

sketch out what was promised and hoped for during the struggle for independence, and then provides insights on how things unfolded (unravelling?) after independence, are the major strengths of this book. What is even more fascinating is the assortment of activities, places, and people that are described.

I particularly like the lively, intimate accounts of the Homecraft Movement in the colonial era. Shaw draws out the role and significance of these clubs in a way that only someone who has encountered them can. She gives the reader a sense of what they were and what they meant: we get both the story and the subtext. However, this is not just a memoir. It is a treatise that is replete with helpful observations and interesting arguments, all backed by ample evidence.

One of Shaw's most powerful and convincing arguments is that 'black women were paradoxically primed for feminism during the colonial period' (p. 2). It is this that makes her points about 'cruel optimism' so poignant and persuasive. For me the value of the book lies not in the account of the failed promises, but in the way that Shaw successfully shows women 'fighting for a better life when the government had become the enemy of the good' (p. 2). We see that women responded to disappointment in numerous ways: making accommodations to the new regime; confronting it head on; or combining feminist ideals with more conventional feminine powers. Shaw succeeds in providing intimate accounts not just from a section of women, but from a whole spectrum: ex-combatants, professionals, beauty queens, activists, wives, and mothers.

Moreover, this is not just a story; it is solid academic work. Shaw uses Berlant's concept of 'cruel optimism' to respond to her main query: 'what bad can happen when we hope' and 'what good can happen when we despair' (p. 9)? Her analyses of women's intimate accounts using Berlant's theory add some methodical power to her ethnography. However, I do think that more could have been done if these thoughts had been woven into the accounts rather than 'relegated' to parts of the introduction and the final chapter. There are some beautiful insights here that could have been more powerful, helpful, and, indeed, more effective had there been an attempt to make them an integral part of the narratives in chapters 1 to 4. Shaw's authoritative and perceptive discussion in the final chapter suggests that she had enough material and critical reflection to do more of this throughout the book. We could have seen how this specifically applies to, for example, the lively descriptions of the

Homecraft Movement in chapter 1; the intimate narratives of Flame, Nyaradzwo, and Pretty in chapter 2; or the gripping story of the NGO under stress in chapter 3. The concluding chapter could then have been used to bring together Shaw's various perceptions, thus employing Berlant's idea in a deeper and more meaningful reflection.

Occasionally a book comes along that makes sense of a complex situation, bringing new interpretations of what we thought we knew. *Women and power in Zimbabwe* is such a book and is long overdue. This ethnography is not just about feminism, and thus only for feminist scholars; it is also a book for Africanists.

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TAKEYAMA, AKIKO. *Staged seduction: selling dreams in a Tokyo host club*. xviii, 225 pp., illus., bibliogr. Stanford: Univ. Press, 2016. £16.99 (paper)

*Staged seductions* is an eloquently written affective ethnography that analyses the seductions of host clubs (bars in which male servers provide not only drinks, but also conversation to women), while seducing the reader with the stories that are woven throughout. In her introduction, Takeyama presents the space of host clubs, arguing that her ethnography explores the 'commercialization of feelings, emotions, and aspirational efforts in Japan's structural reforms aimed at deregulating and expanding service sectors' (p. 3). She analyses both the cultural imaginary and political economy of host clubs, contextualizing her argument within the rise of neoliberalism and the seductiveness of what is seen by the Japanese as a neoliberal 'autonomous individualism' (p. 13). Takeyama takes a feminist-embodied approach to seduction and affective ethnography ('through which the ethnographer mobilizes "affective modes of knowing" [p. 20]), as both methodology and writing strategy, in order to explore the ethnographer's and her interlocutors' intersubjectivity when seduction, the service industry, and neoliberalism intersect.

Chapter 1, 'The consumable city', situates host clubs within Tokyo's 'affective cityscape' (p. 21). Takeyama argues that the service industry's rise and the reconfiguration of Tokyo since the 1980s were both part of a national project of political and cultural imaginaries aimed at turning the city into a (neoliberal) futuristic space in which individuals' hopes, dreams, and aspirations potentially could come true. These in turn feed and shape 'affect economies' (p. 133) in which lifestyles, emotions, and feelings are bought and

sold. Takeyama also highlights the re-emergence of deeply ingrained class struggles that undermine this political economy of hope.

