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## Staging Androgyny

Today is my farewell party.  
To love?  
N-O.  
Inside am I a man? A woman?  
I strike a pose as one  
and the other grows bored.  
Well,  
when the next page is turned  
another me.

*Mine izu main* (Mine is mine) 1986:[46]

### DISRUPTING STEREOTYPES

The epigraph is from an album of photographs featuring Mine Saori, a top *otokoyaku* who retired in 1987. Mine's poem about (her) androgyny is superimposed on a photograph of her: she is sporting a black satin tunic, black leather pants, lacy black socks, and black high heels, reclining on a sofa-like object draped in black cloth. One foot is on the ground, the other raised to rest on the arm of the sofa. She has a bemused but serious look on her face, and her eyes are cast down and sideways. Mine's poem and picture allude to the constructed and performative aspects of gender and its distinction from sex that have been much invoked of late. Such an analysis is not merely a theoretical premise or literary exercise; these aspects are unquestionably evident in the Takarazuka Revue and Kabuki, two sites of my investigation into the politics of androgyny in Japan.<sup>1</sup>

Androgyny, as I employ the term here, refers not to a physiological condition (that is, an intersexed body) but to a "surface politics of the body" (Butler 1990:136). It involves the scrambling of gender markers—clothes, cosmetics, gestures, speech patterns, and so on—in a way that both challenges the stability of a sex-gender system premised on a male (masculine)/female (feminine) dichotomy and also retains the components of that dichotomy, now juxtaposed or

combined. For an androgynous appearance or performance to turn heads on a street or to draw stares—and applause—in a theater, it must do both. Because so many critical analyses of Kabuki and virtually none of the Takarazuka Revue have been published, and also because I am interested in a female-embodied androgyny, my focus here is on the Revue—its actors, audience, and critics—and particularly on its early history. After summarizing the spectrum of English-language and Japanese terms for and usages of androgyny, I shall move on to the main project of this chapter: to explore some of the ways in which androgyny has been differently deployed to support and subvert dominant representations of females and males in Japan.

Since the early twentieth century, androgyny has been used in both dominant and marginalized discourses of sex, gender, and sexuality to camouflage “unconventional” female sexual practices by creating the illusion of an asexual—in effect, a disembodied—identity. Androgyny has identified Takarazuka actors who perform both “female” and “male” gender roles without being constrained by either. How is a dominant gender ideology constructed, reproduced, resisted, and even subverted, sometimes all at once, by women and men whose private and professional lives confound tidy, universalistic schemata, whether those derive from literature or theory? Real people tend to be messy, inconsistent, hypocritical, and mostly opaque when the relationship of sex, gender, and sexuality in their own lives is at issue. Moreover, the stereotype of *the Japanese* as a homogeneous people has had the corollary effect of whitewashing a colorful variety of gender identities and sexual practices. More often than not, the lived experiences of female and male members of Japanese society have not been sufficiently problematized; rather, they have been collapsed into dominant, naturalized gender ideals. The male workaholic and female housewife are two stock images that come readily to mind. In the larger scheme of things, this chapter—and book—seeks to dismantle some of the more tenacious stereotypes of Japanese women and men, in the process provoking new insights into the complicated relationship of sex, gender, and sexuality in Japan and elsewhere.

#### WORDS AND USAGES

The English loanword *andorojenii* (androgyny) has appeared frequently in the Japanese mass media since the mid-1980s in reference

to clothing fashions—particularly the men's clothing adapted by and for women and the skirts worn by all-male pop music groups, such as the Checkers (Asano 1989; Nishiyama 1984; *Otoko ni mo sukāto jidai?* 1985; Yagi 1989). Since *andorojenii* is a transliteration, the term is often simultaneously defined in Japanese as *ryōsei* (both sexes/genders) and *chūsei* (between sexes/genders), the differential use of which I will elaborate later.<sup>2</sup> In English, following ancient Greek usage, "androgyny" literally means "man-woman," although what the word signifies and represents is far from literal. Carolyn Heilbrun, for example, presents androgyny—which she defines as the realization of man in woman and woman in man—as an ideal, nonpolarized way of being that is necessary for the survival of human society (1982 [1964]:xx). Adrienne Rich, on the other hand, argues that the very structure of the word androgyny "replicates the sexual dichotomy and the priority of *andros* (male) over *gyne* (female)" (1976:76–77).<sup>3</sup>

Japanese scholars have taken similar theoretical and political positions. Asano Michiko, for example, adopts Carl Jung's quasi-biological theory of androgyny in exploring the idea of androgyny as it has been expressed historically in Japanese popular religious texts (1989).<sup>4</sup> She bemoans the loss of "traditional" androgyny (as "the harmony of 'male' and 'female' qualities") over the course of Japan's modernization but observes a revival of androgyny (as "cross-dressing") in the present time (201–2). Similarly, Akiyama Satoko employs Jung's theory of the "inherent androgyny" of all people to debunk the notion of "sexual perversion" (*seitōsaku*), insisting that the sexual choices available to females and males are as varied as the combinations of feminine and masculine tendencies they embody (1990; see also Ifukube 1932). And Kurahashi Yukiko suggests the corporeality of Jung's *animus*, or "male archetypical essence," in her neologism for "a female who wants to be a man": *penisuto* ("penist") (quoted in Hyūga 1971:26). Yagi Kimiko, on the other hand, like Rich, dismisses androgyny as an idea (and ideal) that suppresses women's sexual difference in the name of equality (1989).

Medical—anatomical and psychological—descriptions and interpretations of androgyny were especially plentiful in early-twentieth-century Japan. The works of Euro-American sexologists—Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis, Edward Carpenter, Magnus Hirschfeld, Iwan Bloch, Leopold Lowenfeld, Wilhelm Gustav Liepmann, Otto Weininger—were exported directly to

Japan, where they were studied, translated, adapted, and augmented by Japanese sexologists (Fujikawa 1919a, 1919b, 1923; Hanafusa 1930; Hayashi 1926; Ifukube 1932; Izawa 1931; Ōzumi 1931; Yasuda 1935; see also Hirschfeld 1935; Roden 1990). Physiological androgyny—that is, an intersexed body—was of special interest at that time to scholars of forensic medicine, who addressed the phenomenon in terms of conscription, patrilineality (specifically family name and inheritance), political service, and civil rights, all of which were contingent on the establishment of a person's body as male (e.g., Takada 1926 [1917]:285–91).

Two of the most frequently encountered Japanese terms referring to androgyny are *ryōsei* and *chūsei*, which were coined in the early twentieth century; they first appeared in journal and newspaper articles on homosexuality and “abnormal sexual desire” (Kabeshima, Hida, and Yonekawa 1984:185). *Ryōsei* was and is most generally used to label either someone with both female and male genitalia or someone with both feminine and masculine characteristics. Consequently, *ryōsei* has been used to refer intersexed bodies as well as to persons who behave as if they were at once masculine and feminine (Hyūga 1971; Komine and Minami 1985:57, 296–301). The latter combine and embody the stereotyped characteristics attributed to females and males, which are commonly seen as polarized and mutually exclusive (see Akiyama 1990; Asano 1989; Ifukube 1932; Komine and Minami 1985:57).

*Chūsei*, on the other hand, has been used to mean “neutral” or “in between,” and thus neither female nor male, neither woman nor man. Whereas *ryōsei* emphasizes the juxtaposition or combination of sex or gender differences, *chūsei* emphasizes the erasure or nullification of differences. A person whose body is intersexed usually is raised or passes as one or the other sex/gender (see Sawada 1921; Komine and Minami 1985:296–301). A “neutral” body, in contrast, is one whose surface appearance (costume, hairstyle, intonations, speech patterns, gestures, movements, deportment, and so on) confounds the conventional alignment of sex with gender and scrambles received gender markers. The normalizing principle at work here posits that, say, masculinity is a “natural” attribute of male bodies. However, masculinity is not a product of nature—that is, some sort of agentless creation—but a sociohistorical representation of male bodies, a representation that is subject to manipulation and change. Gender, in other words,

names an ultimately unstable "amalgam of signifiers" (Pacteau 1986:80). Despite the workings of this normalizing principle, it remains the case that in Japan historically, as attested in part by Kabuki and Takarazuka, neither femininity nor masculinity has been deemed the exclusive province of either female or male bodies.

#### CROSS-DRESSING HISTORICALLY

For centuries in Japan, cross-dressed performances have characterized ritual practices such as shrine festivals and the Nō theater, have lent spice to many novels, and have even figured in the eighth-century mytho-histories. However, I will limit my review of the history of gender ambivalence to the Edo period, when sexual and gender transformations became a subject of popular and legal fascination.<sup>5</sup>

The earliest Kabuki stage included females who performed men's roles while male actors often took women's roles. Female actors were first banished from the stage in 1629. Apparently, the Confucian Shogunate was disturbed by the general disorder, including unlicensed prostitution, associated with women's Kabuki. Patrons quarreled with one another for access to their favorite dancers. Replacing the females with boys did not solve the problem, for the male patrons were equally attracted to the boys. Eventually, the prohibition of females and later of boys prompted the sanctioned emergence of the *onnagata*, adult males who specialized in performing femininity.

Early accounts of female Kabuki actors were as polarized as the actors' gender was ambiguous. The seventeenth-century Confucian scholar Hayashi Razan (1583–1657) was not complimentary in his description of these shows: "The [males] wear women's clothing; the [females] wear men's clothing, cut their hair and wear it in a man's topknot, have swords at their sides and carry purses. They sing base songs and dance vulgar dances; their lewd voices are clamorous, like the buzzing of flies and the crying of cicadas" (quoted in Shively 1970 [1955]:232). In contrast, another early-seventeenth-century work provided a glowing description of a female Kabuki actor's stage entrance: "The figure . . . did not appear to be that of a woman but of a true-hearted man: it was indeed the image of Narihira, who long ago was called the spirit of *yin* and *yang*. . . . Anyone who would not fall in love with such a beautiful figure is more [frightening] than a ghost" (quoted in Shively 1970 [1955]:233).

Narihira, a ninth-century courtier known for his bisexuality, was eulogized in Edo-period fiction as "the god of *yin* and *yang*" (Schalow 1990:10). His name formed the basis of a term used in the Edo period to denote androgyny: *futanarihira*, literally "double-bodied" or "body double" (Imao 1982:145-46; Maeda 1973:750, 867, 884; Takada G. 1926 [1917]:287). The *futa* (double) preceding *narihira* would seem to imply an "overdetermined" Narihira, in the sense of a person—in most cases a male—who performs both in a feminine and masculine manner.

