



Michelle H. S. Ho

EMERGENT GENDERS

Living Otherwise in Tokyo's Pink Economies

Emergent Genders

BUY

PERVERSE MODERNITIES

A Series Edited by Jack Halberstam and Lisa Lowe

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E M E R G E N T
G E N D E R S

Living Otherwise
in Tokyo's Pink Economies

Michelle H. S. Ho

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*For those who are living otherwise.
This one's for you.*

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Introduction

Tracing Emergent Genders

“I wanted to promote *josō/otoko no ko*,” Hayashi said simply, referring to the phenomenon of male-to-female cross-dressing.¹ I had asked how they had founded Paradise, one of the first *josō/otoko no ko* café-and-bars established in the 2000s in Akihabara, an area in Tokyo renowned among Japanese and non-Japanese people alike for the fandom and consumption of anime, manga, and video games.² Hayashi, who was in their late twenties and was tall and lithe, with alabaster skin, delicate features, and long, straight hair—traits often considered the ideal of feminine beauty in Japan—was asexual and practiced *josō* (male-to-female cross-dressing). Together with Miho, Hayashi’s business partner, an attractive cisgender bisexual *josō* individual in his early thirties, they had built Paradise from scratch, making ends meet by personally serving customers in the early days.

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They were ahead of their time. As entrepreneurs who practiced *josō* in their everyday lives and in this sense had a personal stake in the business, Miho and Hayashi proudly proclaimed to me how they had played a major role in promoting *otoko no ko* (boy/male daughter) over the years. At its nascence, *otoko no ko* was a slang originating in internet culture in the 2000s to refer to two-dimensional *josō* characters in Japanese manga and games.³ However, its eventual adoption in real life by transgender women and cis heterosexual men alike to designate their *josō* practices complicates how we might understand such categories. Miho and Hayashi, who knew the establishment they owned was driven by profit, leveraged consumers' growing interests in *josō/otoko no ko* to drum up business. In turn, Paradise also inspired young amateurs doing *josō* to market themselves as *otoko no ko*, eventually shaping, as the following chapters show, the same culture that had informed their practices in the first place.

Come nightfall, around the time it opened, the gray five-story building housing Paradise would become shrouded in darkness and, from the outside, was indistinguishable from other bars, cafés, and restaurants (figure I.1). Inside, amid the warm lighting, *otoko no ko* were a feast for the eyes. Mostly in their twenties, they were beautifully made up, with stylish long black, blonde, and brown hair and checkered dresses in various colors and designs. Stefanie, a gorgeous, tanned, full-figured twenty-year-old with long dyed-brown hair, introduced herself using feminine speech and *watashi*, a feminine or gender-neutral first-person pronoun. From the moment I met her, her carefree manner made me feel at ease and comfortable enough to ask her questions about herself—something I realized I could never do at maid cafés, establishments staffed by cis women in costume. I learned that Stefanie identified as *toransujendā* (transgender) and was romantically attracted to cis men. She was also a college student who worked part-time at the café-and-bar. We were deep in conversation when her colleagues joined us and introduced themselves. They wore similar uniforms and, like Stephanie, adopted feminine speech and first-person pronouns and paid special attention to their hair and makeup. Half of Paradise's employees were cis straight men. The other half, like Stefanie, were non-cis and/or nonheterosexual.

Only a few blocks from Paradise was Garçon, a themed establishment staffed by *dansō* (female-to-male cross-dressing) employees. Housed in a nondescript building, one small storefront in a vast sea of maid cafés, high school girl cafés, and shops selling merchandise related to idols, anime, manga, and video games, Garçon was easy for most passersby to miss.⁴



I.1 An alley in Akihabara close to where *Paradise* and *Garçon* were located. Courtesy of Xavier Portela, xavierportela.com.

From the outside *Garçon* could have easily been mistaken for a regular bar. But inside it offered something different. *Garçon* was narrow in the way many bars in Tokyo are, only slightly more spacious than the tiny bars in the district of Golden Gai.⁵ However, its minimalist, windowless interior, lit by subdued orange lights and sheltered in gray curtains, was cozy. It reminded me of being inside a maid café, which aims to block off reality and create an alternative world.⁶ But what sets *Garçon* apart from maid cafés and typical bars is the masculine presentation of employees like Ikki, a visual reminder of their *dansō* practices and the larger female-to-male cross-dressing culture they represent. Ikki, a dashing, willowy twenty-seven-year-old who sported short dyed-blond hair, described himself as *chūsei*, a term meaning “middle sex/gender” and referring to someone who is nonbinary or locates themselves in between genders.

Garçon’s main attraction, Ikki told me, was the *kakkōii* (cool/good-looking) *dansō* staff. Glancing at him and his colleagues, who were similarly attired in white dress shirts, black vests, and black pants, I could see what he meant. Hiyori, a handsome twenty-five-year-old employee with tinted hair styled in the latest “mushroom” or bowl cut, resembled an idol from a K-pop (Korean popular music) boy band. I quickly discovered that this

resemblance was no coincidence, as Hiyori was a huge fan of boy bands TVXQ and SHINee. Hiyori used *ore*, the strongly masculine first-person pronoun for men, while simultaneously gesturing toward a nonbinary subjectivity using *chūsei* or *musei*, the latter term meaning “no sex/gender” and indexing someone who is asexual or agender. Like Ikki and Hiyori, the majority of Garçon employees located themselves along a continuum of genders and sexualities.

Doubling as Garçon’s manager, Ikki was instrumental to the establishment’s day-to-day operations, including training new employees and communicating with the owner, Yuka, a cis woman in her early forties. Although Garçon was among the first *dansō* café-and-bars to open and popularize female-to-male cross-dressing in Akihabara, its proliferation of *dansō* seemed almost incidental. Unlike Miho and Hayashi, who claimed to promote *josō/otoko no ko* out of personal interest, Yuka neither practiced *dansō* nor attended to customers as service staff. From all appearances, she regarded Garçon simply as a business.

Despite designating themselves as “café-and-bars,” Garçon and Paradise are more like bars than cafés. At both establishments, customers of all genders alternated among eating, smoking, drinking alcohol, playing games, watching anime, bantering with employees and other patrons, and observing all these activities unfold before them.⁷ Although offered, food and drinks weren’t the main reason for their patronage—which is perhaps understandable given that food and drink prices at both establishments were at least three times those of typical bars or gastropubs in Tokyo. More than one regular customer explained to me that it made economic sense for them to grab a quick meal elsewhere before arriving at the café-and-bar to drink. Rather, conversation, or what my interlocutors called *seken banashi*, everyday discourses about society and the world, was the prime service employees provided. In time, I would come to know that the majority of customers—60 percent or more—at Paradise were cis men. The reverse was true at Garçon, where 60 percent or more of customers were cis women. Whereas around one in ten customers came to Paradise in *josō*, I was initially disappointed to learn that few customers (around one in twenty) turned up at Garçon in *dansō*. Garçon encouraged interest in *dansō*, and I had assumed that more customers would practice *dansō* themselves. But this was not the case. Most customers at both establishments were bisexual, pansexual, or heterosexual with a minority identifying as transgender or nonbinary.

This book takes us inside the worlds of these *dansō* and *josō/otoko no ko* establishments, two separate kinds of businesses where employees dress

as a different gender, which sprang up in Akihabara beginning in the mid-2000s. Their rise was not random; since the 2000s, Akihabara has become synonymous with the culture of otaku, or fans of anime, manga, and games.⁸ Many regulars of Garçon and Paradise also considered themselves otaku. That these establishments are located within sites of popular culture consumption like Akihabara instead of Shinjuku Ni-chōme, Tokyo's gay and lesbian neighborhood, is noteworthy, I argue, for initiating new markets for emergent categories of expression and subjectivity to thrive.⁹

Drawing on extensive ethnographic research of Garçon and Paradise, I chronicle the genders that emerged alongside popular culture—including *josō*, *dansō*, and *otoko no ko*—as well as the everyday life experiences of individuals who operated, worked at, and patronized these establishments. Such emergent genders, I contend, find new ways of flourishing in periods of both economic growth and stagnation, launching new markets for self-fashioning and social interactions. This has implications for both queer theory and transgender studies, particularly an assumed white, northern, anglophone trans studies that has overlooked or barely begun to “engage non-Western forms of gendering.”¹⁰ My focus on Tokyo decenters the works of scholars who have emphasized the significance of capitalism for trans studies and queer theory and vice versa, complicating current understandings of these trans capitalist and queer capitalist relationships. I posit that looking at gender innovations transnationally offers different answers to the question of how trans and gender nonconforming individuals survive and flourish in a capitalist context.¹¹

Emergent Genders shows how my interlocutors at Garçon and Paradise contradictorily threaten the hegemonic and all-encompassing discourses of capitalism and embrace the normalizing influence of work, (self-)commodification, and consumer pleasures that risk them being folded into neoliberal regimes.¹² Discourses of “capitalist hegemony” represent the “virtually unquestioned dominance of capitalism,” (4), which J. K. Gibson-Graham criticizes in favor of anticapitalist or noncapitalist politics.¹³ However, my interlocutors—many of whom locate themselves as trans, nonbinary, or otherwise—resist such representations of capitalism through defying existing categories and innovating diverse genders while simultaneously contingent on these representations for their vernacular innovations.¹⁴ For the editors of *Transgender Marxism*, the relationship between gender and capitalism is one of “mutual dependence.”¹⁵ As they put it, “Rather than merely destructive, capitalism is simultaneously productive of affects, attachments, fierce passions, commitments, and hatred.”¹⁶ This gives us hope

that in precarious Japan, the flourishing of emergent genders in commercial settings may lead to capitalist renewal, giving birth to new forms of capitalism within a perpetual state of crisis.

Emergent Genders and the Material

Though *josō* and *dansō* emerged in the twenty-first century, gender and sexual variance aren't new to Japan.¹⁷ Indeed, as I detail in chapter 1, warriors and royal family members occasionally engaged in *josō* and *dansō* practices as far back as the late first and third centuries, respectively.¹⁸ In medieval Japan, *josō* and *dansō* as ritual included acolytes in monasteries and women in white tunics performing “male dancing” in the Kyoto court.¹⁹ *Josō* and *dansō* practices have also gained visibility through the professional performances of the *onnagata* (female roles; performers who play women in Kabuki, traditional Japanese theater using an all-male cast) and *otokoyaku* (male roles; performers who play men in the all-women theater group Takarazuka Revue).²⁰ Today individuals like Ikki, Hiyori, Miho, and Hayashi have innovated based on these older forms to create modern forms of *josō* and *dansō* to express who they are and what they do in the process of becoming.

