the Wind], DVD, Takarazuka: Takarazuka Creative Arts, 2004.

²¹ Ichizô Kobayashi, *Takarazuka manpitsu* [Takarazuka miscellanea], Tokyo: Jitsugyô no Nihonsha, 1955, p. 37; see Yasumitsu Iwahori, *Isai Kobayashi Ichiô no shôhō: Sono taishû shikô no rejâ keiei shuhô* [The specific business strategy of the genial Kobayashi Ichizô: His mass-oriented leisure enterprise methods], Tokyo: Hyôgensha, 1972.

the whole family²², e.g., the Takarazuka Revue theatre in Tokyo, being called “a temple of family entertainment” (*katei kyōraku no dendō*).²³

My main aim is to separate theatre from the grasp of noble people and make it available to everyone. Plays should not be luxurious occasions, but should be an everyday entertainment. I do not want an audience made up of the sons of rich families with their geishas, nor dignitaries who have no care for how much they spend on leisure activities. I want ordinary families to come.²⁴

Intriguingly enough, the audiences eventually became 95% female²⁵, an effect of the all-encompassing consumer society in Japan which emerged in the late 1960s and solidified throughout the 1970s, with very clearly distributed gender roles: since the mid-1970s until recently (ca. 10 years ago), 95-97% of Takarazuka Revue fans would belong to the demographics of married housewives, between 35-60 years old, with 2-3 children of school-age. During those exuberant 1970s, current identificatory models became predominant, so that the objectivisation of the *otokoyaku* as an entity of desire and site of projection-to use Julia Kristeva's terminology²⁶ – transformed the *otokoyaku* from a model of male presence into a mirror of female identity projections: fans' fulfillment in the imaginary world should confirm *otokoyaku's* magic, and yet place them on the *musumeyaku's* level.²⁷ Every *otokoyaku*, and with her, the masculinity ideal she embodies, abandons the sphere of her own identity and accedes to the public space; she metamorphoses into a symbol for something which she cannot possibly be and she must obey the limits, rules and circumstances

²² Masao Hashimoto, *Subarashii Takarazuka Kageki-Yume to roman no 85-toshi* [The wonderful Takarazuka Revue: 85 years of dreams and romance], Takarazuka: Takarazuka Kagekidan, 1999, pp. 54, p. 123-125.

²³ Jennifer E. Robertson, *Takarazuka: Sexual politics and popular culture in modern Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, pp. 36; Benito Ortolani, *The Japanese Theatre-From Shamanistic Ritual to Contemporary Pluralism*, Princeton/New Jersey: Princeton University, 1995, p. 273.

²⁴ Kobayashi quoted in Zeke Berlin, *Takarazuka-A History and Descriptive Analysis of the All-Female Japanese Performance Company*, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1988, p. 125.

²⁵ Masao Hashimoto, *Subarashii Takarazuka Kageki-Yume to roman no 85-toshi* [The wonderful Takarazuka Revue: 85 years of dreams and romance], Takarazuka: Takarazuka Kagekidan, 1999, p. 29.

²⁶ Julia Kristeva, *La révolution du langage poétique*, Paris: Seuil, 1974, p. 273.

²⁷ Kenko Kawasaki, *Takarazuka to iu yūtopia* [The utopia called Takarazuka], Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2005, p. 105-108.

imposed upon her from the outside. Like Don Quixote in another spatial and temporal culture – who, in the second part of the novel meets persons having already read the first part of the novel, and who must be faithful to the book which he has himself become and protect it from misapprehensions, counterfeits and apocryphal continuations, to paraphrase Michel Foucault²⁸ – an *otokoyaku* must follow her own discourse and transform herself into an object of the process which she herself as a subject had originally created.

However, since late 1970s, the *otaku* emerged and developed as an important existential alternative to the corporatist masculinity of postwar Japan. Mostly regarded as emblematic for the so-called crisis of masculinity in late modern, highly industrialised nations, in current Japanese slang, an *otaku* describes an obsessive fan of different forms of subcultural models and fashions. Contrary to the established cliché, those described as *otaku* seem to have once been ambitious boys who were particularly affected by the loss of faith in science and technology in the 1970s, as Morikawa Kaichirō observes²⁹, and in the political systems of stability and social networks of safety, during the 1990s. In the character of Rhett Butler and its ambivalent trajectory since the late-1970s, the Takarazuka Revue's administrators employed a powerful, credible alternative to the liquefying tendencies in defining the gender roles and models in late-modern Japan by surcharging it with romantic ideals and pragmatic features.³⁰ In Rhett Butler's fluid, non-controversial figure, with his strong will and innate ability to provide material support, moral orientation to those around him and proven mental toughness in times of turmoil, the predominantly female audiences recognise traditional patterns of relating and identifying, both in their function as mothers and primary educators and in their yearnings for a world of emotional outbursts and explosive passions. On the other hand, independently if an *otokoyaku* impersonates a male or a female character, her dualism reveals the impossibility of following classical rules of behaviour and internal validation as well as the increasing

²⁸ Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines*, Paris: Gallimard, 1966, p. 73.

