"EACH LIFE HAS ITS PLACE": TRANSGENDER EXISTENCE IN CONTEMPORARY KANSAI

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RESEARCH ABSTRACT

My PhD dissertation is an ethnography of transgender identities in Japan with a focus on Kyoto and Osaka. To date, Japan has not figured as an area of interest in Anglophone Trans Studies; nor has transness been the subject of much scholarly attention in Japan-related anthropology. I bring the two into dialogue based on eighteen months of fieldwork, Autumn 2018-Summer 2020.

Almost all extant work on 'Trans Japan' has been done by cisgender [non-transgender] researchers: no full-length study of transgender Japanese lives by a trans researcher is yet available in English. What work does exist centres on Tokyo. With a few notable exceptions, most academic studies of trans communities in Japan use either slurs or clinical terminology, neither of which find much favour in trans circles today. The literature as it stands therefore has considerable gaps in the areas of language, location, and lived experience. This thesis redresses all three by taking the reader into Kansai's understudied trans communities through the lens of a transgender ethnographer.

My central research question is: How do transgender people in Japan maintain trans identity in relation to the 'legal' transition requirements demanded by the Japanese State? I am particularly interested in the language that Japanese trans people use to describe themselves and each other, away from Gender Identity Disorder [seidōitsuseishōgai] towards dignity, creativity, and play. This is an ethnography of the 'trans ordinary': what all the days in trans people's lives look like when we are not in the Gender Clinic, the family court, or the operating room. My theoretical framework is the ethnomethodology of gender: specifically, the idea that we *all* are 'passing', and that any study of trans people tells us equally as much about the constructed nature of cisgender identity.

Trans people in Japan are far from a monolithic category. Rather, they comprise a diverse and complex social group with different personal and political aspirations, as well as different ideas of what being transgender means to them and to the wider community. My thesis explores both the collective struggle for trans liberation and the individual

ways in which my respondents make lives for themselves. My most significant finding is that of the assumed complete inextricability of heterosexuality from 'proper' gender. Trans people's genders are provisionally acceptable on the basis of their straightness, with no awareness or visibility of gay trans people within or without the community.

Based on my respondents' testimonials, on conference papers, and on my on-the-ground involvement with LGBTQ activist groups in Kyoto, I found that trans existence in Japan is undergoing a seismic shift, little of which is visible even to the mainstream public and which is almost completely unknown abroad. Some changes to trans people's collective condition are positive. As of August 2018, for example, health insurance must cover all transition-related care; more and more municipalities are passing anti-discrimination ordinances. However, trans people still have no concrete protections regarding healthcare, education, housing, and many other key areas, although the movement to challenge such discrimination is gathering steam.

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A PROLOGUE: THE BODY KEEPS THE SCORE...

The reliance on secondary and archival sources in parts of this thesis must be seen in the light of disabled access (or lack thereof) to the field. I have multiple chronic and life-impeding disabilities dating from infancy. I began the MPhil year of this thesis in September 2015. By the time I left for the field in October 2017, I had undergone two nine-hour maxillofacial reconstructive surgeries (including prosthetic replacement of both mandibular joints and my entire lower jawbone); a hysterectomy; and a failed attempt to repair an epigastric hernia. Anthropologists bring our whole selves to the field. In my case, that includes not only a body in active recovery from gruelling surgical procedures, but a mind with complex iatrogenic post-traumatic stress disorder and co-morbid anxiety and clinical depression. The perfect storm of disability and difficulty travelling, combined with a paucity of potential respondents compared to standard village ethnography, added an extra level of complexity to my fieldwork. My medical interventions hampered both my academic progress and my Japanese language acquisition considerably. Given my personal circumstances and the minority status of the demographic with whom I worked, I make no apology for the extended use of works available to me from, at times, a hospital bed, and I am satisfied that I accomplished firsthand ethnographic work to the utmost extent possible.

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INTRODUCTION

It is the early Summer of 2019 in Kyoto and a transgender anthropologist is having a crisis in a public bathroom. Perched like a gargoyle on a closed toilet seat, I am rapidly transcribing a conversation I had with my respondent Hanako five minutes earlier into the Notes function on my mobile phone. My respondent Makoto has organised an all-LGBTQ cookout at an open-air barbecue place near Kyoto Station; in conversation over grilled squid and fresh watermelon, Hanako began telling me about the state of trans life in Japan in 1992, around the time she was first transitioning, and specifically about her intermittent visits to the legendary Elizabeth Club in Tokyo. Not wanting to interrupt the flow of the party by whipping out my notebook, I excused myself to the Ladies' (itself another level of ethnomethodological rupture) and am letting both thumbs fly over the keyboard as I bullet-point everything she said.

In my MPhil year, before I left SOAS for the field, I found myself having the same conversation with multiple people after Japan Research Centre events or departmental seminars. When my interlocutor enquired as to the topic of my research, I would explain that I hoped to work with transgender communities in Japan – whereupon I would be regaled with advice on navigating Shinjuku Ni-chōme, the Tokyo 'gaybourhood', or asked which Tokyo universities I had approached for visiting research studentships. On explaining that I was in fact moving to Kansai, and that the field site for my research would be Kyoto and Osaka, with preference and emphasis given to Kyoto, I received the same baffled answer: *Why*? Received wisdom claims that transgender communities outside of Tokyo simply do not exist. It is supposedly hard enough to find 'regular' (i.e., cisgender) gatherings of gay men and lesbians; the supply of transgender people, a minority within a minority, is so lacking that it can only allot one trans person per city, or perhaps even per prefecture.

Happily, as this thesis will show, such 'common sense' proved itself anything but, and I found multiple overlapping LGBTQ worlds within the Kyoto city boundaries alone, to say nothing of Osaka and environs. These communities were, as many are, predominantly comprised of cisgender gay men, lesbians, and bisexual people. Transgender people are

indeed a minority within a minority in Japan, as they are in the UK and in many other places worldwide.

However, transgender communities do exist in Kansai, as they do elsewhere. Of the trans people in Kyoto and Osaka, many are closeted or living stealth (i.e., not out as trans); some who married after transition and do not consider themselves queer in any way did not participate in LGBTQ community events; still others reasonably did not wish to be interviewed or did not have schedules that were compatible with research participation. Even with active outreach to potential respondents on my part, which was aided hugely by my respondent Makoto's solicitous assistance in canvassing their friends to my aid, I was able to conduct fewer than twenty semi-structured interviews over the course of eighteen months. Fewer than twenty, however, is an improvement on the zero I was sometimes counseled to expect. When I assessed my field notes over the course of writing this dissertation, I was struck by the close-knit, cooperative nature of much of what I had recorded. In this thesis I have therefore balanced the number of semi-structured interviews against the richness and frequency of large and medium-scale collective events: trans life in Kansai is lived *in community*, and I understand the community as the unit of ethnographic attention rather than any given individual.

Although I was able to access LGBTQ community life with relative ease, the fact does remain that trans populations are considered to be difficult subjects for the ethnographer. Certainly, I am not the first writer to remark on that fact. I propose, however, that this assumption of difficulty in accessing communities of trans people rests on two points, one of which is a misconception and the other less so. To take the latter first: it is an accurate observation that trans people often choose to live stealth after we have completed our transitions - that we prefer to blend in and disclaim trans identity or history in favour of stable marriages, employment, and social acceptance - thus making it difficult or even impossible to find us in group settings outside of support groups. The misconception is that the barriers to, and gatekeeping of, transgender communities are insuperable to all anthropologists, when in fact what they are is insuperable to *cisgender* anthropologists. To this erroneous assumption we may add a few more: namely, that all trans people and trans experiences are the same (all trans people are women; all of them want full surgical

transition; all are heterosexual, etc), which means that trans people whose transitions or identities diverge from the ready-made image of transness may well be overlooked.

My own experiences of transgender communities and activism since 2009 bear these points out. I began this project with the advantage of already having intimate emic experience of collective transgender life: I first became involved with trans people and trans-related campaigning in 2009 as a freshman undergraduate at Oxford University, although only as a dedicated cisgender ally, or so I believed myself to be at the time. I came out as a trans man in 2011 and began medical transition in Autumn 2021. I found trans community in college towns, in regional cities, in the London sprawl, and in individual friends and contacts scattered across the rural UK.

Even before I had left England to pursue fieldwork in Japan, I found that there was a great deal of observable variation between trans individuals, community dynamics, and identity categories. Transgender community knowledge is of an open-source nature: there is a great deal of peer-to-peer practical advice sharing on topics from 'how to fake stubble with brown mascara' to 'how to fix a run in stockings' to 'how to secure a referral to a Gender Identity Clinic'. The trans people I know come from every walk of life and every socioeconomic class. They are, or have been, married; divorced; widowed;' parents; voluntarily sterilised; childfree by choice; disabled; unemployed; professors at prestigious universities; surgically transitioned; socially transitioned; closeted for decades; religious; and possessed of many other facets of rounded human existence.

There was no reason for me to suppose that many of these points of reference in trans life would be different in Japan, especially given how recent the legalisation of gender confirmation surgery [GCS] in the country was. Transgender people tend towards the resourceful and the resilient and find other ways to express our gender identities in the face of a hostile legal structure. As Pepper (1978) would have it, "Needs will be expressed": trans community is constructed in defiance of the fond and naïve belief that if transgender people are legally forbidden from having biological children or unregulated genitals, they will cease forthwith and not find ways to continue doing exactly both of those things.

When I *did* eventually get to Kyoto and made contact with local LGBTQ communities in the Spring of 2018, I found what few surmises I had about the potentialities of trans community to be more or less borne out. The trans community, or at least the people within it who came to offline community events and social meets, was numerically small but contained significant diversity within it. There were still surprises: for example, the age demographics of my respondent pool skewed older overall than my community in London, and there was a higher percentage of nonbinary and genderqueer people than the medicalised image of Japanese trans identities might lead one to assume. The emphasis on the 'medical model' pushed by gatekeepers within Japan and uncritically repeated in Anglophone translation erases trans people who do not medically transition, whether by choice or by circumstance, and overlooks trans people who do not conform to one or the other category of binary gender. Trans people who come out or begin to explore their identities after, say, marriage and parenthood; trans people who prioritise their marriages or children over any potential transition; and genderqueer people who avail themselves of medical transition that works for them but does not include sterilisation or genital surgery are all types of trans people whom I met or heard about within the Kansai community, but are rarely or never represented in the literature.

It is difficult to obtain quantitative data on transgender lives, communities, and identities in contemporary Japan. Informal networks of kinship, friendship, and interpersonal enmity are rarely to be found in governmentally-compiled demographic databases. Furthermore, the strict medico-legal requirements for transition, although intended to provide a standard pathway for recognition of the transgender individual by the state, ironically prove a bar to recognised transition for a large proportion of the transgender population. Many transgender people in Japan, especially non-binary, genderqueer, or agender people, cannot or do not wish to transition in accordance with the transition narrative provided for them by the law. They are thus invisible within ‘official’ statistics on changes to family registries; number of transition-related surgeries performed per annum; court petitions for change of personal names, etc. The bulk of the data I amassed over the course of my fieldwork therefore falls into the qualitative rather than quantitative category.

I employed the two main forms of ethnographic methodology: participant observation and semi-structured interviews with individual respondents. My geographical field sites were the cities of Kyoto and Osaka in Kansai (south-western mainland Japan), with one-off visits to Okayama and Tokyo. My work was multi-sited, involving several different community support groups, LGBTQ-interest events, private parties etc. My most regular field site was the social and support group Shinzen no Kai [Friendship Society], which holds two-hour meetup events every other week, alternating between Kyoto and Osaka. I also attended Queer Shokudo, a pay-what-you-can lunch club run by three volunteers in Kyoto, from April 2018 through to its final event in February 2019. I participated in one litter-picking event along the Kamo River with IroIro Kyoto, an LGBTQ-run community service volunteering group, before the outbreak of the novel coronavirus. Ikuko, one of my respondents from Shinzen no Kai, pioneered a new LGBTQ activism and political study group called NijiMix [Rainbow Mix] in April 2020; I was able to attend the first few sessions via Zoom and am still active in the affiliated Facebook group today. I had less contact with Stonewall Kansai, which primarily serves foreign residents in the region, but managed to attend one or two events they organised, such as cherry blossom viewings [o-hanami] or Autumn sweet potato BBQ parties in Osaka.

Alongside this rich bricolage of participant observation opportunities, I also had the benefit of multiple archival and secondary sources for research. For example, the Japanese-language website *LGBTxER*[1] collects and publishes longform interviews with, and first-person autobiographical narratives of, LGBTQ people and allies from across Japan. I was able to use this website to read personal accounts from strangers; from some of my own respondents, with whom I had completed interviews but whose published testimonials added further details on their lives and experiences; and from several people from whom I requested interviews, who turned me down on scheduling grounds but invited me to read their accounts on *LGBTxER* instead.

[1] All interviews (Japanese-only) are accessible online at: http://lgbter.jp [Last accessed: 12/12/21 12:30 GMT]

Qualitative Data Gathering

I conducted approximately fifteen semi-structured interviews with respondents in Kyoto and Osaka between Spring 2019 and Winter 2020. All but two were face to face, with the two exceptions being conducted via Skype. My participant observation covered between twenty and thirty Shinzen no Kai meetings, three film festivals, two professional conferences, two pride festivals, approximately thirteen pop-up brunch events, private parties and outings, several public lectures, and a community cleanup day. In total, I spent nearly three hundred hours, as Geertz (1998) would have it, 'deep hanging out' with transgender people across southern Japan.

Secondary Sources and Archive Data

Part of the logistical calculation in writing this thesis was the integration of the data from the semi-structured interviews I was able to conduct, the events I was able to attend, and the secondary or archival sources. The latter included, but were not limited to: sourcebooks of oral histories and personal testimonials in translation, e.g. McLelland et al (2007) and Summerhawk et al (1998); transcripts of interviews conducted by other people and published online, e.g. the longform interviews on *LGBTxER*; medical and sexological writings in English and Japanese; presentations given at the GID Research Society's annual conference; documentary and ethnographic films; and, to a certain extent, historic ethnography, literature, and pop-cultural artefacts e.g. TV dramas, novels, manga/anime, etc.

A certain paradox exists such that trans people, and LGBTQ people more broadly, produce impressive amounts of ephemera like zines and film festival flyers, which have not historically been sought after by archives or museum collections (outside of specialist institutions like the San Francisco GLBT Archives or Berlin's Schwules Museum). We therefore end up keeping it ourselves on an ad-hoc basis; there are goldmines of community material to be found, but they are inevitably in private collections, and access is contingent on interpersonal cordiality.

A sample of the ephemera collected by the present author over the course of his fieldwork.

All of my biweekly standing fieldwork commitments, i.e., Shinzen no Kai meetups and litter-picking with IroIro Kyoto, were cancelled from the end of February to early April 2020 in an effort to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus. Although both Shinzen no Kai and NijiMix premiered online meetings via Zoom in April, which I attended regularly, I was unable to conduct participant observation or in-person semi-structured interviews during this period. I therefore used this time at the tail end of my fieldwork to focus on various secondary sources, especially those accessible online.

Considerations in Field Site Selection

In my initial field site considerations, I had to find somewhere outside Tokyo that was still large enough to have a reasonable chance of hosting a local transgender (or even LGBTQ) community. Urban areas were preferable to the more rural prefectures, not out of disinterest on my part, but due to the fact that I am unable to drive, which would have made transport unreliable. Some cities had already been ruled out on the advice of transgender friends who had spent time there (e.g. Kanazawa); I also thought it prudent to restrict my possible field sites to the main island of Honshu, rather than invite the

complications of tiny population (Shikoku), significantly different local culture (Okinawa), or considerable distance from potential LGBT-related events e.g. Tokyo Pride or the Rainbow Reel LGBTQ Film Festival (Hokkaido).

I settled on Kyoto on the basis of some familiarity with the city, having spent July 2013 there on a cultural Summer school with the US Government-sponsored Athena Abroad programme, with a further two weeks' holiday there in July 2014. Kyoto was small enough for me to feel confident navigating the city on a daily basis, with excellent transport links and close proximity to Osaka, which boasts considerably more queer nightlife than Kyoto. The absence of extant Kyoto-based trans ethnography provided a wealth of opportunities for me to contribute to an under-studied area of Queer Japan. I was also able to take advantage of direct travel to Tokyo and Okayama via shinkansen as necessary.

Pre-Fieldwork Cultural Exposure and Familiarity

I lived with my family in the Tsugaru region of northern Honshu for thirteen months as a child (1996-7). My parents had lived there for two years after they were first married, a decade before they returned to Japan with two children in tow. Although my brother and I attended an English-language international school, my mother had studied Japanese at university and arranged for us to live in a residential area of our town, away from the international quarter, in order to immerse us more fully in Japanese culture and daily life. Following our return to England in 1997, I did not have the opportunity to visit Japan again until the Summer of 2013.

As remarked above, I came out as transgender in 2011, halfway through my undergraduate degree. I was extremely fortunate to find a vibrant community of other transgender people at the university and slightly further afield in London. These early yet intense experiences of trans community were an invaluable immersion. They equipped me with a firsthand knowledge of intra-trans politics and ways of making kin. Of course, following Narayan (1993), the question of the 'native' anthropologist's native-ness is always in play. I am acutely aware of my contingent positionality both in and out of the field: when problematising the concept of cultural fluency in relation to my research and

to my lived experience, my emic (transgender), etic (Western), and third-culture perspectives are all relevant and all open to interrogation. Having lived in Japan as a child and having been raised by and around Japanese speakers, Japanese nationals, and people with experience of longterm residency in the country, I was not going to the field completely blind in terms of culture shock. However, adulthood and childhood grant quite disparate perspectives, and what I remembered of Japan was northern, rural, and twenty years out of date. I have an inside-baseball perspective on trans identity, but only from a Western background. My perspective on both transness and Japan is encapsuled exactly by Yamaguchi Tomomi's reflection that "[her] situation also complicates the notion of 'native anthropology', in that the simple fact of being a native of a country or having had the experience of growing up there does not automatically translate into insider status in the complex contexts within the field, particularly when the anthropologist studies politically charged areas. Being a native does not automatically assure one of insider status in the field's constantly changing historical, social, and political circumstances." (in Robertsen (ed.) 2009, p. 76).

While I had some simple Japanese from childhood, I had to begin my language study more or less from the start as an adult. I was enrolled from 2015-16 in OPAL (Oxford Programme in Academic Languages) at the Oxford University Language Centre, where I completed the Elementary and Threshold courses in Japanese. I sat and passed the Japanese Language Proficiency Test at N5 (Basic level) in July 2016 at SOAS. On arrival in Kyoto, I spent one academic year (October 2017 to July 2018) at the ISI Language School in Emmachi.

Since then, my Japanese language instruction has continued via weekly lessons, both in-person and online, with a Japanese language tutor in Kyoto. All translations from Japanese in this thesis are my own unless stated otherwise.

Respondent Demographics

All of the people who participated in my research currently live in the urban centres of Kyoto and Osaka, with a roughly even split between the two cities. Some of my respondents were born in other prefectures or towns, but the majority are lifelong Osaka

or Kyoto residents. There is one exception (a first generation Japanese-American respondent), but they had also spent at least a year living in Kyoto at the time of our interview.

One theme I heard regularly from my respondents was that they represent the tip of the iceberg of Kansai's trans residents. That is: they are the few people confident enough to participate in LGBTQ-related community events; give lectures on LGBTQ topics; be identified publicly as transgender etc. I was given to understand by several people at different times that there is a significant population of transgender *hikkikomori* [recluses] in Kyoto and its environs, but due to linguistic and other social barriers, I was unable to meet or interview any trans hikkikomori in order to investigate this phenomenon more fully.

All of my respondents bar perhaps one, with whom I was unable to clarify this during her interview, have university degrees, whether from technical/vocational colleges or from well-regarded universities like Kansai Daigaku. At least one works full-time in higher education as a university lecturer. Most have white-collar jobs (professor; full-time educational consultant; computer programmer; career and financial counsellor; employee in the legal department of a large software company) or are current university students.[2] Regarding gender and age, there was a definite majority of middle-aged and older transgender women amongst my respondents. Of ten respondents, only two were still undergraduate college students: the youngest respondent was twenty, the oldest fifty-four. Most of my respondents were in their mid-thirties to late forties. This provides an interesting counter-argument to the supposition that gender transition or gender variance is a 'new concept', or one that was invented by the millennial generation. All of my respondents are ethnically/culturally Japanese; one is an *issei* [first-generation] Japanese-American now resident in Tokyo. Two of them have spent extensive time living and working or studying outside of Japan; several have travelled considerably for work or pleasure, especially to Australia and Taiwan.

[2] I suggest that there may be a link between disposable income and ability to transition – all of the largest Japanese health insurance companies cover gender reassignment surgery and other transition-related procedures as of August 2018, but most of my respondents transitioned long before then and would have had to pay out of pocket for the operation.

Despite the small respondent pool, I found a relatively diverse mix of identities. Most, as remarked above, identify as binary transgender women. Two describe themselves as 'genderqueer' or 'non-binary', using the English terms; several people I met at the Shinzen no Kai community group, but whom I was unable to interview in depth, describe themselves with the Japan-specific identity 'X-Gender' [ekkusu jendā], which has been in use since the 1990s. This term retains popularity across age groups: middle-aged people seemed as likely to use it as millennials or members of Generation Z.

Family and partnership structures amongst my respondents also varied greatly. While my participants on the younger end of the spectrum were universally unmarried, several of them expressed explicit desires to marry someone and have children, although they all stressed the necessity of finding a partner whose gender expression complimented their own - i.e., a feminine trans girl I knew, who was not intending to medically transition, said that she wanted to find a 'manly woman' to marry so that they would be well-balanced. One particular respondent often said of their relationship to their boyfriend that they themself were '80% masculine, 20% feminine' to their boyfriend's '80% femininity, 20% masculinity.' Several of my older respondents had never been married and had no interest in doing so; some were already married and had children before they were able to come out; only one, my respondent Ikuko, had gone through the process of divorcing her wife in order to pursue transition. The multiplicity of my respondents' experiences is truly reflective, I believe, of broader trans realities, even if encapsulated within a relatively small numerical pool.

Narrative Considerations

As with every dissertation, one of my central considerations concerned the style of my narrative analysis. My chief indecision was between historical and categorical styles: should I attempt, in a more or less linear way, to tell a story[3] of 'Trans Japan since 1990', or should I start from the world as I found it and consider only different aspects of trans life today (medical, legal, spatio-temporal, familial, activist...), referencing the past only when relevant to my respondents' personal histories?

[3] *A* story, not *the* story; there is never only one story of 'how it has been to be trans in Japan'.

As I worked, a loose cluster of historical narrative did begin to emerge from my respondents' accounts of their personal and communal evolution, especially amongst trans people who came of age around the turn of this century. 'Trans Japan' as we know it now, by which I mean access to medical and legal transition in-country, dates back only to the last decade of the 20th century. The argument in favour of a comprehensive chronological history of the period was strong, although many elements of my respondent's narratives were familiar stories amongst my Anglophone communities. They described isolation; feeling different from others around them, perhaps having attachments or impulses towards things traditionally reserved for 'the other gender'; having no information about LGBTQ people to hand and no sources on which to draw for further information; discovering that there were other 'people like them' from the internet, TV programmes, newspaper articles etc; medical intervention (whether strictly legal or not, especially trans women who began transitioning before various surgeries were legalised in Japan); and the 'ritual – return' of the subject to mainstream Japanese life as a member of a different binary gender.[4]

However, I could not reconcile a strictly historical approach with the contemporary, observational engagement that ethnography demands. I resolved the issue with a combination of both types. The structure of this thesis broadly follows a *thematic* narrative analysis (multiple interviews clustered around a theme with two or three picked out as particular exemplars) and a secondary *interactional* analysis in community with my fellow trans people. Within this thematic analysis, I have included copious chronological material dealing with what trans people's lives were like in Japan prior to 2003; what changed for them after the transition laws were introduced; and how they live(d) and survive(d) as trans before and after legalisation.

I also drew heavily on Hammersley's (2013) discussion of the fetishisation of text in ethnographic fieldwork. The unique ethical pitfalls around trans communities, disclosure,

[4] One of my respondents, a systems engineer, related an anecdote about her boss' reaction when she returned to work following her surgical transition, to wit: "You know, at first I really didn't have any idea what you meant by all this transition stuff, but I've come to understand. You're the same monitor but you're running different software!"

and outing presented a problem in evaluating my data: trans identity is rooted in the body and is expressed almost entirely extra-textually (through medical intervention, clothing, makeup, prosthetics, hairstyle, discourse markers, vocal training, body language etc) *but* to photograph trans people, or to use other multimedia to showcase specifics of trans identity, community, or bodily comportment, risks outing the ethnographer's respondents to an audience that cannot be guaranteed to be non-hostile. I have been granted permission to use all images of my respondents that appear in this dissertation, but I depend proportionately more on text and material ephemera such as film posters and flyers as the media through which I present my results, while acknowledging the limitations of the textual form as a lens through which to view trans life in motion.

Ethics

A number of ethical considerations, many of them specific to trans ethics around secrecy and disclosure, came up during the period of my PhD research and the composition of this thesis.

Privacy and Disclosure

While the maintenance of individual privacy for each respondent was the ideal, this proved almost impossible in a community as small, intimate, and tightly-knit as the transgender communities of Kyoto and Osaka. People recommended other potential interviewees, as is ideal for snowball sampling, but would also quite blithely tell me extremely personal information about other people in the community, including their surgical status, deadnames, details of their suicide attempts etc. I never used any of the information I received from a third party; if the person in question confirmed it independently, I noted it down but did not necessarily feel comfortable adding it to the text. Nor were all of the secondary recommendees always given much choice in whether or not they wished to come to an anthropologist's attention. My respondent Makoto, who was very generous and committed in their assistance, once brought a young trans friend to a Shinzen no Kai meetup and pushed us to sit together "so that you can talk to her, Lyman!" The poor girl was visibly uncomfortable and did not want to talk about transition or anything personal; we ended up chatting about the comparative difficulty of learning English as a foreign language versus Japanese, and what landmarks she ought to see if she

ever came to England. Voluntary disclosure could also be its own kind of difficulty: on another occasion, a trans woman I had just met two hours earlier at the beginning of a Shinzen no Kai meetup told me very casually and in great detail about her hormone therapy regimen as we were walking to the train station, leaving me scrambling in my bag for my disclosure forms. I maintained individual privacy as much as was possible under the circumstances, i.e., I never confirmed or denied that I had carried out an interview with certain people, and where I was unable to obtain written permission to use things I had been told, I either attributed them to a different respondent or left them in my notes.

I also grappled with the ethics of disclosure vis-à-vis overt and covert ethnography. It took me nearly a year to even casually bring up the fact that I was writing about transgender identity in Kansai after I started attending Shinzen no Kai meetups in April 2018; I said at the time that I was an anthropology research student but nothing further than that. It was at the last Shinzen no Kai event I attended in 2018 – December 10th or thereabouts – that I mentioned the nature of my research on trans communities in Japan. My first set of interviews with people I did not know as well as Makoto and another respondent, Hotaru, happened around late January or early February 2019. Conducting ethnography within a community or peer group to which one belongs (in any sense) is both pleasant and fraught. Participant observation always requires time; this is doubly true when the demographic under consideration is as marginalised and as rightfully insular as trans people, both in Japan and elsewhere. I had to make myself a known quantity as a trans man within the community, someone genuinely interested in the lives of other LGBTQ people in the city, before I felt comfortable broaching the topic of my research even in a generic sense. It then took me a further two or three months after the initial mention of my research topic to begin soliciting actual interviews.

Outing [autingu] is a dominant concern in LGBTQ social groups in Japan, as it frequently is across the globe. I found that there was a spectrum of privacy amongst the Facebook pages of LGBTQ meetup groups. One particular events organiser would always ask people not to put up photos or tag people online in relation to the event, as she and several other regulars are still closeted; another would always post a summary of the most recent event and some photos from the rental space, but never with identifiable people in them; a third

posted photos from the event with fully-recognisable group shots included in the summary, along with the countries of origin of any foreign participants. This latter was done in order to stress the 'international' nature of the group and its open-minded, cosmopolitan bonafides, not in any way intending to out them on purpose, but seemed unaware of the potential danger in doing so. When using screen captures of Facebook posts or other social media, as I do at various points in this thesis, I have been careful to censor identifying names and profile pictures while leaving the commentary intact.

The area of anthropological ethics with the greatest importance for this thesis was that of trans ethics of disclosure, and the divergent demands of trans cultural courtesy versus ethnographic ethical ideals. What I mean by 'divergent demands' is that there were were points at which cultural fluency in trans community was, to an extent, in conflict with ethical disclosure as it is ideally conceived within social science research. That is: transgender cultural 'rules' about revelation or elision of personal details were sometimes more conservative than what would be very much considered acceptable by the academy. For example, I never once discussed sex with my respondents, even though sex as a topic is well within an ethnographer's purview. Transgender people as a demographic are too often subject to sexual fetishisation by the cisgender gaze, and are often asked prurient and invasive questions about our sex lives or genital configurations by cisgender people, frequently on very slight acquaintance. My respondents did not bring up the subject of their sex lives *sui generis* and I therefore felt it inappropriate to ask. This discretion around sex may be attributed as much to Japanese cultural norms, especially to taboos around women and sexual expression, as to transgender identity. My reluctance to ask about sex stemmed in large part from my own trans culture and my reticence to reproduce sexualised and sexualising attitudes to trans research, rather than respondent resistance, but resistance itself is a useful dynamic to consider, as exemplified by the following quote:

> The resistance I experienced demonstrates the importance of conducting responsible, ethically sound research that respects the needs and limitations of research subjects, and the need for increased collaboration and for scholarship that feeds back into the host community.
>
> (lewallen, in Robertsen (ed.) 2009, p. 5-6)

I did not, thankfully, experience anywhere near the level of resistance from my respondents as anne lewallen did during her ethnography of Ainu communities in Hokkaido. However, this concept of 'scholarship that feeds back into the host community' is essential to Trans Studies. The concept of 'nothing about us without us', although coined originally by disability activists in the United States, continues to represent the bare minimum that trans subjects deserve: an insultingly low benchmark that, nevertheless, cisgender researchers into transgender lives consistently fail to achieve. The World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH)-affiliated Facebook group maintains a checklist of questions known as TRICON (Transgender Research Informed Consent) that are mandatory for would-be researchers to fill out before soliciting respondents amongst the group members, and which I used as the ethical basis for my own disclosure forms and pre-interview information sheets (for which see Appendix I).

Who Gatekeeps the Gatekeepers?

The most delicate ethical minefield I encountered on fieldwork concerns interpersonal conflict and damaging behaviour amongst trans/LGBTQ groups in Kyoto. There are, as I will discuss in more depth later, at least two discrete and non-overlapping LGBTQ community groups within the city of Kyoto. At first, I put the disjunction between the two groups down to potential differences in politics, activism, or community culture: Group A seemed more invested in 'political queerness' and activism, for example, while Group B was more of a support group-cum-social club. In the third act of my fieldwork, the reasons for the studied non-interaction of the two groups were elucidated to me by several people: one particular figure within Group A was notorious for engendering uncomfortable, at times verging on abusive, dynamics within Kyoto's LGBTQ activist scene. What I was told about their behaviour outside of my own direct interaction with them was that they "wanted to have complete control over everything" -effectively to function as the gatekeeper for all of Queer Kyoto - and if resistance was encountered, would use their not-inconsiderable social capital to make life very difficult indeed for other activists. They were, according to my respondents, in large part responsible for the collapse of one of the local Queer Studies networks, with reports of stalking, online and offline harassment, intimidation, and other anti-social behaviours. They also had control

over material resources, like copies of various films and hard-to-find material, such that the organisers of other events and other communities, especially film or LGBTQ cultural festivals, are obliged to keep on good terms with them. The presence of self-appointed gatekeepers within the community sometimes made it difficult to access certain events beyond the shallow level of public engagement or to hear about what was going on in the planning stages of e.g., protests.

Power Imbalances

The balance of local and regional specificities of power merit discussion here. A great deal of fieldwork undertaken with LGBTQ/gender and sexual minority communities in Asia, especially that which involves hijra in India; LGBT communities in Myanmar or Indonesia; queer lives in mainland China etc. has a significant power differential between the ethnographer, who is usually although not always from the Global North, Anglophone, and possessed of many more material resources, and their subjects, who are usually although not always impoverished, from developing countries or rural areas, subject to social violence or persecution by their governments, etc. The necessity of decolonial approaches to trans ethnography, and gender studies more generally, is gaining increased recognition: Ladner (2009); Dutta and Roy (2014); and Dasgupta (2017) have all written on the pitfalls of assuming Anglophone 'trans identity' will map onto post-colonial South Asian identities. More recognition of this phenomenon is long overdue in the Global Northern academic community.

Japan is an industrialised nation and a member of the G7. Osaka and Kyoto are major urban centres with a high standard of living, infrastructure, and tourism numbers. My respondents are almost exclusively well-educated, well-established in their careers, and more than equipped to argue with my conclusions or engage with the products of my research. Even my youngest respondents were either first-year university undergraduates or undergoing an equivalent level of vocational training. While I cannot discount the social power I held as a researcher in a prestigious doctoral programme, it is also worth noting that my respondents were in a comparatively strong position for refusing engagement with me if desired, fact-checking or correcting my statements, contacting my supervisor to complain, etc. Once people agreed to be interviewed, I was

given to understand that my research had been the topic of some deliberation in the community. I am sincerely grateful that my respondents decided I was worth the time of day, but it was a salutary reminder that the observer is also observed in turn: the community acts to protect itself in ways to which the ethnographer is not privy. This is especially true of trans communities where gatekeeping access is and has always been a mechanism of survival.

Any work in the field of gender and sexuality, especially given the sensitive nature of discussing personal sexual behaviour, must at least touch on the concept of the 'mischievous respondent'. Embarrassment, flirtation, and the desire to shock (or attempt to shock) a po-faced researcher with a clipboard are all frequent hazards of asking other people about their genders and sexual identities. Every anthropologist must come to terms with the fact that a respondent telling them 'the truth' is only ever telling them *a* truth or *their* truth, even with the best and most honest intentions - in much the same way that this thesis is *an* approach to the contemporary trans community in Kansai.

However, I never had the sense that any of my respondents were outright lying to me. This was bolstered in part by the ease of cross-checking: in such a tight-knit community, it would be easy to verify when certain events took place, or when certain social clubs were founded, etc. Despite the variety in my respondents' personal circumstances, their narratives contained many overlapping points of reference and experience. One potential risk sign of mischievous respondents pretending to be transgender in order to skew results would be purported personal experiences that adhere suspiciously to transphobic stereotypes, e.g., any references to anything resembling Blanchard's discredited 'autogynephilia' theory; any claims of pretending to be trans women to 'trap' or 'trick' cisgender men into sexual contact, etc. None of my respondents reported anything of the sort. Another factor in this analysis was that all of my respondents were college freshmen or older, with most of them being middle-aged. As Cimpian et al (2018) have demonstrated, mischievous respondents are in the main adolescent, and tend to make wild, outré claims about fictional experiences or practices for what they consider comedic ends.

The most interesting part of this sense of truthfulness had to do with the fact that I was a fellow transgender person. By that I do not mean, or do not *only* mean, that they would have lied about, obfuscated, or withheld more of their lives from a cisgender researcher. What I mean is best illustrated through Pratchett et al.'s (1999) concept of 'Lies-to-Children': a way of explaining something that is technically true, but is so simplified that it is almost a lie.

> "A "*lie-to-children*" is a statement which is false, but which nevertheless leads the child's mind towards a more accurate explanation, one that the child will only be able to appreciate if it has been primed with the lie."
>
> "Yes, you needed to understand *that*," they are told, "so that *now* we can tell you why it isn't exactly *true.*"
>
> (1999: 41-42)

It is neither inaccurate nor defamatory to observe that many cisgender researchers approach their transgender subjects with some kind of palatable narrative already in mind - witness the enduring popularity of the phrase 'a woman trapped in a man's body', for example. In order to navigate medical gatekeeping and access health care, including hormone therapy, surgical interventions, and mandatory therapy sessions, the complexity of trans lives and identities is often compressed into a narrative of always-having-known and of lifelong conformity to one or the other binary gender role: not because this is necessarily the way that the trans subject experiences their gender, but because it is the one that their cis gatekeepers want and expect to hear. To adapt Pratchett's coinage, we might say that trans testimonials, especially those given as part of mandatory psychological counselling prior to gender confirmation surgery, are frequently comprised of Lies-To-Cis-People. Because I have personal familiarity with the language and structure of trans lives, we were able to talk from a certain set of shared principles without having to reinvent the transgender wheel.

Structure of the Thesis

I open with my *Theoretical Framework* in Chapter 1. As this thesis is necessarily interdisciplinary, drawing from both Transgender Studies and Japanese social anthropology, I find it useful to lay out the diverse foundations on which my arguments are built, and to familiarise the reader with terms and theories that may be unfamiliar.

Chapter 2, *Methodology*, details the practicalities of participant observation and employs ethnomethodology as a framework for understanding how individual people, both cis and trans, perform gender in the everyday.

Chapter 3, *Against a Trans Narrative*, centres and expresses my respondents' experiences in their own words using material from the semi-structured interviews I conducted from November 2018 to March 2020.

Chapter 4, *Spaces and Phases*, returns to ethnographic fieldwork in its analysis of how, when, and where trans people meet each other online and offline, and explores the different geographical boundaries of different LGBTQ communities within the Kyoto city limits.

Chapter 5, *Girls on Film*, takes film festivals, movies, and documentary screenings as its topic. I explore how the time-bounded worlds of LGBTQ film festivals serve both as opportunities for community building and as sites for contestation around what it means to be local, Japanese, and queer.

Chapter 6, *Institutional Interfaces*, is divided into three sub-chapters, each dealing with one aspect of official or state-affiliated institutions with which trans people in Japan must interact: the legal system; the medical system; and the academic system. I detail the requirements that each of those three systems demand of trans people, from mandatory sterilisation to deadnaming to needing a court order for a legal name change, and discuss significant milestones in trans people's relationships with each system over the last twenty years.

Activism is the theme for Chapter 7, *Making the Road*, in which I discuss the political and social activist wing of the trans/queer community in Kansai and across Japan. I begin with an overview of the failed attempt to pass an anti-LGBTQ-discrimination bill ahead of the 2021 Summer Olympics, then discuss specific legal tactics and test cases that trans people have used to try to make headway in changing Japan's draconian transition laws. I end with an ethnographic portrait of local activist groups, including one founded as recently as April 2020 in Osaka.

In the *Conclusion*, I synthesise the central trends, themes, and points of contention within what might broadly be called the trans movement in Japan. I attempt to forecast the next ten years of the political and social landscape for transgender people, taking into account several surprising events that happened even within the eighteen months of my fieldwork, and close with my respondents' own hopes and expectations of the next steps to be taken in the next decade.