In this book I coin the term *emergent genders* to point to the ways older forms are fractured, contested, or recuperated but at the same time invigorated, (re)imagined, and embodied by individuals as new gender practices, categories, and ways of being in their everyday lives. The emergent, as Raymond Williams expounds, is not “merely novel,” referring to how “new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationships are continually being created” vis-à-vis existing categories.²¹ I follow Teresa de Lauretis in thinking of gender as continuously socially constructed and potentially deconstructed by representations, practices, and theories but always located in and produced through people's material lives and social relations.²² I use *genders* to accommodate a plurality of genders, building on Michael Peletz's notion of “gender pluralism,” which he uses in the early modern Southeast Asian context.²³ In employing *emergent genders* to describe my interlocutors' inventiveness, I demonstrate how their ambiguous, unstable, and incomplete embodiments cannot be disentangled from Tokyo's recessionary contexts.

Emergent genders at spaces like Garçon and Paradise must be understood, I argue, in terms of Japan's long economic recession throughout the 1990s and 2000s—known as the Lost Decade and Lost Twenty Years—after the nation's rapid postwar economic growth and the subsequent bursting

of the bubble in the late 1980s.²⁴ During this time, Japanese people increasingly faced social inequality, employment irregularities, and precarious living conditions. Their situation was due to the gradual collapse of Japan Inc., a socioeconomic order in which job security and productivity were intertwined with stable living conditions at home, thereby prioritizing social collectivism over individual independence.²⁵ With the breakdown of Japan Inc., the heteronormative family unit—one in which Japan's social, political, and economic institutions were believed to be entrenched—was increasingly dismissed as a viable basis of productivity.

I contend that categories like *josō*, *dansō*, and *otoko no ko* flourished within alternative spaces of work and consumption in recessionary Tokyo because of—not in spite of—the material conditions brought about by economic stagnation. My interlocutors—the owners, employees, and customers of Paradise and Garçon—were able to innovate and negotiate nonnormative forms of sociality and personhood because when normative ways of being have become impossible, other, nonnormative ways of being, such as diverse gender expressions, can emerge as new possibilities. Renewal thus arises through these new modes of living and survival, or living otherwise.

Emergent Genders traces the *josō* and *dansō* practices of trans and non-binary employees like Ikki and Hiyori, the consumption practices of the mostly cis bisexual or heterosexual customers, and the differing investments of owners like Miho, Yuka, and Hayashi. Their narratives illustrate the complex connections among capital, embodiment, popular culture, and gender and sexual subjectivities. In late-capitalist Tokyo, businesses such as Garçon and Paradise and the commercial culture surrounding them both enable new practices, attachments, and modes of sociality and expression to flourish and potentially fold them into the market. While such gender innovations may threaten the “continuity of capitalism,” the potential also exists for them to be turned into a “material force” that generates new forms of capitalism.²⁶ It is this uneven suturing of emergent genders and the material that interests me most.

The material, according to Petrus Liu, has an “unhappy marriage” with queer theory—one he seeks to “rehabilitate.”²⁷ He characterizes the material as “how a subject comes into existence by virtue of its constitutive outside—what cannot be known or named in advance, what necessarily escapes categories of identity politics.”²⁸ Indeed, many of the *josō* and *dansō* individuals I met at Garçon and Paradise didn't align with LGBT (*eru jī bī tī*; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender), neither the label, nor its activism, nor the public and scholarly discourses, including in the Japanese context.²⁹ They didn't

find their own experiences reflected there. As I show in chapters 1 and 4, my interlocutors often defied existing gender and sexuality categories altogether, choosing instead to enact new affects, categories, and socialities at *dansō* and *josō/otoko no ko* establishments. Their refusal to adopt extant categories and their insistence on gender and sexual fluidity is one way of destabilizing Japanese society and its notions of productivity structured by heteronormative family and marriage, as I discuss in chapter 2.

How might we begin the work of tracing and retheorizing ways of being and becoming that do not fit neatly into existing categories? Through a tracing of categories like *josō*, *dansō*, and *otoko no ko* that arose within an economically stagnant late-capitalist Tokyo, I argue that rethinking the relationship between emergent genders and the material enables us to challenge identitarian models of gender and sexuality and theoretical frameworks incubated in a predominantly white, anglophone US academic context.³⁰ Although trans, queer, feminist, and Marxist scholars have underscored the necessity of bringing queer theory and transgender studies to bear on Marxist politics' and vice versa, many remain loath to engage in queer-materialist or trans-materialist critiques—something I take up in the following pages.³¹ As Liu posits, this particular impasse is rooted in US-centric identitarian modes of analyzing gender and sexuality.³² If we were to move away from this to think with theories and experiences from other cultures and languages, we may just find new spaces for queer- and trans-materialist approaches to gender crossing, gender nonconformity, and emerging categories, all of which this book is concerned with.

Articulating a relationship between emergent genders and the material in what might be considered unlikely sites, *dansō* and *josō/otoko no ko* café-and-bars in Tokyo, I find evidence in these establishments, and the practices of *josō* and *dansō* individuals who inhabit them, of the ways genders are innovated alongside popular culture in material worlds. The development of such worlds hinges on gender experimentation with dress, fashion, and other material objects, but this experimentation has material costs. For my interlocutors, the ability to practice *josō* and *dansō* depends on their economic means. Just as corporations have co-opted and exploited certain gender-variant and sexually variant bodies by incorporating them into neoliberal regimes of markets, rights, and recognition, there are costs involved in frequenting businesses like Garçon and Paradise that turn *josō* and *dansō* individuals into profit.³³

I contend that markets are an important force for the emergence and embodiment of gender categories in Japan. Intervening in the anticapitalist

ethos of US-centric queer theory and trans studies, I argue that engaging in materialist approaches to trans and queer issues and adopting trans and queer perspectives toward the material can allow us to see other possibilities for understanding and articulating genders and sexualities.³⁴ Rather than seeing capitalism simply as a threat, I maintain it is precisely the commodification of *josō*, *dansō*, and *otoko no ko* that has encouraged attachments to them. With a focus on these attachments, *Emergent Genders* follows an empirically grounded materialist feminist approach to draw on ethnographic data, illustrating how my interlocutors—particularly the trans and nonbinary employees whose stories I tell in chapter 4—reinvent themselves.³⁵ Importantly, to lean on Nat Raha, who asserts trans labor is necessary for sustaining trans lives, *josō* and *dansō* employees can build a world for people like them to survive.³⁶ As I delineate in chapter 5, with *josō* and *dansō* becoming increasingly commercialized, consumed, and taken up by young amateurs—what I call “contemporary *josō* and *dansō* cultures”—and expanding beyond Akihabara, beauty and fashion turn into tools of survival for trans, queer, and nonbinary individuals.

I think of sites like Paradise and Garçon as “both in and out” and “simultaneously capitalist and noncapitalist”—what Anna Tsing has called *pericapitalist*.³⁷ This sense of in-betweenness allows us to see past the dichotomy of noncapitalist and capitalist and imagine what it might mean for them to work together. What happens when we venture outside the confines of capitalist logic and seek “multiple ways forward—not just one?”³⁸ Pericapitalist economic forms enable us to decenter hegemonic and monolithic notions of capitalism in our lives that, as Gibson-Graham describes, present capitalism as singular and homogeneous.³⁹ Economic diversity, however, allows us to make sense of value, labor, and the marketplace in new ways, edging us toward renewal. Understanding how innovations like *josō*, *dansō*, and *otoko no ko* operate affectively for those who use and feel attached to them makes it possible for us to rethink existing categories and redraw boundaries of gender and sexuality.⁴⁰

Mapping Queer- and Trans-Materialist Approaches

A vast scholarship rooted within US-centered politics of identity has long examined the intersections between queer theory and Marxism, even when such connections aren’t made explicit.⁴¹ Two queer-materialist approaches in this scholarship bear discussion in the Japanese context.⁴² First, scholars have shown how LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning)

people are situated within economic structures of Western late capitalism.⁴³ Many gay and lesbian individuals, particularly white upper-middle-class cis gay men in the United States, are increasingly targeted as affluent consumers—creating what some scholars have called the *pink economy*, *pink capitalism*, or *rainbow capitalism*.⁴⁴ Lisa Duggan has criticized this trend as a “new neoliberal sexual politics” or homonormativity.⁴⁵

As I delineate in chapter 1, in Japan the rise of modern capitalism during the postwar period was accompanied by a pre-Stonewall-era flourishing of gay bars and lesbian spaces.⁴⁶ But it is only more recently that this has been hailed as an “LGBT market” (*eru jī bi tī ichiba*). During this “LGBT boom,” the acronym LGBT became widespread in public discourses, major newspapers, and television programs to discuss gender and sexual minorities (*seitekishōsūsha*).⁴⁷ We can see, for instance, the explosion of pride parades and other LGBT events, the introduction of same-sex partnership certificates, and the passing and revision of bills and policies that prohibit LGBT discrimination across the country.⁴⁸ After a 2015 survey conducted by global advertising company Dentsū estimated the value of LGBT people’s consumption to be JPY 5.94 trillion (USD 54 billion), corporations similarly jumped on the LGBT bandwagon.⁴⁹ In the run-up to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, for instance, there was an upsurge in interest in and consciousness about LGBT issues across mainstream media, corporations, and state-led initiatives.⁵⁰

Despite this, gender and sexual minorities in Japan have regarded the LGBT boom with equal optimism and suspicion. Their everyday lives have not necessarily improved, and as I found among my interlocutors, some feel disinclined to identify as LGBT, even though the media’s popularization of LGBT could potentially foster greater public awareness.⁵¹ Their reluctance perhaps stems in part from the way the marketization of LGBT has contradictorily erased and sensationalized gender and sexual minorities. This new interest in LGBT issues has also elicited the occasional conservative backlash.⁵² One infamous example is Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) lawmaker Sugita Mio’s repudiation of investing taxpayers’ money into policies supporting LGBT people, calling the latter “not productive” (*seisansei ga nai*) for not bearing children.⁵³ This angered gender and sexual minorities and incited many people to rally against Sugita in front of the LDP headquarters; others took to social media to assert that they, too, contribute to the Japanese economy.⁵⁴ However, this controversy raises important questions about what productivity means under neoliberal capitalism. Why have questions of productivity surfaced now, as LGBT discourse gains prominence in the Japanese public imagination? Important to my own study are questions

about the appeal of *dansō* and *josō/otoko no ko* establishments within this larger framework. What does their existence reveal about shifts in attitudes toward gender and sexuality as well as socioeconomic conditions in Tokyo?