Chapter 2, 'Commodified romance', is a fascinating mini-ethnography of staged seductions in a host club. Using Goffman's concept of dramaturgy (*The presentation of self in everyday life*, 1959), Takeyama explores different performative spheres, ranging from the fantasies and aspirations of both hosts and clients, to temporal-spatial management and exploitative labour conditions. She argues not just that host clubs are extraordinary performative spaces with clear-cut front and back stages, but also that participants move across these places in varying ways that are simultaneously embedded in everyday social interactions.

The next chapters turn to the gendered experiences of host clubs. In chapter 3, 'Entrepreneurial attraction', Takeyama focuses on the hosts' masculine subjectivity, arguing that they engage in paradoxical gendered performances that are both commodified and entrepreneurial. Although Takeyama misses the opportunity to situate her argument within the wider literature on Japanese masculinities, this chapter provides a fascinating analysis of how hosts manipulate and manage their clients in highly gendered ways. In chapter 4, 'Feminine restoration', Takeyama focuses on the clubs' female clients and links their use of such spaces to the feelings of vulnerability that emerge with the prospect of ageing. Drawing on wider feminist scholarship on women's lives, she argues that by engaging in romance combined with the desire to 'polish' the self and seduce hosts, these women are, in some ways, reinforcing cultural expectations about femininity, womanhood, and motherhood, even as they contribute to the 'affect economy'. In chapter 5, 'The art of seduction', Takeyama returns to Goffman to explore how mutual seduction works through emotional, symbolic, and economic exchanges. She argues that seduction is not only central to host clubs, but is also at the heart of Japan's neoliberal reforms.

*Staged seductions* is a highly enjoyable and, at times, troubling read, resulting in a wonderful example of an affective ethnography. Takeyama provides deep insights into the complex ways that affects are implicated in, and constitutive of, the production of neoliberal subjectivities: how they are mobilized consciously and embodied in the seductions between the hosts, clients, and management. However, the book could have benefited from a deeper engagement with anthropological theories of affect, the

senses, and embodiment, which are discussed only in the conclusion. Scholars and students interested in such analyses must themselves make the connections between the case studies and the wider arguments in these fields as they read. Furthermore, despite advocating affect as a methodology, Takeyama does not situate her argument within the wider literature that has long debated this (Paul Stoller's *Sensuous scholarship*, 1997; Ruth Behar's *The vulnerable observer*, 1997; Sarah Pink's *Doing sensory ethnography*, 2009 – to name just three).

These are relatively small critiques to make of a book that provides much food for thought to anyone interested in affect, the senses, and embodiment, and the ways in which they are mobilized to become constitutive of neoliberal subjectivities in Japan and beyond. It should also appeal to scholars and students interested in examples of how to create affective ethnographies.

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WHITTAKER, ELVI (ed.). *Solitudes of the workplace: women in universities*. xxix, 300 pp., table, bibliogr. Montreal, Kingston: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, 2016. £26.99 (paper)

The contributors to this book come from a wide range of academic disciplines and universities in Canada. Unlike most critical volumes on gender and feminism in universities, it includes the experiences of students, support staff, contract workers, as well as professors and a university president. Rather than attempting – as is now mainstream in academic discourse – to 'fill a gap' in existing literature on women in universities, Whittaker sets this collection of essays within a Canadian research tradition that studies women in the academy, including works on knowledge production, the role of feminism in academia, questions of inclusion and exclusion, and academic capitalism. This tradition represents what Whittaker describes as counter-histories and counter-ethnographies, providing alternative accounts of the university. Importantly, the essays not only offer critical analyses of gender relations in academia and the university more broadly, but also seek to establish hope: That is, they point towards the possibility of 'doing otherwise'. Writing and 'trouble talk' are seen as activism.

The contributing authors all speak to or from a metaphor of solitude, defined as 'a stretch of experience disengaged from other people in perception, thought, emotions and action' (P. Koch, *Solitude*, 1994: 57). In Whittaker's