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

> Let me tell you something: trans people have already been studied. We've been interviewed, sampled, tested, cross-referenced, experimented upon, medicated, shocked, examined, and dissected post-mortem. You've looked at our chromosomes, our families, our blood levels, our ring fingers, our mothers' medicine cabinets, and our genitalia (over and over again with the genitalia- stop pushing condoms on us, dumbass, we know what they're for.) You've watched us play with dolls, raise children, fall in love, look at pornography, get sick, die, and commemorate ourselves. You've listened to our ears. You've listened to our fucking ears! But you've never listened to our voices and you need to do that now.
>
> 'Anne Tagonist' (2009)

In this dissertation I provide and analyse original qualitative data on transgender lives in contemporary Kansai, thereby contributing a less biased and more granular ethnographic account to the fields of both Transgender Studies and Anthropology of Japan. Using autoethnography and ethnomethodology in combination with semi-structured interviews and eighteen months of participation observation with trans people and LGBTQ community initiatives, in the Kansai region, my project challenges established Anglophone understandings of trans life in Japan, both from a Japanese Area Studies perspective and from a Trans Studies perspective. I critique Trans Studies' historic disciplinary disinterest in trans communities outside of the Anglosphere and similarly critique the longstanding practice of ethnographic and cultural studies of 'trans Japan' being undertaken exclusively by cisgender researchers. Within the latter category, I seek to dismantle assumptions of the abjectivity of trans life in Japan and its supposed copying of 'Western' gender standards and gender roles.

I combine these theoretical approaches in new and unique ways.

i. I am the first self-identified trans researcher to undertake a full-length ethnography of 'trans Japan' in English. While any claims to emic positionality within one's research demographic are necessarily complicated and contingent, I was able to draw on firsthand experience of trans identity, gender dysphoria,

coming out, trans life in community, and trans linguistic change in ways that cis ethnographers do not.

ii. I update ethnomethodology's traditional obsession with, and misinterpretation of, transgender experience by using it from within, so to speak, in combination with autoethnography as a field practice.

iii. I approach my ethnography as predominantly a trans theorist and anthropologist rather than a Japanologist. Previous writers on 'Trans Japan' have engaged with the topic as an exotic subset of Japanese Studies rather than through participant observation.

My aims in this dissertation are twofold:

i. Argue against the abjective theory of Japanese trans existence, with particular reference to the intersections of embodiment and performativity in trans lives

ii. Show how trans people create communities and identities in modern Kansai

I analyse my data using these two key concepts:

i . Performativity

ii . Embodiment

I begin this chapter proper with a consideration of my project's interdisciplinary nature and a reflection on some of the difficulties I encountered along the way. I will then give an overview of Trans Studies as a discipline, with particular reference to current trends in trans thought on embodiment and performativity. The second half of this chapter focusses on discourses of trans identity and culturally-specific attitudes to sex, gender, and the body in Japan. Finally, I will discuss the state of the trans-related anthropological, sociological, and ethnographic canon as it currently exists both in English and in Japanese.

Notes and Que(e)ries from the Background Reading

There is a conundrum at the heart of my research that profoundly affected my pool of potential references: most Anglophone writers who work in Trans Studies are not area specialists in Japan and do not speak Japanese, while most Japanese Studies researchers are not conversant with Trans Studies as a theoretical discipline. This thesis and its theoretical framework represent an attempt in large part to bring these two discourses into a more perfect conversation.

My methodological framework was a combination of autoethnography, following Narayan (1993), Bain and Nash (2006), Chang (2008), Israeli-Nevo (2017), and Luvaas (2019), and ethnomethodology as pioneered by Garfinkel (1960). Within the ethnomethodological tradition, my work builds on the concept of 'the natural attitude to gender' first theorised by McKenna and Kessler (1978), as well as West and Zimmerman's (1987) and West and Fenstermaker's (1995) paradigm of 'doing gender'. I situate my research in parallel to that of Stokoe (2006) 's work on ethnomethodology of gender as a specifically feminist form of intellectual pursuit. Most significant for my thinking-through ethnomethodology as a theoretical and methodological framework was Rogers's (1992) insight that everyone, including cisgender people, is 'passing' as their gender all the time. The key difference between marked and unmarked subjects in cis discourse is that the figure of the trans person, as an 'aberration', makes visible the invisible scaffolding of cisgender performance.[5]

Outside of auto-reflexivity and the non-written 'texts' of everyday life, the canon of transgender-related life-writing on which I drew for context and inspiration is something of a bricolage. Much of the best autonarrative by transgender people, especially in Japanese, has been outside the remit of 'formal' or academic autoethnography. The most prominent autobiographical or auto-reflexive accounts by Japanese trans writers (almost all of them trans women) are several longform memoirs (Kamikawa, 2007; Yasutomi, 2015; Torai, 1996, 1997, 2000, 2005, 2011); a *manga* (Chii, 2016); a blog that became a book (Nōmachi, 2011); a pop-psychology text (Yonezawa, 2003) and a book on cultures

[5] Or, to put it another way: Either everybody passes or nobody passes at all.

and practices of crossdressing in Japan, intended for a general audience (Mitsuhashi, 2008). I also made liberal use of sourcebooks of Japanese LGBTQ people's oral narratives in English translation, including McLelland et al. (2007) and Summerhawk et al. (1999).

However, the double imposition of English translation and the cisgender gaze of the editors made these primary sources, if not compromised, then contingent on multiple layers of translation. Nearly every single piece of Anglophone writing on 'trans Japan' is by cisgender writers who, all too often, display a lack of familiarity and/or care to do the background reading; trans writers on trans subjects exist in Japan but they do not get translated. When official Japanese documents on transgender existence in-country are published, they are either not translated[6] or are badly misrepresented in the English-language press. Trans academics and activists, within and without the academy, have established clear, coherent style-guides for talking to and about transgender respondents, both in English and in Japanese.[7] However, the extant body of work on 'Trans Japan' by cis writers (and indeed on trans people *tout court* by cis ethnomethodologists) betrays a distinct non-utilisation of any of these resources.

Less than helpful, too, were the multiple papers written on transgender women in Japan by McLelland (2002; 2003; 2007) and Mackie (2008), neither of whom are ethnographers. Nor are they even conversant, never mind fluent, in trans culture and terminology. Some of their errors are easily fixable.[8] Some, however, betray a deeper and more concerning seam of trans-antagonism. It is not acceptable to refer to trans women as 'transgender males' (McLelland 2007: 6). It is awkward and Othering to say 'transgendered individuals' (ibid, 25) or to speak of someone 'hav[ing] deep sympathy for the transgendered condition' (Mackie, 2008: 411), as if being trans is a tragedy that befalls

[6] For example, the Science Council of Japan [Nihon gakujutsu kaigi] released a statement on 23 September 2020 recommending a total overhaul of on the current laws regulating transition, including abandonment of the Gender Identity Disorder-based pathological model and an end to forced sterilisation. The full text (Japanese only) can be read online at: https://www.scj.go.jp/ja/info/kohyo/pdf/kohyo-24-t297-4.pdf [Last accessed: 12/12/21, 13:15 GMT]

[7] For which see Hale (1997); Yonezawa (2003); Chii (2016); Lester (2017); Devar and Haefele-Thomas (2019); Boylan and Erickson-Schroth (2014); the Trans Journalists' Association Style Guide (available online at: https://transjournalists.org/style-guide/); etc.

[8] For example, 'transgendered' is grammatically incorrect: the current author is not a 'transgendered' man in much the same way that he is not a 'brunetted man', a 'shorted' man, or a 'Britished' man.

someone or a debilitating disease. It is especially unacceptable to use a trans woman's correct, female pronouns *except* when discussing her genitals, as Mackie does in her eighth footnote, on the flimsy grounds that "I will generally use pronouns that refer to an individual's chosen gender identity, except in such situations as this, where I wish to emphasise the gap between sexed bodies and gendered identities, or below, where the narrative refers to different gendered identities at different times of an individual's life." Too many cisgender writers seem to see cultural fluency in transgender discourses as conditional (e.g., Mackie withholding Nōmachi's correct pronouns when she wants to talk about her penis) or as simply unnecessary.[9]

This hostility towards transgender people has permeated many other aspects of my research. One of the key difficulties in conducting this fieldwork was the nigh-nonexistence of Japanese sources in English translation, coupled with the apparent unwillingness of the Anglophone academy to promote the work of their Japanese counterparts. All of the extracts from Japanese-language monographs, and all abstracts from researchers who presented at the 2019 Gender Identity Disorder Society conference etc. that appear in English in this thesis, are ones that the current author translated himself. Time and again, in book chapters and articles and professional-interest social media groups for academics, I have seen cisgender Anglophone researchers of 'queer Japan' cite their own work and that of their colleagues without ever mentioning a single Japanese-language expert in the area. Mitsuhashi Junko, Yonezawa Izumi, Yoshino Yugi, Ishii Yukari, Yasutomi Ayumi, Torai Masae, Kamikawa Aya, Itani Satoko, and other writers on the topic in Japanese are properly the colleagues of my fellow researchers in the Anglosphere, but they seem to be regarded as subjects or, more accurately, objects of scholarly (dis)interest instead**.** A full deconstruction of this uncollegial culture is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it was nonetheless a problem during my doctoral research.

When trans researchers *do* conduct trans research, our risks in the field are real; what work exists on care and self-care practices within academia (see for example O'Dwyer,

[9] cf. Bardsley and Miller saying, 'male to female transgendered individual' in what strikes the current author as a desperate attempt to avoid saying 'trans woman' (2011: 14); Lunsing using the word 'hermaphrodites' to refer to intersex people (2000: 206); Summerhawk (1999: 2) stating that she prioritised getting the book to print over taking the time to interview more trans respondents, etc.

2018, and Boynton, 2020) does not necessarily address trans people's specific needs. As Ruth Pearce details in *A Methodology for the the Marginalised: Doing Fieldwork in the Neoliberal Academy* (2020), trans people working within the discipline of Trans Studies and related fields e.g., psychology, anthropology, and sociology are traumatised both by the burden of transphobia encountered in the everyday and further marginalised by the endemic transphobia within the neoliberal academy. Our frameworks are never merely theoretical when we must reckon constantly with transphobic backlash in both our personal and professional lives:

> Since 2017, the UK higher education sector has become an increasingly hostile space for trans staff and students. This is due to a backlash against proposed reforms to the Gender Recognition Act 2004 (Pearce, 2019), which builds on transphobic discourses and ideas that have long circulated within the academy through 'trans-exclusionary' radical feminist writings (Hines, 2019; Kennedy, 2020). At events on university campuses across the country, speakers have called for a rolling back of legal rights for trans people, for restrictions on access to medical treatment for young trans people, and for trans women and girls in particular to be excluded from public toilets and changing rooms, sports events, rape crisis centres, women's shelters, and organisations such as Girlguiding. I have observed both trans and cis scholars working in trans studies being subject to intense harassment and abuse on social media. A number have been doxxed (had their home address shared maliciously online), others have faced extensive complaints to their institution and/or research funding body from people who object to trans studies research, and some have experienced Freedom of Information requests from both fellow academics and members of the public who seek access to the content of their work emails in an attempt to discredit their studies.
>
> (Pearce, 2020)

Having skin in the game of their research specialism is a risky proposal for *any* anthropologist, but to maintain academic distance from one's own community while simultaneously justifying that same community's right to dignity and to respectful treatment, all the while under minority stress and public discrimination, often requires what Hothschild (1979) refers to as 'emotional labour' on the part of the trans

ethnographer towards their public and their peers. However, there is strength in numbers: and the amount, as well as the quality, of trans-related literature, only continues to increase. I turn now to a closer examination of the state of Trans Studies today.

Transgender Theory

Introduction to Trans Theory

The field of Transgender Studies is still a young discipline, having emerged on the academic scene in the late 1980s. As discussed above, the privilege of dictating and defining transgender lives was historically granted to people who were at best neutral or more often actively hostile towards trans people; there is therefore something of a numerical imbalance between trans (and trans-positive) academics and their detractors. However, those last thirty years have seen a great development of trans thought as discrete critical theory, including Bhanji (2013, 2018, 2020), Currah (2006), Driskill (2011, 2013), Gupta (2019, 2020), Namaste (2000, 2005, 2009), Pearce (2018, 2019), Prosser (1998), Serano (2007), Stone (1987), Stryker (2008), Snorton (2017), Spade (2011), and Whittle (1998, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2007). There have been several insightful responses and critiques of particular trans-exclusionary writers by trans theorists, often in response to personal attacks by trans-critical feminists.[10] Much of what are considered classic reference works in trans communities have been crowdsourced (e.g., 2014's *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves*, ed. Laura Erickson-Schroth) or are compilations of writings on trans experience from disparate sources (e.g., Stryker and Whittle's 2006 *Transgender Studies Reader*). Much is also published and passed around trans communities from non-academic sources, including the works of writers like Potts (2016) and Giles (2019), and anonymous writers like 'Anne Tagonist' (2007).

The common object of all of Trans Studies, that is to say gender transition, is an arresting transgression of binary constructions of the body. Through infinite possible permutations of surgical, endocrinological, and social change, a person achieves a break through the rigid binary of ‘man’ versus ‘woman’. The problem of defining gender is

[10] See Stone’s response to personal attacks from Raymond (1987), Serano’s personal critique of the Blanchard typography and response to Dreger (2014), and Stryker (2006, 2008)

central to my research. In order to demonstrate what gender variance and transgression look like, we must first establish the idealised qualities of gender conformity and normative gender roles.

There is a contested truism in trans communities, attributed to the mid-century writer Virginia Prince, that 'Gender is what's between your ears, and sex is what's between your legs': part of the work of trans theory in the last four decades has been the decoupling of gender identity and sexual characteristics. Common definitions of gender grant a privileged position to observable primary and secondary sexual characteristics, while folding in expected emotional and social roles as part of what is 'natural' to each gender. Men are expected to have a penis, testicles, and the capacity to grow facial hair; to wear trousers instead of skirts or dresses; to be sexually and romantically attracted to women; and to have the emotional characteristics of being stoic, logical, and authoritative. Women, by contrast, are expected to have a vagina, uterus, ovaries, and breasts; to be capable of getting pregnant and giving birth; to menstruate; to be the only gender expected or 'allowed' to wear skirts or dresses; to be sexually and romantically attracted to men; to want children; and to be intuitive, overly emotional, irrational, and nurturing. In this thesis, I will refer to these concatenations of bodily and social qualities as 'expected gender'.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I am defining 'transgender' as referring to anyone who does not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth (e.g., someone who was designated female based on a brief survey of their genitals as a neonate, but who identifies as male, and vice-versa). The terms 'cisgender' or 'cis' refer to people whose gender identity is congruent with the sex they were assigned at birth, i.e., people who are not transgender. I use the acronyms AMAB and AFAB (Assigned Male/Female At Birth) where necessary to avoid ambiguity. I will also use 'trans' or 'trans identity' as an inclusive term for multiple different terms, including 'transvestite', 'transgender', 'transsexual', etc. In vernacular English usage as of this writing, 'transsexual' is steadily declining as an acceptable term; 'transvestite' is by and large considered offensive and antiquated. English loanwords in Japanese have their own nuances, such as *toransujendā* [transgender] versus *jendā aitentiti disōda* [Gender Identity Disorder, also known in

Japanese as *seidōitsusei-shōgai*]. In citation and quotation, I will use the terms used by transgender Japanese people to refer to themselves.

Trans-related vernacular in modern Anglophone communities is in a constant state of change: what may have been accepted usage ten years ago may already be outdated or offensive today. For example, as recently as five or six years ago, many English-speaking trans communities would distinguish between 'transgender' (the state of 'not being cisgender', with no assumptions made about social or medical transition status) and 'transsexual' (defined as being post-operative or having completed medical transition). That distinction, and the centring of surgical transition as required for 'properly transgender' status which it reflects, is now obsolete.

Trans identity may or may not encompass gender dysphoria, which can be severe enough to impede daily functioning, but it is not present in all transgender people at all times. The difficulty of encompassing all possible interpretations of transgender identity is pithily encapsulated in Bergman's 'bathroom metric': "I have heard arguments made that bathroom experiences are the defining measure of trans-ness in some way: have you ever had anxiety, apprehension, or problems using the restroom which corresponds to your assigned-at-sex birth? Then you're transgendered [sic] in some fashion. It's not the worst idea I've heard" (2010: 31) Although Bergman's formulation is intended to be facetious, their underlying point is solid: gender exists at the intersection of physical/private embodiment and social/public performativity.

The central question of Trans Studies, that of *what transness is* and *how to define it*, may be roughly divided into the categories of 'gender as embodiment' and 'gender as performativity'.[11] Performativity and embodiment have emerged as what Gottlieb and Graham (2012) call 'braided worlds' within the discipline from the start, on the part of both pro-trans and anti-trans writers. In brief, performativity theory says that gender

[11] Surprisingly little work has yet been done on transgender proprioception, i.e., our physical awareness of and relationship to either physiological phenomena (trans men experiencing 'phantom phallus', say, or feeling that a breast binder *is* a naked chest) or to our prostheses like breast forms, gaffs, packers etc. This is especially interesting with regard to soft packers, STPs (stand to pee devices), or 'pack and play' (penises that can be used for both urination and sexual purposes). Trans men can be very selective about our packers in terms of material and realism. Trans proprioception straddles the border between embodiment and conscious performativity; a fuller exploration of the topic lies beyond this research but will be both timely and necessary.

identity is completely unmoored from any attachment to physical configuration, while embodiment theory argues that gender dysphoria and physical experiences, processes, and transitions should be privileged as our way of understanding transness as a lived phenomenon.

Embodiment in Trans Theory

If there was no physical element of trans identity, transition would not be the only known cure for gender dysphoria. Part of trans experience *is* unarguably rooted in the body. One indication that gender identity has at least something to do with embodiment can be seen in the fact that people suffering from gender dysphoria report sensations of extreme physical discomfort with the sexual characteristics that they have prior to transition. The Scottish Transgender Alliance's 2012 *Trans Mental Health Study* indicated a consistently higher level of satisfaction and comfort with body image, and significantly better mental health, amongst post-transition trans people. For example, 74% of respondents indicated that their mental health had improved after completing transition; of the 5% of respondents who felt that their mental health had declined following transition, the reasons they suggested for the downturn were predominantly to do with unsupportive family, loss of job opportunities, or cultural reasons – i.e., environmental reasons not attributable to the physical aspects of transitioning, out of a final sample size of 889 participants. The necessity of physical and social transition is central to the experience of many trans people.

The model for diagnosing transsexuality as a medical disorder can be found primarily in the DSM-IV / V (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Fourth and Fifth Editions) and the WPATH (World Professional Association for Transgender Health) Standards of Care. These are indispensable sources of current thinking on medical discourses of trans identity, although there have been significant changes in diagnostic criteria between the DSM-IV and DSM-V. A brief overview of those changes is given here.

In both editions, Gender Identity Disorder (GID) is the standard 'mental health' diagnosis for trans people. It is often used as a prerequisite for accessing other forms of transition-

related healthcare, such as endocrine therapy and surgical intervention. As currently defined in Paragraph 302.85 of the DSM-V, Gender Identity Disorder includes:

> A. A marked incongruence between one's experienced/expressed gender and assigned gender, of at least 6 months duration, as manifested by 2* or more of the following indicators: [2, 3, 4]
>
> 1. a marked incongruence between one's experienced/expressed gender and primary and/or secondary sex characteristics (or, in young adolescents, the anticipated secondary sex characteristics)
>
> 2. a strong desire to be rid of one's primary and/or secondary sex characteristics because of a marked incongruence with one's experienced/expressed gender (or, in young adolescents, a desire to prevent the development of the anticipated secondary sex characteristics)
>
> 3. a strong desire for the primary and/or secondary sex characteristics of the other gender
>
> 4. a strong desire to be of the other gender (or some alternative gender different from one's assigned gender)
>
> 5. a strong desire to be treated as the other gender (or some alternative gender different from one's assigned gender)
>
> 6. a strong conviction that one has the typical feelings and reactions of the other gender (or some alternative gender different from one's assigned gender)[12]

The most significant changes to the diagnosis between DSM-IV and DSM-V were: the removal of supposed causal explanations for gender identity disorder, including attempts to diagnose transness as a personality disorder; the removal of GID as a lifelong 'condition'; the new diagnostic standard being set at only two of the listed criteria above; the expansion of the definition of gender from a binary to a spectrum model; and the

[12] The full text of Paragraph 302.85, along with notes on changes to the diagnosis of GID between DSM-IV and DSM-V, can be accessed online at: http://www.ifge.org/302.85_Gender_Identity_Disorder_in_Adolescents_or_Adults. [Last accessed: 03/01/17, 11:38 GMT.]

distinction made in the DSM-IV between gender dysphoria as a symptom and the distress invoked by it as a response in the patient. Of these, I suggest that the change in definition of 'gender dysphoria' from syndrome to symptom was the most important. As of the publication of the DSM-V in 2013, gender dysphoria is one component of 'gender incongruence' rather than a diagnosis all its own. The practical effect of this change is twofold: it places the diagnostic criteria on the perceived incongruence between physical configuration and felt identity, rather than on a holistic mental illness, and it allows people to escape what had been the permanent label of GID. GID as defined by the DSM-IV was a lifelong diagnosis even after the patient fully transitioned, their gender dysphoria was resolved, and they no longer felt dysphoric.

There is long-running dissent amongst trans communities as to whether or not GID is helpful or harmful in advancing trans liberation and access to gender-affirming healthcare. Some people find it useful as a way of understanding the medical options available to them, in the same way that a diagnosis of PTSD or autism may bring relief from uncertainty. GID can also be useful as an authoritative medical excuse to counter perceptions of the transgender individual as 'merely' crazy or perverted. Furthermore, such a diagnosis opens doors to further treatment. Many medical professionals are reluctant to engage in long-term interventions such as hormone replacement therapy without a defined diagnosis; in the United States, diagnostic codes are required for insurance to cover treatment; GID was and remains often the initial prerequisite for embarking on medical transition at all.

However, the model of 'diagnosing' transgender identity as a mental illness was, and continues to be, considered highly pathologising. Doing so casts non-normative gender identity as an aberration for which a cure is both necessary and desirable. The concept of trans identity as a disorder is rightly seen as stigmatising: as Serano (2008) and others have remarked, it privileges the institutional psychological understanding of trans identity over that of trans people themselves. Outside of psychology, the 'scientific' assumptions on which the gender binary is built have also been challenged by the interdisciplinary efforts of biologists such as Fausto-Sterling (1992, 1993, 2000), neurologists such as Fine (2011, 2017) and Hustevedt (2016), neurobiologists such as Barres (2015), and others, but they still underpin the definitions of gender and gender

identity on which the DSM-IV rests its differential diagnosis. While she writes extensively on performative gender practices, Serano is a biologist by training; she works in the same sexological tradition within Trans Studies as Fausto-Sterling (1992, 1993), Prosser (1998), and Cromwell (2006), which critiques and challenges accepted discourses of the sexed body. Lane (2009) suggests that a total re-interrogation of what we believe to be 'objective', permanent, 'scientific' explanations for sex and gender is required. The act of designating neonatal sex - bluntly, by cursory visual examination of genitals at birth - is itself as much an act of cultural interpretation than of objective observation, if not more so. This act of calling out what has previously been seen as 'objective observation', and of rightfully naming it as a cultural interpretation, is part of a body of work in Trans Studies known as depathologisation (Suess, Espineira & Crego Walters 2014: 73-76). Depathologisation redresses attempts to situate cisness as an unmarked category and transness as an aberration, understanding instead that cisgender identity is as actively constructed as its transgender counterpart: as Rogers (1992) remarks, either *everyone* is passing as their gender or *nobody* is. The move away from physical configurations as problems to be corrected, towards a paradigm of gender that takes its constructed nature into account, is where performativity comes in.

Performativity in Trans Theory

When truly frustrated by the mutable nature of both primary and secondary sexual characteristics, gender essentialist claims on the body have a tendency to fall back on chromosomes as the last line of biological defence. However, sex karyotyping of newborns is rare, expensive, and carried out only when initial observation indicates significant variations. Few people know their own chromosomes. Even fewer are aware of other people's. And in any case, we do not demand to see a stranger's full sequenced genome before unhesitatingly referring to them as 'the lady at the ticket office' or 'the uncle who gave me directions'. So if embodiment does not fully explain or define gender, what role does performativity play?

I argue that performativity is the primary way we express our own genders and encounter the genders of others, and in this, I situate myself within the theoretical tradition pioneered by Haraway (1978) and Butler (1990; 2003): namely, the idea that

the sexed biological body is as much of an artificial or cultural concept as performative gender is taken to be. Butler's central thesis is that gender is not an immutable category, still less one moored to the harbour of the sexually demarcated body. Rather, she sees it as a permanent ongoing epiphany, more improvised performance than biological imperative.[13] The key claim here is that both sex and gender are constructs. There is no intrinsic identity of 'woman' or 'man' behind the performances of gender –in other words, that there is no *there* there. The components of the 'expected sexed body' discussed extensively above are a social projection. Contra the cultural assumption that any person with a vagina is a woman, Butler's theory suggests that the only thing that can be said for certain about a person with a vagina is that they have a vagina. The construction of anatomical difference through the practice of assigning a sex to newborn babies is neither value-neutral nor objective.

While acknowledging my debt to Butler, Haraway, and Wittig (1980) in terms of the foundations of gender performativity, I build on it with reference to phenomenology and ethnomethodology: specifically, reference to Grosz (1994) and Ahmed (2006). Ahmed's discussion of queer reality does not explicitly mention transgender people. However, I believe several of her key insights apply equally well to trans theory as to cis lesbians. She situates the concept of sexual (gender) 'orientation' as being an orientation in space and time as well as an internal 'turning' or 'inclination'. The assumptions of biology and personality that comprise expected gender form the projected social skin of an individual in a society built on presumptions of compulsory heterosexuality (or cissexuality). In Ahmed's reading, if all women are 'projected' to be one half of a heterosexual whole, the lesbian is a figure out of time and out of place. Similarly for transgender people: the social projection of a woman is that she is heterosexual (that much remains between Ahmed's cisgender lesbians and trans theory), but further that she menstruates, that she is capable of becoming pregnant and giving birth, etc. There is no social skin for a woman who cannot, or does not want to, fulfil those projected roles; nor indeed for a man who *can*, but does not want to. Being unable or unwilling to fit Amigara Fault-style into gendered social projections is the seam along which ethnomethodological tension occurs.

[13] This includes recognition that the way in which assumptions and constructions of the gendered body do not accrue the same way for women of colour as they do for white women; nor for disabled women as for abled women, etc.

So much of what we think we know about other people's genders is based solely on context clues - how they sit, stand, and walk; what kinds of clothes they wear; their hairstyles and makeup or lack of it. Some of this, of course, is culturally variable: Americans and British people see strangers naked less often than their Japanese counterparts (i.e., at the bathhouse), for example. But, as Ahmed observes, there is an assumption of gender which is inextricable from an assumption of orientation - a *real woman* is heterosexual; a *real man* treats women right. There is no social skin for a woman who doesn't want to be 'complemented' (or indeed completed) by a man. In a trans reading, the same obtains for a woman whose body can't do what we expect women's bodies to do, i.e., menstruate, be capable of carrying pregnancies to term and giving birth etc.

Thus far, I have exclusively discussed trans theory as written by and for Anglophone audiences. The second half of this chapter serves as a locative case study of Japan and its historic and contemporary ideas, debates, and conceptions of gender; cis, trans, and all points in between.

2.2 Japanese Sexology and Gender Discourses (Meiji to Modern)

Background: Gender Discourses in Japanese History

Japanese thought on gender and sexuality was profoundly influenced by the 'modernising' sexological discourses which arrived in Japan from Europe, America, and China during the Meiji period (1868-1912). Japanese anthropologists, sexologists, and feminist writers such as Iwata Jun'ichi, Takahashi Tetsu, Ogura Seizaburo, and Hiratsuka Raichō used new theories of the body and sexuality to challenge women's roles in Japanese society, to lend scientific validity to cultures of male homosexuality, and to foster an open attitude towards sex and sexuality throughout the late Meiji and Taisho (1912-1926).[14]

[14] for which see McLelland and Suzuki in Fuechtner et al. (2017) and Suzuki in Bauer (2015).

However, it would be a mistake to assume that all contemporary Japanese attitudes to the nature of gender, sex, and sexuality are the descendants of wholesale scientisation, or that bodies of knowledge on similar themes did not exist in Japan prior to the 1860s. I want here to very briefly indicate some data points from pre-modern Japan that indicate awareness of, or interest in, the concept of trans embodiment or cross-gender social existence.

Schalow (1998) translated excerpts from a Heian-period (794-1185 CE) court tale [monogatari] called *Ariake no Wakare* [Partings at Dawn]. The central figure of this tale is a mysterious youth, newly arrived at Court, who stuns the courtiers with his delicate beauty and quickly rises through the ranks to become the Major Captain of the Palace Guard. The Emperor becomes enamoured of the Major Captain and they continue an affair until the Major Captain becomes pregnant, at which point he 'retires' from Court and returns in the guise of his previously-sheltered 'younger sister'. In a second tale from the same period known as *Torikaebaya Monogatari* [Tale of the Changelings], a high-ranking courtier has two children, a son and a daughter. As they grow, each of them shows such a marked attraction for the social roles of the 'opposite' gender that he allows them to go through the appropriate coming-of-age ceremonies for each opposite sex, and they begin their lives at Court – the 'son' as a lady-in-waiting to the Empress, the 'daughter' as a mid-ranking male courtier. At the end of the tale, the audience is treated to the revelation that the siblings' gender variance is due to the malicious influence of a *tengu* [demon]. During the events of the text, the tengu has converted to Buddhism and renounced the effects of its earlier wickedness. The 'spell' of the siblings' respective genders is broken and they revert to the social roles of the sexes they were assigned at birth.

Front cover of a *manga* edition of the *Torikaebaya Monogatari*, illustrated and adapted by Saito Chiho (Shogakkan, 2015)

This theme of gender transgression being a visible sign of supernatural workings in the world also appears in later medieval texts, particularly a collection of Buddhist 'jottings' known as the *Kü zōdan* translated and summarised by Fauré (1998). The most interesting story in this text is a report of two monks who lodge overnight at an inn during a pilgrimage. The innkeeper's wife seems strangely familiar to them, and after some questioning, she admits that she used to be one of the monks at their monastery who had disappeared mysteriously some years ago. She tells them that one night, she began to grow breasts and to experience severe pain in her genitals, which transformed physically from a penis to a vagina. She later married the innkeeper and had several children with him. One of the monks, who was previously her master at the temple, reassures her that this is not a divine punishment and she has 'no reason to fear her karma'; the monks leave the inn the next day, 'amazed and marvelling at what they had heard.'

It is extraordinarily tempting to see these medieval accounts as being somehow echoes of real lives lived in the Japanese past, especially given the scholar and translator Rosette Willig's remark in her introduction to the English edition of the *Torikaebaya Monogatari* that there are often autobiographical aspects to Heian monogatari: "Yet another possibility is that it was written by a woman who had actually experienced something like the sexual complications of the heroine of the tale. This would account for the blend of masculine and feminine elements in the work, and however bizarre or unrealistic this theory may seem, it cannot be totally ruled out, for monogatari very often contain autobiographical elements." (1983: 5) Regardless of the role these texts might have played for their primary audience, what we do not find in pre- modern Japanese stories of gender transition is any kind of moral condemnation. Indeed, as Willig points out: "In neither critique does the *Mumyō zōshi* author find fault with the basic storyline of the sex switch of brother and sister, nor does he criticise either version for a lack of morality. On the contrary, he is at pains to say, of the later of the two versions, 'One does not feel it to be an offensive and absurd plot that such a sex reversal occurs.'" (1983: 3)

It is, needless to say, impossible for these tantalising glimpses of pre-modern Japan to form a single cohesive picture of historic 'trans lives'. The *Kü zōdan* is an obscure text by any metric, and the reception of the *Torikaebaya Monogatari* by later audiences often dismissed the story as a sex comedy rather than a reflection of an authentic form of life. I mention them here in order to establish that what Mitsuhashi (2008) and Ishii (2018) call 'crossing the borders of gender' [seibetsu ekkyō] was *not* imported to Japan only in the modern period. Nor, crucially, was the moral disgust so often attached to cross-gender behaviour in Europe and colonial North America. What is also interesting is that the only narrative to imagine physical metamorphosis is the latest of the three stories; the Heian monogatari, as might be expected for a society several centuries away from medical transition, present gender as more interpretive than embodied, but the genders performed by Captain Ariake and the siblings during their time living in 'opposite-gendered' roles are treated with full seriousness. Has this changed with the advent of medical transition technologies? What roles do embodiment and performativity play in modern Japanese discourses of gender and the body?

Embodiment in the Japanese Context

There *is* obviously a discourse of embodiment as a necessary, perhaps even dominant or deciding aspect of transgender existence in Japan. The medical establishment assumes that the desire to transition is a condition rooted in the body and the brain, and the law designates the physical transformation of the body as 'proof' that the individual is truly transitioned. The Japanese Society of Gender Identity Disorder [GID gakkai], which is the oldest and largest professional body for research into transness and gender identity within Japan, held its first annual conference in 1999. The Society grew out of its founders' medical practice at the Okayama University Hospital Gender Identity Clinic and grew to national and international levels over the last twenty-two years (Ako et al, 2001). I provide a fuller ethnography of the Society and its yearly conference in Chapter 6.3, *Navigating Gatekeeping and 'Dark Routes' in the Medical System*, but for now let us note that Japan's foremost association for transgender research is rooted firmly in understandings of transness as a curable condition. While Tanaka (2006) was writing about gender fluidity and feminist approaches to transness nearly twenty years ago, almost all of their contemporaries and indeed their inheritors of the last decade situate themselves within the medicalised tradition. Yonezawa (2003), Yoshino (2008; 2009), Tsuruta (2009), Sasaki (2017), and Ishii (2018) work variously in medical ethics, anthropology, and psychology, but a definition of trans self-perception as isomorphic with 'Gender Identity Disorder' is common to all three. Yoshino is themself transgender and their theory has evolved since their early career publications, to be sure, but these three texts provide a succinct summation of how much embodiment is entangled with trans identity in Japanese discourse.

Although the writers and researchers mentioned above are sympathetic or positive towards transgender people, or indeed in Yoshino's case are writing from an emic trans perspective, emergent Japanese trans-exclusionary discourses focus on embodiment as well: specifically, the idea that the mere presence or absence of a natal penis is the deciding factor in assessing (cisgender) women's safety, comfort, and dignity. There has been increased chatter on the transphobic Japanese internet about the supposed 'security risks' of having trans women in onsen and female changing rooms in particular, with some commentators going so far as to suggest security cameras in public baths and locker

rooms.[15] I would go so far as to suggest that embodiment plays a larger role in Japanese conceptions of the 'transgender body' than in British constructions of the same, both because British law does not mandate surgery in exchange for updating one's legal gender, and because public nudity at the onsen is common in Japan and effectively non-existent in the UK.

Despite this, I think performativity is - if not the more prominent - certainly the more *interesting* of these braided strands of discourse in the Japanese context. I move now to a more detailed consideration of Japanese-specific thought on bodies, fabric, materiality, gendered language, and what it means in practice to be 'skin-deep'.

Performativity in the Japanese Context

> There is a nightclub in Tokyo run by a famous female impersonator called Miwa Akihiro. The customers are seated on rococo chairs under a crystal chandelier in front of an onyx fireplace amidst marble statues of nude boys and vases filled with peacock feathers. The atmosphere is utterly serious. 'Madame will be arriving presently', whispers one of the waiters dressed in a red velvet dinner jacket. And so she does, looking glamorous in her low-necked evening dress. As she sings her usual repertoire of French chansons in Japanese in the warbling style of the 1930s, the people are visibly moved. 'Oh, she's looking lovely tonight', says an elderly gentleman to his wife. And a tear rolls down the scarred cheek of a tough-looking character immediately recognisable as a member of the gangster community. To the Western observer all this is the highest of Camp. To many Japanese it is simply beautiful.
>
> (Buruma, 1984: 117)

I argue that there is a higher priority and value placed on performance over physicality in Japanese conceptions of gender. Although the law as trans people encounter it now is

[15] This issue has only recently come to critical attention in Japanese and Anglophone academic circles. As such, there are few citable sources, but Shimizu (2020) has been at the forefront of naming imported transphobia as a social issue

obsessed with the configuration of a trans person's genitals, it is certainly not the case that the body has always been seen as the sole determinant of gender in Japanese culture.

Mitsuhashi (2008) gives extensive consideration to the phenomenon of being treated as a woman [onna toshite atsukau] in everyday social situations, including at restaurants, hotels, and hot springs. There are, in her experience, immediate and tangible indicators that one is being treated as a woman by the hospitality sector: she is given the 'ladies' menu', with its half-size portions, at restaurants; hotel staff put toiletries and fruit baskets in 'ladies' rooms', which they do not do for men; at hot springs where the yukata are colour-coded by gender, she receives the pink yukata intended for use by female guests instead of the blue yukata for men. She argues that even if one is 'caught out' [bareta] in attempting to pass, one is still treated as a social female:

> そこに商業的な接客配慮があることは確かですが、MtF の トランスジェンダーの女 性擬態がバレても「女扱い」が継続するという現象ね、私の経験からして現代の日 本社会では広く認められると思います。
>
> Certainly part of that is due to customer service considerations, but even if a transgender woman is 'caught' imitating femalehood, the phenomenon of 'being treated as a woman' continues. From my experiences I think it's widespread in modern Japanese society.

Yet even if this is true and Mitsuhashi's experiences are broadly shared by other trans women in Japan, is it true only for trans women? Several of my transmasculine and trans male respondents had horror stories of being hassled or challenged by cisgender women in gendered public spaces like toilets and women-only train cars. The relative lack of work on trans men's experiences and transmasculine gender performance leaves us with a dearth of available comparative points for analysis. There is also the complicated question of what we might call the crossdressing-to-transition continuum, where discrete division between the identities of 'crossdresser' and 'transgender person' might not always be discernible. Serano's defence of transvestism (2007) as a valid form of transfeminine gender identity, particularly as an exploratory way station on the road to

later transition, is worth considering in relation to Japanese trans identities. Japanese queer terminology differentiates fourfold between 'crossdressers' [josōzuki], drag queens, [doragu kuīn], trans women [toransujendā josei], and *okama*. The latter of these four categories,[16] often glossed in English as 'effeminate man', describes a person who takes on a female name, wears women's clothes, and uses feminine-coded language, but does not undergo medical transition and would never consider changing the details on their koseki.[17] The concept of part-time womanhood has a great deal of resonance in the testimonials of writers like Mitsuhashi Junko: they are women, but only within the context and safety of a community of others, perhaps a few times a week but not at home with their families. Several high-profile drag queens in Japan, like IKKO, Betty Mayonnaise, and Matsuko Deluxe, also occupy this middle ground of the continuum. IKKO's situation is particularly interesting considering the popularity she enjoys as a tastemaker for cisgender women: she has a regular feature in the magazine *Kimono Salon*, a quarterly publication aimed at an audience with considerable disposable income. Pictured in luxurious surroundings and wearing kimono from her own personal design collections, she dispenses advice and suggestions on hot spring holidays, New Year festivities, home hostessing, and other essential considerations for the stylish modern woman. As with Mitsuhashi's observations above, within the time that she is performing femininity, there is no attempt to undercut the validity of her presentation.