These questions relate to the second queer-materialist approach, in which scholars like John D’Emilio demonstrated how the emergence of nonnormative sexual identities aligned closely with the development of US capitalism at the turn of the twentieth century, when men and women left the heterosexual family-based economy for waged labor in urban areas.⁵⁵ More recently, Christopher Chitty intervenes in the unilinear temporality of a Western history of sexuality theorized by Michel Foucault and compels us to rethink this history, contending that sexual relations between men in proto-capitalist economies in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe came about due to capital accumulation and are thus “world-systemic phenomena.”⁵⁶ Although focused on European homoerotic cultures, Chitty’s arguments are useful in the Japanese context because they establish a much longer connection between capitalism and same-gender relations. Also valuable is the work of transnational queer and sexuality studies scholars who have sought to analyze the asymmetrical ways capital produces sexual subjectivities in specific historical, cultural, and geographic contexts.⁵⁷ These scholars observe how global discourses of queers’ contradictory relationship with the economy operate differently from those in the US context and demand a more complex materialist understanding of this relationship, pointing to the need to look beyond white gay male desires and their modern sexual identities in the purportedly totalizing force of US capitalism.⁵⁸

Emergent Genders offers ways to rethink existing queer-materialist approaches by tracing categories that emerged in recessionary Tokyo and the labor of individuals who embrace these categories. Although there has been abundant scholarship on gender and sexual minorities in Japan in the past three decades, this scholarship has rarely considered their economic lives and work experiences. Though there have been some recent studies, primarily in the Japanese language, that pay attention to gender and sexual minorities’ class and labor issues via the LGBT market, they are largely quantitative surveys of workplace experiences.⁵⁹ As I detail in chapter 2, these studies demonstrate how, despite their waning as a model of productivity, heteronormative family and marriage still persist as a commonsense ideal and continue to structure the workplace.⁶⁰ Some of these studies have called for the private sector and the Japanese government to prevent and prohibit employment discrimination against LGBT individuals.⁶¹ Nevertheless, despite these calls and a growing public discourse, perceptions of productivity

remain the same. As LDP lawmaker Sugita's criticism of gender and sexual minorities reveals, to be productive necessitates bearing children to ensure the reproduction of the capitalist labor force. My book challenges the idea that gender and sexual minorities either threaten or reinforce existing structures of productivity modeled on heteronormative family and marriage and argues, instead, that the notion of productivity needs to be reconfigured.

Toward a Transnational Trans-Political Economy Studies

Dan Irving, Vek Lewis, and numerous other scholars have begun highlighting the importance of political economy approaches for trans studies through trans-political economy (TPE) studies, a subfield of trans studies that stresses the contradictory connections between capitalism and trans oppression and examines trans individuals' experiences of poverty, job discrimination, and access to welfare and other social services.⁶² They have shown how, in establishing "proper trans social subjects," trans activists, scholars, and individuals inevitably contribute to their naturalization as legitimate citizens and productive bodies within exploitative labor relations.⁶³ Notably, trans people continue to be treated as resources for current regimes of capitalist accumulation, contingent on the production, consumption, circulation, and extraction of "trans."⁶⁴

Within a specifically Asian context, fewer works have mapped the explicit connections between trans issues and the economy, although some scholars, such as Peter Jackson and Ara Wilson, engage in what might be considered TPE studies.⁶⁵ Jackson contends that capitalism has played a larger role in generating modern Asian trans and queer cultures and identities than scholars previously imagined.⁶⁶ "The market has provided a space for the modern Filipino *bakla*, Thai *kathoe*, Indonesian *waria*, and other transgender identities beyond the West to form around the commodification of modern norms of feminine beauty," instead of being rooted in either local premodern genders and sexualities or US-centric queer cultures.⁶⁷ While I agree with Jackson and find his arguments insightful, I also follow Wilson in challenging the reductive logic of transnational capitalism by thinking of plural *markets* instead of a singular market.⁶⁸

Emergent Genders contributes to transnational TPE research by investigating trans and nonbinary lives and bodies in recessionary Tokyo. I take a critical approach to capitalism's often homogeneous discourse and representation, following Gibson-Graham, who criticizes this "capitalocentrism" and calls for us to think instead of economies as multiple and heterogeneous.⁶⁹ Building on this, I explore how emergent genders might differently

shape and be shaped by diverse economies through tracing some of these emerging categories, including *josō*, *dansō*, *onabe*, *new half* (*nyūhāfu*; mixed gender), and *x-gender* (*ekkusū jendā*; neither male nor female, or both).⁷⁰ Central to this are the looks, bodies, and practices of employees at *dansō* and *josō/otoko no ko* establishments and the ways they not only become monetized but also open up not-yet-imagined ways of being that surpass how we think about gender, economy, and heteronormative productivity.

Here I lean on scholars who have studied themed establishments in Japan like maid cafés, cat cafés, and host clubs and have called for us to understand productivity differently.⁷¹ These scholars have noted, for example, that otaku who frequent maid cafés and regulars of cat cafés have been characterized as deliberately unproductive, whereas hosts at host clubs similarly struggle to define their masculine subjectivity according to Japan Inc.⁷² The *dansō* and *josō/otoko no ko* employees and customers I look at either refuse to be productive or have a complicated relationship with productivity, but something important they do share is the search for ways to survive. Of course, patrons and workers at host clubs and cat and maid cafés are also trying to survive in a cis-heteronormative society, but following TPE scholars, the stakes are much higher for the more marginalized *josō* and *dansō* individuals, especially those who are trans and nonbinary. Although by their very existence such *josō* and *dansō* individuals unsettle compulsory heteronormativity, their survival necessitates and drives the formation of new categories and capitalist renewal in which they can flourish without being labeled nonproductive. Many of the stories I tell in this book are about trans and queer survival, ranging from their gender innovations (chapters 1 and 3) and alternative forms of belonging (chapter 2) to labor as a source of pleasure (chapter 4) and commodified looks and styles (chapter 5).

Affect and Precarity in Neoliberal Times

I arrived in Tokyo intending to study how the prolonged recession and neoliberal restructuring have impacted the day-to-day existence and employment prospects of individuals who visit or work at *josō* and *dansō* establishments. After the Lost Twenty Years and in the wake of neoliberalism, noticeable social, cultural, and economic shifts can still be glimpsed within people's daily lives, well into the twenty-first century. Under neoliberal ideologies in developed parts of East Asia, changes in labor markets and subsequent declines in government support and social spending meant citizens had to assume the responsibility of ensuring job security, notably through

constant self-development.⁷³ For instance, under neoliberal restructuring, workers in Japan were rendered “free” to succeed or fail and to sell their labor to whomever they chose and, as a result, were frequently uninspired by their work and exploited for their cheap labor.⁷⁴ This may be a far cry from the lifetime employment system—guaranteed employment for a minority of “salaryman” (*sararīman*), or male white-collar office workers during their working life—but flexible work has long been women’s experience of work.⁷⁵ As Anne Allison illustrates in *Precarious Japan*, many in Japan experience multiple and overlapping precarities, not only in work but also within their everyday lives and relationships with other people.

This was true for the majority of my interlocutors, many of whom, whether employees or customers, held irregular, part-time, and temporary jobs. Yet, when I asked if they felt uneasy (*fuan*) about the recession or worried about the future due to diminishing employment prospects, they often focused on the present and the positive aspects of their jobs. I wondered if my interlocutors, like many patrons and workers at host clubs and cat and maid cafés, normalized precarity.⁷⁶ Perhaps they regarded flexible work in terms of individual freedom and an independent lifestyle, deriving these neoliberal ideals from the structural reform (*kōzō kaikaku*) policy introduced in 2002 to tackle the economic slowdown. This policy proposed new measures to accommodate diverse working styles, such as flexible employment independent of age or gender, the ability to switch jobs more easily, and increased opportunities for professional training.⁷⁷

Over the months, however, I came to understand that my interlocutors’ optimism was built not on ideals of flexibility but rather on their personal attachments to *josō* and *dansō* and to one another. Instead of understanding their contingent labor and living conditions solely as precarious—from a singular hegemonic capitalist perspective—we might instead imagine, from pericapitalist perspectives, that they attained compensation in different (not necessarily monetary) forms.⁷⁸ Among trans and nonbinary employees like Ikki and Hiyori, most saw their care work as more than just an underpaid job, as labor that enabled them to live otherwise through their *josō* and *dansō* practices—something I take up in chapter 4.

The operation of affect, emotion, and intimacy within advanced economies is complex, but leaning on Eva Illouz and Viviana Zelizer, I think of emotion, intimacy, and economy as shaping and being shaped by one another, entangled in ways that structure our everyday lives.⁷⁹ For Lauren Berlant, the emotion-economy relationship is complicated by how people’s ordinary lives are affectively impacted by capitalism.⁸⁰ Through this lens

we might begin to see why some customers cultivate intimate bonds with employees and fellow patrons at Garçon and Paradise as a means of surviving life in the outside world. *Dansō* and *josō/otoko no ko* establishments in Tokyo are interesting case studies because they manifest both pericapitalist possibilities and inextricable connections between emotion, economy, and the emergence and circulation of genders.

It bears asking, then, why emergent genders have come out of neoliberal and recessionary Tokyo. Is there something special about the Japanese economy that allows them to materialize? Are there instances when they might be inhibited? Economists and political scientists have written about the Japanese economy as distinct from the Anglo-American model in terms of its Asian developmentalist state model of capitalism, cultural and institutional differences, and companyism—an agreement predicated on labor-management compromise and job security, namely, lifetime employment.⁸¹ Based on these studies, it would appear that the Japanese economy functions to sustain heteronormative family and marriage—something I discuss in chapter 2—instead of encouraging the emergence of diverse genders.