What is interesting in the passages just cited is the authors' fixation on the female actor's ability to appropriate the markers of masculinity. Yet these and similar accounts seem to presume a priori a male's ability to perform femininity—and thus theater historians have taken for granted the availability of males to play women's roles when females were banished from the public stage.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, whereas males could perform openly as women on the Kabuki stage, and also live as women offstage as well, females who appropriated masculinity as a social guise were criminalized. This double standard is poignantly illustrated by the case of a woman named Take who, in the 1830s, openly defied the sex-gender hierarchy. Her case is recorded in the women's section of *Oshioki reiruishū*, a collection of crimes and their punishments published between 1771 and 1852.<sup>7</sup>

As a girl, Take had played with boys and later found men's work and activities more exciting than women's work. Cutting off her hair, she created a new persona for herself as a young man named Takejirō. This act so provoked the indignation of the male innkeeper who employed her that he raped her, ostensibly to make Take/Takejirō aware of her female sex. She became pregnant and ran away from the inn, but not before stealing an obi and a straw raincoat to hide her pregnancy and to protect her masculine appearance. When the child was born, she suffocated it. Thievery and infanticide notwithstanding, when Take/Takejirō was captured she was charged with having committed the newly coined crime of "corrupting public morals" (*jin-rin o midashimasu mono*) by dissociating sex from gender. Her second arrest came in 1837 when it was discovered that she was both passing as a man and impersonating a deputy magistrate, a flagrant violation of both the sex-gender hierarchy and the social status hierarchy. Ironically, she was rearrested after attracting the attention of a real magistrate who saw her capture a thief committing a robbery.

Take/Takejirō was fined, imprisoned, and eventually exiled for her appropriation of a masculine gendered appearance.

Take/Takejirō's actions indicated that she was aware of the arbitrary nature of gender attribution and of the sexual and gendered division of labor. Her punishment illustrated the tenacity of the Tokugawa Shogunate's emphasis on the fusion of female sex with femininity, although the authorities were considerably more lax toward cross-dressing males. In the case of Kabuki, the Shogunate was less concerned with cross-dressing than with class-crossing sexual relations between males. Nevertheless, Shogunate officials condoned female-embodied masculinity in at least one context. The term *bōzu*, or "shaved head," for example, referred to male and female priests who had taken the tonsure, as well as to female employees in the various castles who were assigned masculine gender. Dressed in formal men's attire (the *haori* and *hakama*), these women were responsible for mediating between the innermost, "female"-gendered and outermost, "male"-gendered sections of the castles (Takayanagi 1965:17). The difference between the *bōzu* and Take/Takejirō is that whereas the *bōzu* were assigned a masculine gender, Take/Takejirō chose hers; accordingly, she was punished severely. Also, the *bōzu* were likely selected from among older, postmenopausal females whose sex and gender were consequently regarded as ambiguous. That is, they were no longer classified as "feminine" females or "really real" females.

#### CONCEPTUALIZING ANDROGYNY

There seems to have been no formally developed concept of androgyny prior to Yoshizawa Ayame's development of a theory and method for Kabuki *onnagata* in the early Edo period. Ayame himself (historical figures are often referred to by their given name) was a Kabuki *onnagata*, and his theory was a twist on the Buddhist concept of *henshin*, or bodily transformation or metamorphosis. *Hen* is the term for "change," in both a transitive and intransitive sense. *Shin* (also pronounced *mi*) is the term for "body" in the most comprehensive sense: that is, a physical, mental, social, historical, and spiritual entity (Gunji 1988:4-9; Hattori Y. 1975:31-35; Ichikawa H. 1985:38-47; Imao 1982:29). The term *henshin* originally referred to the process whereby deities assumed a human form in order to better promulgate Buddhist teachings among the masses of sentient beings.

Related to *henshin* is the process of *henjo nanshi* (also *tenryo jōnan*), whereby a female body becomes transformed, or metamorphoses, into a male body. Since female bodies are regarded in Buddhist doctrine not only as polluted but also as representative of a lower form of existence, enlightenment is not possible for them unless they manage to metamorphose into male bodies. The net effect is not the creation of an androgyne but rather a female's total transformation into "the opposite" sex: in short, rebirth as a male over the course of several generations. It is clear that the orthodox Buddhist concept of *henshin* refers to physical bodies (including genitalia) and not only to embodied markers of gender.<sup>8</sup> However, the term *henjo nanshi* was also used popularly during the Edo period in reference to intersexed bodies. For example, a peasant woman was deemed suffering from the "henjo nanshi syndrome" (*henjo nanshi sho*) when, at the age of twenty-seven, she developed male genitalia (Tomioka 1938:104).

*Henshin* is also central to the Kabuki theater and refers specifically to the received process by which an *onnagata* becomes Woman, as opposed to impersonating a given woman. Ayame's theory resembles the Buddhist concept of *henshin* with the exception that gender (and not sex) is involved in an *onnagata*'s transformation from a man into Woman. He perceived the woman's role player not as "a male acting in a role in which he becomes a 'woman,'" but rather as "a male who is a 'woman' acting a role" (Imao 1982:149).<sup>9</sup> In other words, the actor's transformation precedes his assumption of the woman's role.

The original Woman is a male invention: an amalgam of signifiers of ideal femininity embodied by the Kabuki specialist. Ayame insisted that an *onnagata* "embody femininity in his daily life."<sup>10</sup> Simply impersonating a given female was neither adequate nor appropriate. To clinch his point, Ayame insisted that the construction of Woman could not be left up to the idiosyncratic notions of a particular actor. Instead, he introduced categories of the ideal Woman, each with predetermined characteristics. The role of a "chaste woman" (*teijo*), for example, was to be based on *Greater Learning for Females* (*Onna daigaku*, 1672), an influential primer on "female" gender written by a leading (male) Confucian scholar (Imao 1982:147-53). Given the Kabuki theater's mixed reception by the Tokugawa Shogunate, and the low, outsider status of actors during the Edo period, basing the construction and performance of femininity on *Greater Learning for Females* quite likely added a modicum of legitimacy to the urban theater.<sup>11</sup>



Ayame eschewed what he called the prevailing androgynous figure of the *onnagata*, describing it as *futanarihira*, or "double-bodied," as noted earlier. In his view, an androgynous *onnagata* blurred the boundaries between sex and gender, female and male, femininity and masculinity (Imao 1982:145-47). Ayame's apparent objective in formulating a theory and method for the player of women's roles was to make distinct both those boundaries and the bounded, all the while recognizing that sex and gender were not naturally aligned in any one body. An *onnagata*, then, according to Ayame, was not an androgyne but the embodiment of patriarchally inscribed, state-regulated "female" gender. The actor was unequivocally Woman, a model for females offstage to emulate and a sex object for males offstage to proposition. Apparently, during Ayame's time, there was even "tacit approval" for the *onnagata* "to bathe at the public baths reserved for women" (T. Watanabe and Iwata 1989 [1987]:86).

From Ayame's point of view, the process of *henshin*, or transformation, precluded a blending of the two genders. However, sexologist Watanabe Tsuneo asserts that because an *onnagata* was a male body enacting a type of femininity and thus displacing the conventional alignment of sex, gender, and sexuality, the Kabuki actor was indeed an androgyne (74-135). For Ayame, "female" gender superseded and even negated a male body, and thus the *onnagata*, having become Woman, bathed with females at public bathhouses; in Watanabe's view, the "female" gender and male body of the Kabuki actor formed a dialectic. According to Watanabe, the androgyny of the *onnagata* was achieved by style (coiffure and clothing) in addition to same-sex sexual practices—specifically, by the "passive" feminine role.

With the Meiji Restoration of 1868, the modernizing state discouraged gender ambivalence and sexual confusion, which were associated with social disorder (cf. T. Watanabe and Iwata 1989 [1987]:127). Sex and gender were to be strictly delineated: males were to keep their hair short and dress in Western-style clothing; females were to wear their long hair swept up in a traditional chignon and clothe themselves in kimonos. On the surface, it seems that the state got its way: a one-day survey of 1,180 people in Ginza (Tokyo's premier boulevard), conducted by the "modernologist" Kon Wajirō in 1925, revealed that 67 percent of males wore Western-style outfits, while all but 1 percent of females appeared in Japanese dress (cited in Silverberg 1992:38). Nevertheless, the 1 percent (and probably more) of females who did

wear "modern" clothes rankled critics, who connected Westernization with the masculinization of *the Japanese Woman* and the neglect of Japanese customs (cf. Tachibana 1890; see also citations in Roden 1990; Silverberg 1991). As Donald Roden reports, "the expression and representation of gender ambivalence captured the imagination of the literate urban populace" in the 1910s and 1920s, sparking a heated debate in the media between conservatives and liberals (1990:43).

Roden points to the Takarazuka player of men's roles and the *nimaimme* (literally, "second"), or "effeminate male star" of the screen, as "two of the most striking symbolic representations of androgyny in Taishō mass culture" (47). However, it would be misleading to think of the male *nimaimme* as the structural homologue of the Takarazuka man, even though she was called *nimaimme* by all-female revue fans and revue administrators alike (e.g., "Nimaimme zadankai" 1936; Ueda 1974:211-37). I suggest that the male *nimaimme* was the film media equivalent of the Kabuki dandy (as opposed to the *onnagata*), usually a pale-faced, merchant-class playboy with street smarts in lieu of swordsmanship. To refer to him as "effeminate" both recapitulates and confuses the conservative argument against a broader definition and image of masculinity that seemed to be at issue at that time. Rather, it is more accurate and insightful to refer to the *nimaimme* role as characterized by a "charm born from indecisiveness," a charm that complements its gender ambiguity (Ueda 1974:113).

One could also argue that males were able to perform as indecisive and love-struck men in the movies precisely because the patriarchal ideology of the modern state, like its Edo-period counterpart, so pervasively suffused the structures and institutions of everyday life; sexual hierarchy within the household, for example, was an "organic component" of the state (Nolte 1987:67). The male *nimaimme*, in short, did not alter the dominant ideology of sex and gender. Whereas Roden implies that debates about gender and sexual ambivalence were directed at men and women equally, my extensive perusal of hundreds of contemporary newspaper, magazine, and journal articles leads me to different conclusions: girls and women almost exclusively were singled out as the sources of sexual deviance and social disorder and as the targets of acrimonious debates about the relationship of sex, gender, and sexuality.<sup>12</sup> Just as the Takarazuka man inspired far more commentary about androgyny and sexual deviance than did the sensitive

male screen star, so too the Modern Girl (*moga*) completely overshadowed the Modern Boy (*mobo*), her almost token male counterpart, in the critical social commentary of the early twentieth century (see Silberberg 1991). If the sexes were converging, as some pundits argued (e.g., Nogami 1920), it was because the masculinization of females was compromising the masculinity of males, who appeared more feminine in contrast; that is, the markers distinguishing male from female, masculine from feminine, were losing their polarity.<sup>13</sup> Today, the self-conscious visibility of assertive females, in spite of the corporate glass ceiling and other forms of institutionalized sexism, has prompted pundits to once again argue that the sexes are converging. Ōhira Ken, a psychiatrist at St. Luke's International Hospital in Tokyo, has claimed that "male high school students today have entirely lost the idea of 'masculinity'" (quoted in "Sexual Revolution in the Making" 1996). In the zero-sum game of sex-gender polarity reflected in these sorts of proclamations, which seem to be reinvented by each generation of social critic, any transformation in the dominant ideology of gender is perceived as pathological and socially disruptive.