[16] Okama has historically been received as a slur when used by cisgender and/or heterosexual people towards trans and gender non-conforming people; however, it may be used intra-community by some people without offence. For a fuller examination of okama as a term, see Hirano Hiroaki's 2001 essay *Who Should Be Ashamed of Whom?* [Dare ga dare o hajiru no ka?] (trans. Suganuma, in McLelland et al, 2007) For more on okama and other terms in colloquial Japanese, see: https://www.tofugu.com/japan/lgbtq-identities/ [Last accessed: 12/12/21, 19:35 GMT]

[17] While the figure of the okama does have a transmasculine counterpart in the *onabe*, trans men's experiences are frustratingly under-studied and under-represented; I met at least one person who described herself as an okama during my time in Kyoto, and read personal narratives from several more, but never met or read anything from anyone who described themself as onabe.

A representative example of IKKO's photoshoots in *Kimono Salon* magazine

Any discussion of cross-gender performativity in Japan has to at least acknowledge Kabuki and Takarazuka, especially a work that deals with Kansai, the historic origin and heartland of both theatrical traditions. What complicates trans readings of the Takarazuka Revue and the historic lives of Kabuki *onnagata* [female-role specialists], however, is the fact that both are types of performance art. An onnagata's working life might extend into their eighties, while a member of Takarazuka will have left the company by her late thirties, but both are professions with their own training and their attendant paycheques. The question of heritability and journeyman training raises further questions, in that the sons fathered by onnagata were traditionally raised to the stage. Can trans identity, which Western and some Japanese trans theory holds as particular to the individual, be trained? While questions of such an existential scale are beyond the remit of this thesis, and while it would be a mistake to elide modern trans identity into theatrical roles or to overstate any affinity felt between everyday trans people and paid performers, there is one key concept from Kabuki that I wish to touch on here: that of the outer limits of the body being not skin, but clothes.

> "[G]ender acts arise from culturally and historically specific prescriptions, which designate certain acts to belong to certain gender roles. To know what a culture considers masculine or male-like, feminine or female-like, girlish or boyish, or ambiguous requires an understanding of how gender works in that culture's political and social hegemonic structures as well as their gender hierarchies. [...] The kimono itself, and the obi, worn by men, women, and children alike, have characteristics of design that make the differences between sexed bodies less apparent. The kimono becomes the surface body."
>
> Mezur (2005: 142)

Vollmann's (2010: 231) interview with the contemporary onnagata Ichikawa Shūnen provides further corroboration to Mezur's analysis. For Ichikawa, kimono is the essence of Japanese femininity: he identifies as male and describes himself as 'physically male', but femininity for him is embodied in performance. He details certain ways of sitting, or of spreading one's hands; he also discusses the custom of tying a silk thread around the apprentice onnagata's knees in order to train them into a particular way of walking. Ichikawa remarks that "However physically male a person might be, he can be a woman." (2010: 231) He specifically links feminine performance and *restraint*: the reason he advises women to wear kimono is so that the memory and experience of restraint will influence their gender performance ever afterwards, even when wearing Western-style clothing. "Kabuki actors in the past used to wear women's costume in everyday life. They were so lovely. […] But I always try to restrain myself." (2010: 235). They key point here is not that the physical body is completely ignored in this mode of understanding gender, but that it is not prioritised.

Trans/Queer Anthropology of Japan

Most Anglophone anthropology and indeed most critical work on trans people to date has been undertaken in the imperial cores of Europe, including the United Kingdom, Australia, and North America, as with e.g., Namaste (2000), Preciado (2000; 2008), Halberstam (2005), Valentine (2007), Lane (2008; 2016), Ward (2010), Catalano (2014), Carasthasis (2015), Honkasalo (2018), Borck and Moore (2019), Pearce et al (2020), and others.

There is a small but significant body of work on *some* culturally-specific third gender identities, of which the best are certainly Reddy (2006) on *hijra* communities in India and Najmabadi (2005; 2013) on trans identities in Iran; what is missing in the literature, by and large, is studies of transgender communities and lifeways named as such but outside of the Global North, although scholars such as Dutta and Roy (2014) and Aizura (2018) are producing fresh and exciting work in this area. I wish to draw out two particular points relating to the ethnography of Trans Japan such as it currently exists; one pertaining more to performativity, with the other having some very interesting understandings of embodiment on the part of the ethnographer.

There is some valuable of ethnography on one aspect of gender performance in Japan: that of gender-specific speech patterns. Gendering oneself and others adds one further specific layer of complexity in Japanese compared to Anglophone equivalents. While the use of gender-differentiated language is considerably less popular and becoming less common amongst teenagers and young adults, most of my respondents are very aware of it, especially 'women's language'. They have either had to learn how to deploy it themselves, in the case of trans women and transfeminine people, or have struggled against being expected to use it, in the case of trans men and transmasculine people. 'Men's language' is often treated as the unmarked category against which 'women's language' is presented as Other. Inoue (2006), Anan (2016), and Bardsley and Miller (2011) have all written extensively on the role of gendered language spoken by Japanese women, with particular attention to its intersections with age, class, and politeness. There is effectively no comparative scholarly work of which I am aware on men's Japanese.[18] Nor are the available options for trans people anchored solely to the binary. As S.P.F Dale observes, Tanaka Ray and the group Rockdom of Sexuality were already writing on non-binary and genderfluid identities over a decade ago:

> In 2007, the group ROS (Rockdom of Sexuality, intended to signify the 'fluidity of sex') published the text *Toransu ga wakarimasen!!* (I don't understand trans!!), which was a collection of personal accounts written by members of various genders, writing frankly

[18] In line with most of the useful writing on trans lives and identities coming from outside the academy, see Cameron Lombardo on men's gendered language, writing for the Japanese language learning website *Tofugu*: https://www.tofugu.com/japanese/queer-japanese/ [Last accessed: 01/12/21, 13:00 GMT]

> and candidly about, amongst other things, their bodies and sexualities. The book was originally published as a zine and distributed at various transgender events. X-jendā is introduced in the opening chapter: People who don't clearly understand which gender they are, or who aren't believers in the system of two-sex/genders (seibetsu) are 'trans' or FtX (something other than female/woman (onna igai no nanimonoka), or MtX (something other than male/man).
>
> (Dale 2012)

Readers familiar with *onē-kotoba* [lit. 'big sister language'], the hyperfeminine speech style used in some gay male communities in Japan, may be surprised to find that it does not have crossover appeal in other queer circles. Mitsuhashi (2008) is very firm on the non-usage of onē-kotoba in the Shinjuku crossdressing community, going so far as to title one of her sub-chapters *We Don't Use 'Big-Sister' Language* ['onē-kotoba' wa tsukawanai]. According to her, "[t]his mistake is made frequently, but in the crossdressing community, we don't use the common language of the gay community known as "Big-sister language" - in other words, language that over-exaggerates femininity." (2008: 98).[19] Her reasoning for the non-use of onē-kotoba amongst trans women and crossdressing communities draws a line between cisgender gay men and transfeminine people:

> 習得という点では、「おねえ言葉」がノンケの男性と差異化するためのゲイ・コミュニティの共通言語として先輩から後輩へと継承されるのに対して、女装世界の言葉使いは、その女装者の周囲の本物の女性（純女）のしゃべり方がお手本になります。
>
> The educational point here is this: 'Big-sister language' acts as a common language of the gay community used in order to differentiate themselves from heterosexual men, and it is inherited from older to newer members of that community. By contrast, the way we use language in the crossdressing world is that the style of talking used by the real (genuine) women around them becomes the crossdressers' model.

[19] これもよく誤解されることですが、女装者のコミュニティでは、ゲイ・コミュニティで多用される「おねえ言葉」、つまり、女性性を過剰に誇張した言葉は使いません。

Mitsuhashi suggests that there is no slang or dialect unique to transfeminine people because they, like everyone else, take their linguistic cues from the other people around them. Nor do pronouns, which frequently represent the lion's share of discourse around trans speech patterns in English, seem to feature much as an issue in Japanese trans people's self-image, even despite the presence in Japanese of gendered first-person pronouns. My respondents almost always used the polite neutral *watashi* when talking about themselves, regardless of gender. A few transmasculine people used *boku* [masculine casual] but I cannot ever recall anyone using *atashi* [feminine informal]. Some of the trans people whose testimonials are recorded in McLelland et al (2007) and Summerhawk et al (1999) touch briefly on pronoun usage: Takafumi Fujio, for example, refers to using boku in a 'dignified' way during his childhood. However, it is worth bearing in mind that boku was also used colloquially by some cisgender women in the 1980s and 1990s; pronouns have not always been classed along strict gender lines in Japanese.

This flexibility in names, terms, and naming can have formative effects on transgender people's self-conception, including our phenomenological experiences of embodiment. The use of different words to alleviate dysphoria when referring to different anatomical features is a longstanding practice amongst trans people. People may refer to prosthetics as 'my breasts' or 'my penis' with no qualifications, for example, or might describe a natal penis as 'my clit', a testosterone-enhanced clitoris as 'my dick', a vagina as simply a 'front opening', etc. While transphobes deride trans people as being unable to face the 'realities' of our sexed bodies, the act of asserting one's proprioceptic sense of each organ *as reality* can be a powerful tool in transgender hands. Tsutamori Tatsuru (1990b, 1992, 1993) has written extensively on the trauma and liberation inherent to the act of naming the body according to one's felt phenomena. Lunsing (2000) elaborates on Tsutamori's journey in comparison with that of his own respondents:

> Tsutamori Tatsuru used to be a freelance writer specialising in motorcycles and the world of motorcycling in Japan. Pictures of him through time show a total image change, from a motorcyclist with an unkempt beard, to a beautiful woman (Popeye 1993).
> [...]

> Tsutamori had come to hate his own physique, especially his penis, because the discussion of penises amongst *feminisuto* had increasingly given him the idea that he had better cut it off (Hashimoto and Tsutamori 1990). As he saw his penis as repulsive, Tsutamori was not able to have sex with a woman until his new lover referred to his penis as a clitoris and said she liked it, which made Tsutamori see that one's physique does not really matter all that much. Instead, one's feelings and emotions are the core of a relationship and if those feelings are not sexist and discriminatory against women, a penis does not need to stand in the way of achieving mutual sexual satisfaction (Tsutamori 1993). Likewise, a lesbian couple, of whom my interviewee was halfway through a sex-change operation [sic] and still had a penis, also found a way to enjoy sex together.
>
> (2000: 203-5)

Reading this passage provokes many further questions and reflections; not least the question of what exactly Lunsing thinks a 'sex-change operation' *is* and how exactly it *works*. Nevertheless, it is illuminating insofar as it demonstrates that the boundary between performativity and embodiment in Japanese trans discourse, as in English, is far more porous than the language of GID admits. Bodily autonomy extends to the right to name our bodies and their constituent parts as we see fit; and, as we can see from Lunsing's brief ethnographic sketch of the lesbian couple in Osaka, the centrality that the penis occupies in transphobic fantasy has not always been a going concern amongst lesbians themselves, whether cis or trans.

Chapter 1: Conclusion

Although potential sources for understanding gender variance and transgender identity throughout Japanese history are diverse, eclectic, and something of a bricolage when presented together, their diversity itself speaks to a lively and ongoing debate. Some points of Japanese gender history find echoes in English, such as the emphasis placed on performance-as-validity in eras before medical transition; some are borrowed from Western sexological thought, such as the concept of transness as a medicalised disorder

tout court; some, like the distinction between *toransujendā* and *okama*, or the restraint-based femininity of onnagata training, are uniquely Japanese.

What is certain is that we have not in any sense reached the end of history as regards definitions of what it means to be transgender. The embodiment-performativity divide in conceptualisations of trans identity is very much alive in Japanese discourses. Tsuruta (2009) falls heavily towards embodiment; Mezur (2005), Mitsuhashi (2009), and Vollmann (2010) emphasise cultural performativity. While Tsuruta's ethnography represents a significant contribution to the Japanese literature of transition, her work does not (perhaps cannot) conceive of transgender identity outside of the pathological Gender Identity Disorder model, defining it as a 'physiological phenomenon' [seigenshō] rather than a holistic identity with performative and cultural elements. There does not seem to be a particular 'turn' in Japanese trans studies in favour of performativity, unlike the Anglosphere, where performance is generally preferred as a conceptual paradigm. If the two discourses are still arguing amongst themselves, however, this chapter was at least an attempt to provide simultaneous interpretation.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

> It's true that I am somebody who was born a long time ago as male and now wants to live as a woman, but I carry both of these identities in this person called 'Hanako'. There are both masculine and feminine aspects to my personality. They're in this one body. I can't deny one or the other in my life. Both are OK. That's because I've been an engineer throughout my whole life. When I was little, it's true that there were some times and ways where I seemed like a girl, but more than that I loved to handle machines and ride on the train. If I think about it, I wonder if that's changed yet at all.
>
> (interview with 'Hanako', 3 April 2019)

'Forgive me for saying so directly, but I think it's very much the same for you, Lyman, isn't it?'

The remark came from my Japanese tutor on the heels of me translating the above quotation, which is taken from a semi-structured interview I conducted with one of my transgender respondents. 'You identify as a man, and certainly I can see that in you, but you also always dress very femininely and cutely', my tutor continued, gesturing to the pink pashmina I had thrown on over my T-shirt that day as I left the house. I explained that I'd made the conscious decision, before I came to Japan, to live as female for the duration of my fieldwork. 'It's a nuisance to keep on correcting people every time they call me a woman', I told her. 'Fieldwork is already stressful enough without adding the trouble of trying to pass as a man.

Any blow-by-blow explanation of how a culture *does gender in the everyday* has to encompass a broad analysis of dress, deportment, presumed or actual sexual behaviour, use of gender-separated facilities such as changing rooms and public toilets, etc. In this, the anthropologist's own body and habits offer a prism through which to view one part of the whole. It mattered that I *did* make gender-related decisions based on context in the field, and not all of them conformed to my simplistic explanation that I chose to live 'as a woman'. Some parts of the work I did were straightforward enough decisions, primarily around clothing; some other parts required a little forethought and a linguistic 'code switch' when talking to different groups of people. For example, I never used the

feminine-specific pronoun *atashi*; I generally compromised with the more gender-neutral, if slightly too polite at times, *watashi*; on some occasions, and only around other LGBTQ people, I used the masculine casual *boku*. The most difficult work involved quite literal public exposure. The name by which my respondents know me, which I have used since 2011, is not the name on my passport. Seeing that name on official paperwork, including my student visa and my Alien Registration Card, was a disorienting experience: none of the details which claimed to be my 'identifying data' (name, gender, nationality) were accurate at all. In bathrooms, on residence permits and health insurance forms, and at the neighbourhood bathhouse [sentō], I had to grit my teeth and select the door, the binary column, or the *noren* curtain with the symbol for 'woman' [女] marked on it. In England, I changed in the 'male' changing rooms after kendo [fencing] practice; in Japan, I had to change in the solitary surroundings of the 'female' changing room. Even at the gift and religious supplies shop attached to the Buddhist temple I attended, silk prayer cowls and the long tassels hanging from glass rosaries are divided into colours considered 'female' (purple, pink) or 'male' (mustard, dark red).

All of this -- choosing the door with the 'female' symbol on it at bathhouses and in public bathrooms but using only male pronouns in speech; my participant observation and my own private life; the conscious selection of gendered clothing and the equally-conscious times when trans people let misgendering slide -- comprises 'the work of gender' in a trans context. Transition itself has been theorised as a form of labour, most strikingly by the Scottish writer Harry-Josie Giles in their 2019 essay *Wages for Transition*: '[T]he labour that continually gives birth to gender, that produces liveably gendered lives under intolerable conditions.' The concept of 'gender labour' I use in this chapter draws from both Giles (2019) and Ward (2010)'s work on the affirmative emotional labour undertaken by the cis female partners of transgender men. My definition of trans-related gender labour is: the financial, practical, and affective work demanded by cisgender society of transgender people, in order to render trans people's transitions and identities palatable, legible, and non-threatening.

None of the gendered decisions I describe above were undertaken for my own comfort or my own freedom of expression. They were in large part a performance for the benefit of others, so that my resistance to being identified as a woman did not become a flashpoint

for contention. As Giles correctly identifies: ‘To transition is not to cross from one fixed point to another, nor to become the gender that one always was, but rather to engage with dubious agency and fraught embodiment the ongoing work of being gendered.’ These everyday actions gendered me in the eyes of others through my conscious processes of selection: if someone enters the women's side of the bathhouse, or has an F on their passport, or wears a dress for comfort in the muggy Kyoto Summertime, that person appears outwardly to be a woman regardless of their inner reality. If we class gender transition as part of the *work* of gender in Japan, we must ask: On whose behalf is the work undertaken? Who is burdened by it, and who benefits from it?

This chapter brings us out of theoretical discourses and literature review into the anthropological fieldwork I conducted in Kyoto and Osaka, Autumn 2017 to Summer 2020. In addition to the two prominent ethnographic research methods I mentioned in the *Introduction*, those of participant observation and semi-structured interviews, I also employed secondary/archival sources, alongside incidental ethnomethodological experiments in disrupting or contradicting 'standard' expectations of gendered behaviour or presentation, then noting the fallout. A few small examples of the latter form: I did not use an honorific at all where one was not indicated for accommodation bookings in English, or else I wrote down 'Mr.' when a title was required. In cases where I had not indicated my gender, my hosts uniformly expected me to be a (cisgender) man, with several people remarking on my 'female' appearance. Another frequent context of ethnomethodological experimentation was buying clothes. 'Women's' jeans in Japan are rarely available for purchase in my size: there was more than one occasion when I selected jeans from the men's section of the shop and was not prevented from using the single-occupancy stall marked male [男], as if the tag on the clothing, or the area of the shop in which it could be found, overrode the presumed gender of the wearer.

The participant observation was functionally multi-sited within a small geographical catchment area: that is, I went to different physical venues (coffee shops, rental spaces, cafés, the Yoshida-ryō student hall at Kyoto University, etc) within Kyoto and Osaka. The furthest afield I went for my research was for conferences in Okayama (March 2019) and Tokyo (December 2019). The most basic form this took was me going to places where

trans people gathered and observing what went on. rights at Kyoto Campus Plaza; and private parties hosted by friends in the city.

The central question of my research is: how do transgender and gender non-conforming people in Kansai conceive of, create, and maintain their gender identities and gender presentations in everyday life? The Japanese State's requirements for legally-recognised gender transition are both invasive and predicated on a set of assumptions about what it means to be 'truly transgender'. Many trans people in Japan are unable or unwilling to conform to the demands set by medico-legal gatekeeping in order to change the name and gender listed on their legal paperwork, including health insurance, passports, residence certificates etc. What do transgender people's lives look like in the gap between legal assertions and everyday enactment? What can cisgender people's reactions to transgender people tell us about the way gender is understood and constructed in Japan? What assumptions, what expectations, what moral panics undergird the structure of gender, and how are they exposed through everyday interactions? My aim in this chapter is to use ethnomethodology as a paradigm for analysing specific examples from my fieldwork that demonstrate moments of what we may term 'ethnomethodological crisis', i.e., where some assumption about gender has been contradicted, or where some aspect of a person's gender/gender expression presents a third party with an unexpected surprise. By analysing the nature of the crisis in each case, we can draw conclusions about the unexamined - indeed, often unconscious - logic, or what ethnomethodology calls the 'natural attitude', of gender in Japan: in particular, how it relates to transgender experience. In this chapter, I will draw on individual examples and case studies from my fieldwork and will also consider on a broader scale the coercive nature of the relationship between the Japanese State and the individual trans person, as regards the draconian requirements imposed as preconditions for changing the foundational unit of legal personhood (i.e., the family registry or *koseki*).

Research that centres trans people must also take into account the social assumptions, privileges, and unconscious biases of the cisgender society around us. This work was undertaken on my part from the lived experience of being a transgender man. Claiming to speak from any 'emic' perspective automatically means situating oneself in a contingent and unstable position: while it is true that I work from authoritative lived

experience as a transgender person, I could not expect automatic acceptance from a new (to me) trans community, especially one within a different linguistic and cultural context. Achieving this access was a delicate balance of knowing when to persist and when to refrain from pushing.

I gained physical access to the communities in which I did my participant observation by booking a reservation for a Shinzen no Kai meetup one day in April 2018 and showing up to the rental space where it happened for two hours. My Japanese language skills at that point were still at a very rudimentary stage, so I observed most of the event in silence with some limited small talk in Japanese as my ability permitted, and some chatting in English. The next week, I was invited to the post-meetup brunch at a nearby café; the week after that, one of my new friends suggested we go together to a different local queer pop-up lunch event; the group's Facebook page advertised a trans-interest film screening in Osaka; and the events I was able to attend snowballed from there. That was the persistence: the refraining period came in waiting almost nine months before I mentioned casually in the group that I was hoping to study 'trans Japan' at all, and nearly a year before I submitted my first formal request for interviews via the group Facebook page. This initial period of observation, and my position as a 'naive' observer insofar as I literally could not understand what people were saying, established my presence as a known quantity in the group and seemed, from feedback I received later from my respondents, to affirm my 'earnestness' and my dedication to 'trying my best'.

This evident sincerity on my part and its importance to my respondents was borne out by the actual process of my acceptance. After the Shinzen no Kai meetups, especially those held in Kyoto rather than Osaka, it is customary for a group of attendees to go for brunch at a nearby Saizeriya restaurant. Not everyone attends the post-meetup brunch. However, there is a core group of five or six people who almost always participate. I had attended this brunch group several times after my fieldwork began, and it was friendly enough, but I still felt like I had no particular insight into what my respondents made of me: was I a novelty? An eccentric to be humoured? A stranger to whom politeness dictated they be nice, but not really to be taken seriously? One evening in March 2019, about a year after I started attending Shinzen no Kai meetups and a few weeks after I began actively soliciting respondents for my research, I went with my respondent Makoto to see the film

A Woman is a Woman (Hong Kong, 2018, dir. Maisy Goosey Suen) at the 11th Osaka Asian Film Festival. When we were standing on the platform at Osaka Station, waiting for the train back to Kyoto, we were talking in English about language and translation. I confessed that I sometimes worry whether or not my Japanese language skills, including my pronunciation, are good enough. 'Oh no, it's fine! You're very easy to understand', Makoto told me, 'and what's more, you're very sincere. Your sincerity[20] comes through. And that's why we all like you, and we've all decided to help you as much as we can. Everybody has.' Very casually, Makoto had given me a glimpse of the backstage proceedings that enabled the 'performance' of my research. Their use of the word 'everybody' indicated that my research and my presence at Shinzen no Kai had been the subject of communal discussion to which I was not privy, as did the fact that, in the weeks preceding this event, my respondents had been proactive in recommending other members of the community as potential interview participants. Had I not been found trustworthy, I would have been politely stonewalled.

In stark contrast to the popular images of both trans lives and Japanese society as alienated and atomised, trans existence in Kansai as I experienced it really is a communal affair. The process of vetting me was collaborative and involved multiple participants. Any semblance of privacy vis-à-vis individual respondents was almost impossible, as people would not only suggest potential respondents but would also check in with me later to see whether or not I had taken them up on their suggestions. Nor was there any sense amongst my respondents that my lack of medical transition was in any way suspicious or unexpected, or that it somehow diminished my professed status as a trans man. I suggest that this is due at least in part to the nature of Japan's requirements for legal change of gender: when medical transition is expensive, difficult to access, and mandatorily invasive, everyone with skin in the game understands the potential and indeed the necessity for trans identity to work on the honour system. My work was necessarily prone to error, awkwardness, and misapprehension. Race and medical transition status, or lack thereof, were the two most prominent faultlines that I identified in my reflections on fieldwork. I was a pre-transition trans man amongst people who, for the most part, were years along in medical transition; and I could only embody white,

[20] Makoto and I had an interesting linguistic dynamic throughout my fieldwork: I would talk to them in Japanese and they would reply in English. This quotation is not translated from Japanese.

Western masculinity against the backdrop of culturally-specific, and often culturally-exceptionalist, attitudes to gender. Therefore, I strive in this chapter to both centre the voices, experiences, and lifeways of transgender people in contemporary Kansai, and to acknowledge the limitations and complexities of my own participant observation, with reference to 'mainstream' Japanese attitudes to, and conceptions of, gender where necessary.

Autoethnography and Non-Linear Becoming

The multiplicity of overlapping truisms about trans lives and trans identities has the potential to run rings around the ethnographer, producing a sensation rather like using a Venn diagram as a Hula Hoop. The difficulty of trying to write about trans experience as a discrete category is that every assertion about what trans people feel, want, or do vis-à-vis our transition journeys throws up counter-examples at every turn.

To elaborate on that: all of the following statements about transgender life are true. It is possible to be transgender without any kind of medical intervention (surgical, hormonal, psychotherapeutic, etc). Some trans people do transition medically, and they may do so to differing degrees (only hormones; hormones and chest reconstruction surgery; chest reconstruction surgery without hormones; genital reconstructive surgery, etc). The process of medical transition is often erroneously conceived of by cisgender people as being a linear process from diagnosis, through the commencement of hormone therapy, ending finally in gender confirmation surgery [GCS]. Curiously, this often seems to entail a belief that trans people stop taking hormone replacement therapy [HRT] after we have undergone 'The Surgery': several cisgender acquaintances have been surprised to learn that trans people usually continue taking HRT for the rest of our lives, in the same way as, for example, cisgender women who have had a bilateral oophorectomy prior to natural menopause.

The dominant narrative of trans identity is that it is a process of 'bodily becoming.' The concept of 'becoming' is one currently enjoying a vogue in autoethnography: Luvaas (2016) uses it as the theoretical peg on which to hang the component parts (physical, sartorial, online, offline, mediated by photography, in-person, up-close) of the *habitus*-

ensemble in which he clothed himself to create his ethnography of street fashion bloggers. The non-linear nature of my transition therefore problematised any attempts at delineating an 'autoethnographic *becoming'*. Like Israeli-Nevo (2017), I am 'taking my time' as a transitioning person; also similar to her descriptions of transgender temporality, I often experience my positionality as a trans person as being 'out of time':

> [I] would like to argue that as trans subjects in this transphobic world, we are encouraged and forced into a position of not being present. [...] This dissociation throws us into a far future in which we are safe after we have passed and found a bodily and social home. However, this future is imagined and unreachable, resulting in us being out of time.
>
> (2017: 38-9)

How does one create a narrative arc of 'becoming' when they both already have and have not yet 'become'? I came out as transgender in 2011, nearly a decade before my time in Kyoto began, which means that I did not begin my fieldwork as a heterosexual or cisgender person entering queer space as a tourist or a guest, or even as a newly-out trans person still at the beginning of a transition journey. Nor were my participant observation venues especially novel or strange: the language and city were different, but I went to LGBTQ meetups and social events in Oxford and London in much the same way as I attended them in Kyoto and Osaka. In that sense, I had already 'become' trans, and become familiar with trans life in community, before my research began. But I did not medically transition during the fieldwork period, and as such had not yet achieved any discrete markers of medical transition such as starting hormones, completing any desired surgical procedures etc). Within those temporal limits, especially as friends back home came out, started hormones, posted triumphant post-top-surgery photos on social media, and otherwise moved through various transition milestones, I was constantly engaged in auto-reflexive consideration of my own gender and the way it was received by the people around me. In this, I had to determine the fine balance between prioritising my own experiences to the point that they occluded the lives and experiences of my respondents

and retreating completely from the narrative without analysing the ripples of the 'observer effect' that my presence produced.

Transgender Ethnomethodology

'You know, from your name, I expected you to be a man.'

Many meals have been made out of the raw ingredients of supposed 'cultural differences' between England and Japan, but the apparent gender ambiguity of my personal name remains a constant in both languages. At first, I was startled, followed in short order by amusement, then resignation, then a desire to turn these frequent blips of 'contact shock' to methodological ends. When both obvious answers to a question are inadvisable (lying and pretending to 'confirm' my supposed womanhood, or saying 'You're not wrong, I am a man'), the ruptures of unexpected gender faultlines between transgender and cisgender people make themselves known. Doing gender-related fieldwork as a trans, disabled, smallish-fat, foreign ethnographer is never just classical anthropological methodology: it is specifically *ethnomethodology*, the practice of understanding social relations and conventions through observing what happens when those conventions are flouted. This is the paradigm[21] of observing the 'natural attitude' to gender advocated by McKenna and Kessler in their 1979 text, which drew on Garfinkel's (1967) foundational work, and has been elaborated upon by West and Zimmerman (1987), West and Fenstermaker (1995), and Stokoe (2006).

I argue that every person with a shareholder's stake in gender, which is to say every person, acts as an ethnomethodologist of gender every day. Gender is something that is real but inchoate, the underlying sense of which is only made visible through error. There is no objective set of rules setting out Gender Standards in black and white, but we often behave as if there were; and we may not know that we have veered too far off-message

[21] In ethnomethodological thought, the concept of the 'natural attitude' refers to a shared, 'common-sensical' understanding of the natural and social world. Gender, in this understanding of reality, is not an *action* - not something consciously constructed, performed, or interpreted variously by individuals - but rather a discoverable empirical fact. Crucially, the natural attitude is not a fixed text of 'rules', set apart from the context of everyday life, to which we may refer for guidance: it is something that emerges from individual, interpersonal encounters, and that is relative to them.

in our behaviour or clothing choices until the negative feedback from our peers or passers-by indicates our error. Transgender people have been a topic of abiding interest to ethnomethodologists since Garfinkel's research in the 1960s, a great deal of which involved extensive and invasive interviews with a young transgender woman called Agnes.[22] However, he did not develop a schema of the natural attitude to gender as a specific object of study. That was the brainchild of McKenna and Kessler (1978), who proposed that gender is not a set of empirical observations from which the researcher need only draw inductive conclusions, but rather an attributive process: gender is not something one *has*, but rather something one *does*. Although the natural attitude to gender is itself descriptive and observational, the policing and construction of gender has a strong prescriptive element: it is not enough that one 'does gender', one *must* do gender 'properly'. This mandate obtains for both cisgender and transgender people alike. The immediate questions this raises relevant to my research are: what *does* that construction of 'proper gender' look like in practice for trans people in Japan? On whose supposed behalf is it enforced?

The Work of Gender At Home and In The World

This policing and enforcing of 'proper' (binary, complementarian) gender roles is primarily justified as being for the protection of children and the family unit. The idea that children must be shielded from non-normative gender expressions, and that they will be harmed if not provided with suitable gendered role models and gendered socialisation at home and at school, represents a classical example of a moral panic. The experiences of my respondent Makoto provide a case in point vis-a-vis this moral panic around children's potential exposure to gender nonconformity. Makoto was at one point employed as an English teacher at a 'cram school'. They told me during our interview in

[22] A glaring lacuna in both Garfinkel's original interviews with Agnes and McKenna and Kessler's account of the natural attitude to gender vis-à-vis trans people is their conception of the nature and purposes of *transitioning itself*. That is: there was only one model of 'successful' or 'authentic' gender transition in Anglophone medicine from the 1960s through to the early 2000s (although its hangover manifested in several ways as the author's cohort began transitioning ca. 2011). The only diagnosis available to the transgender people of the time was that of the 'true transsexual', who wanted every possible medical intervention; dressed and behaved in appropriately 'masculine' or 'feminine' ways; was heterosexual; and was willing to go to any lengths to break with their pre-transition life. Viewed from a trans perspective, Garfinkel's Agnes was less a 'methodologist of gender', carefully selecting and discarding gendered behaviours to fit her needs, than someone being systematically punished by the medical establishment.

November 2018 that, although they were the most popular language instructor amongst the students and demand for their classes was highest, the director began to receive calls from perturbed parents:

> そして私は塾で英語の先生としていた時も最初に初めての生徒を担当する時にもちろん「中村恒子先生」とか「髪が短いけど女性の先生です」。校長先生が「女性です！」と紹介してくれて OK なっているんですが。あのう、時々初めてのその塾の…あのう、塾の子供お会話せて親が塾を見学に来た時に私を見て後で電話をかけていました。「男が女をわからない先生がいました。どちですか？私の娘は男の先生はいやだから、もしあの先生は男だったらやめてほしい。女だったら、OK。」
>
> When I was working as an English teacher at a cram school, of course I would always introduce myself by saying 'I'm [Miss] Tsuneko Nakamura' and 'Although I have short hair, I am a woman!', stuff like that. The head teacher would also confirm that I was a woman and would give an introduction on my behalf, and that was OK. But...sometimes the parents of the kids at the cram school would come along to observe the classes, and after they saw me, they'd telephone the head teacher. 'There's one teacher who I can't tell if they're a man or a woman. Which one are they? If they're a man, I want to end my daughter's enrolment, since it would be bad for her to have a male teacher. But if the teacher's a lady, that's OK.' When they said this kind of stuff over the phone...you know, it's difficult to explain.
>
> (interview with Makoto, 19 November 2018)

For the (over)protective parents of Makoto's students, the demands of cis/heterocentric propriety enabled and empowered them to demand 'confirmation' that their child's English teacher conformed to one of two binary genders. Demanding to know the particulars of a stranger's gender (and, by extension, the configuration of their genitals) would ordinarily be seen as *at best* presumptive and - more likely - a breach of the social contract on the part of the asker, in comparison to which the askee's gender incongruity would pale as a faux pas. Educators in Japan, of whom I counted several amongst my respondents (including a university lecturer, an LGBTQ-related educational outreach

lecturer, a freelance language tutor, and a career counsellor specialising in LGBTQ clients), independently corroborated the tacit social approval given to otherwise-rude or intrusive questions about gender - as long as the questions were being asked of someone who appeared gender-nonconforming.

> I've had some students just straight-up ask me 'Are you a man or a woman or what?' during our first orientation meetings at the beginning of the academic year. They'd never usually ask a professor such a personal question, you know? There's a certain level of respect that's expected between a professor and their students. But it's like they feel like it's OK if you're trans or if your gender isn't immediately 'obvious'.
>
> (interview with Hotaru, 7 December 2018)

This was the experience of Hotaru, a trans-masculine person born and raised in rural Kansai, who works as adjunct faculty at a small private university in Shiga Prefecture. Nor was their gender seen as an issue of public interest only within the boundaries of a lecture room: it rose, in fact, to within the remit of the unofficial neighbourhood watch. They told me that their neighbours couldn't seem to decide on a satisfactory solution to the riddle of their gender. In a Japanese neighbourhood, the most intimate material culture of the home is regularly exposed to public scrutiny: that is, very few homes have the luxury of a tumble drier, and so underwear is hung out to dry alongside the rest of the laundry to a greater or lesser degree of visibility. Hotaru's neighbours, upon first meeting them when they moved to a residential area of southern suburban Kyoto, assumed they were female. However, seeing that the underwear and other clothing drying on their balcony was strictly 'masculine' (T-shirts, boxer shorts, cargo trousers, etc), some confusion arose: was Hotaru a man, or did they perhaps have a boyfriend whom no-one had ever seen coming or going from the house? Finally, after noticing that Hotaru had a female partner and that the underwear on the line had, after some time, become the 'expected' mix of masculine and feminine garments, the neighbours drew the conclusion that they were a man after all. One neighbour went so far as to apologise to Hotaru for having initially 'mistaken' their gender, which was the first time they had been privy to this ongoing debate.

Hotaru did not seem disgruntled when they relayed this anecdote to me. On the contrary, it was presented as a comic interlude, with the butt of the joke very firmly being their neighbours. They were not afraid of negative social consequences: since the 'mistake' in gendering them was committed by their neighbour across the way, they did not have to apologise, and indeed were not expected to explain or justify themselves. However, they were genuinely annoyed by the lack of respect displayed by their students. Both incidents encapsulate moments of ethnomethodological crisis, where the social contract is threatened or subverted in some way. In the case of the neighbourhood laundry watch, their neighbours' behaviour remained within the boundaries of what was proper to their concern. By contrast, a first-year undergraduate student barrelling past the expectation of respect held by the instructor, in service of asking personal and prurient questions about that instructor's gender, was a breach of the social contract that could not be downplayed. For both Makoto and Hotaru, the emotional and affective work they had to do in response to others' anxieties or challenges around their gender presentation - to remain calm and professional; to 'reassure' their interlocutors by verbal affirmation of their birth sex; to struggle privately in the aftermath with second-guessing their own reactions to gendered harassment - are precisely part of the 'labour of transition' identified by Giles, specifically the element of it concerned with emotional labour (cf. Hochschild, 1983): the burden of processing other people's gendered anxieties and responding in ways unthreatening to their challengers is one that their cisgender colleagues do not have to shoulder.

For Hotaru's neighbours, their gender was a communal concern. So too with Makoto, whose gender performance brushed up against one of the main anxieties expressed in the law that dictates the form that gender transition must take in Japan: the idea of a teacher or adult figure disrupting the smooth transmission of 'proper' gender roles to the next generation, thereby sowing confusion and socially disruptive behaviour amongst the youth. Modelling these roles in action is also believed to require the students and teacher to be of the same gender, as we see from the parents threatening to pull their children from Makoto's class 'if Miss Nakamura is actually a man'. And yet, if gender roles are so biologically innate or immutable, why do they require so much maintenance and policing by others? The stated reason why transgender parents of minor children are not allowed to update their family registry until their child has reached the age of majority is to 'avoid

confusion'. This is presented as a foregone conclusion, the necessity of which is presumed to be self-evident to the reader.

Assumptions of Heterosexuality

This theorised assumption of what trans people are, do, and should be extends beyond the bare texts of the law and the physical body into the wider social sphere. Such was the case with Ikuko, one of my respondents, who is a fortysomething trans woman; she was previously married to a woman with whom she had two children. As of our interview in Spring 2019, her younger child was just about to start their first year of undergraduate study. Since they had not yet reached the age of majority (20 in Japan), she was not yet allowed to change the name and gender listed on her koseki. Doing so - living as her true self – also mandated a divorce from her wife, as Japan does not recognise same-sex marriage, and theirs would become a same-sex marriage upon Ikuko's transition. She said that she had discussed her transition with the rest of her family, and although they understood and were supportive, she still hoped they would 'be able to forgive [her]' for the breakup of the nuclear family unit that her transition entails. Similar stories abound: Takafumi Fujio, a trans man and trans-rights activist whose oral history is recorded in McLelland et al. (2007), says that he married a man and gave birth to two daughters, more in the hope that it would 'fix' him and make him a 'real' woman than out of any actual desire to be a mother or a wife. On transitioning, he divorced his husband, who now - unusually for Japanese family-court arrangements - has full custody of their children.