Yet, with a dwindling number of lifetime employees and a rise in flexible workers, such shifts in employment, masculinity, and social class may spur on alternative ways of living, being, and coupling. For example, as I discuss with regard to the documentary film *Shinjuku Boys* (Kim Longinotto and Jano Williams, 1995) in chapter 2, young cis women who gained employment through the flexible workforce in the 1990s were apparently free to patronize *onabe* clubs—establishments staffed by *onabe*, masculine-presenting employees who were assigned female at birth—and date the employees there instead of conforming to social expectations to marry (heterosexually) and start a family.⁸² Although *onabe* clubs are located in Shinjuku and distinct from the contemporary *dansō* café-and-bars I explore in Akihabara, there are notable overlaps between these two kinds of establishments, such as categorical innovation and the ensuing booms and boom-based economies. It is this productive tension between emergent genders and the material that this book seeks to illuminate.

Booms in Japan

Japan has been called a “boom-based society” for its series of intellectual booms, which come in rapid succession and “artificially creat[e] a new difference” each time.⁸³ In mainstream media, booms are seen as contingent on the mass commodification of difference. While not unique to gender and

sexuality, the idea of booms is useful for thinking through the connections between categorial innovation and Japanese media and popular culture.⁸⁴ In chapter 1, I trace the historical trajectory of queer and trans booms in Japan, but one example is a pre-Stonewall gay boom during the late 1950s and 1960s, when young Japanese men frequented taverns and coffee shops to seek (sexual) companions, leading to heightened magazine coverage on the *gay boy* (*gei bōi*)—a category of effeminate gay male entertainers—and a subsequent gay boy boom.⁸⁵ This succession of one boom after another is characteristic of boom-based cultures.

Much has been written about the relationship between booms and subcultures in Japan and elsewhere, and these scholars have drawn on Dick Hebdige, who argues that while youth subcultures in postwar Britain are subversive and resist hegemonic norms through style, they eventually become commodified, repackaged, and resold to mainstream consumers.⁸⁶ For instance, in the 2000s the otaku or manga/anime subculture became “normalized and nationalized in Japan” as a boom.⁸⁷ Since the postwar period, Akihabara, where the *dansō* and *josō/otoko no ko* café-and-bars I study are located, has been a hub for the mass consumption of household electric appliances and personal electronic goods like computers and game consoles. However, it was only in the 2000s that Akihabara turned into a site for popular media and culture. These otaku and Akihabara booms are tied to “Cool Japan,” the state promotion of the nation as a “cultural super-power” as well as a marketing strategy by content industries through the global spread of popular cultural elements, such as anime, music, and fashion.⁸⁸ Cool Japan aligns with Joseph Nye’s notion of “soft power,” a nation’s influence over other countries through its culture, policies, and political ideals instead of force.⁸⁹ The circulation of anime products, for example, is aimed at “inspiring desires in global consumers for something Japanese.”⁹⁰

Churning out profit through mainstreaming is a vital aspect of booms in Japan. In economic terms, the word *boom* means a high-growth period, such as a rise in business sales and economic output for the nation and its gross domestic product (GDP). The 2010s LGBT boom I described earlier indexes not only the state, media, and corporations visibly taking up LGBT but also the profit gains, consumption, and expanding markets related to this uptake. Such recurring booms appear responsible for encouraging increased consumer spending, rather than enacting any kind of longer-lasting social change, despite the promise of heralding change. Given all of this, the LGBT boom might not be considered entirely novel; perhaps it merely rebranded old ideas as new.⁹¹ This raises the question of whether there is

anything inherently innovative about the gender categories I trace in this book. Could they instead simply be explained as recurrent fads, situated in the logics of boom-based economies?

To answer this question, it may help to consider the 2000s otaku and Akihabara booms but this time from consumers' perspectives. Otaku include women, but the majority are men who are "engaged in intimate interactions and relations with manga/anime characters."⁹² Although booms shape fans' consumption of anime, manga, and game characters, fans, too, animate the orbit of boom-based cultures.⁹³ As Mark McLelland points out, consumers play an important role in how they use, access, (re)interpret, and (re) distribute such cultural content—outcomes that may be unintended by the government and content industries.⁹⁴ *Josō* and *dansō* individuals' creative consumption—what I call contemporary *josō* and *dansō* cultures and delineate in chapter 3—within the fertile environment of Akihabara demonstrates a different kind of innovation. These individuals' gender-crossing practices trouble Cool Japan's masculinist production and proliferation by male elites and academics for predominantly male otaku, which, as Laura Miller argues, operate to sustain "structures of gender stratification" in Japanese society.⁹⁵ They also turn Akihabara into an unexpected site for emergent genders.

For example, extending from their consumption of two-dimensional *otoko no ko* characters in anime, manga, and games, customers and employees alike affectively regard real-life *otoko no ko*. Capitalizing on these desires, the owners of Paradise encouraged customers' increased consumption of and employees' promotion of themselves as *josōko* and *otoko no ko*.⁹⁶ The owners' embrace of *otoko no ko* in the real world generated much backlash among otaku who only acknowledge two-dimensional *otoko no ko* existing within game and manga worlds—something I detail in chapters 1 and 3—but despite this, Paradise's employees and customers would go on to shape the game, manga, and internet culture that has informed their practices and consumption. We might think of these productive flows among *josō*, *otoko no ko*, dimensions, and establishments as multidirectional instead of unidirectional.

Far from merely subsuming subcultures under capitalism, as some scholars have contended, booms are a result of continuous coproduction and co-consumption of media, cultures, and communities. They tap into consumers for their contribution while also depending on entrepreneurs like Paradise's and Garçon's owners to initiate the next new thing. The differing investments of owners, employees, and customers all point toward a world where the material unevenly sutures with emergent genders. I find

evidence of this in contemporary *josō* and *dansō* cultures at their height in the late 2000s (first wave) and later, when they became more mainstream in the 2010s (second wave). As I limn in chapters 3 and 5, these two waves show how *dansō* and *josō/otoko no ko* establishments are pericapitalist: they are simultaneously sites of resistance and sites of monetized consumption.

The Politics of Naming Genders

In this book, while I employ certain categories to discuss gender-variant and sexually variant individuals, what they mean and who gets to use them are highly contested, even among those who adopt these terms to describe themselves. Because categories of gender and sexuality are socially constructed and embedded in history and politics, they are never neutral, and our existing vocabulary can fail to accurately express people's diverse genders and sexualities.⁹⁷ For *Emergent Genders*, this is compounded by the issue of translating Japanese terms and categories into English for the purposes of publishing in English. For instance, while *toransujendā* (a transliteration of *transgender*) appears to derive solely from, and signals meanings familiar in, the US context, it is located specifically in the Japanese context. Because of this, it is vital I lay out my use of *queer*, its transliteration (*kuia*), *LGBT*, *trans*, *transgender*, *toransujendā*, and locally specific terms to index emergent genders, including *josō*, *dansō*, and *x-gender*. I pay attention to how these categories may (dis)empower individuals in specific contexts while also being mindful of how they are used within North American queer and trans studies. Throughout my work, I follow the terms and categories my interlocutors used to describe themselves.

Queer/Kuia

Following Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who emphasizes the messiness and social construction of gender and sexuality, I use *queer* as an analytical tool rather than an identity or umbrella term.⁹⁸ *Kuia* (a transliteration of *queer*) first came to Japan in the mid-1990s during the “*kuia* movement.” Since then, *kuia* has been used primarily among literary and academic circles, not so much in Japanese people's everyday lives.⁹⁹ This stresses the importance of bringing theoretical frameworks primarily rooted in US discourse and scholarship published in English into conversation with locally specific terms and their sociocultural context. The gap between academics and gender and sexual minorities can be seen in their (non)employment of *LGBT* today. During the LGBT boom, academics, activists, corporations,

and conservative critics alike increasingly used *LGBT* to advance their respective agendas. Among gender and sexual minorities, however, there has been a refusal to adopt the label, as a form of resistance to the co-optation of gender and sexual diversity.¹⁰⁰

Transgender/*Toransujendā*

Gender and sexuality minorities' relationship to *trans* and *transgender* is difficult to articulate and complicated by the aforementioned issues that plague *queer* and *LGBT* as well as intracommunity divisions. The latter was noted by trans activist Mitsuhashi Junko, who, in an interview with gay activist Fushimi Noriaki, remarked on the more vulnerable position of trans people as compared to privileged gay men.¹⁰¹ *Toransujendā* emerged around the same time as *kuia* and Japan's legalization of sex/gender reassignment surgery (SGRS) in 1996.¹⁰² Following Susan Stryker's broad definition of *transgender* as "people who move away from the gender they were assigned at birth, people who cross over (*trans*-) the boundaries constructed by their culture to define and contain that gender," I note that individuals' moving away and crossing over need not align with the male/female binary.¹⁰³ They may identify as nonbinary gender, for example, as in the case of *x-gender*. Likewise, not all nonbinary individuals may identify as trans; they may refuse the categories of cis and binary transgender (i.e., trans man or trans woman) or identify as gender nonconforming.

In Japan as elsewhere, legal and medical discourses of trans people often prescribe gender binarism, resulting in individuals having "mismatched corporeality" and desiring to "fix" their bodies.¹⁰⁴ For example, *seidōitsuseishōgai*, the Japanese translation of *gender identity disorder* (GID), entered common parlance after the Act on Special Cases in Handling Gender Status for Persons with Gender Identity Disorder (*Seidōitsuseishōgai-sha no seibetsu no toriatsukai no tokurei ni kansuru hōritsu*; GID Act for short) was implemented in 2003. The GID Act allowed individuals medically diagnosed with *seidōitsuseishōgai* to legally change their gender in the family registry after fulfilling many criteria.¹⁰⁵ Unfortunately, this medicalized discourse has led to the pathologization of trans people.¹⁰⁶

X-Gender

At its inception in the late 1990s, *x-gender* was a reaction to the pathologizing discourses of GID and SGRS—a history I expand on in chapter 1.¹⁰⁷ *X-gender* refers to a gender that is "neither male nor female, or, depending on the definition, both."¹⁰⁸ For instance, individuals would refer to themselves as FTX (female-to-X), MTX (male-to-X), or XTX (in the case of those

who do not identify with any gender), following from FTM (female-to-male) and MTF (male-to-female), which are often used by trans people in Japan to describe themselves.¹⁰⁹ *X-gender* seems to resemble *genderqueer*, but based on S. P. F. Dale's historiography of *x-gender*, it may be more accurate to say *x-gender* emerged in Japan around the same time that *genderqueer* did in the United States.¹¹⁰ None of my interlocutors ever used *genderqueer*, however.

