

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)



DIJ History & Humanities Study Group

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Happy New Japan: The Ideology and Aesthetics of Happiness in Takarazuka Revue

It is an open secret that Japan has been redefining itself as a cultural soft power. A faithful interpreter of these ambitions is the all-female theater Takarazuka Revue. Concurrently anachronistic in its gender staging and progressive in its performance practice, Takarazuka Revue reconstructs asymmetric interactions between identity and alterity, challenging traditional mimetic concepts, all wrapped up in sparkling tunes, luxurious productions and gorgeous costumes. Focusing on the postwar period, the goal of this presentation is to outline some of Takarazuka Revue's strategies to implement happiness as both ideological base and aesthetical superstructure of identity paradigms in late modernity.

Based on an anthropological definition of happiness, this presentation explores the historicization of happiness in postwar Japan as staged by Takarazuka Revue. The happiness prototypes as embodied by the androgynously charismatic and ambivalent *otokoyaku* and the apparently submissive and conformist *musumeyaku* suggest a dialectical movement between traditional role models and innovative consumption patterns. The transition from ethics to aesthetics and from imagination to ideology reflects Takarazuka Revue's metamorphosis from an insignificant socio-cultural medium to a powerful political-economic instrument. The emergence of a new paradigm of happiness as tenderness (*yasashisa*) calls for a fresh, dynamic manipulation of middle-class ideals through the restructuring of emotional values.

Maria Grajdian holds a PhD from the University of Music and Drama Hannover. Currently she is postdoctoral researcher within the Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context: Shifting Asymmetries in Cultural Flows" at the University of Heidelberg.

The presentation will be given in English. Everybody is welcome to attend. Registration is appreciated. Please contact Peter Backhaus at backhaus@dijtokyo.org.

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