The one exception to the overwhelming focus on the "woman problem" (*fujin mondai*) was an intense debate about the place of *onnagata* in modern Japan. One prominent forum in which the debate was waged was a special issue of the theater journal, *Engei Gahō* (*Theater Graphic*), published in 1914. The constituent articles were fairly evenly divided between those who were in favor of retaining the *onnagata* institution, and those who felt that it was unnatural and perverse. Supporting arguments stressed how

in Japan, males are superior to females in every way—from the shape of the face, eyes, nose, and mouth to body type and size. Females can be beautiful too, but they usually have some flaw: for example, a lovely face but a short body. Since these flaws do not allow an actress to complement a male lead, it is only obvious that males should continue to perform as women onstage.

(Naitō 1914:102)

Real *onnagata* do not perform as men, but now that there are actresses, *onnagata* are also performing men's roles. Previously, a male actor became a woman; now he trains to become an *onnagata*. . . . Adding females to Kabuki is like mixing oil and water. . . . Actresses

have the smell of girls' school students about them. People who watch Teigeki [Imperial Theater] Kabuki, in which both sexes perform, will forget the authentic Kabuki tradition.

(Osanai 1914:83, 86-87)

These and other supporters of the Kabuki *onnagata* proceeded from the assumption, also voiced in the Edo period, that female anatomy precluded womanliness and femininity. The ironic logic of anatomical reductionism virtually ensured that females could participate only in the *deconstruction* of femininity as it was defined by dominant males and, by the same token, provided a rationale for the existence of *otokoyaku*, or female men. As Adrian Kiernander notes in a related context, "The similarities and differences between the terms 'female' and 'feminine' . . . can be seen as a kind of conceptual oxymoron" (1992:187).

Detractors such as Hasegawa Tokiame seconded the point of view voiced by leading feminists, such as Yosano Akiko, Tamura Toshiko, Hiratsuka Raichō, and Iwano Kiyoko, that "now was the time for independent-minded actresses." In Hasegawa's words, "Although the *onnagata* has the weight of history and tradition on his side, all I see is a middle-aged male wearing face powder trying to play the part of a young woman. It is in bad taste and wholly unconvincing. He doesn't even try to hide his Adam's apple!" (1914:97-98).

The same debates continued through the militarizing 1930s. One side argued that "as an art form, *onnagata* imparted a flavor that actresses could not hope to produce" (Hanayagi 1939; see also Hasegawa Y. 1931:82-88); the other side stressed the "unhealthy" (i.e., homosexual) lifestyle of the *onnagata*, insisting that women's roles should be played by females ("Onnagata kikin" 1939:3; see also Watanabe Y. 1965). Tradition and flavor triumphed over feminist arguments and charges of sexual perversion. And, as we shall see in the next chapter, the valorization of "tradition" as part of the spiritual mobilization of the people during the wartime period included the promotion of Kabuki as a classical art form of Japanese theater, a status that ensured its central place in the cultural archive of the Japanese Empire as a living symbol of Japanese cultural superiority.

The Takarazuka Revue, founded at a time when the *onnagata* debate was heating up, created an ambivalent public space for the performance of masculinity by females. *Henshin* was not a process offi-

cially prescribed for Takarazuka *otokoyaku*. Kobayashi, the Revue's founder, was no Ayame, and he was keen on limiting an *otokoyaku*'s appropriation of "male" gender to the Takarazuka stage. Along with many early-twentieth-century social critics, he believed that a masculine female outside the context of the Revue was something deviant. Although her body served as the main vehicle for the representation and enactment of the ideal man, an *otokoyaku* was not to become unequivocally Man herself, much less a model for males offstage to emulate. Whereas the *kata* in *onnagata* means "model" or "archetype," the *yaku* in *otokoyaku* connotes the serviceability and dutifulness of a role player: "The Takarazuka *otokoyaku* affects a masculine guise, while the [Kabuki] *onnagata* . . . is completely transformed into a woman. As the term *otokoyaku* attests, the female who plays a man is but performing a duty" (Nosaka Akiyuki, quoted in Tanabe and Sasaki 1983:130). Thus, Revue directors refer to the actor's achievement of manliness not in terms of transformation or metamorphosis (*henshin*), but in terms of "putting something on the body" (*mi ni tsukeru*)—in this case, markers of masculinity.

#### METHODS OF ANDROGYNY

Any discussion of the construction of gender on the Takarazuka stage must consider the Stanislavski System of acting employed by the Revue since at least the mid-1920s and probably earlier. Konstantin Stanislavski (1863–1938) developed a system of training and rehearsal at the Moscow Arts Theater for actors that, generally speaking, bases a performance on inner emotional experience rather than relying on technical expertise per se, although technical expertise (*kata*) was also central to Takarazuka stage roles. The system's premise is that the "quality of an actor's performance depends not only upon the creation of the inner life of a role but also upon the physical embodiment of it. . . . An actor must . . . answer the question, 'What would I do if I were in . . . [X's] position?' This 'magic if,' . . . transforms the character's aim into the actor's" (Moore 1988 [1960]:52, 25).

Using the "magic if" techniques for the inner construction of male-authored characters means that the Takarazuka actors inevitably reproduce hierarchical gender typologies. The femininity performed by the players of women's roles serves as a foil, highlighting by contrast the masculinity of the players of men's roles. Despite a history of

protest from Takarasiennes and their fans, the (male) directors continue to use *musumeyaku* to define the gendered contours of the Revue's men.

Takarazuka directors, notably Kishida Tatsuya and Shirai Tetsuzō, probably encountered the Stanislavski System firsthand during their travels throughout Europe in the latter half of the 1920s, although they were already familiar with it through the efforts of the playwright Osanai Kaoru, who met Stanislavski in Europe in 1913 and applied his methods in Japan (Rimer 1974:34). Many of the initial Takarazuka staffers had also studied with foreign playwrights and directors residing in Japan, such as Giovanni Rossi, who introduced them to various European acting methods. By the mid-1930s, knowledge of the system was widespread in Japanese modern theater circles and Stanislavskian principles were incorporated into treatises on acting and acting manuals (Hiroo 1936; Hachida 1940 [1937]). Stanislavski's writings (in Russian and English) were shelved in the Revue's library, where they could be perused and adapted by the theatrical staff.

The tension pervading gender issues cannot be accounted for in terms of simple oppositions—an all-male management versus female actors, for example, in the case of the Takarazuka Revue. Directors and actors are only two of the many agents in this ongoing, highly charged and sexually divided discourse; fans and critics are among the others. These interlocutors engage each other on several overlapping levels or thresholds of significance, including the textual, performative, allegorical, and political. Moreover, as Stanislavski recognized, it is important to see drama itself as dialogical, for it includes "inner dialogues": "the character's 'I' is also a 'you' with whom he [or she] is in dialogue" (Moore 1988 [1960]:71). The theoretical and existential implications of a female actor in dialogue with her "male" character—or her "female" character, for that matter—are significant.

One of the key modes in which competing discourses of gender are manifested in the theater and in general is in the dissonance and disjunction between text and subtext. Let me digress for a moment on the relationship between the two. Deidre Pribram's explication of a text offers a useful clarification of the term as I employ it here in the sense of dominant discourse or master narrative.

The function of a text is to position the spectator to receive certain flavoured—and restricted—meanings which the text "manages" for

the viewing subject in keeping with dominant ideology. In this model the spectator is not an active part of the production of textual meaning but the passive side of a unidirectional relationship in which the text disperses meanings while the spectator . . . receives them. The spectator can only interpret (be interpreted by) a text in terms preformulated by gender difference. There is no possibility of a mutually informing relationship between spectator and text, and therefore no accumulative building of textual meaning. . . . The intention of the text and the reception of textual meaning are defined as one and the same.

(Pribram 1988b:4)

A text then, as a technology of gender, is invested with "power to control the field of social meaning and thus produce, promote, and 'implant' representations of gender" (de Lauretis 1987:18). But, as Teresa de Lauretis argues, "the terms of a different construction of gender also exist, in the margins of hegemonic discourses" and texts (18). I use the term "subtext" to refer to marginalized, alternative discourses—which are marginalized and alternative only in relation to a dominant ideology and its attendant practices.

It has been said of the Stanislavski System that the priority given to training actors "led to the deconstruction of performance texts" (Schechner 1988:210). In the context of the Takarazuka Revue, one might restate the claim: the emphasis on training actors in their secondary genders has at the same time undermined Kobayashi's patriarchal text and underscored a lesbian subtext.

#### FEMALE SEXUALITIES AND THE "WOMAN PROBLEM"

Any interpretation of the popularity of the Revue today must take into account its historical beginnings and its unprecedented impact on the status quo. Such an account requires a review of the discourses of gender and sexuality that informed the social climate in which the Takarazuka Revue was established and received, which follows. When pertinent, and especially in the last section of this chapter, I discuss gender and androgyny as performed and constructed in the Revue from the 1960s onward.

It was in the context of state formation and nationalism that Good Wife, Wise Mother (*ryōsai kenbo*) was codified as the model of "female"

gender in the Meiji Civil Code. The discourse of sexualities is closely linked to nationalism and state formation (see Corrigan and Sayer 1985; Mosse 1985; Parker, Russo, Sommer, and Yaeger 1992; Watson 1990). At the same time, the printed word has been key in conceiving of the nation and promoting nationalism (Anderson 1983). Many of the dozens of articles on femininity, marriage, sex, gender, sexuality, androgyny, and the revue genre published in the early twentieth century were written from a nativist and nationalist angle. Some of the authors even elaborated on the link between all of these issues (e.g., Sugita 1935; Takada T. 1934), and one Japanese sexologist claimed in a newspaper interview that cross-dressing among girls and women was fostered by the revue theater and foreign films (Hori Kentarō, quoted in "Dansō hi ari" 1935). Kobayashi himself recognized the potential of theater in orchestrating the construction and regulation of gender and in literally staging the enactment of gender roles in society.