Josō/Dansō

In Japanese the term *josō* (女装) denotes the wearing of women's clothes or adopting a feminine appearance, and *dansō* (男装) indexes a masculine appearance or being adorned in male attire. In this book *josō* and *dansō* refer mainly to male-to-female cross-dressing and female-to-male cross-dressing, respectively, which corresponds with how my interlocutors employed them. Depending on the individual, *josō* and *dansō* might be understood simultaneously as adjectives to describe a person and as labels for their practice, identity, or way of being.¹¹¹ Moreover, as I observed with my interlocutors, individuals may disagree about what for them constitutes *josō* and *dansō* and where to draw the lines between *josō* and non-*josō* and between *dansō* and non-*dansō*. In the twenty-first century, *dansō* has also undergone various shifts with individuals being alternately known as *dansō-san* (female-to-male cross-dressing individuals), *dansō joshi* (female-to-male cross-dressing girls), and *ikemen joshi* (handsome girls).¹¹² Except in cases where I want to bring attention to specific terms my interlocutors used, I use *dansō* throughout to refer to them. Likewise, as my interlocutors used *josōko*, *otoko no ko*, and *josō danshi* (boys) interchangeably, I use *josō* throughout to refer to them.¹¹³

Identitarian Discourse and Common Sense–Inflected Morality

Many studies about the LGBTQ community in Japan have employed human rights and medicalized discourses modeled after scholarship in the United States, emphasizing coming out, queer activism, and LGBTQ social movements as starting points for determining nonnormative identities.¹¹⁴ Such discourses have significantly impacted demands for legal recognition, social support, and health care access for trans and queer people, but they nevertheless hinge on identitarian notions of gender and sexuality. By focusing exclusively on identitarian categories, we risk losing sight of the individual bodies, practices, and experiences, which may not fit into predetermined categories, particularly in non-anglophone contexts where they do not easily translate.¹¹⁵

One example of this untranslatability is *otoko no ko*. Although it refers to male-to-female cross-dressing individuals, it is written with the characters 男の娘 (boy/male daughter) and, when spoken, is a pun for “boy.”¹¹⁶ Such nuances, which showcase the category’s creative propensity for ambiguous embodiments, are lost when *otoko no ko* is translated into English. Moreover, starting with one’s identity (who one is) instead of one’s practices (what one does) may fail to encompass overlaps between gender and sexual variance, which are prevalent in many Asian contexts.¹¹⁷ For instance, under the sign *dansō*, individuals of all genders and sexualities practice female-to-male cross-dressing. Such diverse individuals as Ikki and Hiyori are bound not by their gender identity or sexual orientation but by their practices of *dansō*.

In Japan genders and sexualities diversified in ways not tied to the liberal politics of inclusion that arose as a reaction to religious moral condemnation. Homosexuality has never been criminalized in Japan nor subject to religious stigmatization, unlike in the United States, where Judeo-Christian beliefs prevail.¹¹⁸ Japan’s two major religions, Shintoism and Buddhism, at best sanction same-gender sexuality and at worst are indifferent to it.¹¹⁹ This does not mean there is no discrimination against gender and sexual minorities in Japan, only that it is structured by a morality tied neither to legal nor to Judeo-Christian religious discourses. Wim Lunsing contends that common sense (*jōshiki*) as an organizing principle frames how Japanese people perceive constructions of gender and sexuality, including how they are socially expected to behave and judged to fit into these constructions.¹²⁰ One example of common sense-inflected morality he discusses is (heterosexual) marriage. Between the 1950s and 1980s, it was considered common sense for people in Japan to be married, and many did; those who did not, such as gay and lesbian people and feminist women, ostensibly operated outside these naturalized ideas.¹²¹ At this time, perspectives on marriage in Japan were similar to those in Britain and the United States.¹²² However, that they were not based on Judeo-Christian beliefs means Japan’s trans and queer economies function differently. Likewise, our approaches to thinking about emergent genders and the material must be different as well.

To rethink the relationship between emergent genders and the material, we need to first interrogate “*common processes* that affected both Asian and Western sexual cultures.”¹²³ Such an interrogation aligns with scholars who have proposed rethinking “queer Asia” as method or critique as a means of reconfiguring queer and Asian knowledge production.¹²⁴ Drawing on Kuan-Hsing Chen’s notion of “Asia as method,” this reconfiguration aims

to recenter frameworks and approaches from within Asia and reassemble Asian societies, subjectivities, and meeting points.¹²⁵ This can be done by reconceptualizing “Asia” as nonstatic, displacing queer theory’s US-centric biases, and reconstructing queer as key to doing research on Asia.¹²⁶

Roles and Methods

My positionality as a non-Japanese, non-transgender Asian woman and transnational feminist and queer studies scholar educated in the United States played a major role in my gathering, organizing, interpreting, and reconstructing of the data for *Emergent Genders*. I was always acutely aware of my own submersion in US-centric liberal-pluralist ideology and its identitarian models, suffused as they are within mainstream queer theory, and how this would frame the stories I would tell. My research was primarily ethnographic, consisting of interviews, field notes, participant observation, and close analysis of these field data using interdisciplinary queer and feminist approaches. I join qualitative researchers from anthropology, cultural studies, communication, and gender and sexuality studies in recognizing myself as a “research instrument” with one subjective voice among many.¹²⁷

This book is based on fourteen months of field research in Tokyo. I made three early field visits in 2014 and 2015, each lasting a few weeks. In 2016–17 I carried out long-term fieldwork, living in a city close to Akihabara, my main field site. A few shorter trips scheduled for 2020 were derailed when the coronavirus pandemic struck, bringing on a series of lockdowns and travel restrictions. My data therefore reflect a prepandemic world. I observed the everyday comings and goings at Garçon and Paradise, among the first *dansō* and *josō/otoko no ko* café-and-bars to open in Akihabara. Because I spent copious amounts of time and money at these two establishments, the relationships I established mirrored those between employees and regular customers, and I found myself relating easily to regulars. At Garçon and Paradise, I always paid my own way, at times buying drinks for employees and occasionally fellow customers in lieu of gifts and money—standard practices in ethnography. I approached employees and fellow patrons directly after forming relationships with them. I conducted semistructured interviews with owners, employees, and a sampling of new, regular, and occasional customers, learning about their perspectives on their *josō* and *dansō* practices, feelings toward gender-crossing culture, and experiences of working at and/or frequenting the café-and-bars.

Initially, as a newcomer to Garçon and Paradise, I was pegged as an outsider. Although my interlocutors knew of my intentions, some remained

suspicious I was secretly with an authority that could report them. Although *josō* and *dansō* establishments weren't illegal—something I discuss in chapter 2—I quickly realized anonymity was a serious concern among my interlocutors, most of whom used *adana* (nicknames; pseudonyms). For this reason, Garçon, Paradise, and all names—including *adana*—of interlocutors in this book are pseudonyms, though insiders may be able to guess my field sites.

After several weeks and months frequenting Garçon and Paradise, sometimes multiple times a week and with each visit amounting to two to three hours and setting me back on average JPY 3,000–5,000 (USD 27–45.50), I realized the employees and other patrons had gradually warmed up to me.¹²⁸ Friends I brought to the establishments noticed how warmly I was welcomed. I was fast assuming the role of a regular who introduced more customers as a way to help promote these establishments. While all customers were invited to special events like Halloween and Valentine's Day and routine employee birthday celebrations at the café-and-bars, I began to receive invitations to occasional activities hosted outside the establishments, such as Paradise's annual summer barbecue and Garçon's tenth-anniversary party.

In hindsight, I realized a combination of factors may have enabled me to blend into the Garçon and Paradise crowd more easily. Because I visited frequently and because I paid in full for my patronage, my interlocutors approached me more like a regular than a researcher, although they never completely forgot my role as a researcher. Being able to speak Japanese fluently was helpful, as the majority of my interlocutors did not speak a second language. In addition, from my interlocutors' perspective, I did not look unfamiliar—I was sometimes told I didn't feel out of place (*iwakan ga nai*). Perhaps my fair complexion visibly registered as the pale “white” skin tone Japanese people are imagined to have and base their racial identity on, even though they knew I wasn't Japanese.¹²⁹ At Garçon, my boyish figure and cropped dyed-brown hair were read as androgynous and visually similar to the employees and customers who practiced *dansō*. This may have encouraged some of my interlocutors to trust me and open up during interviews. Moreover, conversation is the main service of these establishments, which was tremendously helpful for me as I approached them.

However, the same factors that allowed me to be inconspicuous at Garçon made me conspicuous at Paradise. For instance, my short hairstyle, lack of makeup, and casual ensemble of T-shirt and slacks rendered me out of place at Paradise, where the employees and customers who practiced *josō*

prided themselves on skillfully applying makeup, wearing their hair long, and modeling the latest fashion. To navigate this minefield, I alternated between my role as a researcher and that of a customer seeking their advice on makeup, hairstyles, and feminine fashion. In the latter, I followed the cue of cis women customers, some of whom were romantically attracted to *josō* individuals, and *josō* patrons who sought companionship and information from like-minded people. My status as an English-speaking foreigner conferred certain privileges and, unexpectedly, facilitated a different role for me in the establishment: an interpreter.¹³⁰ I was occasionally roped into attending to non-Japanese tourists who visited Paradise and were unable to speak Japanese. As an unpaid intermediary between employees and foreign customers, I had the opportunity to closely observe these exchanges and bond with employees over the struggles of caring for first-time customers.

To get a broader sense of contemporary *josō* and *dansō* cultures, I also visited other *dansō* and *josō/otoko no ko* establishments and *new half* bars scattered across Ueno, Nakano, Ikebukuro, Akihabara, and the larger Shinjuku area. By my estimate, the number of *dansō* and *josō/otoko no ko* establishments was half or less that of maid or cat cafés.¹³¹ I also attended events organized by or catering to *josō* and *dansō* individuals.¹³² Collectively, this hodgepodge of bars, clubs, events, and businesses designated as *josō* and *dansō* make up the *josō* and *dansō* business circles (*gyōkai*), respectively. The term *gyōkai* is apt for capturing the *josō* and *dansō* commercial scenes and multiple social networks—as opposed to a singular network—of individuals engaged in the ebb and flow of *josō* and *dansō*. While I visited a wide variety of establishments, my deep dive into Garçon and Paradise means my research has a particular focus on young urban individuals interested or engaging in gender crossing and may not be representative of Tokyo's wider *josō* and *dansō* business circles.