This connection between gender identity and (presumed or actual) sexual orientation was a common theme amongst my respondents.

> I had my first *crush*. I was about eleven, and it was a girl, and so… Then, I couldn't conclude that, um, 'Oh, I like women as a woman', it's more like 'Um… This could be like what's called 'same-sex love'', but I didn't necessarily feel like that? It felt more like a man liking women, kind of thing? So that was the realising point... that was the beginning of my gender journey, in a way. How you identify is so closely tied with your language, right? What's available [to you]. So initially the only thing I could feel was 'Oh, maybe I'm a boy in my

> head and then, like, a girl'… But what does that even mean, right? Identity-wise, I didn't have a word.
>
> And I remember actually writing something similar to one of my closest friends at the time. We had this *kōkan nikki*, an exchange diary thing that was hugely popular back then. But I was exchanging the diary between my best friend, basically. And one day, I wrote 'I think I like this girl, but not as a girl, but I feel like I like this person as a boy.' And I didn't think much of it at the time, but then when I received the reply, or when the diary came back, my best friend had written that *sonna koto iu Hotaru wa daikirai*… Uh, yeah, so, 'I hate you for writing that…'
>
> (interview with Hotaru, 7 December 2018)

The above quotation from my respondent Hotaru throws into relief the ambiguous nature of the relationship between gender identity and sexual orientation. For them, the lack of any language to describe their experiences was the hardest part of growing up trans: the only example available to them at the time of being 'a girl' who liked other girls was that of lesbianism. This presented Hotaru with two problems. Firstly, as evidenced by their friend's reaction to a confession of romantic attraction to girls in their shared diary, lesbianism was something to be hidden and shamed. Secondly, it did not sufficiently explain their feelings of masculinity or a masculine identity relative to the girls they were interested in. The feeling that homosexuality was insufficient as an explanation for the way trans boys related to the girls they liked (and trans girls to the boys they liked) is a common one. This was certainly the experience of the trans playwright and film director Wakabayashi Yuma in an interview with the Japanese website *LGBTxER.*[23] In the exchange quoted here, he recalls the first time he was able to talk about trans identity with a fellow trans man (a co-worker at his part-time job in Osaka) and the other man's girlfriend:

[23] Accessible online at: https://lgbter.jp/lgbter/yuma-wakabayashi/ Last accessed: 10/05/20 at 11.25 JST

> We also talked about my high school girlfriend.
>
> 'What was it like when you were dating?', they asked me. Although I couldn't really remember what dating her had been like, I replied that I had thought I wanted to become her boyfriend.
> Then, his girlfriend told me: 'Aw, that's normal. It's simply that you're a man and you liked this girl. That just means you're straight.'
>
> Really! It's normal that I fell in love with that girl! Straight away, I felt convinced and my heart was relieved.

For both Hotaru and Yuma, one of the earliest signs of their transmasculine identities was that '[they] liked girls, but as a boy would' - that is, not necessarily with a sense of themselves as lesbian, but with the more nagging sense that it was their gender identity, not the orientation of their sexuality, that was out of kilter. What is also noteworthy in this vignette is the relief Yuma felt at being told that his feelings for the girl he liked were 'normal' and 'natural'. Since heterosexuality is held to be the 'natural' state for male-female relationships, Yuma's male identity normalised what would have otherwise been an 'aberrant' lesbian desire. What this shows is that neither cisgender identity nor heterosexuality are unmarked natural categories: Yuma in particular had to consciously process his emotions to reconcile them with the heterosexual ideal.

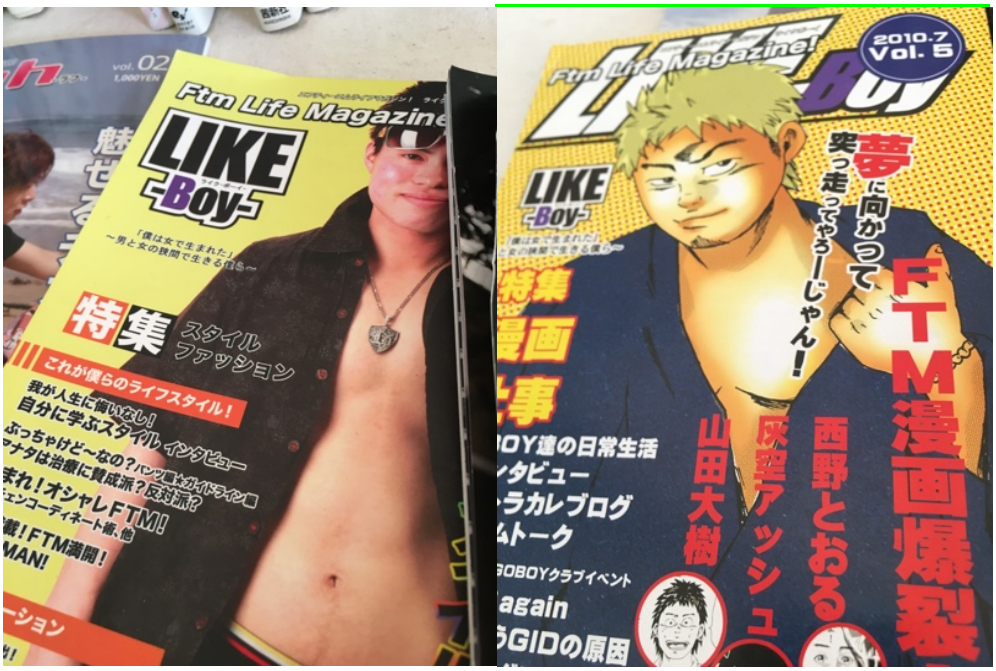
One major issue experienced in common by all four individuals quoted above is this enforced association of gender transition with heterosexuality. Both Ikuko and Fujio - and indeed all married trans people in Japan - were/are forced to divorce their spouses in order to transition legally. The reason for this is that Japan does not recognise same-gender marriages. There have been assorted attempts to challenge the divorce requirement at the municipal or regional level. For example, a case was brought by a trans woman to the Osaka Family Court in March 2019. She had the full support of her family (a wife and adult daughter) in her transition and petitioned the Osaka court to allow her to transition without divorcing her wife.[24] The case was immediately rejected. This is one

[24] Okitsu Hiroki. *Gender Identity Disorder diagnosis and surgery after marriage: petition for legal gender change*. [Kekkon-go ni seidōitsusei shōgai to shindan, shujutsu seibetsu henkō o shinsei]. The Asahi Shinbun Online, 8 February 2019. Accessible at:
https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASM284DC6M28PLZB00Y.html [Last accessed: 20/09/21, 15:55 GMT]

of the 'crisis moments' where the nature of the State's assumptions about acceptable relationships are made clear through challenge: a transgender person may enter into an opposite-gender marriage on completion of their legal transition, but they may not begin or continue in same-gender relationships if they wish for these relationships to be formally recognised. The reasoning presented for this is that heterosexuality is 'natural' and homosexuality 'unnatural', which falls short of explaining the necessity of using state force to maintain the boundaries of what is blissfully preordained. Dealing with enforced divorce carries not only the affective labour of caretaking the other members of the family unit and processing collective emotions around transition, but also a potentially-steep financial and legal cost, including the loss of financial tax-related rights; the right to make decisions regarding medical and end-of-life care on the spouse's behalf; hospital visitation rights; custody rights; and all other benefits that marriage entails. Depending on the type of divorce, which can be anything from a 'mutual agreed divorce' [kyōgi-rikon] involving little more than paperwork at the local ward office, to arbitration by a district court [saiban-rikon], forced divorce costs married trans people in Japan time, stress, and money - to say nothing of the personal, emotional toll taken on couples who wish to stay together as partners or co-parents after one spouse transitions, the trauma of which is often experienced as 'denied grief' given the lack of social awareness and support around this issue.

We can see from both Hotaru and Yuma's testimonials that the link between sexual/romantic attraction and an 'opposite-gender' social role is not merely something imposed by the Japanese state, but rather something that also wells up from within the community. The overwhelming assumption I heard, read, and eavesdropped amongst LGBTQ people in Japan is that trans people are heterosexual after transition. Although Japan, unlike the US and UK, has never mandated eventual heterosexuality as a requirement for transition, there is little to no room in the public consciousness for trans people who are lesbian, bisexual, or gay. Even publications such as *FtM Life Magazine 'Like Boy'* and *Laph*, which are aimed at a trans-masculine audience, assume that the trans men who comprise their readership are interested solely in women. The men who grace their covers are all masculine in presentation, flat-chested (whether post-operative or not), and shown alone or with feminine women, never with other men in poses suggestive of romance or attraction. Although magazine shoots are always within the realm of the

aspirational and the fantastic, Shu Min Yuen (2020) has done extensive ethnographic work amongst FTM communities in Tokyo, including with the editorial staff and readership of *Laph* Magazine. Her findings corroborate both the predominance of heterosexuality and interest in cis women on the part of trans men, as well as their investment in living stealth, i.e., not being outed as trans in the workplace and the broader community.



Examples of the form, from the 2019 Kansai Queer Film Festival at the Kyoto Seibu Kōdō. Photographs: author's own

This assumption of heterosexuality on the part of trans men in particular formed a large part of the dialogue during a discussion panel consisting of the trans playwright and director Endō Mameta, in conversation with Wakabayashi Yuma and the American trans director Jules Rosskam at the 2019 Kansai Queer Film Festival. Endō, who does a great deal of work with transgender youth, talked about the prevalence of casual misogyny and heterosexism amongst the teenage trans boys he mentors and whose youth group he runs. He described them making crude sexist and sexual comments about women and girls; ranking girls they knew based on looks; assuming that a woman's or girlfriend's role is to take care of them and their needs, etc. He elaborated further on the difficulty of interrupting in the moment, in ways familiar to other male allies of women and feminism: when is it appropriate to interject? How can an older mentor figure clearly communicate

what is or is not acceptable? The prevalence of sexism amongst trans men is not, to put it mildly, an unknown issue in the community. Endō's description of the misogyny endemic to some trans male spaces chimed not only with my own experiences but with Hotaru's, who summarised this phenomenon during our semi-structured interview as "Let's talk shit about women - you know, like men do!". The presumption of heterosexuality exists as much within trans communities as it does in the cishet mainstream, and prevailing sexist attitudes towards women and girls are absorbed as much by trans boys as by their cis counterparts.

We can see Rubin's (1975) observation that the designated-at-birth sex category 'decides' the sexual orientation of the individual (in that people in the 'woman' class are expected to be interested only in men and vice versa) play out in the hegemonic assumption of trans people's heterosexuality. Trans people are expected to be available for social reproduction along normative romantic, sexual, and domestic lines. Trans people must do the emotional work of reconciling their 'aberrant' queer desires to the comprehensible framework of heterosexuality, as we saw with Yuma.

The Limits of an Ethnomethodology of Gender

My thinking on ethnomethodology and its limitations draws shape and force from this insight from Veena Das: 'One instance of the application of the idea of reason turning demonic is that it blocks us from accepting such things as the humanity of the other on trust [...] The point is not that such doubts might not arise in the weave of life but that they cannot be settled by the production of more and more evidence. (2018: 172) As we have seen from the examples above, gender presentation can be creatively managed only to the degree that it remains in the social sphere. As soon as it rubs against legal and medical systems, much of the agency of trans people evaporates in the strictly binary settings of the gender clinic and the courts.

This is where we must confront the limits of ethnomethodology as a method of understanding gender as lived experience. Putting emphasis on the micro-perspective of individual encounters that are spatially and temporally limited, the intersubjectively crafted nature of gender presentation is revealed, together with the micro-aggressions,

misgendering and constant doubt that marks the experience of everyone who falls short of the cisgender ideal. But this focus on the minutiae of everyday life cannot account for the larger societal and economic forces that shape the structural constraints around transgender lives. How can we tell that 'people who do not medically transition are [believed to be] cis' is an element of the natural attitude to gender in Japan? Because there is no legal recognition of trans people who do not medically transition. How can we tell that membership in one of two binary gender categories is believed to be 'natural'? Because the law contains no provisions for non-binary gender transition or legal recognition of non-binary existence. How can we tell that gender confirmation surgery [GCS] is the 'defining' metric of whether transition is completed or not? Because it is only after GCS - after the physical transformation of the body - that the trans person is allowed to change their symbolic, legal gender. How can we tell that being cis is presumed to be superior and preferable to being trans? Because every aspect of the law governing transition is designed to force trans people into being as 'cis' as possible.

For trans people in Japan, the rulebook of 'how to perform gender properly and with appropriate permission from the authorities' is very clear: it can be found in the text of the *Act on Special Cases in Handling Gender for Persons Diagnosed With Gender Identity Disorder* [seidōitsusei-shōgaisha no seibetsu no toriatsukai no tokubetsu ni kansuru hōritsu], hereafter the *Gender Treatment Act* (passed 2003, revised 2008). The full requirements of the law and their implications for individual transitions are analysed in full by Taniguchi (2013); I will not reproduce them here in full but wish to note two points of particular relevance. The first is that surgical transition, including genital reconstruction, is required to change the name and gender on one's koseki. The second is that the 2008 revision permitted people who have already had children to transition, as long as their children had already reached the age of legal adulthood and there were no minors in the home, where the 2003 ordinance forbade parents from transitioning at all.

Examination of the ethnographic vignettes shows these macro-level forces in granular detail. In the case of Makoto, the 'crisis' their ambiguous gender presentation evoked manifested itself in think-of-the-children moral panic. Ikuko is a 'good wife and wise mother' in the traditional Japanese formulation: she looks after her children's wellbeing, does their laundry, buys 'office shirts' for her son's job interviews, and is considerate of

their feelings; she has typically feminine interests like cooking, playing violin, and growing her own vegetables; and she takes on 'motherly' caring responsibility for younger or newly-out people in the local LGBTQ community. Yet she is legally not allowed to fill the role of wife and mother because same-sex marriage is 'unnatural'. The moment of ethnomethodological crisis came for her when the harmony of her supportive family was overridden by the requirement to choose between her true gender or her marriage. For Hotaru's student, their interests of knowing how to relate to Hotaru's 'proper' gender overrode the breach in civility being so bold to a social superior would usually entail.

However, as mentioned previously, there is a secondary distinction of crisis in Hotaru's own reception and interpretation of these events as they relayed them to me. They were able to laugh at the neighbourhood gender watch because the whole 'crisis' was invisible to them until their neighbour offered a very flustered apology, which they could then graciously accept. But in the academic sphere, the challenge to their gender was delivered in person and in public, in a way that put them on the spot and threatened both their dignity and their authority. In the former example, the crisis happened behind the scenes; in the latter, they were directly under the spotlight. This second and more confrontational encounter in Hotaru's narrative shows us something interesting: that it is not always the trans or gender-nonconforming person who bears the brunt of the crisis. Makoto told me that they had experienced many confrontations by cisgender women who had accused them of being 'a man' or told them to 'get out of women-only spaces' in gendered bathrooms, in the 'ladies' cars' of trains and subways, and in gender-segregated hospital bays. Despite this, they were always able to assert their 'female' sex and be understood as the wronged party in the interaction.[25] Hotaru as the professor is allowed to express grievance and be sympathetically received. Despite the extreme minority status of trans people in Japan, they are still often able to come out on top of any attempt to challenge or humiliate them on the basis of their gender expression. Doing so - managing the microaggressions of being confronted in single-sex spaces or questioned invasively on their gender in professional settings - occupies a great part of gender-work as emotional

[25] As they told me in concluding one of these anecdotes: 'Oh yeah. That lady got really embarrassed.'

labour: trans people must remain calm and conciliatory lest we come across to bystanders as aggressive, unreasonable, hysterical etc.

Chapter 2: Conclusion

The demand placed on every trans person by a cissexist society is: 'Prove it!' The 'ideal' way for Japanese trans people to prove it, of course, is through faithful conformation to every article of the *Gender Treatment Act*. However, transition to these standards is a process; it takes time, money, medical certification, and a great deal of bureaucracy. How else to 'prove it' in the meantime between coming out and finishing transition, than through a stark and radical change in the gendered attributes of one's clothes, shoes, and hair? Especially when we consider this material performance in the applied contexts of a specific culture, in this case Japan: one is not only a 'woman', but a *Japanese* woman; and not only a Japanese woman, but a woman performing 'Osakan' versus 'Kyotoite' versus 'Tokyoite' womanhood, etc. Womanhood itself is a fraught concept worthy of problematisation. Giles links it with transition as both being minoritised, constructed categories of gender:

> All women labour to be women, and that work is also the work of transition. This is not to say that there is a natural pre-gendered state from which women labour to be women, nor that the marked difference between 'trans people' and 'women' as intersecting classes is immaterial, but simply that all womanhood is alienated labour for another's purpose, that all gender is always suspect.

This performance for others, or 'alienated labour', frequently encompasses the use of what is called 'women's speech' [joshi-kotoba], as magisterially analysed by Inoue (2006), and the *habitus* of bodily politeness. No-one embodied this more than my respondent Hanako, an older trans woman who lives and works in Osaka. When I asked her, during the course of our semi-structured interview, to describe her sexual/gender identity in her own words, she gave this reply:

> I'm MtF [male-to-female] ...well, as far as my sexual orientation goes, I'm asexual. And on top of that, of course, I do have GID [i.e., a

> medical diagnosis of Gender Identity Disorder]. As well as that, I'm an Osaka aunty. (laughs) 'Osakan' works as my identity. (laughs) That's number one, the most important thing. Our way of getting along with people is to be very friendly and... nosy, I guess? (laughs)

'There's a nuance to this word 'nosy' [osekkai]', my teacher (herself from Kyoto) said. 'She means the kind of person who always has sweets in her bag to distribute to passing children. Someone who's very familiar and inquisitive, but in a kindly way; someone who does what she thinks is best, but out of a sense of generosity.' Nōmachi (2009) discusses the amount of careful attention required to absorb a feminine habitus in the context of pink-collar clerical work:

> Although I'd heard of various methods for stopping hiccups, this was the first time I was consciously able to stop them. I managed to stop my hiccups *twice*. I realised I had a kind of 'fighting spirit' in this regard, and I felt pleased that I'd mastered one more aspect of being an adult woman (if only something as trifling as hiccups!)
>
> (2009: 22)

Aside from the 'dainty' management of sneezes and hiccups, other aspects of this feminine habitus include putting one's face in one's hands when embarrassed; laughing with a hand over one's mouth; pulling in the elbows while one walks. This 'training' of the body into a feminine deportment has a rich history and practice in Japan: although few of my respondents[26] wore kimono outside of the obligatory cotton yukata at hot springs or in midsummer, traditional clothing and its influence on gendered mannerisms remain symbolically powerful today. Dalby (1983), Mitsuhashi (2008), and Vollman (2011) have all discussed the adaptation of deportment required in learning how to move while wearing women's kimono. Even though none of my own respondents were particularly enamoured of *kitsuke* [kimono dressing], it can play an important emotional and cultural role for other trans people in Japan. Some municipalities and city wards, including Tokyo's Setagaya Ward, hold Coming of Age Day events for LGBTQ youth in which trans participants are encouraged to wear whichever form of kimono reflects their

[26] During the semi-structured interview with my respondent Hanako, I asked her whether she enjoyed kimono dressing, as her LINE profile picture at the time was her wearing an elegant Oshima silk kimono in the formal plum garden at Kyoto's Kitano Tenmangu shrine. 'No', came the immediate response, 'I hate it actually, it's impossible to do anything while wearing one - I just wanted to look nice in the pictures.'

gender identity best. The trans writer and researcher Mitsuhashi Junko has written extensively on the role of kitsuke study clubs in shaping her female identity and giving her deeply meaningful experiences of sisterhood with other women: '[Many of the cisgender women] kindly accepted me for the way I was and even gave me some friendly advice and comments about how to wear kimono, saying 'Junko, you look really pretty in that kimono'; 'Your way of putting on an obi is beautiful, can you tell me how to do mine like yours?' Those moments brought joy and peace to my heart...I always wanted to be a woman amongst women. I feel that I finally made the dream come true.'[27] Many of Mitsuhashi's anecdotes on kimono dressing are set in Kyoto, although she herself is from Tokyo, which serve to reinforce this association of specifically-Japanese femininity with the cultural capital (in both senses) of Kansai. It is this kind of regionally-specific, culturally-imbued awareness of gender through the media of bodily comportment, feminine discourse and speech markers, and female-coded mannerisms that I suggest forms the lion's share of gendered Japanese interaction in the day-to-day. Mitsuhashi's enthusiasm for kitsuke also serves as an example of how trans people can embrace the material aspects of gender presentation for their own personal fulfilment and gender euphoria.[28]

It is this euphoria, and the pleasure that is also a part of doing gender in the everyday, with which I wish to leave the reader. Much of the focus on the work of transition in this chapter has been on the demands made of transgender people that are not intended for their own benefit, but it would be misleading to conclude that all conscious plays and performances of gender are undertaken from dour necessity. Even as I performed femininity for a set purpose, not as true personal expression, I also found ways to have fun with it, including the adoption of some feminine mannerisms like covering my mouth while laughing. During the conversation with which this chapter opens, in which my Japanese language tutor and I were discussing my gender presentation in the field, she said something mildly complimentary that made me laugh and hide my face in my hands

[27] (quoted in McLelland et al, 2007: 310)
[28] The opposite of 'gender dysphoria', gender euphoria refers to the feeling of joy, comfort, or fulfilment in transition, whether through surgery, hormones, personal dress, being gendered correctly by strangers, using one's true name etc. For a fuller definition and history of the term, see: https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/files/3197xm05t [Accessed 20 September 2021]

out of performative embarrassment - ‘You see!’ she cried in triumph, her point having been made. ‘You do it too now, automatically!’

CHAPTER 3: AGAINST A TRANS NARRATIVE (ORAL HISTORIES)

> Voice is an apropos keyword for transgender studies, as the field rests on the demand that "the embodied experience of the speaking subject" subtend any analysis of transgender phenomena (Stryker 2006a: 12). Speech is propelled into the world through bodily actions, which is why a more metaphorical effort to "claim our voice" is synonymous with agential self-definition. "Voice", used metaphorically, signifies multiple meanings at once: a sound that represents a person, the agency by which an opinion is expressed, and the expressed will of a people. This is why the keyword is frequently invoked to narrate the struggles of transgender studies' formation as a field.
>
> [...]
>
> Trans* voices can fail to make sense in spectacular ways when our voices no longer provide adequate evidence for the bodies that emit them.
>
> Andrew Anastasia, *Voice* (2014: 262-3)

Introduction

As Anastasia (2014) neatly lays out, the concept of the 'transgender voice' is a significant element of Trans Studies as a discipline, within which it tends to have two separate meanings with two very divergent modes of analysis. Trans voices in the most literal sense are something of a preoccupation in the literature: McNeill (2006), Gorham-Rowan et al (2006), Thornton (2008), Hancock et al (2011), Hancock and Garabedian (2013), Pickering (2015), Azul et al (2016), Adler et al (2018), Borck and Moore (2019), Gray and Courey (2019), Cler et al (2020), and Smith (2020) represent a cross-sampling of researchers on trans voice phenomena from the fields of otolaryngology, speech disorder therapy, anthropology, clinical practice, and psychology.

The first aspect is the medicalised voice: how do transgender people *sound* when we speak? Voice training, voice therapy, and vocal cord surgery enjoy a enormous amount of attention and funding in transition-related medical research. Indeed, the Special Lecture featured at the 2019 Society for Gender Identity Disorder conference - the only one to be

granted a full hour-length presentation outside of the keynote address - was by the Korean researcher Hyung Tae Kim on *The New Conceptual Approach of Voice Feminisation, Vocal Fold Shortening With Retrodisplacement of Anterior Commissure (VFSRAC) and Retraining of Phontory Pattern: 14 Years' Experience*. Nor is the need for such services disproportionate or its funding necessarily mis-allocated. A transgender person's speaking voice can be a vector for severe dysphoria; while the concept of 'finding one's voice' is considered empowering, the process trans people must undergo to achieve this is fraught both physically and emotionally. For trans men and transmasculine people who undertake hormone therapy, the breaking or dropping of one's voice is eagerly anticipated as a milestone. However, oestrogen does not cause vocal pitch or timbre changes in the same way that testosterone does. Trans women must undergo vocal training or vocal cord surgery in order to change their speaking voice; sounding 'too mannish' is a point of significant anxiety and dysphoria for many trans women. Having a voice that does not sound like 'what a man *should* sound like', or that is 'too deep for a woman', can pose a genuine risk to transgender people's safety, as it can be one of the most immediate points of disjunction between one's gendered presentation and the current conditions of the body.

The second usage is the more metaphorical of the two. This is 'trans voice' analysed in terms of language use, narrative, and construction of the self: how do we make sense of the extraordinary phenomenon of transgender subjectivity? What words do we use to describe ourselves to ourselves, to other trans people, and to the wider world? Sometimes the literal and the metaphorical combine, as with Susan Stryker's extraordinary performance piece *My Words to Victor Frankenstein on the Hill Above the Village of Chamounix*; sometimes the two coincidentally combine, as with the ANTHONI interview mentioned by Anastasia. This was another part of my fieldwork and my writing-up where autoethnography became a powerful tool of sense-making. My own physical voice has changed since I began hormone replacement therapy, and it continues *to* change; listening to interview recordings I made in late 2018 makes audible the difference in my voice between then and now, not only as a trans person but also as a Japanese speaker, an ethnographer, and an interviewer. In thinking-through the reflexive aspects of my ethnographic role in these interviews, I draw not only on Narayan's (1993) evaluation of the 'native' anthropologist's contingent insider-ness and Adjepong's (2019)

'invading ethnography', but most specifically on Collins' (1986; 1999) concept of the 'outsider within'. The crucial point from her work that I bring to my analysis of these interviews is that *outsider within* is not a personal attribute nor a description of an individual. Outsider-within identities are "situational identities that are attached to specific histories of social injustice - they are not a decontextualised identity category divorced from historical social inequalities that can be assumed by anyone at will." (1999: 86). The broad category of 'transgender' that my respondents and I all shared is not one of simple elective affinity, but signals a collective experience of marginalisation, discrimination, denial of healthcare and legal existence etc. both historic and ongoing.

There is no doubt that I and the people I interviewed belong to relatively privileged minorities within demographics of transgender and gender-nonconforming people worldwide, but all of us have had firsthand encounters with the sharp edges of being trans in public. The outsider-within played a key role in my autoreflexive ethnography in motion during these interviews. I knew what transness means *to me* as an Anglophone trans man who came up in British trans communities: what I was trying to find out was whether or not it meant roughly the same thing *to them*. I was not a truly naive observer like e.g. McLelland (2002) eavesdropping on trans messageboards, so there were points of familiarity between my experiences and those of my respondents, but our points of divergence were significant enough to be constantly intriguing. These overlaps and disjunctions chimed a great deal with Ajdepong's observation that, when engaged in 'invading anthropology', "[E]thnographic performance is not about the researcher, but instead puts the researcher's history and body in conversation with the research participants' and thereby opens up possibilities for connections that may not have previously been imagined." Bringing my body, its history, and its experiences into concert with other trans people's, within the artificial performance context of the ethnographic interview, made possible not only established common ground but potential futurities.

While collections of 'voices' from LGBTQ people, are nothing very new - they are already a popular format for sourcebooks of life histories, interviews, oral testimonials etc. in English translation, beginning with Summerhawk et al's *Queer Japan* (1999) and continuing through McLelland et al's *Queer Voices from Japan* (2007), Fujimura-Fanselow's *Transforming Japan* (2011), etc. - this ethnographic interplay of trans

interviewer and trans respondent is absent in all of them to date. There is a great deal of variation in the quality of the three books mentioned here; even the best feature the words of trans people filtered through the translations and assumptions of exclusively-cisgender editors, while others admit that they prioritised publication over improved trans representation:

> Somewhere along the line, Ms. Shirakawa suggested we include transsexuals [sic] and gave me some information on a male to female lesbian living in Kyoto and I contacted her...We feel the book might have benefited from more stories from the transsexual [sic] community, but we also felt we needed to get the book out.
>
> (Summerhawk et al. 1999: 2)

A trans voice may speak, but it may not always be heard: representation and citation are political acts. Nor are silencing tactics, suppression of dissent, or requirements to conform to the expected narrative always wielded only by cisgender people against transgender people: sometimes, the call made in a trans voice is coming from *inside* the house. By this I mean that the voices (in the metaphorical sense) of trans people are not always an equal polyphony. Class, education level, location, proximity to power, and respectability politics can all play a role in which trans people are heard and which are not. Self-censorship for the perceived or actual good of the community is also a common issue. As Takafumi Fujio observes:

> The community in Japan - particularly in Tokyo - had an extreme bias towards seeing transsexuality as being inborn and and a strong tendency to exclude others. This is because there is a history of using this as an argument in appeals for changing a person's legal sex on personal registration documents as well as in appeals for human rights. It was only after the special treatment law for people with gender identity disorder was adopted that those other than 'typical' transsexuals [sic] let themselves be heard. It is a phenomenon of people who do not agree with the conditions of the special treatment law all together raising their voices.
>
> (quoted in McLelland et al 2007: 293)

One of my aims with this chapter is to complicate the diversity of opinions and experiences within the trans community I was able to access, and to highlight the existence of dissent - from the law, from the 'standard' trans narrative, and from other people within the community. Some of the ways that my respondents describe themselves are contradictory or are unsure; are perhaps at odds with the 'standard' narrative of coming out or transitioning. This is as it should be. Trans existence in motion cannot be easily taxonomised, even - *especially* - in circumstances where a one-size-fits-all model of transness is pushed so aggressively by 'official' (governmental, educational, medical...) sources. Identifying details have been changed at times in order to protect my respondents' individual privacy, but the essentials of their transition journeys; their adherence or divergence from legal transition standards; and the vocabularies they use to describe themselves are accurate to what they told me. Rather than, as Summerhawk does, ticking off a box with one single trans narrative, I choose to follow Rosskam's (2008) hermeneutic of being *against* that 'single narrative' model of representing trans life. My goal is to complicate what transition and trans identity look like in Japan, as their representation often suffers from over-simplification both domestically and internationally: that is, Japanese audiences are presented with one medicalised narrative of transition according to the law, while foreign audiences are presented with voyeuristic pity porn.[29]

There are several elements of the interviews I conducted, and of the practice of ethnographic interviews per se, that warrant unpacking, scrutiny, or at the very least acknowledgement in this introduction. The concept of the ethnographic interview as a qualitative research method has itself not gone un-scrutinised or un-critiqued: Hammersley (2019) and Tuhiwai Smith (2012) have written extensively on both the hegemonic use of the ethnographic interview as a source of authoritative, 'authentic' information from a respondent with relevant relationship to the anthropologist's proposed object of study, and on its detractors. Although the semi-structured interview is a time-honoured tool in the anthropologist's toolbox, often considered to be an

[29] For more on which see e.g., Anglophone reporting of the January 2019 High Court ruling on sterilisation and the 2019 BBC documentary on forced transgender sterilisation in Japan, *Forced to Face Sterilisation*, a short introduction to which is accessible online at https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-asia-56668349 [Last accessed: 12/12/21, 13:42 GMT]. The country is often presented as unusually harsh, backwards, and draconian in its transition laws, in implicit or explicit contrast to 'liberal' Western countries.

essential element of our fieldwork, the fact remains that it is a more purposeful, and therefore more artificial, setting than spontaneous conversation or participation in non-research-based social activities. There are certain risks inherent to presenting interview excerpts as face-value truths; not all of my respondents agree with each other, and I disagree on a personal level, as a transgender person discussing intra-trans issues, with a few of my respondents' approaches to e.g., hormone therapy or clinical gatekeeping. It is also worth acknowledging, if only briefly, the problematic elements endemic to the common usage of 'voices' as academic terminology. To render an individual, a whole complex subject with a contextual social life and a physical presence, into a 'voice' risks erasing their embodiment and the specific ways in which they engage with the world, their built environment, and their community. Hanako is not merely a 'trans voice' or a 'trans body' at the onsen; Makoto's 'trans voice' was not the deciding factor when they were challenged in single-sex public spaces.

A voice can be silenced, censured, or disregarded in the way an embodied personhood cannot; and to simplify the fact of a person occupying space into a 'body' renders it curiously inert. Writing in the online leftist journal *Jacobin*, Daniel Kretz[30] cuts directly to the point of this critique with the title of his essay *People, Not 'Voices' Or 'Bodies', Make History:*

> Somewhere in the lexical history of "giving voice," the primary function of the phrase moved from a reflexive action (expressing oneself) to an ascriptive one (endowing unto others). That is, it's become something of a political act. The bestower engages in a liberatory gesture — indeed, performs an act of redress — and, not incidentally, advertises their own benevolence in the process.[31]
>
> The strange alchemy that renders a person into a voice patronizes them in two senses. First, it perverts their political actions and aspirations, flattening the complexity of their life into a mere voice uttered at a single time and place. Second, even more nefariously, it

[30] The essay can be read online at: https://www.jacobinmag.com/2021/06/voices-bodies-us-colored-troops?fbclid=IwAR0x63lyjiES04XVR3aDtmEAa4n4nAURg8dxCoUAZLkBpjD3bWijevGSuFY
Last accessed: 23/07/21]

[31] We can see this advertisement of benevolence in e.g., Summerhawk et al's introduction: the implication is one of benevolence for having included at least one 'transsexual' at all.

> implies an authorial sponsorship of that voice — a kind of stewardship, if not outright ownership. How many works of history or social science betray the conceit of "giving voice" to their subjects, as if the subjects lived their entire lives on mute until the noble intervention of the scholar?

It is easy for the ethnographer or the compiler of life histories to fall into the trap of assuming that trans people in Japan are 'voiceless' and that 'giving voice' is a form of liberation that can be bestowed or, alternatively, revoked. The problem with this noble sentiment is that it is not true. My respondents kindly agreed to sit for interviews with me, but none were unfamiliar with interviews and their purposes; some were/are academics and had conducted exactly these types of interviews themselves; others were activists, several of whom have blogs, Facebook groups, LINE accounts, queer study collectives etc and are active in public consciousness-raising. They could not be described in any reasonable way as 'voiceless'; and I was certainly not the first person in their lives to express a research or education-oriented interest in their experiences of transition. It is not my purpose to rehash the arguments about the validity of semi-structured interviews and their role in ethnographic fieldwork, nor to go too deeply into the niceties of academic terminology. Even within the limitations of the interview form, it is still very much worthwhile to hear from my respondents firsthand and uninterrupted.

No two of my respondents were at the exact same points in their transitions; none were just embarking on their journeys; all of us were living the extraordinary mystery of the everyday. There were, however, still considerable limitations on whom I was able to interview. The people I was able to meet were already 'out' to the extent that they felt comfortable attending LGBTQ community meetups in major urban centres; prior to the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, almost all socialisation took place offline. With the advantage of online Zoom socials, I was able to meet and hear from LGBTQ people in more rural or further-flung parts of Japan but was unable to arrange semi-structured interviews with anyone I met this way. My eventual interview pool therefore had a certain degree of overlap (mostly respondents in their mid-30s through early 60s; all urbanites; all middle-class or possessed of at least one tertiary degree), while all still diverging from the Ni-chōme community in Tokyo, which has been historically overrepresented in research on Trans Japan.

Structure of the Chapter

I have settled on a structure for this chapter that owes a great deal (perhaps royalties) to Akutagawa Ryunosuke's short story *In a Bamboo Grove*: five characters, as we may think of them, speak on what may or may not be the same body of events, and the conclusion is left to the reader as an exercise. I met many more trans and X-gender people than I was able to interview; the dramatis personae in this chapter, and in the thesis as a whole, are representative of the people with whom I spent the most, and most significant, time. I have chosen to present my respondents' answers here modelled on Rosenberger's (2013) longitudinal study of Japanese women over a twenty-year period, inasmuch as I have a selection of answers for each question I asked in the interviews. Not every respondent is represented in every question but every question does have a variety of responses interwoven around the progression of a typical interview. [32] This organisational strategy reflects my proposal in the introduction that the proper unit of ethnographic analysis for this dissertation is the *community* and not the individual.

All of the qualitative data I gathered for this chapter were drawn from semi-structured interviews, one hour to ninety minutes long. Almost all of my respondents were drawn from the Shinzen no Kai community; this was due both to the primacy of Shinzen no Kai as my field site, and to the fact that the other community with whom I spent time had no centralised Facebook group or contact details through which to solicit interviews. Before I started active interview outreach, I assembled an information pack describing my research and its objectives (see Appendix I) and sent it to Eitaro, the founder and director of Shinzen no Kai. I asked his permission to write a post on the Shinzen no Kai Facebook group soliciting interviewees, which he kindly granted, and people contacted me from there. I conducted almost all of these interviews in person in Kyoto and Osaka, 2019-2020, either in coffeeshops or in private residences like my apartment, my respondents' houses etc. I asked a set list of questions and prompts at each interview. I have used this list to structure my respondents' answers thematically in this chapter, recorded in the same order as I asked each question during our interviews.

[32] Some of the responses to certain questions may also sound like non-sequiturs or tangents. I have chosen to reproduce my respondents' answers directly as they gave them.

Questions about trans linguistics, such as the definitions my respondents use for themselves and others in their community, occupy almost half of the nine points I tried to cover in each session. I was especially interested in my respondents' definitions of the words they use to describe themselves because I arrived on the Japanese-speaking trans scene when the loanword *toransujendā* was already in common usage, which it would not have been even a decade earlier. None of my respondents described themselves as 'having GID' or 'people with Gender Identity Disorder', although people who embarked on medical transition sometimes did allude to having been *diagnosed* with such; it was viewed as a pathology attributed to them by others rather than a reclaimed identity. There are other ways of describing gender transition in Japanese than the ones my respondents used to define and explain their identities,[33] but in practice, the words they used formed a loose but definable cluster.

Some of their definitions surprised me. For example, I have never heard anyone but Hanako define asexuality the way she does.[34] Makoto does not use the word 'transgender' to describe themself at all, preferring to describe their identity in percentage terms. My critical interest in the use of loanwords originally from English owes a great deal to Adjepong (2018)'s discussion of 'the universal epistemic code' as conceived by Mignolo (2011): an epistemology that "silences how colonialism structures what we know of the world and instead imagines Europe and the Western world as the center and site of knowledge production – everything else is local and therefore marginal (Bhambra, 2007; Mignolo, 2009)." The way that this colonial imaginary manifests itself in Anglophone/Western studies of LGBTQ communities inside industrialised but non-Western countries is the assumption that e.g., *rezubian*, *gei*, *baisekushuaru*, and *toransujendā* have exactly the same semantic boundaries and connotations as they do in English, and that Japanese transness is basically 'Western' transness in a yukata. As many of my respondents explained, there were Japanese words for gender variance and cross-gendered behaviour prior to the LGBT 'boom' of the late 1990s; just because they were not *nice* words does not exclude them from the linguistic landscape in which my respondents' early understandings of transness were formed. Although gender

33 The current author is quite fond of Mitsuhashi Junko's phrase 'crossing the border of gender' [*seibetsu ekkyō*].

34 With the possible exception of Plato, in *The Symposium.*

divergence in spoken Japanese has been the subject of significant attention in linguistic anthropology (Inoue, 2006), gender studies (Bardsley and Miller, 2014), and trans people's own writing (Mitsuhashi, 2008; Nōmachi, 2008), it does not form a key part of my analysis in this chapter. Where the interviews were conducted in Japanese, I have included transcriptions; several of my respondents, especially Hanako and Ikuko-san, used English intermittently throughout, which I have retained. My interview with Hotaru was entirely in English. All translations in this section are my own.