Newspaper, magazine, and journal articles on these themes published between 1900 and 1945 make it clear that female sexualities, and particularly certain homosexual practices, provoked the most perplexity among social commentators and made the biggest headlines. The "woman problem" (*fujin mondai*)—the term for issues related to females' civil rights that were made problematic by feminists—appeared to be fueled by problem women.<sup>14</sup> Before and even after the Meiji period, published writers and critics—the vast majority of whom were male—relegated sexual desire in females to courtesans and prostitutes (see Robertson 1991a). "Ordinary" women were defined by the gender roles of daughter, wife, and daughter-in-law. Motherhood and mothering emerged as additional components of state-regulated sex and gender in the Meiji period (Koyama 1982, 1986; Mitsuda 1985; Nolte and Hastings 1991). Nearly all of the women's journals founded in the first two decades of the twentieth century were devoted to promoting among their hundreds of thousands of readers the socialization of women as Good Wives, Wise Mothers (*Watashitachi no rekishi o tsuzuru kai* 1987). One exception was *Seitō* (*Bluestocking*), a feminist journal founded by Hiratsuka Raichō in 1911 and put under surveillance by the government shortly afterward for publishing articles critical of the patriarchal household and family system (Hara 1987:16, 22). The so-called Taishō Democracy was hardly democratic with respect to women. Not only was the



Seitōsha (Bluestocking Society) banned, but under the auspices of the Peace Police Law of 1900, women were forbidden to congregate in public and were prevented from participating in political activity in general. In the spring of 1938, the military government banned from women's journals any articles related to sex and sexuality that did not trumpet the state's paternalistic values and pronatal policies (Hara 1987:16–21). Not surprisingly, in August 1939 Osaka outlawed Takarazuka *otokoyaku*—"the acme of offensiveness"—from public performances in that prefecture; it was the only prefectural government to do so ("Dansō wa shūaku no kiwami" 1939; "Dansō no reijin shōmetsu" 1939).

Kobayashi, who from July 1940 to April 1941 served as minister of commerce and industry, colluded with government censors to produce musicals that exalted the image of the Good Wife, Wise Mother, an image further reified at that time as *Nippon fujin*, or Japanese Woman. Typical of the revues staged during this period of militarization and state censorship was *Legends of Virtuous Japanese Women* (*Nippon meifu den*, 1941), a nationalistic extravaganza dedicated to heroines, mothers of heroes, and "women of chastity" (Matsumoto 1941a). Takarasiennes were also recruited into patriotic women's associations and charged with entertaining not only troops in the field but also farmworkers and the war wounded. Kobayashi introduced a "national defense color" (*kokubōshoku*, i.e., khaki) uniform for daily wear (figure 6) to ensure that the Revue kept in step with the militarization of the society as a whole ("Jishuku wa seitō dake" 1940; "Takarazuka kageki ni seifuku chakuyō" 1939; "Zuka gāru ga jishuku" 1940; "Zuka musume danzen jishuku" 1940). Kobayashi also moved to reorganize the Revue, including the widely publicized temporary addition of a male pit chorus whose mere presence would apparently help to deflect allegations of deviant behavior among Takarasiennes and their fans ("Kindan no Takarazuka e" 1940; "Takarazuka kageki no dansei kashu" 1940).<sup>15</sup> The adverse publicity, which I elaborate on below, had also motivated Kobayashi in 1940 to remove the problematic term *shōjo* in the Revue's final name change for two ostensible reasons: to acknowledge the more "adult" content of the revue and to prepare for the inclusion of the male chorus ("Shōjo no niji masatsu" 1940; "Takarazuka shōjokageki wa doko e yuku?" 1940).

In Japan, the key indicators for females of social adulthood are marriage and motherhood. *Shōjo* is the term coined in the Meiji period for



Figure 6. Takarazuka uniforms: Wartime and current. *Top*, Takarasiennes posing in their "national defense color" uniforms introduced in 1939, which served as the prototype for today's military-like uniforms worn by Academy students, *bottom*. As evident from their haircuts, the students are assigned their secondary genders at the end of their first semester at the Academy. From Hagiwara (1954:21) and Ueda (1986 [1976]: cover).



Takarasiennes  
 in 1939,  
 forms worn by  
 the students are  
 at the  
 cover).

unmarried girls and women and means, literally, a "not-quite-female" female. Its usages and modifications reveal much about the vicissitudes of the discourse of gender and sexuality since the Meiji period. In recent years "gal" (*gyaru*) has been employed as the term for an older, more "female," *shōjo*; and in 1990 the expression "older-man gal" (*ojin gyaru*) was coined by a leading (female) cartoonist to refer to "gals" who enjoy drinking, gambling, and singing (*karaoke*-style) after work, presumably just like their fathers and older males.<sup>16</sup> The "older-man gal," today's Modern Girl, can be construed as an expression of androgyny inasmuch as the phrase refers to a female who has appropriated "masculine" pastimes (Horiuchi 1990:24). "Gal" might also be read as a revival and abbreviation of *garçon* (*gyaru-sonnu*), one of the common terms in the 1930s for a masculine female. *Shōjo* now tends to be used in reference to teenage girls, and *gyaru* to unmarried women in their early twenties. *Shōjo* denotes females between puberty and marriage, as well as that period of time itself in a female's life (*shōjoki*) (Kawahara 1921:112; Tamura 1913:165–68). *Shōjo* also implies heterosexual inexperience and homosexual experience, a point to which I shall return. *Gyaru*, on the other hand, has quite different associations, conjuring up the figure of an assertive, self-centered woman who is in no hurry to marry and who maintains a stable of boyfriends to serve her different needs.

The modernizing state emphasized universal—if segregated and sexist—education, together with the notion that a brief stint in the burgeoning urban industrial and commercial workforce was a desirable thing for females. This policy had the effect of increasing the number of years between puberty and marriage (see Murakami 1983). Kobayashi was among the many influential persons who published articles in women's journals reminding their female readers that working outside the home for wages should not be construed as a career in itself, but rather as preparation for marriage (Shida and Yuda 1987:115).

Included in the *shōjo* category of female were the New Working Woman (*shinshokugyō fujin*) and her jaunty counterpart, the Modern Girl, herself the antithesis of the Good Wife, Wise Mother. The flapperlike *moga* fancied themselves actors whose stage was the Ginza, at that time Tokyo's premier boulevard (see Bollinger 1994; Silverberg 1991). Along with the New Working Women, they were Takarazuka fans. Many of the urban-based New Working Women aspired to the

revue theater; by the same token, Takarazuka players of men's roles were often referred to in the press as Modern Girls, especially after 1932, when the *otokoyaku* began sporting short haircuts (Maruo 1932; "Yōsō danpatsu no shiiku na sugata" 1932).

Generally speaking, not only sexism but ageism was the rule in the workplace. Male employers preferred women up to twenty-four years of age, and there were few employment opportunities for women over the age of thirty. In fact, not many women could afford the financial strain of remaining single; those who did manage to support themselves included doctors, teachers, midwives, nurses, and, to a certain extent, actors (Shida and Yuda 1987:114). Some women, in the first half of the twentieth century at least, passed as men in order to secure employment as rickshaw drivers, construction supervisors and laborers, fishers, department store managers, grocers, and so on (Tomioka 1938:103).<sup>17</sup> Passing was associated unequivocally with sexual deviancy in the case of urban middle- and upper-class girls and women who, it was argued, wore masculine attire not to secure a livelihood but as an outward expression of their "moral depravity." As privileged and educated—in short, bourgeois—girls and women, they were supposed to fulfill the state-sanctioned Good Wife, Wise Mother gender role. Consequently, those who resisted were vilified in journal and newspaper articles on "masculinized" (*danseika*) females, and roundly critiqued in texts and treatises on "female" psychology (Sakabe 1924; Sugita 1929, 1935; Ushijima 1943; Yasuda 1935).

Ironically, given Kobayashi's views on work and marriage, tenure in the Takarazuka Revue further lengthened the *shōjo* period, and many of the actors continued to perform into their thirties before retiring well beyond the average age of marriage.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps in response to criticism, the Revue management crafted an informal "retirement policy" (*teinensei*) in 1936, the first of several up to the present time, whereby Takarasiennes whose tenure in the Revue exceeded twenty years would be encouraged to retire (Kudō 1963; *Shin Nippō* 1936). For the most part, however, it continues to be the case that provided an actor does not marry or leave to pursue other avenues of show business, she can spend her life as a Takarasienne—if not always onstage, then as an instructor or in a supervisory capacity.

Apart from conceiving of an all-female revue as a commercially viable complement to the all-male Kabuki theater, Kobayashi perceived the Takarazuka theater to be an appropriate site for the resocializa-

tion of (bourgeois) girls and women whose unconventional aspirations had led them to the Revue stage in the first place (Kobayashi 1961b:408). In his essays and articles, he makes clear his antagonism toward the Modern Girl and masculinized females. To a certain extent, Kobayashi agreed with reactionaries for whom such females were examples of *eroguro nansensu*, or "erotic-grotesque nonsense," a trendy expression in the 1930s for hitherto unthinkable juxtapositions—such as females dressed as men singing love songs to their feminine partners on a public stage advertised as "wholesome family entertainment." But whereas the critics regarded the *otokoyaku* and her fans as living examples of grotesque eroticism, Kobayashi cast the player of men's roles as a paragon of idealized masculinity and by extension, an emblem of patriarchy—a formulation that was compelling so long as her stage expertise did not carry over into her private life.