Overview

This book situates emergent genders within Japan's economy as it experiences periods of growth and stagnation. From inside two establishments, Garçon and Paradise, I analyze how the owners, employees, and customers make sense of their work, practices, sociality, and consumption under pericapitalist modes and the roles they play in driving and sustaining categorical innovation. Focusing on what my trans and gender nonconforming interlocutors *do* and how they survive, flourish, and reinvent themselves in

spaces that are at once capitalist and noncapitalist, I unsettle North American anglophone queer theory and trans studies.

Chapter 1 begins by examining emergent genders in the historical context of Japan, drawing on the documentary *Shinjuku Boys*. Taking a genealogical approach, I explore how these configurations of gender and sexuality have been foundational to current categories and have also figured complexly within them.¹³³ Turning to categories like *new half*, *onabe*, and *x-gender*, I trace the forces behind their emergence during and after the bubble economy. Connecting these categories to my ethnographic data, I show how contemporary categories are complicated by my interlocutors' individualistic practices and understandings. I argue that those pushing for these categorical innovations cannot be neatly contained within identitarian notions of articulating gender and sexuality.

Chapter 2 articulates the relationship between capitalism and the cis-heteronormative home, family, and marriage in the Japanese context and the ways in which Paradise and Garçon as profit-making businesses figure within this relationship. I use a gender lens to explore capitalist development in Japan and the gradual departure from commonsense expectations of marriage and family while also demonstrating how the cis-heteronormative home lingers in the Japanese imaginary. Telling the stories of Paradise's and Garçon's births in Akihabara, I also investigate the café-and-bars' (dis)connections to Japanese sex and night entertainment through what I call *pink economies*, or wider networks of production, consumption, and circulation of goods and services related to how sex, gender, and sexuality have been commodified in both heteronormative and nonnormative sites since the postwar period.¹³⁴

Mapping the rise of *josō*, *dansō*, and *otoko no ko* since the 2000s, chapter 3 shifts to Akihabara as an important, if unexpected, site for new categories and nonnormative practices to emerge. Although its pink economies are different from those discussed in chapter 2, Akihabara remains a fertile environment for young amateurs' heightened practices, consumption, and commercialization of *josō* and *dansō*—what I call contemporary *josō* and *dansō* cultures. Drawing on conversations with my interlocutors, I posit that their gender innovation was facilitated by Akihabara's pericapitalist material conditions in the mid-2000s through an array of media, services, and establishments by and for *josō* and *dansō* individuals.

Chapter 4 turns to the employees of Garçon and Paradise and the ways their (im)material labor produces and sustains emergent categories of *dansō*,

josō, and *otoko no ko*. Telling some of their stories, I contend it is not a simple case of labor exploitation, although it is potentially exploitative, with most employees working on a part-time basis; rather, focusing on the experiences of employees who locate themselves variously as trans and nonbinary, I show how, for them, work is more than just work. While Garçon's and Paradise's employees were hired precisely for their capacity to promote *dansō*, *josō*, and *otoko no ko*, they also capitalized on these same categories to strategically position themselves and negotiate their relationships with other people.

Chapter 5 builds on people's consumption at Garçon and Paradise, focusing on style, beauty, and *body work*—the work individuals do on their or other people's bodies.¹³⁵ Unlike the first wave of contemporary *josō* and *dansō* cultures, discussed in chapter 3, in the second wave, *josō* and *dansō* practices became more mainstream and embedded in beauty and fashion. How do these embodied modes of consumption offer new ways to think about gender innovation throughout the 2010s? I contend that my interlocutors' co-consumption—the act of consuming together—of fashion, beauty, and popular cultures motivates and sustains the production and circulation of emergent genders and enables the generation of diverse class, sexual, and gender subjectivities under “nonhegemonic formations” of societies and economies.¹³⁶

In the coda, I reiterate the book's central argument that not only are emerging practices, attachments, and modes of sociality and expression potentially enabled by markets, they can also become a material force for generating new forms of capitalism. One of the key takeaways I offer to the reader is the need to reconfigure how we currently understand structures of productivity and to rethink US-centric identitarian models of gender and sexuality, particularly in Asian contexts. I reflect on why emergent genders and living otherwise remain important to think about amid multiple crises around the world stemming from the coronavirus pandemic.¹³⁷ These ways of living, dubbed the *new normal*, are characterized by the uncertainty of new rules, mindsets, and behaviors, including movement restrictions and limited or no interactions with other people in everyday life. But what does this mean for the future of my interlocutors and their gender innovation and the survival of *dansō* and *josō/otoko no ko* establishments? Thinking through these questions from the perspectives of gender-variant and sexually variant individuals, I gesture toward new ways of engaging with the material in a (post)pandemic era.

NOTES

Introduction

- 1 All translations are the author's unless otherwise stated. See chapter 1 for a discussion of *otoko no ko*.
- 2 For all my interlocutors, I follow the pronouns they gave during interviews, as far as possible given the differences between Japanese and English pronouns. I retain “café-and-bar” (*kafe ando bā*) because it indexes how this genre of restaurant is popularly called in Japanese.
- 3 Kawamoto, *Otoko no ko tachi* [About boy daughters].
- 4 High school girl (JK, or *joshi kōsei*) cafés hire teenage girls wearing high school uniforms to chat with and serve drinks to primarily middle-aged male customers.
- 5 Golden Gai is a small network of bars located near Kabukichō, an entertainment and red-light district located in Shinjuku.
- 6 Galbraith, “Maid Cafes.”
- 7 Until April 2020, when the Japanese law banning indoor smoking in Tokyo kicked in, customers could smoke next to nonsmoking patrons within the premises. See Jack Tarrant, “Smoking Diners to Take It Outside as Tokyo Ban Kicks In,” Reuters, March 31, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-japan-smoking/smoking-diners-to-take-it-outside-as-tokyo-ban-kicks-in-idUKKBN21IoWC>.

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- 8 Originally a derogatory term, *otaku* has been reclaimed by individuals, usually men, who are “engaged in intimate interactions and relations with manga/anime characters, specifically *bishōjo*, or cute girl characters.” As I discuss in chapter 3, discourses of *otaku* are deeply contested and contradictory. See Kam, “Common Sense,” 5; Kam, “Anxieties”; and Galbraith, *Otaku and the Struggle*.
- 9 Numerous works already discuss gay consumption in Shinjuku Ni-chōme. For some examples, see McLelland, *Queer Japan*; McLelland, “Japan’s Original ‘Gay Boom’”; Sunagawa, *Shinjuku ni-chōme no bunka-jinruigaku* [A cultural anthropology of Shinjuku Ni-chōme]; and Baudinette, *Regimes of Desire*.
- 10 Adair, Awkward-Rich, and Marvin, “Before Trans Studies,” 317. As I discuss later in the introduction, trans studies and queer theory are distinct but share a close relationship. Some scholars like Cael Keegan have also argued how trans studies “must remain in the position of against” queer theory and its disciplinary boundaries, being “invited and disinvited at the same time.” Keegan, “Against Queer Theory,” 352.
- 11 This question is adapted from one asked by the editors of *Transgender Marxism*. See Gleeson and O’Rourke, “Introduction,” in *Transgender Marxism*, 2.
- 12 I discuss the relationship between neoliberal regimes and consumption later in the introduction.
- 13 To be clear, Gibson-Graham does not necessarily view capitalism as hegemonic but criticizes how various discourses in scholarship or otherwise have “sustained a vision of capitalism as the dominant form of economy.” As J. K. Gibson-Graham is the pen name of feminist economic geographers Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson, I will refer to “Gibson-Graham” as one entity in the singular. See Gibson-Graham, *End of Capitalism*, 3–8.
- 14 Reading an early iteration of this book, Jack Halberstam called these forms my interlocutors generate “vernacular innovations.”
- 15 Gleeson and O’Rourke, “Introduction,” 14.
- 16 Gleeson and O’Rourke, “Introduction,” 17.
- 17 There is vast scholarship on gender and sexual variance in Japan. See, for example, Chalmers, *Emerging Lesbian Voices*; McLelland, *Queer Japan*; Mitsuhashi, “Transgender World”; McLelland, Suganuma, and Welker, *Queer Voices from Japan*; and Dale, “Transgender, Non-Binary Genders.”
- 18 Sacki, *Josō to dansō no bunkashi* [The cultural history of male-to-female and female-to-male cross-dressing].
- 19 See Leupp, *Male Colors*, 46; and Mitsuhashi, *Josō to nihonjin* [Japanese people and male-to-female cross-dressing].

- 20 See, for instance, Isaka, *Onnagata*; Leiter, “From Gay to Gei”; Robertson, *Takarazuka*; and Stickland, *Gender Gymnastics*.
- 21 Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 123.
- 22 De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender*.
- 23 Peletz defines *gender pluralism* as “pluralistic sensibilities and dispositions regarding bodily practices (adornment, attire, mannerisms) and embodied desires, as well as social roles, sexual relationships, and overall ways of being that bear on or are otherwise linked with local conceptions of femininity, masculinity, androgyny, hermaphroditism, and so on.” Peletz, *Gender Pluralism*, 10.
- 24 J. Nakamura and Fukuda, “‘Zombie’ Firms in Japan.”
- 25 For works on Japan Inc. (*kigyōka shakai*), see Borovoy, “Japan as Mirror”; and Allison, *Precarious Japan*.
- 26 Gleeson and O’Rourke, “Introduction,” 26.
- 27 Liu, *Specter of Materialism*, 59.
- 28 Liu, *Specter of Materialism*, 70.
- 29 M. Ho, “Queer and Normal.” This is also what Marta Fanasca found of *dansō* escorts in Tokyo. See Fanasca, *Female Masculinity*.
- 30 As Jules Joanne Gleeson and Elle O’Rourke remind us, the theories that are deemed “scholarly” in academia may not reflect the realities of trans lives. See Gleeson and O’Rourke, “Introduction,” 3.
- 31 See, for instance, Gluckman and Reed, *Homo Economics*; Jacobsen and Zeller, *Queer Economics*; Floyd, *Reification of Desire*; Rosenberg and Villarejo, “Introduction”; Chitty, *Sexual Hegemony*; and Gleeson and O’Rourke, *Transgender Marxism*.
- 32 Liu, *Specter of Materialism*, 58.
- 33 See some of the discussion in queer-materialist and trans-materialist scholarship, for instance, Lewis and Irving, “Strange Alchemistries”; Eng and Puar, “Introduction”; and Puar, *Right to Maim*.
- 34 On queer theory’s anticapitalist ethos see, for instance, Drucker, *Warped*; and Sears, “Queer Anti-Capitalism.”
- 35 This approach underscores the social while not reducing it to a singular hegemonic capitalism. See S. Jackson, “Why a Materialist Feminism.”
- 36 Raha, “Queer Marxist Transfeminism.”
- 37 Tsing, “Sorting Out Commodities,” 38; and Tsing, *Mushroom*, 296.
- 38 Tsing, *Mushroom*, 65.
- 39 Here I draw on Gibson-Graham’s discussion of capitalist hegemony and economic diversity. See Gibson-Graham, *End of Capitalism*.