All five people I introduce here are transgender or gender-nonconforming individuals whom I have met several times, or with whom I have developed enduring relationships, since April 2018.

Makoto, a lifelong Kyoto resident, is in their late 50s. They previously worked as a language teacher and are now an independent educator and website developer. They are gender-nonconforming and transmasculine. We met at the first Shinzen no Kai meeting I ever attended, in April 2018; Makoto is one of the few regulars who speaks English, so by necessity was one of the first people I came to know well.

Hotaru, a nonbinary person in their mid-30s, works as a university professor at a small private college in Hyōgo, the prefecture where they were born and raised. After completing undergraduate studies in Japan, they pursued tertiary education in New Zealand and the United States.

Momoko, a trans woman in her early 40s, is an LGBTQ outreach educator. She runs workshops and awareness-raising classes for all education levels in schools; hospitals; civil service offices, ward offices, City Hall employees, etc. We met at Shinzen no Kai. Makoto suggested Momoko as a potential respondent and she was in fact the third person after him with whom I was able to secure a semi-structured interview.

Ikuko, a trans woman in her late 40s, is a musician, legal secretary, and founder of an LGBTQ study and activism group in Osaka. She is divorced; the mother of two grown children; a fan of synthpop; and highly active in continuing education groups in her

community. We met at Shinzen no Kai and I joined her group, NijiMix, on its inception in 2021.

Kaede, at 22 my youngest respondent, is a sophomore at a private university in Kyoto studying family and child counselling. She was newly out in 2019 and had only been coming to Shinzen no Kai a few times when she agreed to be interviewed.

The Interviews

1. Please give a short self-introduction, including anything you like (family background, hobbies, career etc)

MOMOKO:
まず家族は、父と母と、私と、弟と妹です。三人きょうだいの一番上。いつごろ性別が違うと思ったかっていうことなんですけど、違うと思い始めたのは、幼稚園の時ですね。幼稚園に泊まった時にみんなでシャワーをかかる[浴びる]、[その時に]周りの子が女の子で、なんか突起物があるぞ、と。突起物があって違うなと思ったので、親にその後「いつ突起物がなくなるか」って聞いたら、「この突起物はなくならない」と言われてショックを受ける。悲しいような感じ。その時はまだ自分が女の子だと思ってたんですよね。だけど、男の子だということを知った時かなと思います。

In my family I had my father, my mother, and two younger siblings - a brother and a sister. I'm the oldest of three siblings. As for when I felt that my gender was different [from the one I'd been assigned], that sense of difference began for me in kindergarten. When I was at kindergarten we all used to bathe together. At that time the other children around me were girls, but I somehow had a body part that stuck out. I thought I was somehow different because of this protruding part, so a while later I asked my parents: "When will this sticking-out part disappear?" On hearing from them "This sticking-out part *won't* disappear", I felt shocked. It was a feeling similar to sadness. At that time I still thought I was a girl, you know? But I think that was the point at which I learned I was a boy.

MAKOTO:
私にとって、一番大切な物は、ボイフレーンドのセックシュアリディが、あのう、女の子っぽいということです。それが一番初めの気かけで、でも、私が彼と仲良くなった理由は、彼は女っぽい、私は男っぽい、それで私たちは後時にすぐそのセックシュアリディが普通の人たち(がいうこと)始めた後時にすぐわかりました。そして、あのう...彼は80パーセント女のこで、20パーセント男性、私は20パーセント女性で、80パーセント男性だから、[both laughing] 私のはその人間関係相性は、すごくいいとわかりました。

For me the most important thing is this. So, my boyfriend's sexuality is quite feminine. That was the beginning, that was the reason why I became friendly with him - he's feminine, I'm masculine, so after we met, our relationship became one of 'normal' sexuality; we understood each other straight away. He's 80% girl and 20% male, and I'm 20% female and 80% male, so I found that our relationship compatibility is very good. What's more, when he came to Japan as an LGBT person himself, he started to join the local community because he wanted to hear people's insights about various environments and about [LGBT] acceptance.

IKUKO: 私は兵庫県に生まれてずっと兵庫県で住んでいます。私の趣味は.....playing the flute.

他に、コンピュータでプログラミングをしたりすることが好きです。実は一度結婚して離婚しています。子どもが二人います。今日は子どもの大学合格のお祝いで後でお買い物に行きます。MacBookが欲しいって言われました（笑） 高いです。

I was born in Hyogo Prefecture and I've lived there all my life. As for my hobbies...I play the flute, and other than that, I like doing some computer programming. I've been married once and divorced. I'm actually going shopping today for one of my kids' college graduation celebrations; he told me he wants a MacBook! They're expensive (laughs)

KAEDE:
自分について.....セクシュアリティはまだ完全には決まってない感じですね。気持ち

はたぶん、客観的な判断としてはMTFに近いのかなとは思ってます。セクシュアリティって確定したものがないので……マニュアルと言いますか、[それ]がないので、決めかねているという形です。趣味はビリヤード、サイクリング、読書が普段していることになりますね。それ以外のたまにやることも含めると数えきれない。大まかにこの三つ。[自己紹介として]出てくるのはこれくらいです。

About myself... I feel like I haven't yet completely settled on what my sexuality is. My sense is that maybe, as an objective judgement, 'MtF' comes the closest. Because my sexuality hasn't been settled, and because there isn't a manual for this kind of thing, it takes the form of fence-sitting. My usual hobbies are billiards, cycling, and reading, but are really too many to count if we're including other things I do occasionally. But these three are my main pastimes. That's all I've got for a self-introduction!

HOTARU: I was born and raised in Kyoto Prefecture in Japan. I grew up with my parents, who were high school teachers when I was young, but my mom was a Physical Education teacher, and she was interested in gender issues. So I remember, she started to talk to me - not so much talk *to me*, probably, but more like she started to use 'gender' as a word when I was in middle or high school. So I started to… I kind of grew up not clearly understanding what what gender is, but I was given a space to question the gender roles or gender norms that were…yeah…suffocating me at the time. So that was, yeah, one of the things that I kind of remember being a little bit different – in a way, fortunate – growing up. And then also, I now identify myself as more like 'genderqueer', but it took me a while to get to that identity because I needed to find a word, first of all. So I think the first time that I noticed that I was a little bit different, in terms of gender, like, identification, I was very young, like maybe like…five, even six, that's as far back as I can remember. But this is just identification with things, right? I have a brother, who's one year older, and he was sort of my star, or role model. So anything he liked, or he did, was something I always wanted to do too. But what does that even mean, right? Identity-wise, I didn't have a word.

HANAKO:
私は大阪で生まれて大阪で育って、大学を卒業して、大きな電機メーカー。システ

ムエンジニアとして三十年ぐらい努めていました。その会社が経営危機になった時に、大阪市内の別の会社に転職して、その会社では人事、総務関係などをやっていました。[でちょっと]体力が落ちて、去年会社をやめて、今はキャリアコンサルタントという資格の取得をやりまして、昨日合格しました。トランスについては今から十年前に、体も戸籍上の性別も今の女性にして、会社でも no problem. 友達とか近所の人とかもno problem. But my family is no……

I was born and raised in Osaka. After I graduated from university, I worked for about thirty years as a systems engineer at a large electrical-goods company. When there was a financial crisis at that company, I moved jobs to a different corporation in Osaka, where I was responsible for things like HR and general business relations. Since my physical strength was failing me a little, I quit my job last year and I've already acquired a qualification as a career consultant. I passed the qualifying exam yesterday. As for being transgender, I changed both my body and the gender on my family registry ten years ago. There were no problems at the office. No problems with my friends or neighbours either, but my family [disowned me].

2. What words would you use to define your own gender and sexual orientation? (e.g. 'gay', 'pansexual', 'transgender' etc)

KAEDE: 端的に表現するならば、現段階ではクィアになると思います。
Put simply, at this stage I'd say I'm queer.

IKUKO: I'm MtF and pansexual.

MOMOKO: MtFです。というのは、男性として生まれて今女性として生きてるんです。

I'm MtF. That is to say, I was born male but now live my life as a woman.

HANAKO: 私はMTFであり……まあsexual
orientationはasexualですね。そしてもちろんGIDでもある。であり、大阪のおばちゃ

んである（笑）アイデンティティとしては大阪の（笑）
これが一番。社会の中でみんなと仲良くするのは……笑い、おせっかい？　（笑）

I am MtF…well, as for my sexual orientation, I'm asexual, you know? And of course I also have GID. As well as that, I'm an Osaka auntie. (laughs) In terms of my identity, it's all 'Osaka' – that's the most important thing. When it comes to getting along with everybody else in society we're friendly and nosy. (laughs)

MAKOTO:
私は今まで色んな仕事をしたんですけど、今は言葉と語学は、あのう、プロフェッショナルとして教えたり、自分で勉強したりしています。で、その興味深いのは、日本語は男言葉と女言葉があるんですけど、英語は中あまり区別がないから、私が英語を話す時はなんかジェンダーをあまり気にしなくていい。日本語話す時は、男の言葉と女の言葉がありますから、なんかその女の言葉を使うのは、私はちょっと、あのう...居心地が悪いです.
その言葉の勉強仕事し出したのも、その言葉のセックシュアリディもすごい興味があるから。

I've done various different jobs up to now, but at the moment, I teach (foreign) languages professionally, and I study them for my own personal goals as well. And as for the thing I'm really interested in: Japanese has male language and female language, but English doesn't really have such a distinction, so I don't have to pay much attention to gender when I speak English. When I'm speaking Japanese, because it has male language and female language, if I sort of use women's language, I feel, well...uncomfortable. I started studying this [gendered] language because I'm very interested in language and words around sexuality.

3. In your own definition, what do those words mean? How would you explain e.g. 'transgender' or 'asexual' to someone unfamiliar with the term?

IKUKO: 私は生まれたのは as a boy,
but…女性として生きたいという気持ちでMTFなんですけど、恋愛の対象は男性とか女性ではなくて、好きになった人。その人の中身、アイデンティティが好きになった人。

I was born as a boy, but I'm MtF with the desire to live as a woman. The object of my romantic attraction isn't specifically a man or a woman, but rather someone I've come to like. Someone whose personality? and identity I've grown to like.

HANAKO: これはたとえですけども、プラトンの、アンドロギュノス。male body and female body……joint……my body image. so 私はもうこれで満たされてる……heterosexual or homosexual ……separate……search the other half, but I joint? （笑） so I don't have to seek the other half. so 今で満足している。なのでasexual。

It's, I suppose, something like Plato's androgyne. Male body and female body...joint...my body image. So I'm also completed in this way - heterosexual or homosexual [people are] separate [and] search [for] the other half, but I'm joint? (laughs) So I don't have to seek the other half. So now I'm satisfied. That's what I mean by asexual.

4. When and how did you first encounter concepts like 'lesbian', 'gay', and 'transgender'?

MAKOTO: It was only *very* recently that I became aware of LGBT loanwords from English in Japanese (e.g., 'gay', 'transgender' etc.) When I was young, for example, a boy who moved/had mannerisms like a girl was said to 'look like an okama', or was called 'effeminate', but apart from these words to describe body movement, there weren't many words to describe [being LGBT].

HOTARU: Maybe it was towards the end of year 2000 or the beginning of 2001, my parents – I mean my mom bought her first computer really early on, and we were really probably one of the earliest families to do that in Japan – I remember this big-ass Macintosh. (laughing) I set up email, which gave me access to this…at the time it wasn't *vast,* but...It was a whole new world. And…first thing I probably typed in was some sort of, like, 'same-sex' or 'dōsei-ai', because that was…I didn't know anything about transness back then. Um…In Japan, you know how there's *okama* people, 'new half' people on the TV, but it's always more like trans women? So, as much as I felt like something similar,

or… *deep* down, I probably knew that's something that *I* also belonged to, but I couldn't accept that.

HANAKO:
まず、二十年前に新聞で性同一性障害っていうのが埼玉医科大で手術されたっていう。そこで性同一性障害というものを知ったんですね。私の兄は医者で両親は薬剤師。でも性同一性障害のことは cannot understand. 私の兄の友達に心療内科の医者がいたんですけども、彼もまた……[理解できなかった]。The doctor said "gender identity disorder is 発達障害。 only the panic disorder and うつ病 are mental illness. gender identity is not……no 発達障害。 [so] I can't understand".

The first I ever heard about transition was twenty-five years ago. I read in the newspaper about what they called a 'Gender Identity Disorder'-related surgery performed at Saitama Medical University. That was how I came to know about Gender Identity Disorder. My older brother is a doctor and both of my parents were pharmacists, but they couldn't understand Gender Identity Disorder. One of my brother's friends is a specialist in psychosomatic medicine and even he wasn't able to understand. The doctor said that Gender Identity Disorder is a developmental disorder. Only panic disorders and clinical depression are mental illness, but Gender Identity Disorder is not. So I couldn't understand.

5. How did you come to realise that these terms might apply to you? How did you accept them as part of your identity?

HANAKO:
ジェンダークリニックへ行きました。十五年前に関西医科大学の織田先生に診てもらっていました。しかし……wait for more than four or five years so I gave up（笑）そして私も自分がGIDであるということを認めたくなかった。やっぱり男性として生まれてきたんであれば、男として生きるべきだ、どう言われようがそれはだめだ、男は男らしく、女は女らしく、という考えをもっていた。今考えると、もし脳科学の研究が進んでいてどこか治療が可能であれば、それをやってたかもし

れない。むしろ体を触る[変える]んじゃなくて脳を治療して……できるのであればそれをやってたかもしれない。それは今もできないですけどね。

I did go to a Gender Identity Clinic. Fifteen years ago, I was diagnosed by Dr. Oda at Kansai Medical College, but I had to wait for more than four or five years, so I gave up (laughs) At first I didn't want to admit that I had Gender Identity Disorder. I still thought that if I was born male, I should live as a man; no matter what one could say, it wouldn't make any difference. Men are masculine, women are feminine...that's how I thought [back then]. If I think about it now, maybe if neurological research had progressed to the point that it's possible to have treatment somewhere [i.e., to correct one's 'brain sex' rather than undergo gender confirmation surgery], I might have gone for that instead. Treating the brain without touching on the body instead...if that was possible, I might well have chosen that. Even though such a thing still isn't possible today.

MAKOTO:

としは、例えば中学生・高校生の時は、普通の女の子として親が期待するように（態度）を作っていたので、置かなかったですけど、なか自分で大学を卒業して働くはなったら、その自分の給料で一例えば（かみがた）とか服とかーそうした親ともはなるで住んで、全く自由な時に私の選ぶ物はあまり女だし物じゃなくて、えっとでは短い髪とか男のような服とか持ち物が多くなったので最初に気づいたのは…ですけど、そのLGBTを表す日本語がなかったあまり。なか、ある言葉は、あのう…悪い言葉「おかま」とかそんな中にみせあげる言葉しかなかったので使い言葉ができなかった。男もっさりとかである言葉があるんですけど、私は何回もその言葉を言われて、例えば女のくせにとか女だてらにとか。その性別が女のに女らしくない体動のことを表す言葉そうく。あって、その言葉で傷付いたりした。それが、セックシュアリディを表す言葉ととても思いなかったです。なんても嬉しくないから男もっさり。なかそのあまりニュアンスがよくわからなかって、言ってる人は褒めてる時もあるし、だか、あのう、「男をみたいですね」の言葉は、いい意味の時もあるんです。

When I was young, around the time I was in middle or high school, I crafted the attitude that my parents expected; that I should act like a normal girl. But when I left that behind, like when I graduated university and started working and I was living away from my parents, I would pay for my haircuts and my clothes with my own salary. In that time when I was totally free, the things I chose for myself weren't very feminine at all - so for example I had short hair and quite a few masculine possessions, like clothes. That was when it first came to my attention. But there were very few words in Japanese to express LGBT [identity]. There were certain words, but, well... there were no words that I could use, because the only words available to me were bad words, like okama. But there are certain words, like 'mannish', and I was called words like that more than once. For example, I was told that women should not be arrogant, or that I was just a mere woman - I was being 'mannish'. That's a word which describes a physicality as being too un-feminine for a woman. I was hurt by that word. So that's why I didn't think of it as a word that could [positively] express my sexuality. I wasn't happy at all to be 'like a man'. But then again I didn't fully understand the nuances of this word, and there are also times when people say it as praise...so, there are also times when the comment "You're like a man, aren't you!" has a positive meaning.

HOTARU: Somehow – I can't remember anymore how, exactly – but then I found the word *seidōitsusei-shōgai* [on the internet] – I think, yeah, this was the beginning of 2000, so it was after the first approval of legal gender reassignment surgery in Japan? And I'm like: "This sounds like myself…" But then…sei dōitsusei-shōgai is like GID, right? It's still a big, medicalised, serious word. Like "OK, I'm hentai [perverted] now", like, "Am I this giant shōgai thing?"

So I couldn't *quite* be OK with that either. Maybe I was scared of it, too.

So yeah. I grew my hair, I wore skirts, I wore makeup for my first few years abroad…ehhm. I have to be honest: some part of me would enjoy it, I'd do it well. But then I was like *no*. Like, *I can't do this anymore*. And…I cut my hair and everything. But it was convenient to wear girls' clothes because I didn't have to be, like…scared of buying boys' clothes. It was just much, in a way, easier to live in a society the way I performed as a woman.

Because I clearly didn't feel like a girl, it must mean that I identified myself as a guy, because that was the only framework of explanation I had at the time. So I started to live at least among my friends as a trans man, and my friends helped me buy boys' clothes, because I still had huge anxiety around shopping for male clothing. And that was very liberating. But even then there was always something in me - I changed my gender pronoun to him/he, which a lot of my friends respected; I really, really appreciated that. But then also like: "Am I really *he*?" There was a little something *off* about it. And I hated having breasts, so I always kind of looked forward to being able to take them off, but at the same time...do I want a penis? Do I want a hairy face? Not really! But there is this trans man...in a way...*norm.* So eventually I found this term 'genderqueer' and met people and read things about people who identify as neither men nor women, and that's when I was like: *yeah!* I felt like I'd been liberated from this gender norm for women, but I'd stepped right into this new gender norm for [trans] men. I have to say, a lot of trans male communities are pretty misogynistic. And I couldn't deal with that!

6. Can you tell me a little about the role your gender [identity] plays in daily life? e.g., would you say that you're still in the closet, or out to friends and family but not at the workplace, etc.

IKUKO：I always…coming out. because it’s very easy when I change my name about two years ago? 名前を変えると、会社にも手続きをしないといけないので、それが…lead it to coming out. If you change your name, you have to go through the procedure [to update your paperwork] with your company, so...that leads to coming out. 正確に言うと名前の変更だけで、性別はまだ男性のままなので、会社からは何も言われてません。だから問題はないんですけど、もちろんボスには、私がMTFであることは伝えました。しかしボスも何も……できない、知らない、わからない……I wear skirts at my company. but boss don’t say about that （笑）

I always…coming out. because it’s very easy when I change my name about two years ago? If you change your name, you have to go through the procedure [to update your paperwork] with your company, so...that leads to coming out. To be precise, I haven't heard anything from the company because I've only changed my name and my gender is

still listed as male to date. That's why I haven't had any problems. Of course, I told my boss that I'm MtF, but he can't do anything; he doesn't really know or understand [transition]... I wear skirts at my company. but boss don't say about that (laughs)

HANAKO:◯◯コーポレーションではカミングアウト。But other companies……unnecessary.
逆に私が会社の人であれば、もし私のような人間がカミングアウトしたら、会社として何かヘルプすることがないかって聞くと思うんです。しかし私は何も過去のことで困ってることはない。なので、あとは職場の人とちゃんと一緒に仕事ができるように、人間関係をつくっていけばいい。

I did come out when I worked at X Corporation. But other companies...unnecessary. Conversely、if I was an employee and someone like me came out, I think they would be asked if there's any help we could offer as a company. But I've had no trouble in the past. So after I came out I tried to cultivate good interpersonal relationships at work, in order to work well together with my colleagues. It's slow. (laughs) But little by little, it's getting better. However, there are places where it's difficult. I don't feel like I have to come out to many people now. I'm in so-called 'stealth mode', you know? I mean, after all, I'm at a point now where I don't have to say anything in particular [about my identity].

7. Are you friends with/do you know or have a community of other transgender people? How did you meet?

I did not always ask this question during the interviews. This was because most of my respondents were people I met through Shinzen no Kai, and as such I already knew that they did have a queer/trans community in their lives. I include it here because it was part of my original interview protocol; because people did occasionally answer it; and because it is an example of how careful planning does not always survive first contact with the field.

HANAKO:
他の団体にも関わることはあるし……先週、GID学会で岡山に行って、その頃の古い友達にも会いました。私にとってこの問題は二十年になりますので、専門医の先生

方も知ってるし、大学の教授も知ってるし、当事者も知ってるし……なので日本のキーパーソンとのつながりをすでにいろんなところで持ってます。

I do get involved in other groups...Last week, I went to Okayama for the Gender Identity Disorder Society conference, and I saw some old friends there. These issues began twenty years ago for me, and I know medical specialists, I know university professors, I know other trans people...so I already have connections with the 'key people' (for GID research) in Japan, who are in various places across the country.

8. Have you read or seen any depictions of trans life in pop culture e.g. *Life as a Girl*, *In Order for Me to Be Myself*, Nōmachi Mineko's autobiography etc. If you have, what did you make of them? Do they reflect your own experiences at all?

MOMOKO:
タイトルは知ってます。男の子で、会社で働いたり……まあ二か所ぐらいで働いてみて、この、一か所目はすごいことやってて。性同一性障害の時代になってるので、そういう治療をしようよって病院に行って、会社に嫌がられた。そういう人はいりません、みたいな。だから会社に……窓際族ってわかりますか。会社にいらないか、窓の方に追いやる。あまり仕事のない、必要ない部署に追いやって、最終的には、「暇だから、やめたくなります」って言わせる部署。

I know the title. When I was still living as a boy, I worked at an office...well, I worked at two offices, but this first office did something terrible. When I was first diagnosed with Gender Identity Disorder, I went to the hospital to receive treatment, but the company hated me. Their attitude seemed to be, "We don't need people like that here". So at the office...do you know the phrase "Window-side tribe"? [literally 'useless employees pushed to sit next to the window until they retire'] Because you're not needed in the office, they shove you off to the window. It's a position in the department where you're pushed off to an unneeded post with not much work; they're waiting for you to finally say "I'm doing nothing here, I want to quit."

HANAKO:
ちょっと読んだことはあります。能町さんはまだ私にとっては若い、young generationなので。彼女は東京大学を卒業してOLとして働いた。私はそうではない。あくまでもサラリーマンとして二十何年か働いて……やっぱり違うと思う。違いますね。若ければ若いほど自分の性事情に合った生活ができるチャンスがあるんですね。私たちのジェネレーションの場合はほぼ選択はなかった。

I've read a little bit of it. In my opinion, Nōmachi-san is still young - she's from the young generation. She graduated from Tokyo University and then started working as an office lady. It wasn't like that for me. I persisted in working as a salaryman for two decades and some-odd years...I think it was different, even so. Yes, there is a difference. The younger you are, the more chance you have of making a life that suits the circumstances of your gender/sexuality. In the case of my own generation, that option was almost non-existent.

IKUKO: ah I know it（笑）
親善の会のみんなも、性別を変更する時に仕事をやめてchangeした人が多いと思います。そしてchangeのあとも自分で仕事をする人が多いと思います。なぜなら、会社に就職することが難しい[から]。女性としてとか、男性ととして、どのようにしたらいいかが会社の方もわからない。

(ライマン: 差別はありますか？)

差別はないです。because since about ten years ago, I tried to...仲良くする。会社の女の子たちと仲良くしてきて、少しずつカミングアウトしてきたので、今になると、most of ladies in company は、私を受け入れてくれる。だけど難しいのは、性別は変更していないけど見かけは女性なので、会社の更衣室とかトイレとかは男性用を今使ってます。

Ah, I know it. (laughs) Amongst the people at Shinzen no Kai, I think there are a lot of people who have changed the gender on their koseki, but who also quit their jobs when they made the change. I think there's also a lot of people who work independently after

changing [their koseki]. The reason is that it's difficult to get hired for an office job. The company doesn't know whether they should treat you as a female or a male employee.

LYMAN: is there any discrimination?

No, there's no discrimination. Because since about ten years ago, I tried to...befriend people. Because I became good friends with the girls in the office and was able to come out to them bit-by-bit, most of the ladies in the company accept me [as a woman]. Even though they accept me, it's still difficult in that I look like a woman but I haven't changed the gender on my documents, so I still use the men's changing rooms and men's toilet at work.

9. What are your thoughts on the current transition-related laws in Japan? Is there anything about them you think should change, or that you'd like to see change? Do you think they might change in the future, and if so, how so?

HOTARU: The way it is, currently, is so problematic, right? It really just pushes people into treatment that they might not necessarily be ready for, or want, ever. Where to begin? I haven't actually looked into it but I think you can change your name without changing your gender? I *think* that's possible. I think you can still file to change your first name, though it's still kind of a daunting amount of paperwork. But when it comes to your gender on your koseki...in Japan - often in places like the States documents don't necessarily ask about your gender? but in Japan everything does. Even for your CV. So my answer would be that...ideally, which I don't see happening anytime soon...well, first of all, that the koseki shouldn't exist. Then, if the government needs some sort of official gender legislation or registry, there should be 'man', 'woman', *and* 'X-gender' options. Because it's already permitted in some countries, and it sounds like it's working just fine. ... And then this connection between diagnosis and treatment, into the name of the law itself: let's say that if even if there was a [recognised category] for third-gender people in Japan, I don't know if I'd want to change my details. I do *want* to have top surgery, in a way, in the future, but I don't want to have a very invasive surgery for the bottom half. It's very scary. And even if I did want to have a gender designation as a male, do i want to go through all that? No!

KAEDE:

日本においては少し厳しすぎるのでは、と思います。具体的にまで変化を起さないと認められないというのはやはり、過度が過ぎる[過度である]と。選択肢の自由があってもいいと思います。そういう点においてやっぱり日本はLGBTの社会現象に対して後発国だとは思います。手術をすることによって肝臓に負担がかかる形になります。結局、女性として……トランス[ジェンダー]として生きるには、寿命が十年削られるとされてますから、十年寿命を削ってそれを手に入れなきゃいけないという。あとは社会構造として難しいという点はありますね。二十代から三十代っていうのは金銭的に余裕がないところがあります。にもかかわらず莫大な費用がかかる手術をするというのは不可能に近い。制度的には社会保険の対象外ですから、国が個人に自由として認めているのであって、改善すべき点だとは思っていないということなのかなと思っています。そういう点で言うならばタイはすごく優れた国であるとは思います。やっぱり日本はそういう点において……日本人は同調から入るので少数派が排斥されるというのが大きいかなと。

I think the law is a little too strict in Japan. After all, transition isn't recognised unless there is a measurable physical change, and that's excessive. I think it's good to have freedom of choice. I think Japan as a country is coming late to the LGBT social phenomenon. Surgery puts a strain on your liver. In the end, it's said that living as a woman - a transgender woman - takes ten years off your life expectancy, but the law says you have to lose those ten years and undergo surgery. Another point is that accessing surgery is difficult in terms of social structures. There are situations where people in their twenties and thirties can't afford it. It's close to impossible to have a surgery that costs an enormous amount of money. Because surgery isn't systematically covered by health insurance, I think the government permits it as an individual freedom and doesn't think access should be improved. In that respect I think Thailand is an excellent country. But considering the same point in relation to Japan...I think it's a big deal that a minority is excluded [from appropriate medical care] because Japanese people tend to follow majority opinion.

IKUKO:
もう一つ、やっぱり手術が全部終わってないとだめですよね。なので、私はしばらくはまだこの[状態]。あと手術のお金も高い。日本で新しい法律を作るけどそれは制限をするための法律で、自由のための法律ではない。日本人はそれを区別したいから法律を作ってると……maybe…change…but this is too long time
日本は新しいことを受け入れるのが得意じゃない。だから、将来的には変わると思いますけど、すぐにではない。少しずつ。外国だとある日突然全部変わったりするけども、日本はそれができないと思います。most of transgender wanna be real…lady, for me. so I want to change my…戸籍を変えないといけないということに対して今ハードルがとても高い。特に手術を絶対しないといけない。でも手術を必ずしないといけない法律がある外国は少ない。その違いが埋まらないとよくないかなと思います。

Another problem is that you have to finish all the surgery. So I'm still in this transitional state for a while. Also, the cost of surgery is high. To make a new law [about transition] in Japan would be to make a law for the sake of limitations, not for the sake of freedom. Because the Japanese people would want to make such a distinction, if a law was made...*maybe...change...*but this is too long time. Japan is not good at accepting new things. That's why, even though I think things will change in the future, it won't happen straight away. It will come little by little. There are foreign countries where everything changed completely overnight for LGBTQ rights but I think it's impossible for that to happen in Japan. *Most of transgender wanna be real...lady, for me*. So I want to change my [koseki]...In order to change your koseki, the hurdles are currently very high. Especially because you're not allowed to change your details if you don't have surgery. But only a few foreign countries have laws that require transition surgery. I think it would be bad if this gap went unaddressed.

HOTARU: [My professional research] also tells me that gender ambiguity has always been part of Japanese culture, right? Androgyny was praised, Takarazuka is full of androgynous performers...but then for the longest time gender reassignment surgery was illegal. And it was only legalised in the late 1990s, I think. But previously it was prohibited because it was associated with sex workers and performers, and supposedly you're

cutting up your healthy organs. [LYMAN: was it related to the eugenics laws?] HOTARU: Yeah. Yeah, exactly, the eugenics law did that. In the end the eugenics law was changed into the protection of mothers' - *Women's Bodies' Rights Act* [botai hogohō]. Either way it was prohibited, so to legalise it, the medical society had to really do a big medicalisation push. At the time, the Japanese trans community - they didn't call themselves a trans community, but really rallied behind this medicalised discourse.

HANAKO:
意見は……そうですね、昔は、少なくとも私が十年前二十年前っていうのは、病気であったし、私もそれで体も心も病気になったし、苦しんで、まあ手術があって社会復帰して、治ったんですね。でも今で言ったら、手術をすればいいとか……やるのはホルモンとかなんですね。そんなのを投与するとかしないとか、ものすごくフリーになってきている。なのでかえって難しくなってるのかなとか。子どもたちがどうやって決めるか。親とか学校とか会社の人たちとどう話し合って決めていくのか、っていうようなところも考えていかないといけないっていうのも、いいところもあるし逆にどうしたらいいんだろうっていうところもあるかなと。特にXジェンダーとかはいろんな人がいらっしゃいますので、それだけ選択肢が増えれば増えるほど……どれだけ話し合うことができるか……

My opinion... Well, a long time ago, at least ten or twenty years ago, for me it *was* an illness; I developed a physical and mental disorder; I suffered; I had surgery and returned to society; I recovered. The discussion these days is still along the lines of 'You should have surgery...you should take hormone therapy'. The decision on whether or not to administer [hormones and surgery] is being taken very freely. So perhaps it's getting more difficult. How are children supposed to talk to their parents and their schools and decide on treatment, while considering their future lives, employment, and so on? There are some good points, and vice versa - there are some circumstances where you just don't know what to do. Especially because there are various people who identify as 'X-gender', the more gender identity options increase, I wonder how many more types of conversation there will need to be...

LYMAN:
現在の日本の性同一性障害者の取り扱いに関する法律では、Xジェンダーの人への意識が全然ありませんね。法律はとてもかたい。

There isn't any recognition of X-gender people in the current law concerning treatment of people with Gender Identity Disorder, right? The law is very rigid.

HANAKO:
ないです。かたいし、ハードルが高いんです。日本の場合、戸籍がベースになって、保険証とかパスポートとか住民票とかがつながってるんですね。そこをもうちょっとフレキシブルにできないのかなと。いろんな経済的な問題で治療ができない人[もいるし]、手術もやっぱり健康上の問題……いろんなダメージを受ける可能性もある。そういうことを考えていったら、やっぱり変えることができないというか難しい人も多くいらっしゃると思うんです。なのでもう少しフレキシブルに考えることができないかなと。特にこれからやっぱり人口が減っていくっていうから、そういう人たちを排除するっていうことは結局は社会の損失に……これはLGBT素地の問題も含めてトータルで考えていかなきゃいけないのかなと。障害者の方やみんな含めての……diversity,
inclusionっていうのを本当に日本は考え直すべき時期にきてるかなと思いますね。外国人の人たちもそうです。

There isn't, no. It's strict and there are a lot of hurdles. The situation in Japan is that the family registry is the base (for your legal identity) and your health insurance, passport, residence certificate etc. are all connected to that. I wonder if it isn't possible to make it a bit more flexible? After all, there are people who can't receive treatment due to various financial problems, and surgery can also be a health risk. There's a possibility that you could have complications, like physical damage. If we're considering these kinds of problems, I think there are a lot of people who would find it difficult or impossible to change their family registry. So I wonder if there can't be a bit more flexibility in this thinking. Especially considering that the population will continue to decrease, if these kinds of people (i.e., trans people) are excluded, it will result in a loss to society after all.

Perhaps we should consider this in total, including the foundational problems of LGBT life. I think it's time for Japan to reconsider diversity and inclusion, including people with Gender Identity Disorder. People in other countries are already making similar considerations.

Chapter 3: Conclusion

The experiences of the people reflected here are particularly interesting as ethnographic sources because they are a longitudinal account of Trans Japan as a discrete period, from its inception to the present day. Some of my respondents came of age before transition medicine was legalised in Japan, but everyone's experiences have to do with a relatively short twenty-year period. I could not interview anyone who went through a gender clinic in the 1980s, say, as might be possible in the UK or Canada, since gender clinics simply did not exist in Japan prior to 1998.

There were multiple points of overlap, but they were not always commonalities that one might expect. All three of the interviewees featured here who would describe themselves definitively as trans women had pursued, or were still actively pursuing, the state-prescribed transition route; neither of the transmasculine people did. Relatively few of my respondents had sought out LGBTQ-themed pop culture like TV shows, manga, books etc. although almost everyone used the internet as their primary point of entry into trans community (online or offline), with most people's first step having been to google LGBTQ-related keywords like 'Gender Identity Disorder'. Reports of family difficulties, up to and including rejection and disowning, were sadly not a shock. I was however surprised at how few problems people reported with regards to workplaces, colleagues and employment-related bureaucracy, corporate Japan not being known for its freewheeling, open-minded culture.

There was certainly a sense of a generational gap between older and younger trans people, which is interesting as a data point by itself, but is made even more interesting when we consider how tightly bound these experiences are to a discrete two-decade timescale. Kaede's remark that "[T]here's no manual" seems to come from a different trans world when contrasted with Hanako's experience of being diagnosed with Gender

Identity Disorder and her description of Nōmachi Mineko as "coming from the younger generation", but this does not indicate a liberalising progression of trans thought from 1999 to 2019. Ikuko is younger than both Hanako and Makoto, but defines being a 'real lady' for her as having undergone surgery; Makoto, the oldest of my respondents, simply chooses to throw out the whole idea of labelling gender or sexuality on a category basis.

The single most interesting point for me was that, despite the overwhelming assumption of heterosexuality on the part of trans people by both trans and cis communities, only one of the respondents interviewed here, Momoko, identified as straight. Ikuko had been in an ostensibly opposite-sex marriage for years, but is pansexual; Hanako is uninterested in romantic relationships with anyone; and both Kaede and Hotaru would describe themselves as broad-spectrum queer. Makoto sees their relationship with their boyfriend as something approximating 'normal' [for which read: heteronormative] because their gender presentations are almost completely inverse from the genders assigned them at birth. Despite the almost total lack of representation of non-heterosexual trans people in Japanese popular imagination, media, or pop culture, the majority of my respondents - even the limited dramatis personae of this chapter - situated themselves outside of a heterosexual paradigm. The inextricability of heterosexuality from any form of 'authentic' gender in the natural attitude, as discussed in Chapter 2, does not reflect the situation on the ground. The obvious question then remains: why is it still so dominant? I explore this question further in Chapter 6, *Institutional Interfaces,* but for now we must return to the granularity of participant observation, before further conclusions can be drawn.

CHAPTER 4: SPACES AND PHASES (COMMUNITY CONTEXTS)

Introduction

Where and when did I meet other transgender people in Kyoto? Doing fieldwork with and in trans communities brings with it the disadvantage that comes with any attempt to access non-institutional affective communities. That is, I could not show up at, say, a shrine or a tea-ceremony classroom and observe the daily routines of its occupants. Nor is there a designated Transgender Resource Centre in Kyoto that keeps regular hours in a brick-and-mortar building. Instead, we met in rental spaces; in 'family restaurants' like Saizeriya; in coffeeshops; at pop-up lunch clubs; at private parties; at our homes; at activist meetings; at Pride festivals; at community volunteer events; and at shrine visits, flea markets, public lectures, and other everyday situations out in the world. This ad-hoc bricolage of trans encounters reflected the way that many of my respondents made room for their queerness amongst their daily responsibilities, or how they had lived as part of their transition journeys before they were able to live in their true gender fulltime.