Kobayashi, like Stanislavski, used the theater as a pulpit and maintained that the Takarazuka Revue served a didactic purpose. He theorized that by performing as men, females learned to understand and appreciate males and the masculine psyche. Consequently, when they eventually retired from the stage and married, which Kobayashi urged them to do, they would be better able to perform as Good Wives, Wise Mothers, knowing exactly what their husbands expected of them (Kobayashi 1961b:467 and 1948; Ueda 1974:139). In other words, the actors were trained to perform gender roles that would facilitate their postretirement reentry into a more conventional lifestyle. Significantly, Kobayashi referred to the actors as "students" (*seitō*). The term not only justified his paying them less than fully professional actors but reflected his belief that a wedding ceremony marked the start of a woman's real career, whereupon she became a full-fledged actor, with the conjugal household her stage, and her husband and children her audience. Their stage duty as members of the Takarazuka Revue was deemed analogous to their eventual duty as Good Wives, Wise Mothers in a patriarchal household.<sup>19</sup>

Kobayashi anticipated the attacks of and defended the Academy and Revue against social critics and sexologists who singled out girls' schools and their (unmarried) female instructors and students as the primary sites and agents of homosexuality among females (see Furuya Tsunatake 1932; Sugita 1929, 1935; Tamura 1913; Ushijima 1943).<sup>20</sup> In 1910 one of the first articles on this subject was published in a leading women's newspaper, the *Fujo Shinbun* (*Women's Newspaper*). Two

types of homosexual relationships between females were distinguished: *dōseiai* (same-sex love) and *ome no kankei* (male-female relations). It is clear from the article that what the editorial staff meant by "same sex" was actually "same gender" and that *ome* referred to a butch-femme-like couple: that is, same sex, different genders.<sup>21</sup>

*Dōseiai* was coined at the turn of this century to refer specifically to a passionate, but supposedly platonic, friendship between females, although sexologists found it difficult to distinguish friendship from homosexuality among girls and women: where did one end and the other begin (Yasuda 1935:151)? Such friendships were regarded as typical among girls and women from all walks of life, but especially among girls' school students and graduates, female educators, female civil servants, and thespians (Fukushima 1984 [1935]:561; see also Tamura 1913; Yasuda 1935). The *ai* alludes to the term's original definition, although *dōseiai* soon came to be used as the standard word for homosexuality in general without any distinction by sex. *Ai*, often translated as "agape," is contrasted with *koi*, or "eros." Because female homosexuality was understood as spiritual and male homosexuality as physical, *dōseiai* was preferred by some sexologists to underscore the spiritual aspect of same-sex love between women (Furukawa 1994:115-16).<sup>22</sup>

Passionate friendships and same-sex relations among females were also referred to as "S" or "Class S" (*kurasu esu*), with the S standing for "sister," "shōjo," "sex," or all three combined. Additional meanings of S (*esu*) included the German "Schöne," or "beautiful woman," a popular loanword at the time, and "escape" (*esukeipu*), a popular word among students in the 1920s that meant to skip class (Hattori K. and Uehara 1925:83-84; Kabeshima, Hida, and Yonekawa 1984:41). Class S continues to conjure up the image of two schoolgirls, often a junior-senior pair, each with a crush on the other (Miyasako 1986:61). *Ome* relationships, on the other hand, were described as

a strange phenomenon difficult to diagnose on the basis of modern psychology and physiology.<sup>23</sup> . . . One of the couple has malelike (*danseiteki*) characteristics and dominates the [femalelike] other. . . . Unlike the [*dōseiai* couple], friends whose spiritual bond took a passionate turn, the latter have developed a strange, carnal relationship (*niku no sesshoku*) . . . stemming from their carnal depravity (*nikuteki daraku*). . . . The malelike female is technically proficient

at manipulating women . . . Doctors have yet to put their hoes to this uncultivated land (*mikaikonchi*).

(Fukushima 1984 [1935]:562)

This article, and others like it (e.g., Tamura 1913; Yasuda 1935), makes it clear that even an overheated *dōseiai* (that is, homogender) relationship was not pathological in the way that an *ome* (that is, heterogender) relationship was, the latter being not only explicitly sexual but also a heretical refraction of the heterosexual norm formalized in the Meiji Civil Code. The most objective writers, not surprisingly, referred to an *ome* couple as "husband and wife" (*fufu*), a marital metaphor that safely contained (and in effect neutralized) the sexual difference represented and practiced by the two women.

The *Fujo Shinbun* article introduced recent "medical" findings in surmising that females were more prone than males to homosexuality. It was postulated that women's "natural" passivity (*muteikōshugi*) made them susceptible to neurasthenia (*shinkeishitsu*), which, in turn, occasioned a pessimism expressed in the form of homosexuality.<sup>24</sup> However, *ome*, or "butch-femme" relationships, seemed to stymie the sexologists and worry the social critics of the day since unmarried women (that is, *shōjo*) in particular were stereotypically regarded as blissfully unaware of sexual desire, and since women in general were certainly not supposed to play an active role in sex. "Moral depravity" fostered by modernization (or Westernization) seemed to be the only viable "explanation" for *ome* relationships among urban women, at least until the appearance of the Takarazuka man prompted critics to come up with new ideas to account for the increasingly visible masculinized female.

Overall, it seems that much more print space was devoted to defending the typicality and relative "normality" of *dōseiai* (homogender) relationships among *shōjo* and to insisting on their—ideally, at least—platonic character. Apart from eye-catching headlines and titles, relatively little attention was paid to the actual *ome* relationship itself, although the "origins" of the "deviant and anomalous" (*hentaiteki*) masculine partner generated several speculations. The author of a 1930 newspaper article on the Takarazuka Revue, for example, went so far as to assert that the emergence of *ome*-type relationships was the "direct result of females playing men's roles" and to suggest

that the Revue was the medium through which Class S couples were transformed into "butch-femme" couples, an evolutionary thesis absent from the *Fujo Shinbun* article published twenty years earlier ("Takarazuka bijin hensenshi" [4] 1930).<sup>25</sup> The headline sums up the gist of the author's argument: "From Class S to Feverish Yearning for *Otokoyaku*."<sup>26</sup>

#### ANDROGYNY AS ERASURE

The "psychiatric style of reasoning" imported from Europe and the United States late in the second half of the nineteenth century—and alluded to in the 1910 *Fujo Shinbun* article and others—provided a whole new set of concepts that made it possible to separate questions of sexual and gender identity from facts about anatomy (Davidson 1987:22; see also Hanafusa 1930; Izawa 1931; Kure 1920; Yasuda 1935). Female sexualities, now problematic, were linked to experiences, to environment, and to "impulses, tastes, aptitudes, satisfactions, and psychic traits" (Davidson 1987:22). For example, in the *Fujo Shinbun* article, "abusive stepmothers, exploitative employers, constant hardship, others' callousness, false accusations, and unrequited love" were blamed for causing girls and women to adopt homosexual practices. The so-called masculinized female in particular was regarded by some sexologists and social critics as a prime example of the newly defined disorder, "abnormal or deviant psychology" (*hentai seiri* or *hentai shinri*). After establishing cross-dressing (*hensō*) itself as "abnormal" (*fuseijō*), one sexologist went on to distinguish between "natural" or congenital cross-dressing and "unnatural" or acquired cross-dressing among females and males.<sup>27</sup> According to this writer, the former involved an intersexed person attempting to pass as either a woman or a man, while the latter involved a person motivated by curiosity, criminal intentions, or the desire to secure a livelihood. Masculinized females associated with the theater, the author claimed, cross-dressed out of curiosity (Tomioka 1938:98–103).

Beginning in the 1920s, so far as I can assess from print sources, Takarazuka *otokoyaku*, as well as the girls and women who were attracted to them (and sent them "love letters"), were referred to by unsympathetic critics as "deviant" and "anomalous" (Kawahara 1921:13; Sugita 1935; "Takarazuka bijin hensenshi" [4] and [5] 1930). Their desire was interpreted as being misaligned with their female bodies. The



sympathetic use of the term *chūsei* ("neutral," or in between woman and man) to describe the Takarazuka man and masculinized females in general conveniently circumvented the issue of erotic desire and parried allegations of "abnormal" sexuality. *Chūsei* was used defensively to deflect negative attention away from both the sexual difference represented by the Takarazuka player of men's roles and the social ramifications of that difference. Describing someone as *chūsei* suggested that she had a childlike naïveté about anything beyond a passionate friendship between *shōjo* sisters. A group interview with ten Takarasiennes on their thoughts about a Hungarian movie actress known in Japan for her "*otokoyaku*-like" appearance illustrates the deflective, defensive use of *chūsei*. Active in the 1930s, she is described in the article as not only neutral (*chūseiteki*) but also childish (*kodomoppoi*), mischievous (*itazurakko*), and "not coquettish, but rather romantic in a childish sense" (*kodomoppoi romanchikusa*). The reporter notes that she is *chūsei*, "in the sense of childlike" (*chairudo to iu imi*), the implication being that despite her provocative wink, she was asexual (*Yomiuri Shinbun* 1935).

Some of the more "progressive" writers and critics sympathetic to the Revue, such as the novelist Yoshiya Nobuko (1904–73), a lesbian,<sup>28</sup> preferred the safe ambiguity of *chūsei*, with its allusions—like Yoshiya's fiction itself—to a "dreamworld" (*yume no sekai*) free from the constraints of fixed, dichotomous, and hierarchical gender roles. Takarazuka itself was conceived of as a dreamworld—"a place where dreams are made and sold," according to the Revue's advertisements—and the early theater complex was named, appropriately, Paradise. Kobayashi collaborated with Yoshiya and shared her romantic vision, but he colored it heterosexual: his dreamworld was one in which gallant men were sustained by adoring women (figure 7).<sup>29</sup>

Detractors, on the other hand, referred to the players of men's roles and other Modern Girls as abnormal, masculinized females, who sported short hair (*danpatsu*) and wore pants (Maruki Sunado 1929; Sugita 1929:80 and 1935). Such females were also called *garçons*<sup>30</sup> since they had "forgotten what it means to be feminine"—one of the accusations leveled at Yoshiya Nobuko herself ("'"Watashi' wa 'boku' e" 1932). Among the detractors singled out for criticism by Kobayashi was the feminist writer and editor Hiratsuka Raichō, who was more concerned about cross-dressing onstage than its practice offstage. Her criticism of the *otokoyaku* was directed toward the gender ideology



Figure 7. Yoshiya Nobuko and Kobayashi Ichizō. The setting is Yoshiya's home in Kamakura, a seaside resort south of Tokyo. From Maruo (1981:2).

promoted by the Revue; she apparently did not recognize the potentially subversive implications of the all-female Revue's subtexts. Raichō argued that there was no reason to have "girls who know nothing about males expressing earnestly emotions such as passion and love." Kobayashi claimed that she dismissed Takarazuka as "mere fiction; a superficial performing art form," declaring that "we women view [the *otokoyaku*] as a disfigured and deformed person" (Kobayashi 1961a:395; source of original citation unknown).