- 40 M. Ho, “Categories That Bind.”
- 41 See, for example, Rosenberg and Villarejo, “Introduction”; Floyd, *Reification of Desire*; Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black*; Muñoz, *Disidentifications*; Hollibaugh and Weiss, “Queer Precarity”; Brim, *Poor Queer Studies*; Gluckman and Reed, *Homo Economics*; and Jacobsen and Zeller, *Queer Economics*.
- 42 Liu identifies five queer-materialist approaches, which I shall not reprise here. For a succinct summary, see Liu, *Specter of Materialism*.
- 43 Jacobsen and Zeller, *Queer Economics*; and Gluckman and Reed, *Homo Economics*.
- 44 Binnie, *Globalization of Sexuality*; Ramírez, “Gay Latino Cultural Citizenship”; and Lim, *Brown Boys*.
- 45 Duggan argues that homonormativity depends on “a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption.” Duggan, *Twilight of Equality?*, 50.
- 46 As I discuss in chapter 1, “lesbian” spaces are those shared by women-loving women before the term *rezubian* (a transliteration of *lesbian*) was coined. See Sugiura, “Lesbian Discourses.”
- 47 The Japanese word *sei* can refer to sex, gender, or both. This boom was preceded by the spread of “LGBT” in local activism in the 2010s. See Horie, *Rezubian aidentitī* [Lesbian identities]; Sunagawa, “Tayō na shi-hai, tayō na teikō” [Diverse rule, diverse resistance]; and Fotache, “Subculture and Social Movement.”
- 48 After Tokyo’s Shibuya ward became one of the first to offer same-sex partnership certificates in 2015, 372 other municipalities swiftly followed suit by January 2024. See Marriage for All Japan, “Nihon no pātonāshippu seido” [Japan’s partnership system], accessed January 14, 2024, <https://www.marriageforall.jp/marriage-equality/japan/>. Scholars have criticized how these same-sex partnership certificates not only have no legal standing, and their terms and benefits vary from district to district, but also create the image of a progressive Japan. See Shimizu, “Yōkoso, gei furendorī na machi e” [Welcome to the gay-friendly city]; and Dale, “Same-Sex Marriage.” On nondiscrimination laws, see Kyle Knight, “Tokyo’s ‘Olympic’ LGBT Non-Discrimination Law,” Human Rights Watch, October 11, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/10/11/tokyos-olympic-lgbt-non-discrimination-law>.
- 49 At the time of my fieldwork, JPY 110 equaled approximately USD 1. See Dentsū, “Dentsū daibāshiti rabo ga LGBT chōsa 2015 wo jisshi—LGBT ichiba kibo wo yaku 5.9 chō-en to sanshutsu” [Dentsū Diversity Lab conducts LGBT survey 2015—LGBT market size is estimated to be about

5.9 trillion yen], April 23, 2015, <https://www.dentsu.co.jp/news/release/pdf-cms/2015041-0423.pdf>.

- 50 For instance, Tokyo pledged to incorporate “Diversity & Inclusion” “in all aspects” of the Games, which entails recognition of people’s differences, including their gender identity and sexual orientation. This is due in part to changes to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Charter in 2015 to include sexual orientation. See Tokyo 2020, “Diversity and Inclusion,” accessed May 28, 2021, <https://tokyo2020.org/en/games/diversity-inclusion/> (no longer available).
- 51 Wallace, “Stepping-Up.”
- 52 Maree, ““LGBT Issues.””
- 53 See Tomohiro Osaki, “LDP Lawmaker Mio Sugita Faces Backlash after Describing LGBT People as ‘Unproductive,’” *Japan Times*, July 24, 2018. Japanese names are rendered surname first. However, depending on the preference of the individual, such as when they publish in English using Western ordering, I follow that order.
- 54 Tomohiro Osaki, “Thousands Rally to Protest LDP Lawmaker Mio Sugita’s Remark Calling LGBT People ‘Unproductive,’” *Japan Times*, July 27, 2018.
- 55 D’Emilio, “Capitalism and Gay Identity.” See also Hennessy, *Profit and Pleasure*; Joseph, *Against the Romance*; and Sender, *Business, Not Politics*.
- 56 Chitty, *Sexual Hegemony*, 35. See also Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1.
- 57 Grewal and Kaplan, “Global Identities”; Cruz-Malavé and Manalansan, *Queer Globalizations*; Gopinath, *Impossible Desires*; Liu, *Queer Marxism*; and Wei, *Queer Chinese Cultures*.
- 58 Champagne, “Transnationally Queer?”; and Cruz-Malavé and Manalansan, *Queer Globalizations*.
- 59 On sexual and gender minorities’ class and labor issues, see, for instance, Kawaguchi, “Neoliberalizumu” [Neoliberalism]; Hiramori, “Shokuba ni okeru seitekimainoriti no kon’nan” [Challenges of sexual and gender minorities in the workplace]; Hiramori, “Seitekimainoriti ga hataraki yasui shokuba to wa?” [What is a workplace in which sexual minorities can work comfortably?]; Hattori, “LGBT seisaku no dōkō” [Trends in LGBT policy]; Nagao, “Seiteki mainoriti (LGBTQ) gakusei no shien” [Supporting sexual minority (LGBTQ) students]; and J. Anderson, “Invisible Diversity in Companies.”

For workplace surveys see, for instance, Dentsu, “Dentsū daibāshiti rabo ga LGBT chōsa 2015 wo jisshi—LGBT ichiba kibo wo yaku 5.9 chō-en to sanshutsu”; Nijihiro Diversity and Center for Gender Studies (CGS) at

International Christian University, *Niji VOICE 2018 Report*, *Niji VOICE 2019 Report*, and *Niji VOICE 2020 Report*.

- 60 See J. Anderson, “Invisible Diversity in Companies”; Hiramori, “Shokuba ni okeru seiteikimainoriti no kon’nan”; and Hiramori, “Seiteikimainoriti ga hataraki yasui shokuba to wa?” I also give an overview of the relation between productivity and heteronormative family and marriage in chapter 2
- 61 See, for instance, Hattori, “LGBT seisaku no dōkō.” It should also be noted that gender and sexual minorities may experience discrimination differently depending on their gender identity and sexual orientation.
- 62 Lewis and Irving first coined *TPE studies*, and TPE follows feminist political economy, which is grounded in materialist feminist approaches. Feminist political economy is defined as “gendered production, distribution, and consumption of goods and resources and the examination of how ideology is used to stabilize the unequal relations.” See Lewis and Irving, “Strange Alchemies”; and Lee, “Feminist Political Economy,” 83. On TPE, see also Spade, “Compliance Is Gendered”; Schilt, *One of the Guys?*; and Namaste, *Sex Change, Social Change*.
- 63 Irving, “Normalized Transgressions,” 39–40; and Gleeson and O’Rourke, *Transgender Marxism*.
- 64 See Lewis and Irving, “Strange Alchemies.”
- 65 A. Wilson, *Intimate Economies of Bangkok*; P. Jackson, *Queer Bangkok*; P. Jackson, *First Queer Voices*; David, “Purple-Collar Labor”; Hegarty, “Value of Transgender”; and Aizura, *Mobile Subjects*.
- 66 Previously, scholars refuted Dennis Altman’s well-known notion of “global queering,” the globalizing spread of homosexuality from the West to the rest, arguing for the importance of locally specific modern expressions of genders and sexualities as opposed to having derived from US-centric queer cultures. See Altman, “On Global Queering”; Altman, “Global Gaze/Global Gays”; Halperin, “Response from David Halperin”; Puar, “Global Circuits”; P. Jackson, “Explosion of Thai Identities”; and A. Wilson, “Queering Asia.”
- 67 See P. Jackson, “Capitalism and Global Queering,” 360. While *bakla*, *kathoe*, and *waria* have commonly been translated as “trans women,” it should be noted that these terms are specific to each cultural context and have multiple definitions.
- 68 A. Wilson, *Intimate Economies of Bangkok*.
- 69 Gibson-Graham also criticizes capitalism for being unnamed, “phallic,” and contiguous with the social. See Gibson-Graham, “Ethics of the Local”; and Gibson-Graham, *End of Capitalism*, 6–8, 35.

- 70 Although some have also translated *new half* as “trans women,” I retain
the term’s original meaning as not all *new half* individuals identify as
trans. See chapter 1 for a discussion of *new half*.
- 71 Cat cafés are establishments where cats provide labor for their human
customers. Host clubs are establishments where cis men or masculine-
presenting employees provide conversation for mostly women.
- 72 Galbraith, *Otaku and the Struggle*; Plourde, “Cat Cafes”; and Takeyama,
Staged Seduction.
- 73 Anagnost, “Introduction.”
- 74 Borovoy, “Japan as Mirror.”
- 75 Unlike flexible work, lifetime employment often hinges on gendered so-
cial roles and division of labor in heteronormative family and marriage.
See my discussion in chapter 2. See also Matanle, *Japanese Capitalism*;
and Lam, *Women and Japanese Management*.
- 76 Takeyama, *Staged Seduction*; Galbraith, *Otaku and the Struggle*; and
Plourde, “Cat Cafes.”
- 77 Takeda, “Structural Reform.”
- 78 I follow Gibson-Graham, who decenters a monolithic Marxian political
economy. See Gibson-Graham, *End of Capitalism*.
- 79 Illouz, *Cold Intimacies*; and Zelizer, *Purchase of Intimacy*. Illouz uses
emotional capitalism to refer to “a culture in which emotional and eco-
nomic discourses and practices mutually shape each other” (5). Intimacy
might be understood as being physically and emotionally attached to or
in proximity to another person or entity. Although, in theory, affect has
been defined as pre-emotion, whereas emotion indexes our response
when affect is triggered, I follow scholars like Sara Ahmed in thinking
of them together as they are embodied and experienced by people in
everyday life. See Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*.
- 80 Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*.
- 81 T. Yamada, “Japanese Capitalism”; Matanle, *Japanese Capitalism*; Takeda,
“Structural Reform”; Lechevalier, *Great Transformation*; and Wakatabe,
“Cultural Difference in Economics.”
- 82 See a fuller discussion of *onabe* in chapter 1.
- 83 M. Yoshimoto, “Postmodern,” 9.
- 84 I was inspired by Claire Maree, who first discussed this connection in
her book. See Maree, *Queerqueen*.
- 85 *Gei* indexes *geinōjin* (entertainer) and predates the use of the English
term *gay* in the 1970s United States. “Gay boy” (*gei bōi*) was regarded
as an occupational category in mainstream Japanese media, referring