This chapter revolves primarily around participant observations and anecdotes from my time in the field, Spring 2018-Summer 2020. Because so much of communal trans life in Kansai is lived piecemeal and intensely within the discrete confines of regular events (e.g. Shinzen no Kai socials or pop-up brunch groups), the best way to explain what *being there* was like is through demonstration. This is not to say that there is no analytic lens through which we can understand this ad hoc participant observation. The theoretical framework of this chapter is bipartite. First, I use Halberstam and Foucault on trans time and queer space: what 'queer spaces' are, how 'trans time' differs from what we might call Ordinary Time, and why contexts of queer communal life are so often perceived as a social threat. For the second level of theoretical interpretation, I use Aultman on trans happiness, which I consider an essential element in ethnographies of trans people. Because transness and the people who experience it are still posited as isolated, tragic figures to a great extent in the public imagination, the concept of 'trans happiness' may be elusive even to the sympathetic viewer. Aultman's definition of and questions around the concept, as follow, are the foundation and springboard for this chapter:

> This essay explores the lived aspects of feeling "happy" within the rhythms of day-to-day gender non-normative life, which I will be calling the "trans ordinary".
>
> I use shudder quotes around "happy" to point toward the normative perils of assuming that happiness extends from accepted healthy attachments to things, life-activities, and people. My aim is not to argue that happiness is impossible to achieve or that the things we enjoy will always disappoint us, but to question happiness' solidity across different ways of life. [...] Is this sense of happiness most crucial to a person when life is patterned around a constant state of exhausting vigilance—whether about one's own sense of belonging in the world, a sense of local safety or ordinary mutual recognition and reciprocation? Might happiness be understood as phenomenological, as irreducible experiences of the bodily type? Or as affective attachments that do not fit neatly within liberal commitments to self-sovereignty or radical left critiques of power and of revolutionary empowerment?
>
> These are some of the questions we need to ask in order to re-frame happiness as it is lived in the fragile grooves of the trans ordinary.
>
> [Aultman (2019)]

Transgender temporalities: constructing the queer *ibasho*

All of the various contexts in which I spent time with my trans respondents, from coffeeshop to cookout, formed a loose network of what I term a transgender *ibasho*. In colloquial Japanese usage, an ibasho is 'a place where one feels at home'; a place 'where it is possible to be oneself'. For trans people, a necessary condition for feeling that somewhere counts as an ibasho may be that it is a space where no-one challenges us on our pronouns, bathroom use, gender presentation, etc. The ibasho is also always psychological to some extent, and can indeed be a wholly psychological space, as we will see in the discussion of Shinzen no Kai's online events.[35] Ibasho rarely if ever has a sexual

[35] Scholarship on the concept of the *ibasho* ranges from psychological care of abused children (Bamba, 2010) to Asian-American high school students' senses of belonging (Tominaga, 2018) to sociology of

valance to it. Brothels, cruising sites, and other places where sex work or no-strings-attached sex are available may be referred to as 'healing' [iyasu], but not ibasho. This distinction between the homely and the healing - the communal and the casual - finds an echo in Foucault's *Friendship as a Way of Life*:

> One of the concessions one makes to others is not to present homosexuality as anything but a kind of immediate pleasure, of two young men meeting in the street, seducing each other with a look, grabbing each other's asses and getting each other off in a quarter of an hour. There you have a kind of neat image of homosexuality without any possibility of generating unease, and for two reasons: it responds to a reassuring canon of beauty, and it cancels everything that can be troubling in affection, tenderness, friendship, fidelity, camaraderie, and companionship, things that our rather sanitized society can't allow a place for without fearing the formation of new alliances and the tying together of unforeseen lines of force. I think that's what makes homosexuality "disturbing": the homosexual mode of life, much more than the sexual act itself. To imagine a sexual act that doesn't conform to law or nature is not what disturbs people. But that individuals are beginning to love one another-there's the problem.

"Homosexuality threatens people as a 'way of life' rather than as a way of having sex", Foucault surmises. We might ask: is this statement applicable to transgender people as well, no matter their orientation? Is the assumption of an entirely different social role, no matter how well one embodies it, similarly threatening to the cisgender order? Or are trans people marked as less menacing if we can be properly subsumed into 'passing' (as straight; as binary; when naked in the bathhouse, etc.)? My argument in this chapter is that it does and is, but in a slightly different way than Foucault describes. If the 'threat' entailed by homosexuality is its *visibility*, I suggest that the analogous threat supposedly to be feared from trans people is our *in*visibility: fear of the hidden saboteur within rather than the visible Other without.

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welfare and professionalised care work - for more on which see Tanaka (2001), Otaya (2008), and Tsuda (in Okano, 2015).

Contemporary transphobic rhetoric primarily posits trans existence as a sexual fetish: specifically, transgender women are seen as 'autogynephiles', whose gender identity is reduced to nothing more than an expression of deviant sexuality.[36] I suggest that the fundamental emotional underpinning of this worldview is fear, and the supposed threat posed by trans happiness comes not just from fear that the autogynephiliac understanding of trans people *is* true, but more importantly that it is *not*. To see middle-aged trans women in twinsets and court shoes having tea with friends at a Lipton's Café, or to see young trans men volunteering to pick up litter along the Kamo riverbanks, brings transness into the realm of the respectable, thus making it harder to dismiss as sexual roleplay. What happens when trans people insist on having rich, full lives outside of the operating theatre? What threatening events unfold in queer spaces where everyone's clothes stay on?

Trans Time/Queer Space

I draw predominantly on Halberstam and Aultman (2019) for discussing the concept of 'queer space'; Israeli-Nevo (2017) and Halberstam (2005) are the theorists I follow here in discussion of 'trans time', to a lesser extent; and Serano (2007), Haraway (1978), and Sandoval (2000) contribute valuable analysis of interstitial, partial, oppositional modes of life.

Whatever form the trans/queer ibasho takes - indoors or outdoors; online or offline; trans-only or open to all the letters in the alphabet - it is an interstitial world. The people who make it happen must return to their everyday lives, which for many of them involve heterosexual marriage, child or eldercare, living stealth, and other manifestations of the closet. Mitsuhashi Junko's crossdressing community in Tokyo belongs to a somewhat different form of life than my respondents in Kyoto and Osaka, but she is also clear on the temporary nature of trans time and queer space:

[36] See Blanchard (1989), Bailey (2003), Dreger (2015), Jeffreys (2014), Joyce (2020), and Stock (2021); see also, and more importantly, Moser's critique of Blanchard (2010) Serano's (2006; 2014) deconstruction of autogynephilia as a trope.

> 新宿の女装コミュニティでは、女の格好して女として振る舞っていれば、とりあえずは「女扱い」されます。
>
> In the Shinjuku crossdressing community, if you dress as a woman and behave as a woman, then you'll be treated as if you are a woman for the time being.
>
> Mitsuhashi (2008: 284-5)

Time that is reserved from the everyday schedule for the queer ibasho is what I, following Halberstam (2005), describe as 'queer time'. The idea that time does not happen in the same way for everyone is not a new idea in the humanities, as Halberstam observes, but it has not always been attuned to the nuances of how specific minority groups experience it: "Harvey (1990) argues for multiple conceptions of time and space, but he does not adequately describe how time/space becomes naturalised, on the one hand, and how hegemonic constructions of time and space are uniquely gendered and sexualised, on the other" (2005:8)

What Halberstam means here by 'hegemonic constructions of time and space' are normative categories for how a 'normal', healthy, cis/hetero life should be organised: childhood spent in educational structures that are supposed to prepare one for an adult life of full-time work or childcare; heterosexual marriage; reproduction; child-rearing; retirement; and death at a reasonably old age. In contrast to these overarching expectations, he defines 'queer time' as time gained by subdividing from 'reproductive time' and 'familial time'. This queer time can be marked out both physically, as with experiencing a secondary puberty in your twenties or thirties, and socially: several of my respondents had gotten married and had children before coming out, for example, or had tried very hard to hew to the social demands of education, work, and gendered behaviour (i.e., being the oldest son of a family, or being an unpaid carer for family members due to one's position as the youngest daughter) placed on them. Discrete and discreet weekends away in Tokyo at crossdressers' clubs were trans time and trans space carved out of everyday life, as experienced by at least one of my respondents and detailed by Mitsuhashi (2008):

> 新宿には、月決めで女装用品を収納するロッカーと化粧台（共用）を貸してくれる女装のため支度部屋がいくつかあります。月会費はだいたい一万五 〇〇〇円前後、そうした場所を利用すれば、男性が女装することは、少なくとも環境的にはそれほど難しいことではありません。
>
> In Shinjuku, there are various dressing rooms for crossdressers that one can rent by the month, with lockers for storing crossdressing supplies and communal makeup tables. The monthly fee is generally somewhere around 15000 yen [ca. £100]. If one makes use of these places, it's not difficult for a man to practice crossdressing, at least in terms of the surrounding environment.

For some of the Shinzen no Kai participants, the biweekly meetups represented the only space in which they could vocalise that they were gay, trans etc, and the only time they had in physical company with other LGBTQ people. This was highlighted even further by the pandemic, when people participated in the Zoom calls from as far away as Okinawa. Several participants expressed that they felt safer online than they would in real-life meetup spaces because the internet gave them the option of keeping their camera switched off throughout the meeting, thereby concealing their face from other people on the call. The Zoom interface also allows for each participant to set their own username, thus enabling a secondary level of privacy or distance from their offline identities. It was not merely the experience of being around other LGBTQ people that made these Zoom calls an ibasho for certain participants, although that was certainly a key factor; the ability to obscure identifying details even amongst other queer people also helped closeted and questioning people to feel safe in this communal space. [37]

It is also important to note that not every trans or queer space is explicitly named as such. The documentary *Watashitachi no ibasho: Shinsekai monogatari* [A Place Where We Can

[37] A common truism in LGBTQ communities (certainly as I experienced them in London and Oxford as well as in Kyoto) is that queer people have a delayed adolescence: because so many of us were still closeted as teenagers and were unable to experiment with dating, sex, or presenting as our true gender at the time that our cisgender/heterosexual peers were doing so, it often takes us until our twenties or even our thirties to understand and accept our own identities. This may go a long way to explaining why most of the people I met were, at youngest, in their early twenties.

Feel At Home: A Shinsekai Tale, dir. Takeda Tomokazu, 2018], on which more in Chapter 7, was about an *okonomiyaki-ya* [restaurant serving traditional savory pancakes] in Osaka that happened to be run by an okama and became an important community hub for many trans women in the neighbourhood. Nor is it the case that any given ibasho will be comfortable or welcoming for every person present. For example: my respondent Makoto told me, in our first dinner meeting of 2020 (mid-February), that they had met a trans woman over the Winter break at the Shinzen no Kai Christmas party. It had been her first time attending a Shinzen no Kai event, but she told Makoto that she had not enjoyed it much - this was due to the fact that the annual Shinzen no Kai Christmas and o-hanami parties are an exception to the general rule of having no alcohol served at meetings. She said several people had become louder and louder as they drank, and so it had been too noisy to socialise enjoyably. Queer people being, after all, people, some level of interpersonal conflict is inevitable.

All of the meetup locations I experienced prior to the onset of the SARS-CoVid-2 pandemic in March 2020 were well-entrenched within the local communities in Kyoto and Osaka. Queer studies by Anglophone anthropologists too often posit the global as superior and preferable to the local, especially in terms of the 'global identity' of being LGBTQ as opposed to local and cultural roles, responsibilities, and lifeways, and too often appear to notice queer people from the global south and from Asia only when they are in migration. These groups and contexts wherein I encountered queer community in Kyoto and Osaka are local. They are regional. I had no idea what equivalent groups in, say, Hiroshima, Nagano, or Aomori were up to. Although they have many educated people participating in them, who speak multiple languages (especially English) and have lived or travelled extensively abroad, the dominant language of communication in community notices and at meetup events is Japanese. Queer Shokudo had a slightly different culture in that two of the people running it were nisei or sansei [second and third-generation] Japanese-American and it catered to a more international student crowd, but its advertising and Facebook updates, along with most of the communication at the events, were uniformly in Japanese.

Queer Kyoto by Foot

In order to clarify the affective and instinctual boundaries of the various LGBTQ communities in Kyoto and Osaka, I would like to take us on a virtual tour of what is, if not quite Benedict Anderson's imagined community, at least similar to Mr. Rogers' imagined neighbourhood. Similar to that staple of daytime programming, all of the events I describe here happened during the afternoon or early evening. I did not attend any cabarets, drag shows, New Half bars, or any other nightlife venues as part of my fieldwork. This was a conscious decision on my part: not because of any moral disapproval or respectability politics, but because the entertainment sector and its kissing cousin, sex work, is already heavily over-represented in studies of trans and queer life in Japan. In addition, I did not feel that my Japanese language skills were up to the task of negotiating sexually-charged situations safely or gracefully. I therefore chose sites for participant observation that were available during daylight hours and where everyone's clothes stayed on for the duration of the events.

I group Kyoto into roughly two LGBTQ 'turfs': that of Shinzen no Kai in the downtown urban areas, and that of what I call the Queer Students' Circle, which is less centrally-organised but tends to revolve around the Kansai Queer Film Festival volunteer community. in the semi-suburban areas. I will begin with Shinzen no Kai, as they were my primary field site and the group with which I spent the most time overall. I will also discuss a volunteer community service group called IroIro Kyoto, through vignettes of an afternoon I spent litter-picking with them along the Kamo River, as well as a private party to which I was invited by my respondent Makoto. I selected one particular field site as an exemplar for the Queer Students' Circle: namely, a now-defunct pop-up lunch club known as Queer Shokudo. This chapter will finish with some thoughts on the intersecting degrees of visibility and hiddenness inherent to trans lives in Kansai and elsewhere.

I almost always lived close enough to the regular Shinzen no Kai Kyoto rental space to walk there, no matter where I was in the city. Even when I spent five months in Ukyo-ku, a residential suburb about twenty minutes outside of the city centre by tram, it still took me under forty minutes to reach the meetups. The rental space was downtown, but not obvious; easily accessible by public transport, but tucked away discreetly in a side street.

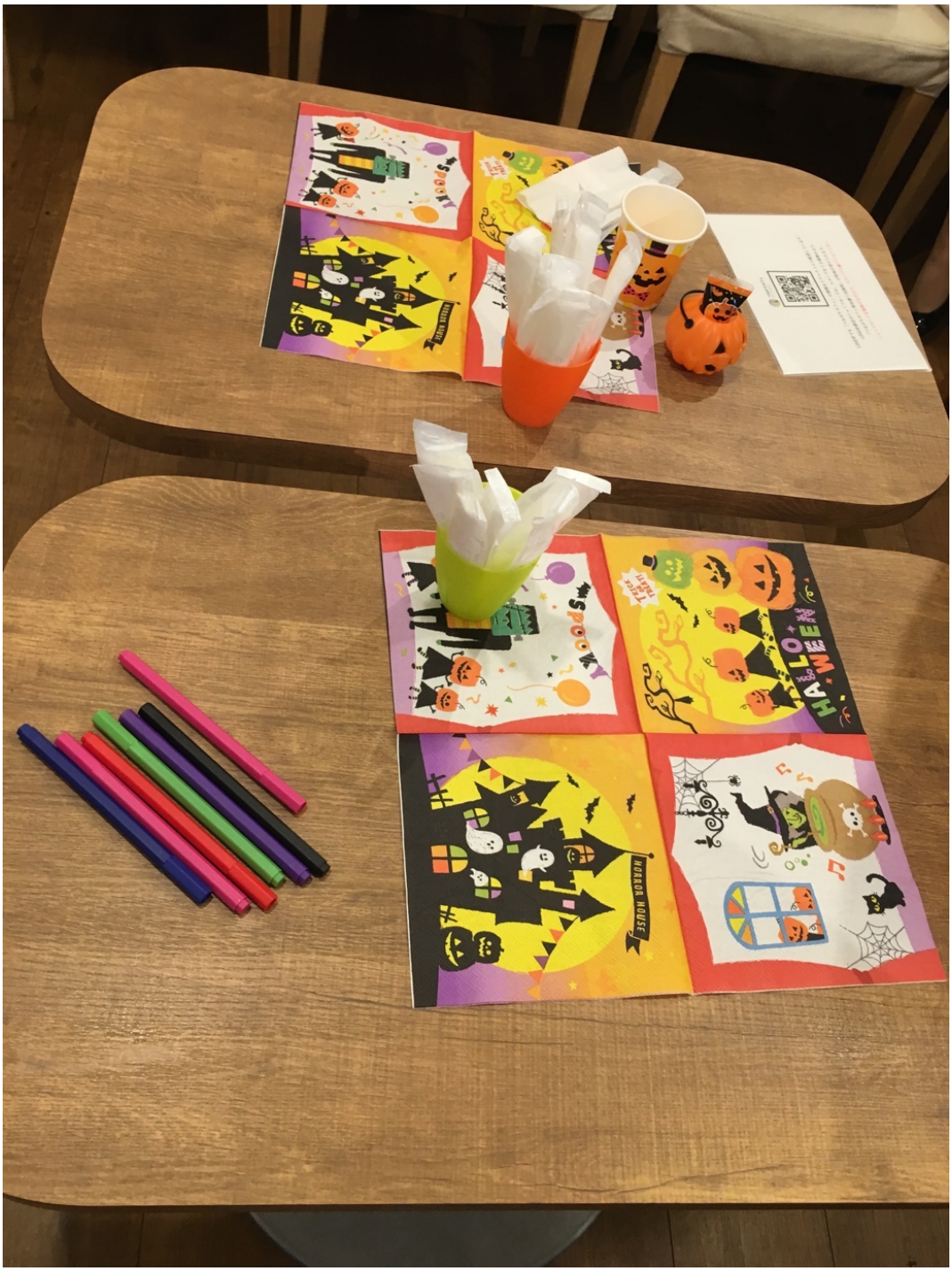
For my first two years in Kyoto, they only used one particular rental space, but moved in late 2019 to occasionally using a second, newer co-working hub elsewhere in the city centre.[38] The Osaka venues were more varied: for the combined Christmas and *bōnenkai* [end-of-year] party I attended, we had a rental space with a kitchen for cooking and prepping the food, but I do not remember ever going to the same place twice. Once and only once, as an emergency venue when the rental fell through at the last minute, we met at a Starbucks downtown near Umeda Station.[39] If one wished to attend Queer Shokudo, the journey took one a little bit further from the city centre than Shinzen no Kai, out to the university quarter and the mountain foothills.

Making friends at the Friendship Society

Shinzen no Kai meets for two-hour social sessions twice a month, alternating between Kyoto and Osaka. Most meetings are for anyone who identifies as LGBTQ, as well as for allies and friends of the community. There are also separate meetups for gay and bisexual men, although none for lesbian and bisexual women. These regular events form the backbone of the group's activities, along with annual events like o-hanami, Christmas parties, Halloween potlucks, and several one-off occasions, like organising a group trip to an LGBTQ-themed film at the Osaka Asian Film Festival or documentary screening (for more on which see Chapter 7).

[38] One notable exception was when the usual rental space fell through at short notice and I had to sprint across a public park to get to the last-minute meetup location.

[39] This last location was particularly interesting because it provided an example of an ibasho created by the people who make it, within yet distinct from a 'mainstream' setting.



Tables at the Shinzen no Kai Halloween party, October 2018
Photograph: author's own

Potluck dishes at the 2018 Shinzen no Kai Halloween party.

Photograph: author's own

In order to attend one of these meetups, one must check the group's own website or their Facebook page to find the time and place of the next event. The website has an online registration form which asks for the attendee's name, their prefecture, their name and preferred nickname (if any), and their gender identity or sexual orientation, the latter question being a selection of optional tick-boxes from which multiple identities can be selected. Entry to the events is not free but has a sliding scale of costs, from JPY 800 for full-cost to JPY 500 for the student ticket. The money is used to cover the cost of drinks, snacks, and other materials for each meetup. Getting quantitative numbers on attendance proved to be easier than I thought it might be: the Facebook event page for each social has the numbers of people who have reserved a ticket; post-meetup, the director thanks everyone for coming and lists how many people came and, of those attendees, how many came for the first time. The regular meetups attract an average of thirteen to twenty-four people per week, with higher attendance numbers at the parties and annual events.

Every Shinzen no Kai meeting follows the same basic room layout and activity structure. When you enter the rental space, there are three or four tables set up with individual groups of chairs around them. The tables are equipped with paper, pens, drawing crayons, and snack bowls of sweets and savoury crackers; a soft drink station is set up on a long counter or freestanding table. There is always a reception desk next to the door as you walk in. The spaces in which the group meets are 'social café's or other privately-owned co-working hubs which can be rented out by the hour. They are invariably clean, bright, and modern, but with no individuality in the decor. The group organisers usually bring a rainbow flag to hang on one wall, as well as two small desktop rainbow and trans flags to put on the welcome desk. Upon arrival, everybody has to get their name ticked off on the list of people who have reserved a ticket; write their name, gender, LGBTQ-related identity, and any other relevant details on a little nametag; and pick one of three letter cards from a pack, which designate the table you will be sitting at for the first half of the event. Everyone is asked to reselect a card at the halfway point and we move around again in order to encourage mingling. The director has a handheld portable microphone that he uses for introductions and imparting information. The mic is then passed around and each person gives a brief self-introduction. The events sometimes feature educational talks or PowerPoint presentations, such as introductions to LGBTQ terminology for allies or reports from members' trips to Taiwan Pride but are more usually unstructured opportunities for small talk. Each table has a set of five or six icebreaker questions to get people talking, only one of which asks *How would you describe your gender or sexuality?* The others are generic conversational openers along the lines of *Where have you come from today? What is your day job? Do you have any plans for New Year?* Looking over my extensive field notes as I wrote this chapter, I was struck by how few of the conversations I noted down had anything to do with LGBTQ topics in particular. People talked about foreign holidays we had enjoyed; our favourite desserts;[40] whether it actually rains as much in England as popular culture had led them to believe; how Aomori dialect differs from orthodox Japanese; the extension of the bullet train network as far north as Hachinohe; and other topics of general interest. A large part of the draw for many attendees seemed to be the ability to simply spend time with other LGBTQ people in a

[40] There were occasional comedic interludes. During the conversation about desserts, I got a laugh which surprised even me by telling my interlocutors about the English-language joke that 'LGBT' stands for "Let's Get Bubble Tea"; Hanako amended the joke to "LGBTQ – Let's Go! Bubble Tea! Quickly!", and we soon dissolved into farce.

space where they would not be questioned intensively for mentioning a same-gender partner or using the right bathroom for them.

This is not to suggest, however, that we never talked about LGBTQ topics at Shinzen no Kai. It was in fact one of my richest sources for hearing how people described their identities in their own terms. I recorded one conversation in my field notes wherein the two people I was talking to asked me what the English equivalent of 'X-gender' is. I used the *Imi wa?* kanji app to look up the word for 'binary', which is 二元 [nigen, lit. 'dual'], so we settled on 不二元 [funigen, 'not-dual'] as the closest Japanese equivalent. Another time, I asked a student who had introduced themself as 'X-gender' meant by that. It was so loud in the room that they couldn't hear me the first couple of times I repeated the question and I was beginning to second-guess myself, wondering if they had been the person to mention it at all, but then recognition came. I asked, "What does it mean?" [nan to iu imi desu ka?] and they explained it means feeling like one gender one day and a different gender the next, having a fluid or unfixed gender identity. There were also deeper conversations about risk and personal safety from time to time. Once, when we were talking about the risks of coming out at work, I said that I sometimes feel like I have to come out twice: once about the topic of my research and then again about my own trans identity if someone asks me how I first became interested in trans culture. Ikuko-san asked me if I don't feel confident [sekkyokuteki] about discussing these things; I replied that in LGBTQ spaces, like Shinzen no Kai, I always feel very open and confident – I say that I am trans in my self-introduction every time – but when I am in majority straight or cisgender spaces, whether in England or Japan, I often feel more uncertain. Hanako nodded and said, "It's harder outside the community, isn't it?" [komyuniti no soto ni muzukashii ne]. The sense of collective identity was strong, especially within the boundaries of the event's queer time.

Nor did this particular ibasho always dissolve on exiting the rental space. The post-meetup lunch gathering I describe in Chapter 2, affectionately referred to by Makoto as the 'Premium Members' brunch, was a rich source of gossip and meta-commentary on other people within the group. Over bowls of French fries and ice-cream sundaes, I overheard commentary on X-san, who was always looking for a boyfriend, but only ever looking for a guy who is smarter or older than him; Y-san, who is old enough to know

better but their mental age [seishin nenrei] is much younger than their chronological age; Z-san, who comes from a rich family and is always baffled when other people remark on the expensive sweets he brings to share at the meetups; and other main characters of the week's gossip. Yet the brunches could also be a useful source of information on events and trends in the wider community. It was at the diner, for example, that I was able to hear Chiaki, a well-known local activist, talking about trans awareness in the LGBTQ events he ran throughout 2018 in a regional city in Ishikawa Prefecture. He said that in the April event, basically no-one knew anything about trans issues at all, and by May, there had been some increased consciousness-raising. The brunch club afforded opportunities for people to discuss ongoing outreach and educational or activist projects outside the time-limited small talk sessions, and further functioned as a space for my respondents to evaluate me and my motivations, as much as it was for me to find out more about them. At the same brunch where I was able to hear Chiaki talk about his educational project in Ishikawa, I was asked why I was interested in hearing about regional LGBTQ initiatives. I described how the Anglophone ethnographic field is already saturated with work based in and around Tokyo and explained my interest in trans life outside of urban megacentres. As described in Chapter 2, my research was in some ways of as much interest to my respondents as they were to me.

I was often, but not always, the only Westerner present at the Kyoto meetups, but certainly not the only foreigner; there are several regulars from China, Taiwan, and Vietnam, many of whom are overseas students at Osaka's many universities or are in Japan on work visas. While visible foreignness might seem to be a disadvantage, I was often able to play on it for comic or self-deprecating effect. I remember with fondness a *nomikai* [drinking party] organised over Zoom by Eitaro, the director of Shinzen no Kai, during the national coronavirus-related State of Emergency in April 2020. When we all compared what we were drinking, I had sake while almost everyone else had plumped for red wine or beer. "Am I really the only foreigner *and* the only person here drinking Nihonshu?" I asked in mock-outrage, spurring laughter from the other attendees. The intimacy of that party, which was enabled both by participation from home and the private sphere instead of an impersonal rental space and by the unstructured nature of the conversation, created a further ibasho within the Shinzen no Kai sphere. The icebreaker questions and self-introductions could be dispensed with in favour of aimless

chatting; Eitaro-san's husband knitting; and Ikuko-san drowsing at the electronic keyboard in her music room, plinking chords softly with one hand, supervised by a plush Hello Kitty wearing a trans flag as a cape.

The world of Shinzen no Kai's ibasho remained my primary field site for nearly two years. Its structured events, coupled with more casual interludes and friendships made within the group itself, provided the perfect context for 'deep hanging out'. But a walking tour cannot stop only at one place: and so, on our tour of the gaybourhood, we go outside, walk a few blocks through Teramachi Market, and emerge by the Sanjo [Third Avenue] bridge across the Kamo River.

Let's Go, Beautification Team!

"Please wear your most colourful rainbow clothes", the Facebook event page had said in English and Japanese; surprisingly enough, I had failed to bring any rainbow apparel with me to Kyoto and so I had to settle for a bright red T-shirt. As I approached the knot of people underneath the Sanjo Bridge, down by the riverside, I saw that several of them were decked out in rainbow clown wigs, rainbow leis, rainbow suspenders, and other cheerful indicators of what might be termed a queer persuasion. Several pedestrians on the bridge above us were leaning over to snap pictures with their mobile phones as the organiser waved back at them. There were about ten of us in total, with an even mix of Japanese and foreign volunteers; the organisers introduced themselves, gave a quick description of the route we would take, passed out thick cotton gloves, rubbish bags, and spaghetti tongs decorated with rainbow *washi* tape, and we were off.

The group I was with that sunny early Spring day was IroIro Kyoto, a volunteer community service group run by LGBTQ people in the city. They have a friendly relationship with Shinzen no Kai and some other affiliated queer groups but are independently run. Their most regular activity, and the one in which I had come to participate, is litter-picking: clearing rubbish off the banks of the Kamo River, ensuring the cycle paths are clear of any hazards, and generally ensuring the health of the local environment. The group's activities are far from unusual in Japan, a country where most of the population belongs to at least one neighbourhood association [jichikai; chonaikai],

volunteer group, or community service initiative[41] (Pekkanen et al, 2014; Taniguchi, 2016). Schools, universities, and youth groups frequently organise similar volunteer activities, such as raising money for charitable causes. The only unusual element of IroIro Kyoto's litterpicking is that the people engaged in it are visibly LGBTQ.

This was unusual not just for Japanese public space in general but for the rest of the LGBTQ community as well. As we will see at the end of this chapter, there are some events such as Pride which serve as opportunities for mass public visibility, but most of the events I attended involved at least some level of privacy or concealment. Anyone wishing to attend Shinzen no Kai meetings, for example, has to register on the website beforehand: walk-ins are not admitted. The rental space is marked for attendees via signs that say SHINZEN NO KAI, but the generic name *Friendship Society* does not indicate any direct link to LGBTQ people. Once inside, the presence of rainbow flags as decor rather gives the game away, but anyone passing on the street outside could easily mistake it for a befriending group, a depression support circle, or any other community initiative. As remarked above, several participants in the Zoom sessions that began during the pandemic said repeatedly that it was only via the extra privacy options available online that they felt safe participating in the group, even though they felt badly in need of queer companionship. One of the most active people I knew in Kyoto, a born organiser and party planner who organised endless o-hanami, BBQs, bōnenkai, nomikai, and New Year's Eve festivities, had to remind participants every time not to post photographs on social media or tag anyone present, as they themself were still closeted both to their family and their workmates and could not risk being outed. Queer Shokudo were something of an outlier amongst my various fieldwork groups: believers in truth-in-advertising, they put their affiliation directly in the name of the group where most other organisations chose names like 'Colourful' [IroIro], 'Rainbow' [Niji], or 'Ibasho'.

I heard the sentiment that "It's important for people to see us as LGBT people volunteering" from several people as we strolled along the Kamo banks, fishing plastic bottles out of the reeds with the spaghetti tongs, dodging cyclists, and cheering when

[41] See e.g., Hamamatsu City's advice for resident foreigners: https://www.city.hamamatsu.shizuoka.jp/hamaeng/02life/02_4.html [Last accessed: 12/12/21, 14:03 GMT]

someone pulled off a particularly daring rubbish retrieval from the shallows. "It's nice to have something to do with other *tōjisha* [here meaning queer people] that happens on a weekend and isn't at a bar", said Yumiko, a college freshman with whom I struck up a rapport over the course of the afternoon. She had been coming to the litter-picking events off and on but had been too busy, and the weather too bad, to attend over Winter. Several of the attendees were Australians or other study-abroad students; one, a Portuguese girl who came to Kyoto to study art history, was also there for the first time. She asked me for an introduction to other LGBTQ groups in the local area and I sent her the details for Shinzen no Kai, along with the upcoming Nara Pride festival, Osaka Rainbow Festa, and the July sessions of the Kansai Queer Film Festival. The IroIro litterpicking, and an impromptu picnic thrown by a friend in the Queer Students' Circle to mark the anniversary of the Stonewall riots, were the only two events where the participant demographics skewed my age or younger. Queer and trans college students proved to be an elusive population during my fieldwork due to my lack of institutional affiliation; spending time with them was both ethnographically enriching and socially enjoyable.

While Shinzen no Kai is a moderately-sized group and IroIro's anti-litter crack squad comprised only a dozen people or so, I was also invited to small private parties thrown by friends in the community. We have come in off the street and passed through the rental space; strolled along the river on a nice day in Spring; and now we venture underneath the railway bridges to attend a purely social gathering.

How to get invited to the cookout

"I sometimes taught people at my office about LGBT issues", Hanako said, cutting a chunk of watermelon into bite-size pieces, "but nothing formal. It was just like teaching people to use Word or Excel." "Why don't you put it on your CV? It could go under the 'Skills' section - Word, Excel, LGBT *ishiki* [awareness]", I replied, to which she laughed.

The context of this conversation was the BBQ party with which this thesis begins. It took place in mid-June of 2019 and was organised by my respondent Makoto, who had confessed some nervousness to me beforehand, as they said this was their first time organising something as logistically complex as a group cookout. Makoto is an inveterate

socialite and loves to matchmake friends with each other; I had gone with them and one or two of their other friends to visit shrines, see movies, attend the Kitano Tenmangu flea market, have dinners out in town, and once (memorably) to climb a small mountain in Uji, but all of these expeditions had been for at most three to four people. Everyone they had invited to the cookout, of whom about thirteen ended up participating, were people Makoto had met through LGBTQ community group socialising and queer-related activism, although they were at pains to stress that this was their idea, unaffiliated with the Shinzen no Kai LGBT society.

The site and materials of the cookout itself were unremarkable. That is to say: group barbecues like this are a very common social event across Japan in the Summer. The ingredients of the cookout are agreed upon by mutual assent; back-of-the-envelope calculations are made to work out the total bill, including the price of food, drinks, and equipment/table rental; and each person pays in a requisite amount to the one organising the event, who uses it to cover all associated costs. The venues for this kind of cookout are invariably public. Rare is the Japanese house with sufficient garden space to make at-home gatherings an option. The site Makoto had chosen for our BBQ in June was a public venue in Arashiyama, underneath part of the railway bridges. As we prepped vegetables, flipped food on the grill, and distributed plastic cutlery, one of the other people at the party joked that Makoto was being Dad and Hanako was being Mum. "That's right", Makoto said, "we're a family, and you're all our kids home from university for the Summer." "I guess that makes me the foreign homestay student", I joked, but Hanako and Makoto suddenly became very serious. Makoto grabbed my hand and squeezed. They insisted almost in unison: "No! You're one of our *real* kids! We're family!" Once they were reassured that I didn't feel like an outsider, Hanako looked somewhat wistful and said "Even though it's not a real family..." [hontō no kazoku ga nain desu kedo...] That led to a discussion of the term 'chosen family' [eranda kazoku] and, over the course of the afternoon, Hanako telling me with extraordinary generosity about her life. I have detailed much of what she told me in Chapter 3, *Against a Trans Narrative*, but wish to highlight one specific example of trans time and queer space from her narrative.

About thirty years ago, she started going to the Elizabeth Club in Tokyo. The Elizabeth Club itself was founded ca. 1980, but there was an older crossdressers' club founded by

crossdressers who came of age in the postwar era; it was established sometime around 1978 and Hanako believes it to be the oldest in Japan. It was a space where young women like her could get advice from older trans women and crossdressers on how to dress and act as a believable woman: "Otherwise", she said very matter-of-factly, "you'd die. The whole thing was 'Top Secret' back then. I had to bring my clothes to the club in a bag and get changed there, then change back to my male clothes before going home." Even spaces designated as sanctuaries for trans women could not always be counted on to provide a welcoming atmosphere: Hanako told me that one particular crossdressers' club in Kobe, the *Yamato Nadeshiko*, refused her and her friend membership due to their heights. The club organisers said it would be impossible to get clothes big enough for such tall women to wear. This memory highlights an uncomfortable truth about both trans time and queer space: neither are uncomplicatedly positive for the people who occupy them. While most are positive and affirming, like Shinzen no Kai and the long affectionate afternoon we spent eating and chatting at the cookout, the 'crab bucket' impulse to hammer down a sticking-out nail for the sake of the community is also strong.

The last stop on our tour of Queer Kyoto takes us back indoors to somewhere that I suggest occupied a third position between the proactive conversation-starters of Shinzen no Kai and the intra-community exclusion experienced by Hanako and her friend; a space where *belonging* could be subject to some negotiation, but any degree of *participation* was welcomed and respected.

Makoto and Hanako at the cookout.

Photograph: author's own, included by kind permission of those pictured.

Reading the tea leaves and the zines at Queer Shokudo

Queer Shokudo was a now-defunct pay-what-you-can lunch club run by three members of Kyoto's queer community from 2014 to 2019, held every Saturday in a neighbourhood known for its student population and artsy vibes. The all-vegan menu would be announced on the group's Facebook page every Wednesday along with an invitation to come along, chat, and take advantage of the group's zine collection. Although it was founded and run by LGBTQ people, the lunch events always drew a mixed crowd: local members of the queer community; hungry students of every gender and orientation from the university quarter; young couples with babies and toddlers, etc. The suggested donation for lunch was 500 yen but it worked on the honour system. Anyone who turned up would be fed, and some people paid a little more to cover others' expenses. The team behind Queer Shokudo also provided food for the Kansai Queer Film Festival and other local initiatives. Their setup was very different to Shinzen no Kai. The Shokudo was much

more of as a come-as-you-are, no-need-to-socialise atmosphere, without icebreakers, educational talks, or anything similar.

The attendee demographics fluctuated. Sometimes there were several Japanese regulars and almost no foreigners, while the next week might bring half a dozen exchange students from Kyoto University. On one particular day chosen at random from my field notes, I arrived about 45 minutes after lunch had started. There were only three or four other guests. A young couple with a baby and a toddler came downstairs after a while, which surprised me. The attendees were all otherwise at least college-freshman age. When I arrived, there was only a Japanese woman and a young foreign woman eating lunch at the long bar by the window. The other white woman said there was a seat there if I wanted one, but apart from that exchange, there was no conversation. We all ate in total silence, looking out the window, reading zines, or tapping at our phones. Another young white woman came about half an hour after me, immediately drew up a chair, and started chatting with the person next to me. They did not seem to know each other. In fact, the girl who came later was coming to Queer Shokudo for the first time and was amazed to have found it. She said she was not expecting to find any kind of organised queer community in Kyoto and thought she would have to go to Osaka to find it, although what she had found in Osaka so far seemed to only be bars and no other forms of queer life like bookshops or cafes. The final event in February 2019, by contrast, was very busy. The café was filled to standing room only for most of it, including three quite lost students from Doshisha who had not initially realised this was a *Queer* Shokudo; their voices grew quiet when they parsed out the katakana for *kuia*.

While the Shokudo was not as accessible a place for recording LGBTQ-related colloquial Japanese or having structured conversations, it was the best place in town for picking up on rumours and emerging issues troubling the community. I was able to corroborate bits and pieces of facts about 'queer Japan' there that I had surmised, or had read about in translation, but had been unable to find sources for elsewhere. For example, people there confirmed in conversation that Kansai *does* have a queer culture distinct from Kanto, and that there *is* in fact very little queer/trans organising at a national level, as opposed to regional. It was actually at Queer Shokudo that I heard about the groundswell of

transphobia in Japanese online feminist discourses, which will be discussed more fully in Chapter 9, *Making the Road*. According to my field notes:

> **2nd February 2019:** The director of KQFF was handing out flyers at QS today for an event – open-mic discussion of emerging transphobic feminism in Japan. Everyone concurs that TERFism hasn't been a problem in Japanese feminist circles until now, but no-one seems to know where it's coming from. Clyde speculates that it might be because Ochanomizu Daigaku has started admitting trans women, but they aren't certain, and they're kind of doubtful that that would be a sufficient precipitating event.[42] This outbreak seems to be happening only on Twitter as well (almost none offline, none on Facebook, none on LINE etc), so they're suspicious that it might be a small group of people trying to malign the Japanese feminist movement – it's hard to figure out how many people might be behind it and what their motivations are. I told Tetsuko and Marwan that it's a double-edged sword – interesting and relevant for my research, but never nice to know that people hate us.