²⁹ Kaichirō Morikawa, *Shuto no tanjō: Moeru toshi Akihabara* [Learning from Akihabara: The birth of a personapolis]. Tokyo: Gentōsha, 2003, p. 86.

³⁰ Bell Hooks, *The Will to Change-Men, Masculinity and Love*, New York/London: Washington Square Press, 2004; Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

ambivalence of traditionally transmitted ideals: there is comfort in the centuries-old codex of obeying the rules without questioning them or following strong leaders without asking for re-assurance, but late modernity with its challenges and uncertainties dissolves the warm soft protective layer offered by hierarchical structures and requires instead initiative and a sense of discernment. Scarlett's highly masculinised appearance represents highly contradictory alternatives to the on-going project of re-inventing the gender roles and modelling them according to patterns established once again in recent years. More than being a stable entity for the "silent majority" to follow, Rhett Butler's character in the Takarazuka Revue version from 2013 suggests rather a shadow adaptation to the expectations and pressures of that very "silent majority" he was once supposed – or chosen – to lead. On the background of other roles performed by Ôki Kaname while being topstar *otokoyaku* of the sky troupe (2012-2015), such as Gustav III of Sweden in *Oath of the midnight sun* (2014), Edmond Dantes in *The Count of Monte Cristo* (2013), Fersen in *The Rose of Versailles* (2012), Reinhart von Lohengramm in *Legends of the galactic heroes @ Takarazuka* (2012), her Rhett Butler is neither a cool thug profiting from the chaos of war nor an empowered gentleman in the aftermath of civil unrest – he is simply a confused male citizen who cannot figure out his own emotions when confronted with an overwhelmingly strong lady, as Scarlett once more proves to be.

Classical femininity, with its qualities of warmth, patience and softness, disappear in Scarlett despair and reckless resolution to overcome all difficulties by herself. Correspondingly, Rhett loses both his masculine appeal and *raison-d'être*, and must submit to the flow of time. In constructing this type of disempowered masculinity, the Takarazuka Revue reflects for once the prevailing tendencies in Japanese society and suggests, simultaneously, new paths to follow in the character of a slightly emotional, less cerebral Rhett Butler: Still masculine in his opposition to Scarlett, he is complementary to her dialectical femininity in light of social pressures and inter-human challenges, and finds the strength to walk away when his dignity requires it. In doing so, Rhett Butlers leaves the arena of a submissive adaptation to historical upheavals and enters the sphere of self-reflexive acknowledgement that awareness is fundamental in defining masculinity, as it is emotional maturity and intellectual depth. The long way Rhett Butler has left behind as an epitome of progressive

masculinity from Margaret Mitchell's novel through Victor Fleming's movie reaches in the latest Takarazuka Revue's version of *Gone with the Wind* an important stage, with compassion, kindness and (self-)respect, as fundamental elements of his gender identity.

Appendix: Takarazuka Revue Company's stagings of *Gone with the Wind* (selection)

Year	Troupe	Theater
1977	Star	Takarazuka/Tokyo
1978	Snow	Takarazuka/Tokyo
1978	Flower	Takarazuka/Tokyo
1978	Star	National Tours
1978	Moon	National Tours
1978	Flower	National Tours
1984	Snow	Takarazuka/Tokyo
1988	Snow	Takarazuka/Tokyo
1994	Moon	Takarazuka/Tokyo
1994	Snow	Takarazuka/Tokyo
1994	Moon	National Tours
1997	Flower	National Tours
1998	Snow	National Tours
2001	Star	National Tours
2002	Snow	Takarazuka/Tokyo
2002	Flower	Takarazuka/Tokyo
2004	Sky	National Tours
2013	Sky	Takarazuka/Tokyo
2014	Moon	Takarazuka/Tokyo
2014	Star	National Tours