- to effeminate gay men who have skills in entertaining. See McLelland, *Queer Japan*; and McLelland, "Japan's Original 'Gay Boom.'"
- 86 Hebidge, *Subculture*. For works on girls' subcultures that I discuss in chapter 5, see Kawamura, *Fashioning Japanese Subcultures*; Kinsella, *Schoolgirls*; and Winge, "Tokyo Subcultural Street Styles."
- 87 Galbraith, *Otaku and the Struggle*, 182.
- 88 McGray, "Japan's Gross National Cool," 47.
- 89 Nye, *Soft Power*.
- 90 Allison, "Cool Brand," 93.
- 91 Maree, "'LGBT Issues.'"
- 92 Galbraith, *Otaku and the Struggle*, 5.
- 93 As I discuss in chapter 2, this fandom is known as *moe*, a term originating from the Japanese verb *moeru* (to bud or sprout), a homophone of *moeru* (to burn), and referring to "a euphoric response to fantasy characters or representations of them." Galbraith, "Moe," para. 1.
- 94 McLelland, "(A)cute Confusion"; and McLelland, "Introduction."
- 95 Miller, "Cute Masquerade," 19; and Miller, "Taking Girls Seriously."
- 96 *Josōko* is a category of self-identification for young male-to-female cross-dressing individuals, regardless of their gender identity and sexual orientation.
- 97 Valentine, *Imagining Transgender*; and Aizura, *Mobile Subjects*.
- 98 Sedgwick defines *queer* as "the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or *can't be* made) to signify monolithically." Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, 7.
- 99 Dale, "Introduction to X-Jendā."
- 100 Wallace, "Stepping-Up."
- 101 Fushimi et al., "Sekushuaru mainoriti no 'rentai' to wa" ["Solidarity" of sexual minorities].
- 102 *Sex/gender reassignment surgery* (SGRS) refers to a range of aesthetic or cosmetic surgeries, genital modifications and reconstructions, and medical procedures to remove or transform genitals and reproductive body parts. Although there are more politically correct terms, such as *gender confirmation surgery* and *gender affirmation surgery*, I retain SGRS because it is still used in the Japanese context. See Itani, "Sick but Legitimate?"
- 103 Stryker, *Transgender History*, 1.
- 104 Lovelock, "Call Me Caitlyn," 676.
- 105 These criteria, which I also discuss in chapter 1, are being over twenty years of age, unmarried, childless, and having undergone "full" SGRS.

See Taniguchi, “Japan’s 2003 Gender Identity Disorder Act.” In 2023 Japan’s Supreme Court ruled that the SGRS requirement for people to legally change their gender is unconstitutional, but it remains to be seen how the government will follow up on this. See Francis Tang and Sakura Murakami, “Japan Court Deems Gender Change Rule Invalid in Landmark Case,” Reuters, October 26, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japans-top-court-set-rule-sterilisation-requirement-gender-change-2023-10-24/>.

- 106 As I discuss elsewhere, while GID is a diagnosis and is no longer used in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition* (DSM-5), many Japanese people continue to self-identify as GID. See M. Ho, “Affect”; and M. Ho, “Transgender Celebrity.”
- 107 Dale, “Transgender, Non-Binary Genders.”
- 108 Dale, “Introduction to X-Jendā,” para. 1.
- 109 Dale, “X-Jendā.”
- 110 Dale, “Introduction to X-Jendā.” Dana Stachowiak defines *genderqueer* as individuals who “*queer* gender constructs and activate new social relations” when they dismantle the gender binary and create new spaces for self-expression. Stachowiak, “Queering It Up,” 534.
- 111 Other scholars writing about contemporary *josō* and *dansō* cultures have similarly noted the use of *josō*, *dansō*, and *otoko no ko* as “self-chosen” and a “self-label” to express their “doing” and “being.” See Fanasca, *Female Masculinity*; Kinsella, “Cuteness, Josō”; and Kinsella, “Otoko no ko Manga.”
- 112 M. Ho, “Queer and Normal.”
- 113 *Josō danshi* is a contemporary term emphasizing *josō* individuals’ status as boys, which Yoshimoto Taimatsu observes has since 2009 replaced *otoko no ko* in media coverage. See Yoshimoto T., “Shota josōshōnen” [Shota cross-dressing boys].
- 114 For studies discussing these issues in Japan, see Itani, “Sick but Legitimate?”; Dale, “Introduction to X-Jendā”; and Lunsing, “LGBT Rights in Japan.”
- 115 Chiang, Henry, and Leung, “Trans-in-Asia, Asia-in-Trans.”
- 116 See chapter 1 for a discussion of *otoko no ko*.
- 117 Chiang, Henry, and Leung, “Trans-in-Asia, Asia-in-Trans.”
- 118 McLelland, *Queer Japan*.
- 119 In the past, Japanese Buddhism even celebrated the *josō* practices of adolescent acolytes in monasteries (*chigo*) and ritualized a pederastic tradition of sexual relationships between these acolytes and adult monks. *Chigo* (infant) were highborn adolescents between twelve and sixteen years old, many of whom adopted appearances that were indistinguishable from maidens (*shōjo*) and were treated as women (*josei*) within a

male-only community. See Faure, *Red Thread*; and Mitsuhashi, *Josō to nihonjin*, 54–60.

120 Lunsing draws on Clifford Geertz's definition of *common sense* as a "cultural phenomenon" that is "liable to change" and located in a specific sociocultural context. Lunsing, *Beyond Common Sense*, 2.

121 Lunsing, *Beyond Common Sense*.

122 For a discussion of this in Britain and the United States, see Weeks, *Sexuality and Its Discontents*.

123 P. Jackson, "Capitalism and Global Queering," 366.

124 Chiang and Wong, "Asia Is Burning"; and Yue, "Trans-Singapore."

125 Chen, *Asia as Method*.

126 Chiang and Wong, "Asia Is Burning"; and Yue, "Trans-Singapore."

127 Valentine, *Imagining Transgender*; Nagar and Swarr, "Introduction"; and Tracy, *Qualitative Research Methods*, 15.

128 My time and spending were on par with regular customers' visits and expenditures, as I discuss in chapters 3 and 5.

129 Ashikari, "Cultivating Japanese Whiteness."

130 As observed by ethnographers in other cultural contexts, foreigners associated with the United States and Europe are often regarded as more open-minded and less discriminatory than local individuals who harbor existing beliefs and attitudes about trans people. See Kulick, *Travesti*; and Swarr, *Sex in Transition*.

131 There is little information on how many *dansō* and *josō/otoko no ko* establishments there are. This estimate is based on my observation as well as numbers during the 2007 maid boom, when there were almost fifty maid cafés in Akihabara, and during the 2009 cat café boom, when the number of cat cafés peaked in Japan. Marta Fanasca also notes there were a total of thirteen *dansō* host clubs, café-and-bars, and escort companies in 2015–16. See Galbraith, "Maid in Japan"; Plourde, "Cat Cafes"; and Fanasca, *Female Masculinity*.

132 One example was Diffusion, a late-night *josō* event in Kabukichō, located in the Shinjuku area of Tokyo, which I discuss in chapter 5.

133 This genealogical approach follows from Foucault, as I discuss in chapter 1. Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*.

134 Although *pink economy* is not a neologism and has been criticized for its hegemonic discourses of constructing all gay and lesbian people as wealthy, passive consumers, I reconfigure it in the Japanese context, in which *pink* more broadly denotes sex and eroticism. See my discussion in chapter 1. For criticisms of the pink economy, see Badgett, *Money, Myths, and Change*; and Binnie, *Globalization of Sexuality*.

- 135 Gimlin, *Body Work*.
- 136 This is what Gibson-Graham calls “(re)subjectivation,” which I discuss more in chapter 5. See Gibson-Graham, “Ethics of the Local”; and Gibson-Graham, *End of Capitalism*, xxxix.
- 137 These crises include health and mortality risks, rising unemployment rates, the worst recession since the 1930s Great Depression, and major disruptions to travel, tourism, hospitality, and entertainment industries. See Gita Gopinath, “The Great Lockdown: Worst Economic Downturn since the Great Depression,” IMF Blog, April 14, 2020, <https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2020/04/14/blog-weo-the-great-lockdown-worst-economic-downturn-since-the-great-depression>; and Lora Jones, Daniele Palumbo, and David Brown, “Coronavirus: How the Pandemic Has Changed the World Economy,” BBC News, January 24, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-51706225>.

1. Categories That Bind

Parts of chapter 1 in its earlier version were published in *Asian Anthropology* in 2020 and in *Sexualities* in 2024. See M. Ho, “Categories That Bind”; and M. Ho, “Queer and Normal.”

- 1 All dialogue from the film *Shinjuku Boys* (1995), which is in Japanese, has been translated to English by the author.
- 2 Maree, “Ore wa ore dakara,” para. 2; and Sugiura, “Lesbian Discourses.”
- 3 Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*.
- 4 Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 144.
- 5 This aligns with Marta Fanasca’s characterization of *dansō* escorts in twenty-first-century Tokyo. See Fanasca, *Female Masculinity*.
- 6 Illouz, *Cold Intimacies*.
- 7 Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 91.
- 8 Saeki, *Josō to dansō no bunkashi*, 12, 118.
- 9 Mitsuhashi, *Josō to nihonjin*, 31–35.
- 10 Saeki, *Josō to dansō no bunkashi*, 13–14.
- 11 Warawa also means “child” in Japanese. See Mitsuhashi, *Josō to nihonjin*, 53–54.
- 12 Warawa in *josō* were also called *chigo*, a word meaning “infant” and used to refer to high-born adolescents between twelve and sixteen years old. Scholars observed that despite wearing makeup and women’s clothing, *chigo* remained masculine in other aspects and may therefore be considered androgynous instead of feminine. See Leupp, *Male Colors*, 46; and Mitsuhashi, *Josō to nihonjin*, 54–60.