Between Shinzen no Kai and Queer Shokudo, the latter seemed to have closer connections with the university population in one section of suburban Kyoto, and was the more international of the two, with several nisei Japanese-Americans and many international research students amongst their regulars. This did not, however, mean that it was easy to blend in to the larger community that revolved around the Kansai Queer Film Festival. Early in my fieldwork, I thought that volunteering at the festival might be a decent opportunity for participant observation. I broached the subject to the director one day when we were both at the lunch club. She stressed to me, in what I initially thought was a non-sequitur, that when Queer Studies began to take off as a discipline in Japan, the scholars involved made the decision right from the start to keep Japanese Queer Studies Japanese. This was in order to ward off English linguistic imperialism, as the language of most international Queer Studies is English and young Japanese academics are more likely to learn English rather than conduct work only in Japanese. She invited me for an interview over tea at a coffeeshop near Higashinotoin Street a week or so later, and her

[42] As it transpired, my sometime respondent Clyde was correct: the trigger for the current transphobic backlash in Japan is broadly agreed to have been Ochanomizu's decision to admit trans women as undergraduate students. I go into this in further detail in Chapter 6, *Institutional Interfaces.*

point became clear when she gave me to understand they already had one English speaker on the volunteer board and that was quite enough already. Despite the fact that the Shokudo had an international clientele, was run in part by native or bilingual English speakers who were themselves never anything less than friendly and welcoming, and used English as a frequent language of communication, the director seemed to me to be somewhat invested in keeping the boundaries of acceptance and belonging much more fraught than people did at Shinzen no Kai, where communication was almost exclusively in Japanese but people seemed less preoccupied about it.

I close the door on our walking tour of LGBTQ Kyoto with the last ever Queer Shokudo event in late February 2019. I had gotten up in plenty of time that morning and, on a whim, went to the flower shop next to my apartment in order to buy three sets of flowers for the organisers. They set out a buffet-style lunch on every available flat surface in the café: a rich feast of fried tofu, pasta salad, rice, gyoza, and sweets. Other people also brought flowers and a cake from a local bakery. Even though I had spent time the previous week relaxing in the upstairs room with some of the organisers and talking about the natural ends of things – how it is encouraging and refreshing to see something new emerging from something that has run out its time - it was melancholy to see it come to an end. I signed one of the big collage-style cards that were being passed around with notes of appreciation and reminiscences on them before the final, emotional farewell to five years of Queer Shokudo. Our three proprietors posed outside the café with the flowers and cards and the banner they had made at the café's launch party when it all began. I told Mariko-san, one of the original founders, that we would all see Queer Shokudo again "jikai no keshin ni" [in the next incarnation], which made her laugh out loud. Once the laughter and the *banzai*s faded down, the door closed forever to one queer ibasho and opened, perhaps, to whichever one came next.

The last of Queer Shokudo, February 2019.
Photograph: author's own.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

> The need to make a life will continue in spite of gender-confirming surgeries. If SRS is not a defining event, but one among many, then happiness is a cluster of connections to all those non-events and interstitial spaces in the trans ordinary.
>
> Aultman (2019: 8)

The trans people I met in Kyoto and Osaka clearly, consistently understood and identified themselves as a community. They did things together, queer-focussed and otherwise, and maintained a coherent group identity. One particularly interesting point for me was that there did not seem to be any correlation between age groups and willingness to be visible. One might reasonably expect older trans people to be more circumspect and younger trans/queer people to be more visible, but I met out-and-proud activists in their fifties and closeted people in their early twenties. Trans happiness and trans community are

realised even in contingency: a venue or a context doesn't have to be permanent or reliable in order to fulfil a person's needs. This has been made especially clear by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and the decision by the Shinzen no Kai director to continue online socials for the foreseeable future. Community and intrapersonal bonds were strengthened through several of my respondents' sense of responsibility towards me as their *kohai* [junior] or as a visiting researcher. Makoto was often very anxious that I get in contact with the people they had recommended I meet, even when their contacts were not related to my project, e.g. straight asexual people, cis gay men etc. Assumptions about privacy and anonymity between my pre-fieldwork training and the culture on the ground could also be radically different. At one of the regular Shinzen no Kai meetups, when there had been no significant announcements, guest speakers, or other particular one-off occurrences, Makoto asked me if I had been recording the attendees' conversations. They asked me this with what seemed like an assumption that of course I might be and that doing so would be a totally unremarkable thing to do, but I said no, no, just listening and occasionally taking part. While this sense of community cohesiveness could be problematised or complicated by actors within the mesh of interpersonal relationships, such as the director of the Kansai Queer Film Festival or the club that refused service to Hanako and her friend, the overarching strength of trans people's elective affinity with one another belies the stereotype of trans people as isolated and atomised.

Yet this camaraderie often has limits and boundaries along lines of time, space, and occasion. For many people in Japan LGBTQ life is still very compartmentalised, including trans life, although the public image of a transgender person is of someone who intends to permanently live and present as their target gender. Several of my respondents did have to, as Halberstam says, subdivide their 'queer time' from familial or employment responsibilities, or had had to do so in the past. Not everyone is interested in living as a binary trans person 24/7. Not everyone is safe to do so, but it would be misleading to say that trans people only compartmentalise their lives out of concerns for their personal safety, or only go to queer spaces in order to discuss LGBTQ-related issues. While designated queer events might be the only opportunity for non-transitioning X-gender people to say so publicly, for example, or for trans people not to be challenged on their gender presentation or their bathroom use, they also serve as places to *not* talk about

gender and sexuality, which may come up too often in unpleasant ways for them to relish the idea of discussing them again, even amongst friends.

There are a multiplicity of such spaces in in Kyoto alone, never mind Osaka, which are quasi-hidden and have a routine if one knows where to look. They maintain a polite and above-board atmosphere where explicit discussions or expressions of sexuality are discouraged and where children, teenagers, and families are welcome. The trans worlds I describe here are thus different from previous ethnographies of trans Japan, which have historically focussed on the demimonde. It is not my intention to play respectability politics here - the cabaret scene and the people within it are no less valid or real as both ethnographic topics and transgender people than their daytime counterparts - but the focus of this chapter was on how I met other trans people in the everyday, or what Mitsuhashi Junko calls 'the world below the sunlight'.

CHAPTER 5. GIRLS ON FILM: LGBTQ FILM FESTIVALS AND VIEWING PUBLICS

Introduction

Even after returning to England, I was lucky enough to see Yuka Kanno, my supervisor at Doshisha University, give lecture for the Daiwa Foundation on the history and culture of queer film festivals in Japan. I had been toying with the idea of writing a chapter on LGBTQ film cultures and the ethnography of film festivals in Kyoto and Osaka but had hesitated due to my lack of familiarity with media ethnography or film criticism; her talk was the impetus I needed to do so. Why did I feel that a designated section on queer film festivals was necessary? Quite simply, because they provide literal, visual signposts for how queer people do, should, or are imagined to live our lives in ways legible to multiple audiences. Queer film festivals function as a device for forming new communities and rearranging existing ones. The social and convivial space of the auditorium provides opportunities for queer, local, and cinematic activism along with networking and the simple pleasure derived from watching films. Yet, as Dr. Kanno observed, the fact that people can attend a screening, watch the film in silence, and leave without speaking to any other attendees can also create a state of 'weak connectivity' compared to other events like social meets or support groups. Nor is there one single programme for what a 'queer film festival' might look like. One festival may become a vehicle for models of contestatory or radical viewing within the counterpublic sphere, such that it may be difficult to speak of 'community', more like 'viewing publics'.

Local LGBTQ film festivals in Japan are places where people go to reaffirm and reproduce community on an intimate scale, while also being able to access missives from the foreign, the exotic, and the strange. By their nature as endogenous public-facing events organised and run by local queer communities, they serve multiple intersecting functions as sites of contestation, of imagination, of reflection, of aspiration, of reification etc. Their content includes a considerable overlap with other minority groups and minority activism, at least in the festivals I attended in Kyoto and Osaka. Kansai Queer Film Festival, for example, featured films on environmental activism at Henoko Bay in Okinawa; Deafness

and disability; and ethnic Korean [zainichi Kankokujin] struggles, the latter of which it shared with the screening of the Korean film *Spirits' Homecoming* (*Gwi-hyang*, dir. Cho Jung-rae, 2016) at the Osaka University Queer Film Festival. They also provide a greater veneer of plausible deniability for LGBTQ people who are closeted or not fully 'out' than many other queer spaces do: film festivals, being open to the public, may be attended under the guise of being interested in environmentalist films like *Our Island's Treasure: Rise for Henoko* (dir. Kaiya Yonamine, 2019), or anti-HIV/AIDS initiatives, or merely being intrigued by the 'exotic' narratives on display. Parents of LGBTQ children and young adults may also feel more comfortable attending cultural events like film screenings rather than community events like meetups, end-of-year parties etc. that are explicitly or implicitly for LGBTQ people only.

Japan's LGBTQ film festivals are not the exclusive preserve of the urban megacentres of Kansai and Kanto, even given the dominance of Tokyo Rainbow Reel and the Kansai Queer Film Festival in the subcultural landscape - they also belong to Aomori, to Kagawa, and to Fukuoka, amongst other places. Nor are the large urban film festivals necessarily glossy productions on the level of London's annual LGBTQ film festival, *Flare*, which is convened under the auspices of the British Film Institute. As this chapter will show, the queer film festivals in Kyoto and Osaka are grassroots events run by local communities on shoestring budgets. While there are certainly elements of institutional privilege to both Kansai Queer Film Festival and Osaka University Queer Film Festival - one convened by students at Osaka University using campus facilities; the other held each year in October at the historic Seibu Kodo - Kansai Queer Film Festival at least works very hard to present an atmosphere of determined iconoclasm. In contrast with more 'professional' film festivals like the Osaka Asian Film Festival, which is run in a large cinema multiplex near Umeda Station, these community-run queer film festivals put more emphasis on the *participant* part of 'participant observation', rather than engaging only with the spectacle onscreen.

Although the film festivals I attended had a high proportion of foreign-to-domestic content, they were selected by local queer people with opportunities for feedback and suggestion from others in the community. A representative sample of films across two years and three festivals include some Japanese productions like *Until Rainbow Dawn*

(*Nijiro no asa ga kuru made*, dir. Imai Mika, 2018); *Of Love and Law* (*Ai to hō,* dir. Toda Hikaru, 2017), and the *FtM Season* at Kansai Queer Film Festival, coupled with the International Gay Short Films selection, the Jules Rosskam Retrospective, and high-profile 'global' films like *Happy Birthday Marsha!* (dir. Reina Gossett and Sasha Wortzel, USA, 2018) and *Rafiki* (dir. Wanuri Kahiu, Kenya, 2018). The Asian Queer Film Festival in Tokyo screens only LGBTQ films of Asian origin, while the other film festivals (Kansai, Osaka, Aomori etc) offer a variety of international fare.

Film festivals' most immediate affective power is that of LGBTQ cultural reproduction: we gather as a (queer) community; we watch films that reflect people (we imagine to be) like us, or that (we feel in some way will) chime with our experiences or will make us feel a sense of global solidarity with people like-unalike to us, or (especially for trans people) might provide a roadmap and example for the journeys ahead of us; and we engage in discussions about our community on our own terms. Some of my respondents, like Ikuko, enjoyed films like Maisy Goosey Suen's 2018 docu-drama *A Woman is a Woman* [*Nǚrén jiùshì nǚrén*] both because it entailed a representation of trans women at a high-profile, mainstream cinema festival, and because it was about somewhere a little far from home but with a satisfying amount of overlap with her own life. Hanako had the unusual experience of watching a documentary about a place that had been part of her own life for more than a decade while she was first coming out. Chiaki-san formed part of a discussion panel after the Osaka screening of the documentary film *Becoming a Woman* (*Onna ni naru*, dir. Tanaka Yukio, 2017). He is a trans man, so did not see his own transition reflected exactly in the film's narrative, but was invited to contribute to the discussion as an activist and someone with a keen interest in tracking transgender representation onscreen. Within the walls of the auditorium, we also have the chance to become more educated on people and identities within the community about whom we may have known nothing. This latter possibility offered in the context of a film festival maintains a strong affective appeal for me on a personal level as well as professional interest for me as an anthropologist. As a teenager in a rural part of England, I was preoccupied for years with an inkling that there was a queer culture just out or my reach, or that there was something more to *be found out* about the phenomenon of being gay or transgender, while the prevailing attitude of the people around me at the time could well be summarised along the lines that "there's nothing more to learn about, there's no

culture, you don't take *exams* in it, you just happen to find somebody else who's gay and if you're lucky you fall in love, that's it". Queer film festivals at their best can be a rare opportunity for the imagined community of LGBTQ people to experience more of the 'community' half of the phrase than the 'imagined'. Sites for viewing queer films outside of film festivals in Kyoto are few and far between. Films dealing with cisgender gay or lesbian desire, to say nothing of trans narratives, very rarely make it to the screens of major cinema chains like Toho or Movix. For example, the only LGBTQ-themed film on offer at the Nijo Toho Cinema for Spring 2018 was *Call Me By Your Name* (dir. Luca Guadagnino, 2017). The independent arthouse cinema Minami Kaikan provided more (and more regularly-scheduled) opportunities to see LGBTQ films in Kyoto. However, as with Toho, the queer-themed offerings were exclusively comprised of 'foreign' films - Georgia's *And Then We Danced* (*Da chven vitsek'vet*, dir. Levan Akin, 2019), Vietnam's *Song Lang* (dir. Leon Le, 2018) etc. LGBTQ film fans in Kyoto who want to see domestic LGBTQ-themed films on the big screen in company with other queer people, rather than as a solo viewing experience, must therefore wait for the annual film festivals rather than relying on mainstream programming.

Theoretical Lenses

I draw primarily on Anderson's (1983) 'imagined communities' and Surak's (2013)'cultural reproduction' for the theoretical framework of this chapter. Of particular relevance to my theory here is Weston's (1991) and Ross' (2012) use of imagined communities as they apply to queer kinship and LGBTQ community construction.

Anderson's definition of "a socially constructed community imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group", although referring in its original context to the nation state, is ideal for analysing the concentric nature of the publics that are imagined into being within the film festival, i.e., as a queer subset of the Japanese body politic. His analysis of media, especially visual and print media, as vehicles for the formation and reaffirmation of imagined communal identity lends itself particularly well to an ethnographic reading of film festivals. Yet, as Ross observes, the controversial aspect of Anderson's terminology is not 'imagined', for things imagined can easily take on an observable reality of their own, but rather 'community': "[A] contested term, since it

has been used to assert a form of gay ethnicity, grouping together and homogenising individuals who share a non-normative sexuality, whose specific differences may be erased through collective identification (Weston 1991, 122-24)". Who is inside, and who outside, the community? Who is systematically included, represented, and celebrated, and who is elided, excluded, or passed over? This is where I suggest it is useful to layer the concept of multiple overlapping *publics* atop the the imagined community: if 'the LGBTQ community' is the theoretical audience for whose benefit the film festival is held, then the individuals who show up to watch are its practical manifestation.

Similarly, while Surak's monograph is on the arch-traditional image and practice of the tea ceremony, I use her theories to describe a reproduction (through images and through their reception by a Japanese queer audience) of a subcategory of Japanese culture that works to reproduce both queer identity and Japanese-ness. Surak divides nation-work into two distinct subtypes, *definition/explanation* and *embodiment/cultivation,* which she defines as "principally expository and principally performative ways of concretising nations". The educational portions of LGBTQ-centric events, like panel discussions on transgender existence, mythbusting stereotypes around HIV/AIDS, or raising awareness of the intersections of other minority identities with queer existence, serve to define and explain aspects of the community to itself. Screenings of soi-disant documentaries to audiences that are presumed to be cisgender, such as the showing of the documentary *Onna ni naru* with a Q&A afterwards that I attended in Osaka, purport to explain what it means to be transgender as the definition is delineated and policed. The explanations that are offered come from within the community itself, especially from speakers like Yoshino Yugi, Endō Mameta, or Wakabayashi Yuma, who have firsthand experience of trans identity. The embodiment/cultivation aspect of nation-work is also in play within the event environment: providing a space in which LGBTQ people can cultivate their public queerness, i.e., not getting challenged in the bathroom; not being asked to justify why they are wearing a certain type of clothing; talking openly about same-gender partners, etc, serves to strengthen the affective and performative aspects of queer community as a collective effort rather than an individual phenomenon.

This concept of 'Japaneseness' is a crucial element of the Kansai Queer Film Festival's self-conception and presentation, as I discussed in Chapter 4, *Spaces and Phases*. There are

some overtly nationalistic elements in the deliberately-curtailed use of English as a communicative language in the programme and the access information, along with the director's rejection of 'Anglophone linguistic imperialism'; they argue for the necessity of a canon of work on Japanese LGBTQ culture and identity that is written *in Japanese*. Several scholars have, however, correctly observed that a homogenous 'Japanese' canon is itself a construction which cannot account for in-group variations. Most relevant amongst them for this discussion is Surak: "Thus in Japan what is at at stake is less whether someone is Japanese, a question that nearly always allows for an automatic yes-or-no answer, but what kind of Japanese that person is". (2013: 10) We may well suggest, then, that asserting Japanese-ness at the film festival through linguistic reinforcement and differentiation with the Other is a significant element of the festival's participants' performativity. Again, this provokes a set of not-quite-rhetorical questions, these perhaps to be uttered with a more pointed tone: When it comes to performing enlightened progressivism in Japanese leftist circles, who is the most aware of imperialism, both Anglophone and Japanese? Whose trans narrative is foundational and whose is problematised? Who is the most invested in grassroots community efforts and who is the most internationally cosmopolitan?

My purpose in this chapter is to draw out the mutability and the porous boundaries inherent to the imagined community - in this case the LGBTQ community, as we may still call it - in order to make visible the ways that film festivals can hold space for pleasure, education, and solidarity, but can also reproduce unconscious, prejudicial narratives and patterns of discrimination endemic to intra-community organising outside of the auditorium as well.

When it comes to the nature of the media I analyse herein, this chapter deals specifically with live-action drama films and documentaries on transgender subjects, or that include significant transgender representation. Manga and anime are almost entirely outside the remit of my research: relatively few of my respondents had seen or heard of any trans-themed anime (the few that exist, e.g., *Wandering Son* [Hōrō musuko], based on Shimamura Takako's manga of the same name). Nor were there any animated films featured at any of the screenings, film festivals, or movie nights I attended. I have also deliberately chosen to write only about films rather than television serials or J-dramas.

There are several well-known Japanese TV series that are about trans people or that feature trans characters, including 2006's drama *Watashi ga watashi de aru tame ni* [In order for me to be myself] and 2016's *Joshiteki seikatsu* [Life as a Girl], or *San-nen B-Gumi Kinpachi-sensei* [Mr Kinpachi in Class 3B], which ran from 1979 to 2011. *Kinpachi-sensei* in particular is frequently cited as a milestone for public awareness of trans people, especially trans kids and teenagers. However, I chose to focus on film festivals as setpiece events: the selective nature of what is shown and what is obscured gives us an opportunity to analyse the mechanisms at work within a discrete context.

I begin this chapter with an ethnographic account of my participant observation at two years of the Kansai Queer Film Festival [Kansai kuia eigasai] and the inaugural session of the Osaka University Queer Film Festival in May of 2019. I analyse the film festivals as sites of both collective organising and controversy, with particular reference to the 'imagined communities' enabled and engendered within these transient spaces. I then use several case studies of trans-related film screenings, outside of queer film festivals proper, to examine how trans narratives are constructed and disseminated to a mainstream audience. I have chosen to structure this chapter episodically, considering each of the film festivals or screenings I attended as standalone events, rather than thematically. The primary reason for this is the lack of overlap or interaction between my different respondent groups at these varying events. Members of Shinzen no Kai attended the Osaka University Queer Film Festival, the Asian Film Festival, and the special screenings of *Onna ni naru*, but noticeably avoided the Kansai Queer Film Festival. I will go into further detail on what I believe to be the reasons for this public disjuncture; suffice it for now to say that the difference in attendant demographics is sufficient for each event or set of events to be analysed separately.

Kansai Queer Film Festival (2018/19, Kyoto Sessions)

The Kansai Queer Film Festival holds two sessions a year: the first in July at Osaka's Toyonaka Step, the second at the Kyoto Seibu Kōdō in October. Of the two, October seems the more significant event: for example, both 2019 sessions were dedicated to a retrospective of the works of the American trans director Jules Rosskam, but he was only flown over to Japan at the organiser's invitation for the October event. I was never in

Japan in July over the course of my fieldwork, so I never had the opportunity to attend the Osaka sessions and compare both events in the same year. All of my field notes are taken from the Kyoto events.

Promotional material for the 2011 Kansai Queer Film Festival, from the author's own collection.

A selection of promotional material for the Kansai Queer Film Festival 2007-2019, curated from the author's own collection.

The event itself happens over a three-day weekend in and around the Seibu Kodo auditorium, a historic building that belongs to Kyoto University and dates originally from 1937, relocated and reconstructed in the present location in 1963. The Seibu Kodo building itself has an interesting history. It was first built to celebrate the birth of future Emperor Akihito in 1937; after the student uprising of 1968, the auditorium became home to a longstanding counter-cultural movement including rock concerts, Communist politicking, and artistic experiments in absolute freedom of speech. While there are other venues in Kyoto that could easily accommodate a three-day queer film festival, such as the city's Centre for Gender Equality, the choice of the Seibu Kodo deliberately invokes the building's history as a site for free expression and dangerous ideas, situating the festival and its publics within that radical tradition.

Outside, the hall's traditional tiled roof and wooden architecture could pass as a small temple or a large family home; inside, with the space decorated for the festivities, it takes on an atmosphere of warehouse chic. There are raised seating blocks covered with grey

industrial carpeting, arranged to form a roughly-tiered auditorium bank, with floor pillows, electric blankets, and beanbag cushions strewn about. Wooden plank benches and upturned plastic crates provide further seating in front of the projection stage. Large glass fishing buoys suspended from freestanding stepladders serve as mood lighting, illuminating the intricate structure of the rafters from below. There is an upright piano kitty-corner to the stage with a pianist intermittently playing live music. The accessibility on offer for disabled attendees, especially Deaf viewers, was impressive in its attention to detail. All volunteers for the event were equipped with portable whiteboards and dry-erase markers in case they needed to communicate with Deaf or nonverbal attendees. Hand bells were rung and lights were flicked off and on three times to signal announcements, such as intermissions, or to mark five minutes remaining before the next set of films. All spoken portions of the festival, including announcements, welcoming remarks, panel discussions, educational lectures etc. were accompanied by Japanese Sign Language interpretation.

During the intermission at the 2018 festival, I went to the back of the hall and looked at the stalls that had been set up to host a variety of items for sale. It was an eclectic bazaar: some DVDs (both anime and live-action feature films); underwear, including boxer shorts for trans men that had adaptations for packers or sanitary products; an eye-watering array of sex toys; rainbow tchotchkes like T-shirts, pins, and lapel badges; and books. I bought a book on queer Japanese terminology and two catalogues for this year's film festival. Some of the DVDs on sale were representative of other social progressive issues, such as the antiwar film *The Other Hiroshima: Korean A-Bomb Victims Tell Their Story* [*Mō hitotsu no Hiroshima*, dir. Park Soo-nam, 1986], although the majority were queer-themed. Also in attendance were Queer Shokudo, providing popcorn in paper bags (free to take, with toppings lined up in front), a crockpot of vegan bean chilli, and a small portable rice cooker. A South Asian-style tea vendor was providing cups of masala chai: although the festival's access information does not explicitly say it is a dry environment, I did not see anyone drinking alcohol. The overall mood was relaxed and unhurried, with volunteers circulating and attendees drifting in and out over the breaks between film screenings. It was difficult for me to estimate how many people came with friends or met people they happened to already know, but my sense is that most attendees came by themselves. The exception was Hotaru, who came for the Saturday overnight film marathon in 2019 with

a group of their undergraduate students and a few friends from the Kyoto academic ecosystem. The parking lot in front of the Seibu Kodo was always full of people in small groups chatting, smoking, and waiting for the next session. I did see a considerable number of people exchanging business cards [meishi], especially with invited speakers/panellists after they'd been speaking. The festival played an important role as as site not only for socialising but also for purposeful networking, especially as many of the speakers came from Tokyo or occasionally from abroad.

I took my chilli bowl outside to eat while perusing the 'library table', which was stacked with manga, light novels, and educational materials on a variety of progressive social topics. People were lining up at the next table over to receive shoulder massages. There was a strong sense of ordinary life happening around us during the film festival: because the hall in which the films are screened is situated right next to student dorms and common areas, I frequently heard band practice, drama rehearsals, chatter and eating noises drifting over to the car park and waiting area outside. This quotidian mood was also part of the charm of helping to clean up the hall each night. When I found myself volunteering to scrub used dishes from Queer Shokudo's chilli-and-rice pots outside at the cold-water sinks or folding up electric blankets and corralling errant beanbag cushions after the day's event was over, the logistics reminded me of the communal trans life I had experienced in Oxford and London. This sense of the communal and the familiar - of the 'queer sphere' enabled by the festival being incorporated into the mainstream - was heightened by Hotaru and their students. We all went for dinner together nearby during the film intermissions. While some of the students identify as queer, the majority do not; the fact of their presence at the festival, and their evident enjoyment, seemed like a cautious data point in favour of growing LGBTQ awareness and acceptance in Japan. Yet community is not the only affective force at play: when there was an initial problem with the first film at the 2018 event, I felt a familiar fear for queer people when we are gathered together in the public dark: the fear that something isn't just wrong but is about to be deadly wrong. Japan is, statistically speaking, one of the safest countries in the world. There was no reason for me to expect that we would be in any danger; but depictions of trans and queer people as persecuted, under threat, or subject to social rejection can also provoke strong emotions of their own.

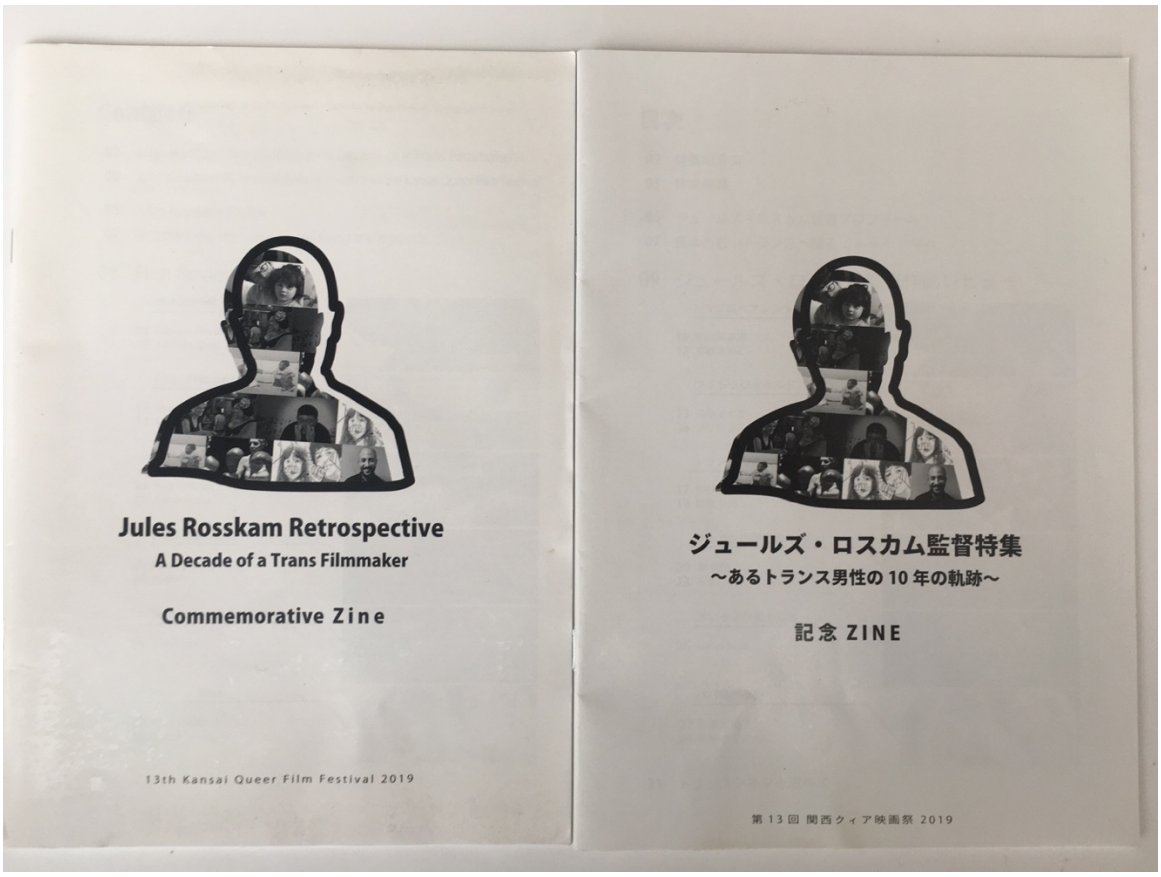
As I wrote a few initial impressions of the site down in my field notebook, I recalled one of my respondents, who volunteers with both the Osaka and Kyoto events every year, saying that the Kansai Queer Film Festival is run on a shoestring budget.[43] I found myself wondering whether similar conditions and aesthetics were present in the Osaka event, and whether either or both of the Kansai film festivals were comparative to the annual LGBTQ film festivals held in Aomori, Tokyo, Fukuoka etc. Is the setting just shabby, or is it shabby-chic? Is it reflective of the fact that trans and other queer people as a demographic are more likely to live below the poverty line and have less access to material resources than our straight and cisgender peers, or is it a self-conscious aesthetic? Kyoto University is an extremely prestigious institution, and the Seibu Kodo is a historic building in a city not short on historic buildings, but we as attendees sat on plank benches and plastic crates with borrowed electric blankets, watching movies projected from somebody's laptop. BFI *Flare*, this was not. My intention here is not to criticise the volunteers who bring the Kansai Queer Film Festival to life each year. Rather, the point I want to make is about the conscious deployment of aesthetics as a political tool and a tactical choice: emphasising the shabbiness and the grassroots aspect of the festival's organisation serves as a way to underscore the counter-cultural credentials of the event.

That particular political and social sensibility was as much evident in who does *not* attend the film festival as who does. While I was outside waiting for the Welcome Session, I happened to strike up a conversation with one of the volunteer photographers affiliated with the film festival. I was looking at a selection of flyers and publicity material from previous years arranged on the library table; she pointed out a self-portrait on one of the pamphlets from about a decade ago. "I don't help choose the films or the themes every year - I'm just generally lending a hand today", she told me. "But I and other people have helped to suggest that the number of films about women and trans people should increase over the years. At first it was exclusively films about gay men." The phrase she used for

[43] The price structure for the events reflects the relative expense of acquiring often-obscure films and booking out the Seibu Kodo for a whole weekend. Both years, I bought a two-day Kyoto Pass (available for one, two, or all three days) at the 'support rate' of 8,000 yen, which is 53 GBP; even the reduced 'hardship pass' is 6,800 yen, or 45 GBP. Although expensive, it is comparable in price (or even cheaper) than, say, BFI Flare, where a 'festival pass' of ten tickets for the all-online 2021 festival would set a member of the general public back 90 GBP.

'increased', *ganbatte sagashite*, implied that the process of that thematic expansion had not been without its struggles. I was curious as to what she meant by that, or whether she would be willing to expand, so I said by means of comparison that Shinzen no Kai has had similar issues in the past, at least going by what my friends and respondents have said. She had heard of Shinzen no Kai but had never attended a meetup.

Nobody from Shinzen no Kai attended either of the Kansai Queer Film Festival events I observed; nor was Kansai Queer Film Festival advertised on any of Shinzen no Kai's multiple social media accounts, including Facebook, LINE, or their own independent website. This is not because Shinzen no Kai as a group have no interest in LGBTQ-themed pop culture. By contrast, there were several social media posts and announcements at in-person meetups ahead of the inaugural Osaka University Students' Queer Film Festival; the one-off screening of *A Woman is a Woman* in Osaka in May 2018; and the inclusion of a trans-themed film at the Osaka Asian Film Festival, sometimes including handouts of flyers and other ephemera, plus information about showing times and event access. The KQFF is an event where the most prominent disjunctions and non-overlaps between Kansai's discrete LGBTQ communities become clear. I was not told directly by members of either group as to why Shinzen no Kai and the community build up loosely around the Kansai Queer Film Festival were in a state of such non-communication, but I have my suspicions. I believe there to be a deep political and activist disjunction between the two groups: Shinzen no Kai is focussed specifically on LGBTQ issues and often advocates for more mainstream 'respectability' issues like marriage, same-sex adoption etc, while Kansai Queer Film Festival sees their mission as involving wider solidarity issues and queer militancy. They view 'queer' as a political position as much as a social phenomenon.



Bilingual editions of the zines for the 2019 Kansai Queer Film Festival's Rosskam retrospective, from the author's own collection

Although the Kansai Queer Film Festival hosts many interesting and informative talks, panel discussions, lectures, and other educational opportunities every year, I want to provide an in-depth study of one specific panel at the 2019 Jules Rosskam retrospective. Rosskam is an American independent filmmaker whose films examine different aspects of trans existence and transition narratives; he describes his work as 'essay films' interrogated through a variety of theoretical frameworks, especially Trans Studies, as is most explicit in his 2008 film *Against a Trans Narrative* [Japanese title: *Toransu monogatari ni kōshite*]. He was the guest of honour at the October session that year, both giving a keynote speech and participating in a group discussion with the trans male Japanese filmmakers Wakabayashi Yuma and Kashō Iizuka, chaired by the festival director, herself a trans woman. This discussion was ethnographically significant because it was a rare opportunity to hear trans people talking about the ways in which they grapple with, challenge, and deliberately construct trans narratives on their own terms as creative directors. Even rarer, all three of the directors and scriptwriters were transgender men. I had noticed the lack of any films about trans men made by Japanese directors in the 2018 edition of the film festival, so I was particularly interested to hear from Wakabayashi and Kashō.

While Kashō depicts mostly trans protagonists and hires only trans actors for the roles, Wakabayashi chose cis actors for their theatre piece on trans identity. He explained his casting choices as being a case of "You pull from your own experiences and they pull from theirs, and the performance is strongest when those experiences converge...[T]he reason I cast cis actors is because, when we staged it live in 2017, I didn't say anything at all about it being a trans narrative, in order to see what people made of it from their own assumptions. But if I made it now, I'd cast trans people, because public awareness has increased over the last two years." Kashō, by contrast said that his narrative decision-making was more dedicated to 'reflecting the truth' about trans embodiment, which he felt could only be achieved by transgender actors. When asked about the fact that they both used the acronym GID rather than 'transgender' in their films, Kashō pointed out that eight years ago, GID was the only word used in Japanese discourse to describe transgender identity; there has been a significant recent uptake of the loanword

toransujendā, but even as recently as two years ago GID was still the preferred word.[44] "Who even knows what GID is?", Wakabayashi asked rhetorically. "Everybody here at the film festival does, but there's very little public awareness otherwise." Both agree and recognise that there are non-GID-conforming trans people; Kashō made the point that directors of drama films have more imaginative scope in imagining the kind of trans person they wish to depict unlike documentarians, and that choosing diagnostic criteria strengthens the public perception of trans people as pathological. One detail particularly stood out to me at the end of the talk, as it was the first corroboration I had heard for a phenomenon I had experienced but previously wondered if I was misinterpreting. In answer to the director asking how the Kansai Queer Film Festival's representation of trans people and trans narratives should be improved, Kashō recommended a diversification of trans identities and stories on show. He explained that he had previously felt immense pressure to be True Trans, i.e., to adhere to a binary male identity and undergo medical transition but he now wants to tell lots of different trans stories. "There's a political pressure on us as a community to represent trans people in an intelligible way, but there's so much variation in our experiences - I was surprised when I moved to Tokyo that gay trans men exist."[45]

The first year I attended the Kansai Queer Film Festival (2018), the theme was 'Deaf and LGBTQ'; 2019 marked the Jules Rosskam Retrospective. Both had considerable amounts of lectures, panel discussions etc on trans topics specifically. The local trans researcher and activist Yoshino Yugi gave a lecture in 2018 on their court case against the Gender Clinic at Osaka Medical College and on the evolving state of trans awareness in Japan since 2008, while the 2019 festival had several all-trans discussion panels in between screenings, with a particular emphasis on the voices and experiences of transgender men. The Seibu Kodo became a space intended not only to entertain but to inform. However, the intended audience for education at the film festival *seemed to me* to be LGBTQ people rather than a cisgender/heterosexual-dominant public. This impression on my part came

[44] The director of the festival interjected at that point to admit that her first thought while watching Kashō and Wakabayashi's films was along the lines of "Oh fuck, not GID *again*".

[45] It is perhaps worth noting that all three of the trans men participating in this discussion, as well as other trans male speakers like Endō Mameta, all identified themselves as heterosexual or had female partners. I have already discussed the invisibility of gay trans men in Chapters 2 and 3, but will return to analyse the topic from a legal perspective in Chapter 6.

from discussion of letters in the alphabet which have less public awareness, like transgender men, or discussions about Deafness and other intersections of disability with queer identity, where the audience was already presumed to be au fait with the LGBTQ side of things. There was also considerable discussion of what it means to be living with HIV/AIDS today, around which many stigmatising and dangerous assumptions remain in Japan, such as "Only foreigners have HIV, so you don't need to use protection if you're having sex with other Japanese men"; "HIV is a death sentence"; and "Having HIV cuts you off from a fulfilling romantic or sexual life", etc. This educational outreach fulfils what Surak calls the *definition/explanation* element of nation-work. As she observes: "Nation-work is particularly potent in pedagogical situations, where definition appears as explanation. In this case, the contours of the nation are not so much clarified as motivated, in the form of new information for the edification of those instructed." (2013: 4)

Even with the festival's stated commitment to anti-imperialism and diversity, however, the films it showed on non-queer or intersectional themes were not particularly critical of Japan: documentaries like *Rise For Henoko* were opposed to environmental destruction in Okinawa, for example, and films about institutional homophobia and disableism in Japan, like *Until Rainbow Dawn*, critiqued discrimination within Japanese society rather than problematising the Japanese nation-state. The Osaka University Queer Film Festival, however, took their intersectional politics a step further with a screening of the controversial Korean film *Spirits' Homecoming*. As we shall see in the next section, the students not only destabilised the idea of the queer imagined community, but also brought nationalism into the frame to be deconstructed.

Osaka University Queer Film Festival (2019 Inauguration)

Programme for the first Osaka Students' Queer Film Festival.

Photograph: author's own

The inaugural festivities of the Osaka University Student's Queer Film Festival was held in one room of a building on the university's North Campus, about 25-30 minutes north of Umeda Station by tram. It had a considerably smaller attendance than Kansai Queer Film Festival - there were, by my reckoning, probably no more than fifty people there at any one time - which gave it a more intimate atmosphere. The single room where it was held was probably a lecture room in its ordinary use but had been festooned with blackout material over the walls. A large projection screen occupied one wall. Seating was provided in the form of folding chairs, beanbag cushions, and rubber pads similar to gym or wrestling mats. The festival was held over two days rather than three, Saturday morning to Sunday mid-afternoon. The format was similar to Kansai Queer Film Festival, with screenings of several short films interspersed with longer features, but instead of educational lectures or panel discussions, there were 'Cinema Café' sessions held in between film screenings. These consisted of 15-20 minute intervals so where participants got into small huddles and discussed the themes of the film just watched and their impressions of it, with some general prompts from the organisers to start things off.