From the mid-1930s onward the expression *dansō no reijin*, literally "a beautiful person [i.e., a female] in masculine attire," was used sympathetically in reference to both Takarazuka *otokoyaku* and masculinized females. This expression, a euphemism for *chūsei*, was apparently coined in 1932 by the novelist Muramatsu Shōfu. His serialized short story "Dansō no reijin" was inspired by Kawashima Yoshiko (1906–48), who had donned a military uniform and passed as a man during the early stages of Japanese imperialism in China and Manchuria.<sup>31</sup>

In an editorial titled "What is the '*dansō no reijin*'?" Kobayashi expresses his concern that the current spate of scandal-mongering press reports on all-female revues was bound to create public misunder-



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standings about Takarazuka, the "'main household' (*honke*) of the *shōjo* revue": "The *dansō no reijin*, . . . a symbol of abnormal love, . . . is becoming a social problem. . . . [G]ood [i.e., middle- and upper-class] households especially are affected. . . . Nothing must compromise [Takarazuka's] reputation or worry the parents of [Takarazuka Music Academy] students" (1935a:10–12). He quotes part of his letter to Ashihara Kuniko, a leading *otokoyaku*, asking her to make sure that new students understood that they were not to use masculine words or to behave in a manly fashion in their daily lives. For Kobayashi, the most problematic "male" words were *aniki* (elder brother), *boku* (a self-referent denoting "male" gender), and *kimi* (a masculine form of "you") (Kobayashi 1935a). Ashihara's fans called her *aniki*, which distressed Kobayashi greatly and for which he had chastised her two years earlier (Ashihara K. 1979:157). Her reply—which, in keeping with precedent, may actually have been written by him—was included in the editorial.<sup>32</sup> In it, the senior *otokoyaku* reassured Kobayashi that she and "the others are all just 'ordinary girls' . . . who practice the tea ceremony and flower arrangement when not performing onstage." "Masculine words," she added, "are not used by any of the students or actors even though their use is popular among girls' school students and [Takarazuka] fans" (Ashihara, quoted in Kobayashi 1935a:11–12).

But even sympathetic contemporary accounts of the Revue contradicted this "ordinary girl" image of the Takarasiennes: mention is made by one critic of a player of men's roles who is "malelike in her everyday life" (Hirai 1933:168). It appears, rather, that Kobayashi's editorial was a timely and opportunistic measure undertaken to minimize any negative repercussions from the highly publicized lesbian affairs at that time (detailed in chapters 4 and 5) and also to reinforce his patriarchal agenda for the Takarasiennes.

#### POSTWAR ANDROGYNY

Knowledge of past precedents and of the early, varied reception of the Takarazuka Revue is necessary to fully recognize the significance of contemporary experiments with androgyny. The Revue continues both to uphold the dominant ideal of heterosexuality and to inform a lesbian subcultural style. In this connection, the sexual tension that has marked Takarazuka from the start still frustrates the paternalistic management. With respect to state formation (i.e., the production and

reproduction of the status quo), the Revue continues to attract the attention of the mass media, although the charges of "moral depravity" and "abnormal sexual desire" are now rarely leveled, as openly at least at the Takarasiennes and their fans. But this waning of overt criticism is due less to an acceptance of lesbianism than to the Revue's tighter management of public relations and newspaper coverage.

*The Rose of Versailles* (*Berusaiyu no bara*) is regarded by the Revue and fans alike as the most memorable and successful postwar revue to date. It was based on a best-selling, multivolume *shōjo* comic book of the same name first published between 1972 and 1974 by Ikeda Riyoko, one of Japan's most successful female comic book artists. First staged over the period 1974–76 and revived in the years 1989–91, the hugely popular revue illustrates the resilience of the androgynous image of Takarazuka.<sup>33</sup> *The Rose of Versailles* dwells on the adventures of Oscar, a female raised as a boy in order to ensure the patrilineal continuity of a family of generals. The late cartoonist Tezuka Osamu's popular postwar comic, *Princess Knight*, doubtless inspired Ikeda's Oscar just as Takarazuka inspired Tezuka. In that earlier comic, *Princess Knight*, or *Sapphire*, is raised as a son, having been born to a royal couple in need of a male heir. Sapphire switches costume-cum-gender several times in the story before emerging as a woman at the end (Schodt 1983:95–96).

The Oscar character, who represents the slippage between sex and gender (figure 8), is referred to in the literature as a "classic" *dansō no reijin* (Tsuji 1976:97, 107–8; Yabushita 1990:108). Significantly, Oscar has been acted by *otokoyaku* exclusively, whose own acting careers in the Revue have followed a similar trajectory. Clothing is the means to, and even the substance of, the character's commutable gender, as the expression *dansō no reijin* suggests; accordingly, Oscar switches at one point from masculine to feminine attire. This play's alternative subtext is that gender as performance undercuts the ideological fixity of received gender differences (see Kuhn 1985:53; see also Komashaku 1989; Tsuji 1976:107–30).

*The Rose of Versailles* is one of the Revue's most reflexive productions in that the relationship between Oscar and her/his father is analogous to that between the player of men's roles and the Revue's patriarchal administration. When reading the following dialogue between Oscar and the General, bear in mind that Kobayashi had insisted that the Takarasiennes call him "Father."



Figure 8. Oscar. Haruna Yuri as Oscar and Hatsukaze Jun as Marie Antoinette in the Moon Troupe's 1974 performance of *The Rose of Versailles*. From Hashimoto (1994:108).

- OSCAR: Father, please answer me!  
 GENERAL: Oscar?!
- OSCAR: If . . . if I had been raised as an ordinary female, would I have been forced to marry at the age of fifteen like my sisters? I could be playing the [clavichord], singing arias, dressing up every night in fine clothes and laughing away the time in high society. . . .
- GENERAL: Oscar!!  
 OSCAR: Please answer me! I could be wearing velvet beauty marks and rose perfume; I would fill my arabesque compact with cosmetics; I could bear children—and raise them.
- GENERAL: Oscar!!  
 OSCAR: Answer me, please!  
 GENERAL: (Pensively.) Yes, it's as you say—had you been raised as an ordinary female.
- OSCAR: Father, thank you.  
 GENERAL: (Taken aback.)  
 OSCAR: Thank you for giving me a chance to live the kind of life I have, in as broad a world as I have, even though I am a fe-

male. Even while struggling to deal with the stupidity of pathetic people . . .

GENERAL: Oscar.

OSCAR: I am no longer remorseful. I . . . I'll live as the child of Mars, god of war. I'll devote this body of mine to the sword; I'll devote it to the cannon. My livelihood is the military and I'll serve as the child of Mars, god of war.

(Ikeda Riyoko, quoted in Tsuji 1976:165-66)

Oscar (and by the same token, the Takarazuka *otokoyaku*) is able to transcend the fixed, narrow life course of "ordinary females" because of Father's pragmatic decision to name her "son." Recognizing that "male" gender affords access to a wider world, Oscar is effusively grateful for the opportunity to be the household's *otokoyaku*. Oscar's military uniform not only accentuates the difference between masculinity and femininity—the former identified with swords and cannons, the latter with flowers and children—but also magnifies the tension between "male" gender and the female body it camouflages. The overall effect at once exaggerates and masks the slippage between sex and gender. Both the General and the audience know that Oscar, like the Takarasienne, is a masculinized female. That gender is a property of attribution and convention, and not anatomy, is made doubly obvious by the synonymy between Oscar and the *otokoyaku* performing Oscar. At the same time, both role players demonstrate the irony that access to a supposedly more "liberating" gender identity is granted by privileged father figures.

Annette Kuhn observes that if "clothing can be costume, capable of being modified at the wearer's will, it follows that the gender identity conventionally signified by dress may be just as easily changeable" (1985:53). What is most problematic with this theoretical statement insofar as Oscar and the Takarazuka *otokoyaku* are concerned is the matter of the "wearer's will." "Will" does not figure in one's initial gender assignment (based on genitalia); nor is either Oscar's or a Takarasienne's secondary gender assignment necessarily confluent in every respect with her will.

*The Rose of Versailles* also illustrates how "the West" is positioned as a site of transvestism in Japanese popular culture, although the implications are differently construed depending on the spectator. For ex-

ample, the Revue has deployed cross-dressing not only to represent ideal men and women, masculinity and femininity, but also to use non-Japanese (especially Western) characters as foils against which a homogeneous Japaneseness can be gauged and understood—the we-are-not-that maneuver. Thus, in American musicals, such as *West Side Story* (*Uesutosaido monogatari*, 1968–69), generic American gender markers are constructed and performed in opposition to dominant assumptions about Japanese gender ideals. Not surprisingly, therefore, some conservatives within the Takarazuka management were opposed to the production of *West Side Story* on the grounds that “vulgar street gangs should not appear on a [Japanese] stage renowned for its beauty and elegance” and that the “innocent” Japanese women should not portray coarse American characters (Berlin 1988:283; Hashimoto 1984:83). Whereas the ethnic and class tensions that informed the original *West Side Story* were absent, tensions between Japan and the United States were evident in the criticism directed at this and other Broadway musicals restaged by Takarazuka during the “miracle sixties,” when post-war Japan began to rise as a economic giant.

A discussion about the Takarazuka production of *West Side Story* appearing in an official fan magazine is revealing: the director noted the difficulty of being Japanese and performing as Americans (“Enshutsuka ni kiku” 1968:67); the various ethnic identities of the American characters in the Broadway production were not at issue. One theater critic, in fact, criticized the Revue for the actors’ inability to convey convincingly Puerto Rican “affectations” (*kusami*) (“Yukigumi kōen o mite” 1968:69). Equally problematic, of course, is the critic’s reduction of ethnic difference to a matter of affect. I do not wish to imply here that Arthur Rollins’s *West Side Story* was less ethnically essentializing; my point is that the specific ethnic differences informing the story were more or less homogenized in Takarazuka’s “melting pot” version. This production points to a type of “cross-ethnicking” (discussed at length in the next chapter) that involves the enactment of reified national character stereotypes, in this case a singular *American* ethnicity. Takarazuka’s *West Side Story* focused not on the convoluted and tragic ethnic politics coloring the love affair between Tony, an Italian American man, and Maria, a Puerto Rican woman, but on the “purity” of the couple’s impossible love—a theme that is vintage Takarazuka (“Sutā to sutaffu” 1968:62).

## ANDROGYNY REVUE

In the fall of 1985, the Takarazuka Revue staged a show called *Androgyny* (*Andorojenii*) that the (male) playwright/director felt captured the "bewitching charm" of the androgyne. The show called for players of men's roles to appear alternately as "neutral boys" (*nyutoraru boi*), resplendent in gaudy, glittery jumpsuits and equally colorful wigs, and as well-known (non-Japanese) masculinized females, such as George Sand. It was referred to in fan magazines as "unprecedented," a show "ahead of its time" (Mure 1985:38).

Although the 1985 revue may have been the first and only show titled *Androgyny*, the theme and phenomenon themselves have constituted an essential part not only of the Takarazuka Revue's repertoire but also of its public image, as we have seen. Already in the late 1960s *otokoyaku* were encouraged to impart an "androgynous charm" by blending markers of "female" and "male" gender. They did so mainly by teasing their often peroxidized hair to create puffy pompadours and by using pastel makeup to soften the darker, sharper, deeply chiseled features of the "classic" *otokoyaku* (figure 9). These 1960s players of men's roles foreshadowed the interstitial Oscar character: Kō Nishiki described herself as "an *otokoyaku* who was close to being feminine," although she also threatened to resign if forced to appear as a woman onstage (Okazaki 1971:49; Yoshizawa J. 1966:52); Anna Jun claimed to have been a "womanish" (*onnappoi*) man (Anna 1979:197); Dai Takiko declared that even though she was a "leading man," she took care not to forfeit her femininity (Yamada 1968:70).

By allowing "the woman" to permeate "the man," these *otokoyaku* in effect drew attention to the facticity of their female bodies and, from the standpoint of convention, to the primacy of their femininity, thus ensuring that their secondary, "male" gender was kept in check by their primary, "female" gender. The directors did not want the players of men's roles to be too successful in their appropriation and performance of masculinity. Similarly—and here the Edo-period case of Take/Takejirō comes to mind—as a way of clarifying the limits of actors' "honorary" masculinity, the directors also staged shows in which *otokoyaku* were to appear as women, much to the consternation of the players of men's roles and their fans. Allowing "the woman" to permeate "the man" is one thing; being assigned to women's roles is quite another. Many *otokoyaku* protested the directors' gender-switching an-





Figure 9. *Otokoyaku*: Classic and androgynous. Left, Kasugano Yachiyo as a "classic" *otokoyaku*; right, Anna Jun as a 1960s "androgynous" *otokoyaku*. From *Takarazuka Fuan* (1954) and *Takarazuka Gurafu* (1968).

tics, and they claimed to have experienced a sense of conflict or resistance (*teikō*), along with a loss of confidence (Misato 1974:68; Okazaki 1971:49; "Sensei to kataru" 1977:38; Yamada 1968:70–71; Yoshizawa J. 1966, 1967). Gō Chigusa, an *otokoyaku* who retired in 1972, remarked that on the rare occasion she was assigned to perform as a woman, her fans complained bitterly of their resultant dis-ease, that eerie feeling (*kimochi warui*) when the familiar suddenly is defamiliarized (Yoshizawa J. 1967:71). The androgynous charm of the *otokoyaku* was compromised by the compulsory femininity of "the woman."

Some fans, however, drew attention to the difference between the female in the man and the woman in the female. *Otokoyaku* Daichi Mao, who retired in 1985 and is now a very successful stage actress, is the subject of the following "fan letter" published in a pathbreaking lesbian anthology. Daichi was often called the Japanese James Dean during her tenure in the Takarazuka Revue (figure 10).

To Daichi Mao-sama: You were an absolutely new flower. There has been no other star in Takarazuka history who has displayed your gorgeous androgynous elegance. Before you, there were many orthodox *otokoyaku* . . . but you gave rise to a new type of player of men's roles . . . with your round face, slim body, and sinuous movements. . . . When we fans first heard you sing [about love],

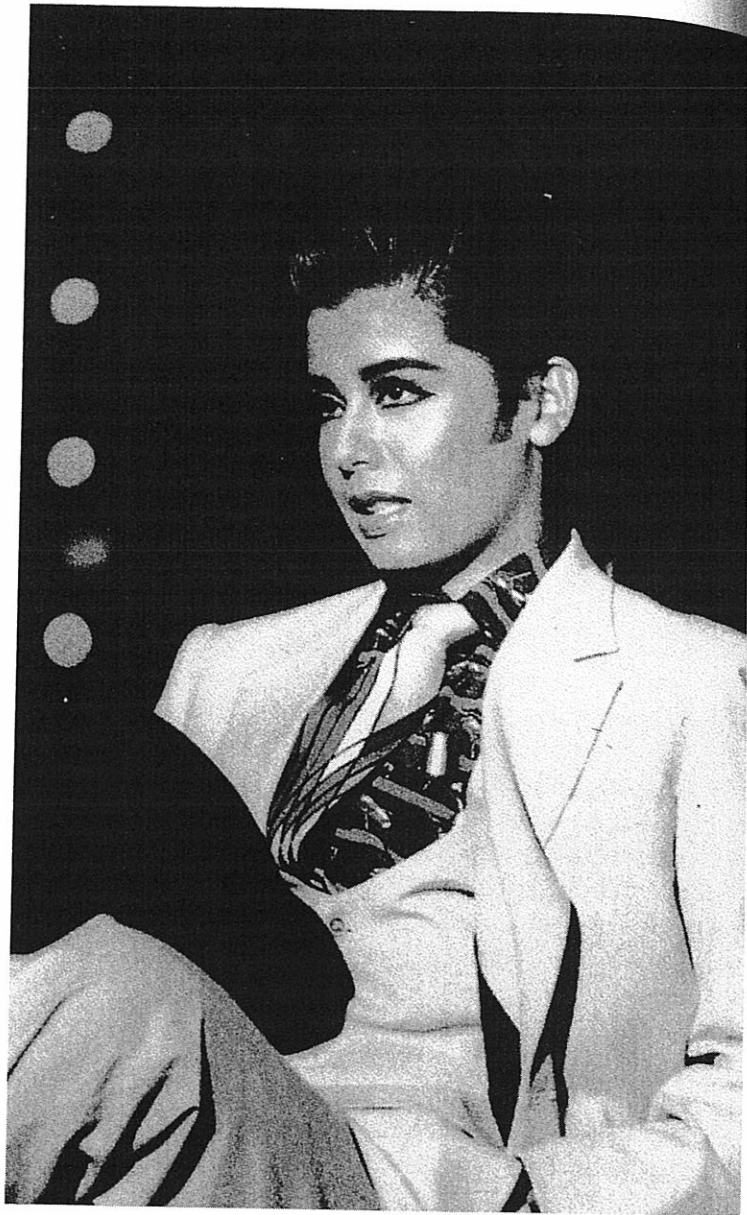


Figure 10. The Japanese James Dean. Moon Troupe *otokoyaku* Daichi Mao. From Ueda (1986 [1976]:296).

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we were swept away into a strange and fragrant world. Without question your charm was your very womanliness. Not the posturing come-on of mannish females, but an affirmation of the womanliness of female bodies. You symbolized a new era when females could begin to love themselves as themselves.

And so why have you become an ordinary woman?

There are millions of actresses. There's no reason for you to become yet another actress who titillates actual males. . . . Now all you do is take roles that have you pout at males and say things like, "Why don't you like me?" That kind of role is totally unrealistic; it's a pathetic joke. You've gone from being a jewel to being a mere pebble. I can never forgive your betrayal in playing women who exist for males. When we see you being embraced by a male, it's as though our dreams have been stolen.

You—Takarazuka's new flower, females' freedom and joy, our fin de siècle dream. Why did you become a woman? Just an ordinary woman!?

Yours, Hoshi Sumire.<sup>34</sup>

(Hoshi 1987)

The fan, who was thrilled by Daichi's precedent-shattering androgynous performances, is bitterly disappointed that the former Revue star capitulated to the sexism of show business and became a mere woman—a patriarchal invention that exists only to indulge and pleasure males. She adored Daichi as a female "doing" a man, but despises the petulant player of women's roles the female star has devolved into.

*Otokoyaku* have been characterized by sympathetic (and defensive) critics as sexy but sexless, the argument being that ambiguous gender is perceived as an asexual identity (e.g., Aoki T. 1934; Aochi 1954:231). An *otokoyaku* performing onstage as a man may be the object of desire, but she herself is purportedly without sexuality. Partly to sustain this perception of asexuality, all Takarasiennes must remain unmarried and ostensibly heterosexually inexperienced throughout their tenure in the Revue, a policy implemented by Kobayashi on founding the Revue. Yet the actors and the administration rationalize this policy in tellingly different ways. Implicitly acknowledging that a theatrical vocation virtually precludes distinctions between on- and offstage experiences, several players of men's roles have noted that "it would be ridiculous to be married *and* to perform as a man onstage," but their explanation contradicts the management's rationale: "Female fans probably will not be charmed by a married *otokoyaku*" ("Jidai ni kakaru hashi" 1962:41). Other players of men's roles

*Otokoyaku* Daichi

claim—at least in official interviews—to sustain their stage roles in public out of respect for their fans: “The fans have this stereotype of what the [*otokoyaku*] should look like, and to wear a skirt [offstage] is just like shattering their dreams. . . . That’s why whenever I get in a car, I never sit with my knees together. I just sit like a man” (Anju Mira, quoted in Rea 1994:55).

From the beginning, the Revue management has sought to limit female fans’ infatuation to the ideal man performed by an *otokoyaku*. My archival research and interviews suggest that, on the contrary, female fans of all ages, class, and educational backgrounds do not see a prototypical man onstage; rather they acknowledge and appreciate a female body performing in a capacity that transgresses the boundaries of received femininity and masculinity (Hoshi 1987; Maruo 1950:252–78; “Shōjo kageki o kataru” 1935; Tanabe and Sasaki 1983:135–36). The player of men’s roles, in short, is appreciated as an exemplary female who can negotiate successfully both genders, and their attendant roles, without being constrained by either: like Daichi Mao during her Moon Troupe days, she successfully lives the contradiction.

And what about the *musumeyaku*? One aspect of the postwar revival of Takarazuka has been the efforts of *musumeyaku* to make femininity more than just a foil for masculine privilege. Takarasiennes and their female fans sometimes refer to the actor not as *musumeyaku* (literally, “daughter’s role player”), but as *onnayaku* (woman’s role player), thereby claiming a nomenclatural parity with the *otokoyaku*. This act of (re)naming is a reminder that the “sex-gender system . . . is both a sociocultural construct and a semiotic apparatus, a system of representation which assigns meaning (identity, value, prestige, . . . status in the social hierarchy, etc.) to individuals within the society” (de Lauretis 1987:5). The actors began to stress their female being over their daughter status, and, accordingly, demanded more prominent roles.

The all-male administration responded to these demands by creating highly visible, dynamic, and often overtly sensuous woman characters, such as Scarlett O’Hara in *Gone with the Wind* and Jacqueline Carstone in *Me and My Girl*. However, in a move that undercut *musumeyaku* intentions, the directors assigned these new roles to players of men’s roles. As the director of *Gone with the Wind* explained, using a logic reminiscent of the arguments in favor of retaining the Kabuki *onnagata*, “the *otokoyaku* have an erotic appeal (*iroke*) that is

missing in *musumeyaku*. The rationale for having an *otokoyaku* play Scarlett O'Hara is to revive her original femininity while at the same time retaining the sensuality of her 'male' gender, thereby doubling her charm (*nijū no miryoku*)" ("Dō, oiroke aru kashira" 1977). In this way, the construction and performance of femininity remain the privilege of both males and players of men's roles. *Musumeyaku*, in contrast, almost never have been reassigned to men's roles: the transposition of gender is not a reciprocal operation. As several players of women's roles have remarked, "Japanese society is a male's world, and Takarazuka is an *otokoyaku*'s world" ("Utsumi-sensei to onnayaku" 1967:54). Also significant is that the charismatic women characters performed by the players of men's roles are most often Euro-American. We saw that in the early twentieth century, the Paris-inspired revue and Western films were held accountable for the "masculinization" of Japanese females. But in this case, the directors felt that the requisite innocence and naïveté of the *musumeyaku* would be irreparably compromised by roles that called for (hetero)sexually active characters. Although all Takarasiennes by definition are unmarried and ostensibly (hetero)sexually inexperienced, *otokoyaku*, by virtue of their "male" gender, were perceived as less likely to be corrupted by assuming the roles of charismatic and lustful women—an ironic twist on the rationale for the emergence of the Kabuki *onnagata* in the 1600s.

Some actors, such as Minakaze Mai (retired 1988), who had enrolled in the Academy specifically to do "male" gender, were assigned instead to do "female" gender. Minakaze was assigned to perform women's roles because of her comparatively short stature. In order to resolve the conflict between her offstage desires and her onstage role—or, in Stanislavskian terms, in order to dialogue with her character's "I"—she "stopped wearing blue jeans" and "always exerted [herself] to the fullest to be a *musumeyaku*, even in [her] private life." Minakaze is not alone in believing initially that females encountered less resistance performing women's roles. She now agrees with several of her colleagues that locating "the woman within the female poses a perplexing problem" (*Nihonkai* 1987; *Hankyū* 1987). Similarly, after ten years of performing only men's roles, *otokoyaku* Matsu Akira (retired 1982), in contrast to Daichi Mao, was unable to perform a woman's role: "Even though I am a female, the thing called 'woman' just won't emerge at all" (quoted in Misato 1974:68). Whether in terms of "re-

sistance" or "emergence," the Takarasiennes have drawn attention to the incompatibility between their femaleness and the dominant construction of "female" gender. The actors' training in their secondary genders has led in effect to the deconstruction of femininity, which, as a gender role, can be understood as a performative text.

Kobayashi's assertion that "Takarazuka involves the study of males" is only partially correct (1948). "Female" gender is also taught and studied; this, in fact, is the ultimate objective of the Takarazuka Music Academy and Revue. Students who are assigned a secondary gender contrary to their personal preference are in a position analogous to all Japanese females who are socialized into gender roles not of their own making. And like the players of women's roles in particular, girls and women are suspended between the depiction and definition of "female" gender and the achievement or approximation of such. Ironically, it is just this limbo that many young women have sought to avoid by enrolling in the Academy.

Nevertheless, the Revue offers Takarasiennes an alternative to, or at least a respite from, the gender role of Good Wife, Wise Mother. One actor declared that for her to become a player of men's roles was tantamount to "realizing [her] personal ideals" ("Tsurugi Miyuki katarogu" 1986:45). Another enrolled in the Takarazuka Music Academy specifically because "despite the fact that [she] was female, [she] could assume a masculine persona" ("Kakko yosa" 1969:39). And many *otokoyaku* regularly speak of themselves offstage as *boku*, a self-referent that signifies masculinity. As players of men's roles, the actors have access to, and provide fans with vicarious access to, a wide range of ranks and professions still limited to males, from military general to revue director. Many *otokoyaku* have noted that had they not joined Takarazuka, they would have pursued—as if employment opportunities were equal—such careers as import-export trader, airplane pilot, train engineer, and lumber yard manager, among others, occupations underrepresented by females.

Leading *otokoyaku* have been provided the opportunity to realize their forfeited careers in one fan magazine's "magic if" series, titled "What If You Had Not Joined Takarazuka?" Asami Rei and Haruna Yuri, for example, would have been a train engineer and airplane pilot, respectively. For the series, the two players of men's roles dressed in the appropriate uniforms and assumed their forgone careers for a day. Haruna toured but did not pilot a jet, and Asami was given lessons

and actually drove a Hankyū train ("Untenshi ni charenji" 1976:50–51; "if . . ." 1977:60–61). Theoretically, they subverted the male-dominant occupational hierarchy; but in actuality, as well-known *otokoyaku*, their act was not perceived as redressing conventional "female" gender roles. So long as they remain members of the Takarazuka Revue, the *otokoyaku* are able to operate as hinge figures whose very bodies mediate the fantasies of the stage with the realities of everyday life. Like the theater itself, they represent excess—overflowing semiosis—and its containment. Once they retire, the players of men's roles are expected to return to their primary feminine selves.

In recent decades, Takarasiennes and their fans have often referred to the *otokoyaku* as a female who has metamorphosed (*henshin shita*), indicating a recontextualization of this hitherto androcentric term to fit their stage experience (e.g., "People: Ōura Mizuki" 1986:48). Their use of the term outside the Buddhist and Kabuki (*onnagata*) contexts may have been prompted by the tremendous, continuing popularity of the "morph dramas" (*henshin dorama*) that were first aired in the late 1960s. These television dramas, some of them animated, feature mostly "ordinary" boys and young men who have the ability to suddenly morph into another, more powerful form. The brainy Pa-man, for example, in another incarnation is Mitsuo, an average elementary school student. His inventors suggest that what audiences find intriguing is the possibility of "one person living in two worlds" ("Kodomo no suki na henshin dorama" 1968:11).

I would argue that the Takarazuka Revue was and is attractive to audiences for much the same reason. For over eighty years the excessively wrought Revue has provided viewers in Japan with glimpses and dreams of other, exotic worlds. And for female fans in particular, the tuxedo- and gown-draped actors enabled the vicarious experience of an alternative to the traditional kimono, as well as an alternative to the Good Wife, Wise Mother role—or at least a respite from it. Of great significance in this connection is that the public vocation of the Takarazuka actor reverses the conventional association of females with the household; in a particularly vivid way, the player of men's roles negotiates both the public and the private spheres, her androgynous image symbolizing their fusion.

It is in this light that the impressive popularity of Takarazuka among girls and women especially is partly explained, as is the fiery criticism aimed at the *otokoyaku* in earlier years. Voting rights and nominal equal

employment opportunity laws (in effect since 1986) notwithstanding, sexist discrimination against girls and women—from the boys-first order of school roll calls to short-term “mommy track” jobs—is the prevailing state of affairs. “Women inside, men outside” remains the dominant gender ideology, which is further reinforced by “public opinion” polls commissioned by the Prime Minister’s Office and others despite the facts: over 60 percent of all adult females work for wages outside their homes, 80 percent of whom are married and mothers (Atsumi 1988; Pollack 1994:17, 19; Radden 1991; “3.4% of Women Feel Equal at Work” 1994:2; “Women’s Work Conditions” 1990:4).

#### ANDROGYNY AS AMBIVALENCE

“Performance at its most general and most basic level is a carrying out, a putting into action or into shape” (Maclean 1988:xi). Takarazuka performances “carry out” at least two competing actions that correlate with the text and the subtext of the Revue. Indeed, a theatrical performance always exceeds the elements—such as the “master” text—from which it is composed, extending into many spheres of action (xi–xii). In addition, the interaction of performers—who, in the widest sense, include actors as well as directors, fans, critics, “I,” and “you”—may be cooperative or contentious. The influence of the Takarazuka Revue on the discourse of gender and sexuality has been evident at different historical junctures in several, often contradictory ways, as I have shown. For example, whereas Kobayashi argued that the players of men’s roles participate not in the construction of alternative gender roles for females but in the glorification of males and masculinity, both government censors and female fans viewed the actors as doing just the opposite. The former interpreted the *otokoyaku* as deviant and offensive enough to ban from the stage in 1939, even as the wartime state employed Takarazuka in its efforts to mobilize the population through entertainment, as we shall see in the next chapter. Female fans, on the other hand, continue to view the player of men’s roles in a number of affirmative ways, including as a style-setting lesbian and as an exemplary female who embodies contradiction and bridges gender and its spatial domains. Watching the *otokoyaku* onstage, (female) fans enjoy vicariously what they too might be able to do *if*—magically—they were someone else: not male, but players of men’s roles. The key to liberation, as it were, involves not a change



of sex but a new gender identity, and by extension, a transformation in gender ideology. Like Oscar in *The Rose of Versailles*, Takarasiennes, and particularly *otokoyaku*, provoke a recognition of gender as, in part, a costume drama in which clothing—in addition to gesture and voice—undercuts the ideological fixity and essentialism of conventional femininity and masculinity (Kuhn 1985:53). The technologies (*kata*) of gender utilized in the Takarazuka Revue not only have drawn from and informed but also in some cases have redressed the dominant representations of male and female.

Androgyny has been used in Japan since the turn of this century to name three basic, but overlapping, types of androgynous females: those whose bodies approximate the prevailing masculine stereotype; those who are charismatic, unconventional, and therefore not feminine females; and those who have been assigned to do "male" gender or who have appropriated it on their own initiative. The characterization of their appearance as "androgynous" is necessarily premised on a priori knowledge of the underlying female body—knowledge that can nullify or compromise the "male" gender of the surface. Obviously, a female who passes successfully as a man does not appear androgynous. "Passing" can work in either transitive or intransitive ways, or both. It can refer to what someone does to purposefully efface their difference or otherness, and it can refer to what is achieved, consciously or unconsciously, when an observer does not recognize one's difference or otherness. Successful passing was a source of great anxiety on the part of conservative pundits committed to retaining a polarized sexual hierarchy, which they equated with social stability. Others preferred to reassure themselves with the conviction that masculine females were asexual. *Dansō no reijin*, for example, was an expression that focused attention away from the body and onto the masculine clothing of an unconventional female.

I have shown that the appeal to and experiments with androgyny in the Takarazuka Revue served the different interests of both the patriarchal management and female actors and fans alike by deflecting negative attention from the sexual difference posed by the players of men's roles. (We shall return to the subject of sexuality and cross-dressing in chapter 5, which considers very recent expressions of androgyny.) By allowing "the woman" to permeate "the man," the Revue's experiments with androgyny in the late 1960s and early 1980s in effect reemphasized the facticity of the female body doing "male"

gender. The directors viewed this as an indication that an *otokoyaku*'s secondary "male" gender was kept in check by her primary or "natural" femininity. But many female fans continued to see the *otokoyaku* as a female unconstrained by a sexual and gendered division of labor. Androgyny, as a theory of body politics, continues to interrogate the naturalized dualities of male and female, masculine and feminine. At the same time, androgyny, as an embodied practice, also has been used to exaggerate, essentialize, and mystify those same dualities.