There were ten films on offer over the course of the weekend, ranging in length from 5-minute shorts to 94-minute feature films. Six of the ten were Japanese productions, with one each from Korea, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and the USA, and one international documentary featuring participants from Brazil, Germany, the USA, and Catalonia.[46]

Title	**Country・Year**	**Director**
トークバック沈黙を破る女たち [Talkback: Women Breaking the Silence]	Japan (2013)	Sakagami Kaori
私の居場所〜新世界物語 [A Place Where We Feel At Home ~ A Shinsekai Tale]	Japan (2018)	Takeda Tomokazu
鬼郷 [Spirits' Homecoming]	Korea (2016)	Cho Jung-rae
愛と法 [Of Love and Law]	Japan (2017)	Toda Hikaru
MAN MADE	USA (2018)	T Cooper
染色体の恋人 [Chromosome Sweetheart]	Japan (2017)	Yano Honami
ある家族の肖像 [Portrait of a Certain Family]	Japan (2015)	Matsui Kaeruko
SSEX BBOX	intl' - USA, Brazil, Germany, Spain/Catalonia (2012)	SSEX BOX Collective
Paki [Please, Care]	Philippines (2017)	Giancarlo Abrahan
女人就是女人 [A Woman is a Woman]	Hong Kong (2018)	Maisy Goosey Suen

The programming was in the main educational but was not afraid to touch on controversial topics. For example, the first film on the programme, *Talkback*, follows an

[46] A full schedule, and more information on the films, can be found (in Japanese) on the film festival's website: https://ouqff.jimdofree.com/?fbclid=IwAR2Egq9yvDs_fV3mFTNEBcpg5uQ7y8iU5K_RZg-smUxiHdiSbDLFgdWBDn4

American theatre company called Medea Project: the Theatre of Captive Women, which is comprised of women who have survived incarceration, many of whom are HIV+ or living with AIDS. There was relatively little fictional or drama programming compared to the number of documentaries, and no speculative horror or sci-fi films with queer themes like Hou Ji-Chan's 2014 short *The Thrill*, which was shown at the Kansai Queer Film Festival in the same year. *Of Love and Law* is a slice-of-life documentary that follows a gay couple, Fumi and Kazu, who run a law firm together in Osaka. The film takes several of their cases as a framing device to highlight other social injustices in modern Japan, including a woman who was left without a family registry due to paternal rejection of legitimacy and a teacher who was fired for refusing to stand and sing the national anthem at morning assemblies. Although *Of Love and Law* is very much a domestic Japanese production aimed mostly at Japanese audiences, the cases they profile throughout key into the ongoing theme of solidarity and intersectionality between different minority groups, whose struggles are often believed to be distinct from one another. *A Woman is a Woman* is a bipartite documentary about the struggles of transgender people in Hong Kong: the first portion of the film is a lightly-fictionalised drama, while the second moves the viewer behind the scenes to hear from the director and the cast. *Portrait of a Certain Family* took a middle-class gay couple as its focus, showing them interacting with family, friends, and members of their local community, with a broadly positive message overall.

While there is not space here to discuss all of the films featured on the programme, there are two that I feel merit individual discussion, for very different reasons: *Spirits' Homecoming* and *A Place Where We Can Feel At Home ~ A Shinsekai Tale.*

Theatrical release posters for the 2016 film *Spirits' Homecoming*

Although the Kansai Queer Film Festival included flyers about *zainichi Kankokujin* issues and advertisements for Korean culture festivals, Korean-language schools, resident Korean-related political petitions etc. amongst the ephemera on the tables outside, the Korean films actually on show were all queer-related, e.g. the short film *Uninvited* (Korean: *Bulcheong-gaeg*, dir. Lee Seung-yeob, 2017). The Osaka University Queer Film Festival, by contrast, began its Sunday morning programme with a screening of the film *Spirits' Homecoming* (Korean: *Gwi-hyang*, dir. Cho Jung-rae, 2016). This film was met with profound controversy in both Korea and Japan on its release due to both its subject matter (the rape and mass killings of Korean girls by the Japanese Imperial Army at 'comfort stations' during WWII) and its graphic depictions of sexual violence and murder. There were no content warnings or trigger warnings given by the organisers ahead of the screening, although this is standard for film screenings in Japan. The promotional material for the film does not necessarily hint at its contents. The two film posters/flyers I collected from the event suggest to the casual viewer, within the specific context of an LGBTQ film festival, that the narrative is likely to be about lesbianism. The explanation given by the organisers during the Cinema Café discussions after the screening was that

they showed it in an attempt to raise consciousness amongst younger Japanese people about the history of war crimes in Asia and of historical Japanese imperialism. In the Cinema Café directly after the showing, there was a great deal of unease and silence around our small discussion circle. It took several minutes for anyone to venture an opinion at all, and when they did, it was a general observation that this level of detail about Japanese war crimes in Korea is not the kind of thing one learns in school. This observation was greeted with a palpable sense of relief as other people admitted they had not been told about it either. The other discussion circles in which I participated were much livelier; this was the only circle where people seemed hesitant or even afraid to air their reactions to the film. I speculate that this is in part because the contents of the other films were more relatable to my fellow viewers' lives, as young queer people or allies navigating the modern worlds, and in part because *Spirits' Homecoming* is a genuinely harrowing film. I did not detect any sense that their hesitance to speak came from any anti-Korean animus, but rather from the fact that we were all struggling with what to say in the viewing's aftermath.

A Shinsekai Tale,[47] by contrast, happened to be about one of my respondent Hanako's old stomping grounds in Osaka from the early years of her transition. I had already been planning to go to the university's queer film festival, but a week or so before the event, she wrote a post on Facebook encouraging people to go and see this particular film, although she was not interviewed for the documentary and does not feature in it. When we were chatting for a few minutes before the screening began, she expressed some hesitation about the film which had not been evident in her post, on the grounds that the director is not part of the LGBTQ community; she was unsure whether or not he would be able to do full justice to his subject. The subject in question of the film is an okonomiyaki-ya [savoury pancake restaurant] which was, for over a decade, a hangout spot for transgender women in the neighbourhood. It served as a safe space for people to use their real names and to dress in the clothing they felt most comfortable wearing: a place where both physical and emotional nourishment were available. The mama-san of the restaurant was an *okama*. As discussed in Chapter 1, in its most literal translation, the term is a slur for an effeminate man, carrying roughly the valance of the English word

[47] Shinsekai is a neighbourhood in Osaka known for its food and nightlife.

'faggot'.[48] It has, however, been widely reclaimed. Hanako did not seem to consider the term a slur: she told me on our walk back to the train station that she herself was transgender but that the mama-san was an okama, and wanted to confirm that I understood the difference - indeed, that there *was* a difference. She obviously had a great deal of affection for the mama-san, who was present in the audience for the screening. They had not seen each other for some time, as the okonomiyaki-ya closed a few years ago following the mama-san's cancer diagnosis, but greeted each other with evident delight. On our walk back to the station, I asked Hanako her thoughts on the film now that she had seen it in full; she felt 'satisfied', she said, that the director had done a respectful job, and that it was very nostalgic to watch.

A sense of nostalgia pervaded the film itself: part of it was the nostalgia inherent to any retrospective by virtue of the form, but it found its most acute and poignant expression during a sequence in which the mama-san went back to the rural town and prefecture in which she grew up. The documentary showed her talking to friends from childhood, old teammmates from the high school volleyball team, and people from her graduating class; meeting their spouses and children; and being welcomed into their houses for tea and chat. The reception she received was unusual footage for a trans-related documentary although no more than standard Japanese politenesss. Her old friends and acquaintances met her revelation of her identity and the last forty years of her life with "Oh, is that so?", "How interesting", and other noncommittal-to-benign replies. While this does not indicate any particular level of trans acceptance or awareness of LGBTQ existence within the Japanese mainstream, its inclusion in the footage marked a significant departure from documentaries like Ebata Kōki's *Transgender Trouble* [*Onna toshite ikiru,* 2011], Kim Longinotto's *Shinjuku Boys* (1995), or Konstantinos Panapakidis' *Dragging the Past* (2012), in that it takes the viewer out of the bar or club and into the broader sphere of the protagonist's life. Discussing this film at the Cinema Café directly afterwards, I said I thought it was unusual to see queer films where the subject *returned* to their hometown instead of fleeing to the big city in the first act and never looking back. Other people in the discussion circle corroborated this: no-one could think of an LGBTQ film produced in Japan, nor any foreign films they had seen, which featured a return from the city to the

[48] Honorific *o-* prefix added to a slang term for 'buttocks'.

hometown. If a great part of film festivals' appeal is its presentation of imagined, fantastical, or aspirational achievements for queer protagonists - escaping from oppressive communities into the freedom of the urban setting, say, or finding true love - this was a moment where the viewing aperture opened enough to remind us that queer (life)time does not only happen in linear progression.

The radicality of the decision to screen *Spirits' Homecoming* surprised me. Of the two queer film festivals I have described here, it seemed to me that the University Film Festival was less interested in education and more interested in the *embodiment/cultivation* aspect of Surak's cultural nationalism. By that I mean there were no prearranged discussion panels; no educational lectures; and no 'LGBTQ 101'-style guides available for reading between the film sessions. The Cinema Café discussion groups held after each screening were horizontally organised with no MC or convenor and the people with whom I formed a discussion circle did not need LGBTQ terminology explained to them. We certainly did talk about various forms of cultivating queer life and culture, as when Hanako told us about her own personal recollections of the okonomiyaki-ya, but the discourse could be critical at times, with a willingness to turn the critical lens on Japanese nationalism and Japanese history. *Spirits' Homecoming* raised uncomfortable questions about what exactly Japanese nationalism demands to be cultivated, and how its embodiment had been used as a weapon of war. I wish to turn now and follow the specific thread of Japanese nationalism, trans embodiment, and overlapping publics through one particular viewing circuit: that of trans-related documentary film screenings absent the communal context of the festival.

Documentaries, Special Screenings, and Q&As

Trans-related films in particular seemed to have very different screening conventions when being shown outside of LGBTQ community space, like the screenings of *Becoming a Woman* or *A Woman is a Woman*. Both are documentaries, even if *A Woman is a Woman* is lightly fictionalised; all screenings had a Q&A afterwards with the casts and directors in attendance. They were very much educational in nature rather than escapist or fantastical. I suggest further that they imagined viewing public to which they were pitched was a cisgender audience, and the question undergirding this portion of the

chapter is: do trans people imagine themselves into these films, or see ourselves reflected in them, and if so, how? Are we supposed to? Ebata Koki's documentary *Transgender Trouble* [*Onna toshite ikiru*] was shown at the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival in 2011, the year it came out, which is not a specifically queer space but gives another data point about contexts of screening trans-related nonfiction films.

Over 2018 and 2019, there were multiple special screenings of *Becoming a Woman* in Osaka, almost all of which included question and answer sessions with the cast and director afterwards. I went with one of my friends from Shinzen no Kai for the first of these screenings, sloshing our way from JR Osaka Station through a sudden rainstorm at the very beginning of the 2018 rainy season; the bright jewel tones of the promotional posters seemed to glow outside the venue through the downpour.

The documentary follows a trans woman in Kobe and her community of girlfriends through the 'end stages' of her medical transition, with the final milestone represented by undergoing gender confirmation surgery. (The film was reviewed in the mainstream Japanese press at the time, a representative sample of which can be found in the Mainichi Shinbun).[49] The blurb for the film[50] leans heavily into exoticising tropes around transgender women:

> 未悠21歳、3週間前まで男だった
>
> 性同一性障害から性別適合手術へ
> 単純で複雑な胸の裡(思い)を軽やかに描くドキュメンタリー
>
> 子どもの頃から女性になることを夢見ていた未悠(みゆ)。家族へのカミングアウトは高校のとき、大学に入って女装も始めた。大学３回生の春休み、念願の性別適合手術を受けることになった。女性として社会に出るために。映画は、半年間に亘り未

[49] Mainichi Shimbun staff writers. *"Becoming a Woman": Following the Before and After of Sexual Reassignment Surgery: Screening in Fukuoka City's Minami Ward on the 14th* [Onna ni naru: seibetsu tekigō shujutsu no zengo ou Minami-ku de 14-nichi ni jōei-kai / Fukuoka]. The Mainichi Shimbun Online, April 11 2018. Accessible online at: https://mainichi.jp/articles/20180411/ddl/k40/040/309000c [Last accessed: 31/03/21, 13:00 GMT

[50] Accessible online at: https://www.ks-cinema.com/movie/onnaninaru/ [Last accessed: 01/04/21, 16:55 GMT]

悠に寄り添った。家族との真摯な話し合い、友人たちとの本音爆笑女子トーク、教員たちの学内意識改革、臨床心理士の思い、医師の覚悟、LGBT関係者のパートナーズ婚のすすめ…。そこから浮かび上がるのは摩訶不思議で愛おしい人間の姿だった。

Miyu, 21 years old, was a man until three weeks ago.

From Gender Identity Disorder to Gender Confirmation Surgery: a light-hearted documentary that depicts both simple and complex emotions

Miyu has dreamed of being female ever since she was a child. She came out to her family when she was in high school and began wearing women's clothing fulltime after starting university. Over the Spring break of her third undergraduate year, she finally accomplished her long-held dream of undergoing gender confirmation surgery. She did this in order to enter adult life as a woman. This film sticks close to Miyu's side over the course of six months, through serious discussions with her family; bursting into heartfelt laughter during girl talk with her friends; innovations in her teachers' trans awareness on campus; hearing opinions from clinical psychologists; her doctors' preparations; recommendations for LGBT-related 'partner marriage'... What emerges is a portrait of a profoundly mysterious and lovely human being.

The storyline of the documentary is heavily medicalised, with full-depth vaginoplasty being seen as the goal and fulfilment of transition as a process. The film opens on a shot of Miyu's feet in bright red pumps and tracks up her body to reveal her 'feminine' face to the viewer. One element of the documentary to which I had a profound personal reaction was the explicit nature of the scenes dealing with her gender confirmation surgery and immediate recuperation. The camera follows Miyu into the operating theatre and lingers in close-up as she is intubated for anaesthesia; while the shots of surgery in process are shot from a tasteful distance away, semi-occluded by members of the surgical team and sterile drapes, we return to an uncomfortably long and tremendously close take of Miyu experiencing uncontrollable post-anaesthetic shivering in the recovery unit. There were no content warnings given prior to the screening I attended in Osaka and I found myself

caught off-guard by an unexpected attack of my own iatrogenic C-PTSD [Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder]. I had undergone major surgery every year between starting my doctorate in 2015 and leaving for the field in 2017: at the time I went to see the documentary, my most recent medical procedure was less than twelve months away in the rearview mirror. The friend with whom I went to see the documentary asked if I was alright, which helped to distract me enough to sit through the rest of the film and ask a question at the Q&A afterwards.

Yet the question provoked by my C-PTSD attack haunted me on the train home to Kyoto: *who was the intended audience for those scenes? What purpose did they serve?* One uncomfortable truth that trans narratives reveal is that in transition we are often unsafe for each other. So many transgender people's individual needs and goals are sharp-edged when they brush against one another. Just because something was distressing to me as an individual trans person does not mean that trans people were not the intended audience. This experience is also a pointed example of how transgender spaces, including film festivals where we quite literally project desired, idealised, or exceptionalised images of our trans selves, can be sites of struggle and contestation over our various needs, comforts, traumas etc. When I was invited to a second screening in 2019 by a different (cisgender) friend in Kyoto, who was going with his boyfriend and a third friend, I declined and pled tiredness from doing interviews. In truth, I was afraid that a second viewing of the documentary would risk repeating the PTSD episode provoked by the first; I was also somewhat wary of becoming the transgender sounding board for well-meaning questions from my friend's friends.

The crowdfunded documentary *I Am Here* (*Watashitachi wa tomoni ikite iru*, dir. Asanuma Tomoya, 2020) has been hailed as a milestone in Japanese trans film history, as it is supposedly the first to have an all-trans directorial team along with collaborative trans effort onscreen. However, having said that, *I Am Here* is not actually the first trans-directed documentary about trans people in Japan. Ebata's *Transgender Trouble* (2011), referenced above, was the first, but is almost impossible to find for viewing purposes, whether online or in hard copy. Longinotto's *Shinjuku Boys* (1995) is chronologically the oldest documentary on 'trans Japan', but Longinotto herself is neither transgender nor Japanese. Both *Shinjuku Boys* and *Transgender Trouble* are about the cabaret and drag bar

scenes in Tokyo; only a small minority of trans people work in the entertainment industry or keep doing it as a career for years, but the profession is over-represented in the ethnographic documentary canon.[51] This is not to minimise trans people's experiences of working in the entertainment sector as a first route of entry to the community: for example, my respondent Momoko-san worked in a similar 'show pub' when she first moved to Osaka years ago, and the trans sociologist Mitsuhashi Junko spent six years working as a hostess in a crossdressers' bar in Shinjuku, which she later used as the foundation for her 2008 book *Crossdressing and the Japanese* [Josō to Nihonjin]. From my respondents' descriptions and from the secondary literature, their experiences as professional or quasi-professional entertainers in the gender-variant demimonde bore close resemblance to the figure of the 1950s *gei boi* (as discussed in e.g., McLelland, 2005; Angles, 2011): that is, a young man who might not necessarily be gay or bisexual himself, but who worked in postwar gay bars as a bartender and entertainer and would age out of the profession by his mid-thirties.

Amongst my respondents' oral testimonials of their lives, however, only a tiny minority (perhaps two out of fifteen) discussed working in the entertainment sector as part of their transition. The overwhelming majority worked white-collar jobs and treated themselves to occasional weekends in the Tokyo crossdressing scene when they could afford it; or got married and raised children in an effort to sublimate their trans identities; or began to transition while living abroad; or simply began to dress and behave in more 'masculine' or 'feminine' ways in their daily lives, acquiring wardrobes piece-by piece, cutting their hair or growing it out, and in general keeping it low-key. Everybody in the local community certainly *knew* somebody who had worked in the cabaret scene to fund their transition, but the number of people who had firsthand experience of doing so seemed to have been quite low.

Similar to the publicity materials for *Becoming a Woman*, *Transgender Trouble*'s Anglophone blurbs exoticise and pathologise the film's subjects. The summary of the film available on the Internet Movie Database (IMDB) runs as follows:

[51] Nor is this apparent fascination with the cabaret *demimonde* as a synecdoche for transness as a whole confined to documentaries about Japan: I have seen the same film set in Athens, in London, in New York City, and in several other places, with relatively little changing except the local vernacular.

> In Japan, transvestites, transgendered people, and those with Gender Identity Disorder are treated as outcasts, used for entertainment, and are regularly shown in appalling stereotypes on television and in the media. Their reality in fact represents a vast and not easily definable range of experiences and existences. The director of this documentary, herself transgendered, focuses her camera's gaze specifically on the performers in a 'New Half' (Shemale) cabaret show in Tokyo.[52]

Despite the summary's claims of a 'vast and not easily definable range of experiences and existences', the world represented in the film is confined to one part of Tokyo's contemporary pleasure quarters and the people who work there. Nor was the directors' explanation of transgender existence one which even gestured to trans lives in daylight hours. When *Transgender Trouble* was shown at the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival in 2011, Ebata Koki was interviewed for the film festival's website. Her comments (trans. Kyle Hecht) reproduce the binary model of transition endorsed by the Japanese state and medical system: [53]

> **Q:** I felt you were trying to show that LGBTQ people have no place to be.
>
> **EK:** They don't. When you're in the middle of the switch from man to woman or woman to man, you are neither. In that period you are unstable, and you seek grounding. That could be psychological counselling, the Japan Association for Queer Studies or the Japan Society for Gender Identity Disorder, but you have to go to those kinds of places. Especially transgender people in their early twenties, who have to work in bars and clubs to save their medical fees, making the change little by little. That kind of work doesn't grow into a career. It does nothing for your studies, and it obscures your future. I am very aware of this problem.

[52] https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2087999/ (Last accessed: 23/04/2021, 11:32 GMT)
[53] The interview can be read in full in both English and Japanese at: http://www.yidff.jp/interviews/2011/11i073-2-e.html (Last accessed: 20/04/2021, 13:13 GMT)

Q: What did you want to tell most with this film?

EK: The flamboyant characters and drag you see in the mass media are not examples of people showing their individuality. They are nothing more than humorous spectacles, depicted this way for the sake of ratings. Even on NHK, queer people are depicted only as a medical issue. Looking at this as a transgender person, you find that all the representations are off. The biggest thing I want to get across in this film is that all people are different. There is difference even among "women," and the thoughts of the so-called "transgender" people in this film also differ from person to person. These may only be small differences, but they are where individuality lies. I tried to show diversity with this film, and not to fall into the dualism of gender and sexuality. I would be happy if those who watch it see the individuality inside each of them as well.

Ebata obviously knows that there is considerable artificiality in the ways trans people are presented and are forced to present themselves, as for example when she observes that "trans people are depicted only as a medical issue", but she still describes transition as "changing from a man into a woman or vice versa" and assumes that everyone in the community seeks medical intervention. Of course, this film was made a decade ago; some things have certainly moved on, and the documentary should be seen as a product of its own time. Yet the medical myths repeated in it are still dangerously current. The film's ominous dialogue about how taking hormones means you can 'never go back' is still very much a widely-accepted belief in the community. My respondent Momoko has stated before, in our semi-structured interview and in interviews with a Japanese website that collects oral testimonials of LGBTQ people, that "even if you've only taken hormones once, that's it, you can't reverse it". [54] Both Ebata and Momoko have firsthand experience of HRT regimens; both of them are well aware that oestrogen in particular takes a long time to show any effects. Their insistence on the opposite surprised me.

However, that is not the only controversial topic that goes unremarked-upon by Ebata in regard to her own film.

[54] Part of this assumption may be due to the fact that microdosing is not yet a common practice in Japan.

Screen captures taken from the theatrical trailer for *Transgender Trouble* [55]

The three screen captures shown above follow each other closely in chronological sequence during the film's trailer. The short video opens with Moca, our narrator, getting dressed in the *yukata* she is wearing in the first shot; it is at that point that the 'Rising Sun Flag' [jūrokujō-kyokujitsu-ki] can first be glimpsed in the background. It quickly moves to occupy centre stage over the next few shots. The Rising Sun Flag does not have what we might call an *uncomplicated* history in modern Japan. Although it has been in use for roughly four hundred years, it was adopted as the specific war flag of the Japanese Imperial Army and Imperial Navy in 1870 and remained as such until Japan's surrender in 1945. A variant continues in use as the flag of the Self-Defence Forces today. While the Rising Sun Flag is not automatically linked to Japanese fascism, it does retain a connection with military organisations and militarism. [56] The use of overtly Japanese clothing, accessories, and nationalist symbols asserts a distinct and non-globalised sensibility within this transgender space. Ebata's lack of commentary on this Japanese nationalist imagery, neither within the documentary nor in interviews, are an example of Surak's point about intra-group homogeneity being *as important* as us-versus-them categorisation. The world of 'New Half' cabaret may be a demimonde within Japan; the genders of the performers and attendees who people it may be open for public challenge at any time; but they are indisputably Japanese.

The titles of so many of these documentaries and dramas about transgender people in Japan also bear some scrutiny, as does the Hong Kong film popular on the festival circuit while I was doing my fieldwork. *Onna ni naru*, *Onna toshite ikiru*, *Onna wa onna de aru*,

[55] Accessible online at: https://www.imdb.com/video/vi3057819161?playlistId=tt2087999&ref_=tt_ov_vi) [Last accessed: 22/04/2021, 14:00 GMT]

[56] I should say more accurately that it does not have overt fascist connotations *within Japan*; countries in Asia that suffered under Japanese imperialism in the twentieth century, most notably Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines, do frequently understand it as an emblem of Japanese military violence.

Joshiteki seikatsu - almost all are downright banal (not to mention vague) statements About Womanhood. 'Becoming a Woman', 'To Live As A Woman',[57] 'A Woman Is A Woman', 'Life As A Girl'; the fact of womanhood and its deliberate becoming is taken as the most interesting part of the subjects' life, rather than anything else they may do while or after transitioning. By comparison, the titles of other LGBTQ-themed documentaries offer us more about the lives of their subjects: *Of Love And Law*, for example, puts the couple's professional practice on an equal footing with their domestic lives, and even *I Am Here* (directed by a trans man) is an assertion of personhood and individuality rather than a generic reference to the subjects' genders. We may also compare how few equivalents there are about trans men (i.e., there are no documentaries called *Otoko ni naru* [Becoming a Man], *Otoko wa otoko de aru* [A Man is a Man], *Otoko toshite ikiru* [To Live as a Man] etc.) and the complete lack of any documentary focussed on nonbinary/X-Gender people.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Queer film festivals serve as a place for queer people to be told about ourselves and each other; for us to build contacts and rapprochement; for pleasure and imagination, but also challenge or even threat: the Osaka University Queer Film Festival ended with a brief talk entitled *Queerな撹乱* [Queer Disturbance], for example, and the Kansai Queer Film Festival organises its queer politics under the banner of *Taihen x Hentai* [Weird x Perverted], which I will be unpacking further in the next chapter. Both elective affinity and affective intimacy draw people together as queer subjects in the auditorium to fantasise about lives we do not, cannot, or might yet live. Yet the fictional and imaginative space is not completely free of boundaries. As my interlocutor at the 2019 Kansai Queer Film Festival intimated when she told me about the 'struggle' to show films about more than cisgender gay men, the politics inherent to film selection can easily serve to reinforce norms of the imagined community. Film festivals also involve a delicate navigation between conflicting publics and their overlapping needs, desires, and hurts. When a trans-themed film leaves a trans viewer shaking through a panic attack, who is educated and at whose expense? Who makes it to the big screen and who is left out?

[57] Although the official English title for Ebata Koki's film is *Transgender Trouble*, a closer translation of its Japanese title would be *To Live As A Woman*. The discrepancy in titles is itself indicative of the tenor of the film.

International and domestic solidarities were a key point in the self-construction of the Kansai Queer Film Festival, especially its emphasis on intersectional and marginalised causes, cultures, and people within Japan, such as ethnic Koreans, Ryukyuans, disabled people, migrant workers, and people living with HIV/AIDS. However, none of the people who spoke at either film festival were Ainu, Zainichi, or Okinawan despite the stated dedication of the organisers to inclusivity. During the 2019 Jules Rosskam retrospective, when Rosskam himself was a guest of honour, there was considerable interest in international solidarity from the audience: one questioner asked where Japanese trans people could look for examples of queer representation in foreign cinema, for example, and another asked what advice he would give to Japanese people wishing to further the cause of trans acceptance. Yet, outside of the panel setting, he was also subject to quite a parochial set of assumptions about foreigners in Japan. After the full programme of retrospective discussion panels, keynote talks, and film screenings had concluded, I was outside the hall chatting with a group of people, including him. When he said he was going to Tokyo for a few days after his festival-related stay in Kyoto was complete, two of the Japanese girls with us asked if he had ever eaten sushi, if he liked sushi, and if he had heard of this or that Japanese cultural property, to which he replied with polite bemusement. The young women's questions sprung from a sense of hospitality and solicitousness that foreign visitors should be exposed to, and should have opportunities to enjoy, Japanese culture outside of the queer festival circuit. Inadvertently, by doing so, they redrew the boundaries of the imagined community along national lines rather than those drawn, however loosely, by sexuality or gender identity: Rosskam was queer (and thus belonged), but also American (thus perhaps unfamiliar with concepts such as sushi). This moment of contact shock served as a particularly perfect example of ethnomethodological rupture, in terms of the assumptions it revealed, but there were many like throughout the events I attended: the porosity of imagined communities, coupled with the idealised, fantastical, or didactic depictions of LGBTQ people onscreen, made the Queer Film Festivals a particularly rich site for ethnographic work.

CHAPTER 6: INSTITUTIONAL INTERFACES

And all our progress, yeah, I wonder who it's for;
when I dared to utter that 'Trans Lives Matter'
and all I got was a TERF war...
- Grace Petrie, Black Tie

Introduction

I will turn now to the institutional side of trans life in Japan, which I have been deliberately delaying in order to privilege the voices and everyday experiences of trans communities in motion on the ground. By 'the institutional side', I mean places, events, publications etc. affiliated with those parts of the legal, medical, and academic systems with which transgender people must interact. The nexus of law, medicine, and education forms a network of spaces in which various 'official' interpretations of trans lives and identities take shape. We might describe the agents of this nexus - lawyers, surgeons, judges, university admissions panels, social commentators, etc. - as being the people and organisations who produce and police the state-sanctioned model of trans identity as a regrettable medical condition for which there is fortuitously a cure. This is not to say, however, that they are spaces where decisions about and on behalf of transgender people are made *only* by cisgender people; transgender people do not only interface with these institutions as plaintiffs, patients, or problems. As the following sections will show, trans people are engaged in struggle, contestation, and proactive kinship formation even in contexts where the 'one size fits all' medico-legal model of transgender existence is ostensibly dominant.

I depart here from the single-chapter-by-single-chapter structure of the thesis thus far, in order to hold space for the complexities and the various intersections of the academic, legal, and medical interfaces of institutional transgender life in modern Japan. Following this introductory section, each of these three key sites of contestation in the formation of trans identity will be examined in distinct but interlinked sub-sections of approximately 5,000 words apiece. My conclusion seeks to both summarise and synthesise the issues discussed therein.

The ethnographic basis for these sub-chapters represents the part of my fieldwork where I was most personally distant from engagement with the systems I describe, and where I was most situationally privileged over my respondents as a transgender person in Japan. I am not a Japanese national, and as such do not have a *koseki* [family register] to change. Public access to law courts is generally permitted in Japan, but I never got the chance to attend a case involving a trans plaintiff; I did not medically transition, so I do not have firsthand experience of attending a gender clinic in Japan, and my Japanese language proficiency was not sufficiently advanced to a point where I felt comfortable interviewing medical professionals. This positionality gave me advantages even over other transgender foreign nationals in Japan in some regards, especially in the area of medical care: I did not have to contend with finding a clinic that would prescribe me hormones, for example, or struggling through gender-related mandatory counseling appointments in Japanese. I therefore necessarily draw here, more than elsewhere in the thesis, on a bricolage of sources - newspaper articles, semi-structured interviews, self-published reports, zines disseminated at film festivals, public lectures, online material such as blog posts, etc. - precisely because I found access to the institutional modes of trans life in Japan so very difficult to achieve. The irony of the paradox inherent to using 'unofficial' sources for a discussion of institutional modes is not lost on the present author.

Institutions and the Difficulties of Ethnographic Engagement

> Tied to legal gender recognition, measures regulating trans reproduction and kinship relations more broadly construed include compulsory divorce, spousal veto provisions and heterosexual remarriage; trans people may also lose custody of their children as a consequence of gender transition in many jurisdictions, or be prohibited from adopting the child of a spouse (particularly if the spouse is legally classified as "of the same gender").
>
> Carasthasis (2015: 83)

The broad-brush mechanisms of the family courts, the gender clinic, and the bureaucratic ecology of the koseki are the aspects of transgender life in Japan that are the most

immediately obvious to outsiders. Many a well-meaning sensitivity workshop and English-language infographic has condensed 'being trans in Japan' to sterilisation and multiple *hanko* [personal seal] stamps beneath the old name and the new. An essential part of my ethnography, therefore, was to attempt to determine the role that these legal and medical requirements actually play in my respondents' daily lives.

What I found is that the answer to the question "Are the koseki and the legal side of transitioning very important to trans people in Japan?" was, to borrow a phrase from Jeanette Winterson, "No not at all and yes of course." Having one's true name and gender listed on the family register does have tangible everyday effects: those details affect one's medical insurance; one's work history; and one's eligibility to get married, amongst other important aspects of legal existence. Yet the act of changing one's koseki is also something which seems to have been regarded by most of my respondents as a distant final box to tick, if indeed they wished to tick it at all. People who had already legally transitioned talked about it as the last bureaucratic step they had had to take out of a long list; people who were planning to transition in the future saw it as a far-off culmination at the end of more immediate concerns like finding a gender clinic or coming out at work; and people who did not want to transition (often citing the koseki as a reason) had to find a way to reconcile themselves to living in the space between their authentic gender expression and their legal existence.

The latter is not always as difficult as might be expected. My respondent Makoto, for example, uses their feminine birth name in all social contexts, including on their business cards [meishi]. Their birth name is still on their health insurance, their koseki, their passport, and all official correspondence. They blog and tweet under a masculine name and told me at one point that their masculine handle is the name they would choose for themself if they had full freedom to do so, but have resigned themself to keeping their 'female name'. They buzz their salt-and-pepper hair close to their scalp, wear jeans and button-down shirts over turtlenecks, and maintain what they describe as a 'manly' decorating aesthetic in their apartment, i.e., with plain futon covers, no extraneous decorations etc. Some of my other respondents have adopted gender-neutral names (e.g., Yu, Mizuho, Chiaki) or gender-ambiguous versions of their birth names (e.g., 'Natsu' for 'Natsuko'). There were a few people for whom gender presentation and legal

classification were too far apart to even be on nodding terms, including a person in their late twenties whom everyone called Hinaginu. On first meeting them, I had guessed that they might identify as a trans woman. Hinaginu stood out at every one of their intermittent appearances at Shinzen no Kai meetups: they had long, loose hair that fell to their elbows and always dressed in high femme style, with ankle-length skirts, frilly blouses, strings of costume pearls, women's pumps, and, more often than not, a lace-edged parasol. I asked Makoto about Hinaginu at one point early on in my process of compiling potential respondents, in particular about whether they might consent to be interviewed.[58] Makoto was encouraging but questioned whether or not Hinaginu was quite the kind of person I was looking for: "I thought you only wanted to talk to trans people? He's not a trans woman. He's not actually a woman at all! He's a *josôzuki* [lit. 'someone who likes women's clothes'] - that's just his style, not his gender." Hinaginu belonged to the same end of the transgender-crossdressing continuum as Mitsuhashi Junko: they are someone who has no interest in transitioning surgically or legally and who is satisfied by social and expressive gender performance rather than bureaucratic confirmation.

Even amongst those of my respondents who had completed or were planning to complete full legal transition, the koseki did not come up organically as a subject of conversation very often. Outside of semi-structured interviews, where I asked directly what people thought of the current legal requirements for gender transition, I noted only one instance of the conversation at a Shinzen no Kai meetup. It was December of 2018 and we had had to convene at a Starbucks in downtown Osaka because the usual rental space had fallen through at short notice. There were relatively few people in attendance - enough to fit around a single coffee table by the end of the evening - and the bustle of other people around us gave the whole meetup a markedly relaxed atmosphere in comparison to the more intense feeling of privacy and secrecy that a designed rental space can engender. The only people who were there were people who were already confident about appearing in a public space with others who were 'visibly' LGBTQ. At one point, my respondent Ikuko was talking about her recent experience with the health insurance

[58] I did not end up interviewing Hinaginu personally, although Makoto's evaluation was not a deciding factor; Hinaginu lives on the other side of Kansai, near the border with Hiroshima Prefecture, and the logistics were not in our favour.

system, which sparked a vigorous debate about the koseki. Her gender was at that time still listed as male on all of her official records: she received some odd looks from the clerk processing her paperwork, as she has shoulder-length hair and a very feminine dress sense. She had been forced to out herself in order to explain the supposed discrepancy between her papers and her presentation, for which the clerk was visibly embarrassed and unprepared. "It's annoying", she said. "All the insurance paperwork and ID cards go by the gender on your koseki, and all the hospital bays are divided by gender, but they put you in the bay that corresponds to your legal gender, not your real one." In response to a comment from Hanako, who began transitioning in the late 1990s, Ikuko said "Well, since you've had surgery in the past, you look like a real girl!" [Mukashi ni shujutsu o shita nara, kissui josei kitai desu]. The two women are close friends, so the tone of Ikuko's quip was complimentary rather than abrasive: she was admiring Hanako's ability to 'pass' even in a medical context. Outside of these few exchanges, the legal side of transition was remarkable less for its presence in my respondents' lives than by its absence.

Overview of the Three Sub-Chapters

I begin the first sub-chapter, on 'trans law', with a discussion of the literature and theory regarding transgender people's legal status and human rights, followed by a brief history of the 2003 *Act on Special Provisions for Handling Gender Status for Persons with Gender Identity Disorder* [seidōitsuseishōgaisha no seibetsu no toriatsukai no tokubetsu ni kansuru hōritsu] and the role played by particular actors in the Tokyo trans community in bringing it about. I will then discuss the last three years' attempts at moving the legal needle on transgender rights in Japan, drawing on newspaper reports of trans-related court cases; interviews with trans rights activists in Kansai; and my own participant observation of a one-day public lecture series on LGBT human rights held at Kyoto's Campus Plaza. Having established the legal requirements for transition in Japan and the physical demands they make on the petitioner, I will then examine what those medical requirements look like in practice, both in the lives of my respondents and in the 'officially-licensed' spaces and public statements of the GID Society's annual conference, quarterly journal, commentary in news stories about transgender people etc. Finally, I will use my participant observation of the December 2019 Ochanomizu University International Symposium on Transgender Studies and the March 2019 Annual

Conference of the Society for the Study of Gender Identity Disorder, as well as my own experience as a visiting research student at Dōshisha University, as the ethnographic basis for a discussion of the Japanese academy's role in 'formalising' public perception of transgender people and identities.

Of the two conferences I attended, the first, in late March, was the Annual Conference of the GID Gakkai [Gender Identity Disorder Research Group], the foremost body for medical, psychological, and sociological research on trans topics in Japan. The other, held in December, was the first-ever International Conference on Transgender Studies organised by the Gender Studies Centre of Ochanomizu Women's University in Tokyo. There had been other opportunities to attend public lectures in Kyoto on LGBT issues, such as a talk at Ryūkoku University on 'LGBT and Buddhism', as well as a public forum chaired by the director of the Kansai Queer Film Festival, on the topic of emergent transphobia in Japanese feminist circles. I also was able to attend a public lecture event in January 2019, which consisted of a one-day (four-hour) series of lectures on LGBTQ human rights in Japan, with particular reference to employment law, education, healthcare etc. It was sponsored by the Kyoto Centre for Gender Equality and was a free public event held at Campus Plaza, a public-access study centre affiliated with the Consortium of Kyoto Universities near Kyoto Central Station.[59] I selected the Okayama and Ochanomizu conferences for several reasons. One was that they were both multiple-day engagements (three days for Okayama; a one-day symposium with a follow-up workshop the next day at Ochanomizu) rather than a single talk with a Q&A afterwards. This gave me greater opportunities for immersion, casual conversations, and observation of others' networking. Another was that they were national-level events that gave me impressions of trans life and community engagement in Japan outside of the intense Kyoto bubble.

I class both of these events, as well as the Campus Plaza lecture series, as being more 'formal' than e.g., the panel discussions and lectures at the 2019 Kansai Queer Film Festival's Jules Rosskam retrospective, or the group discussions at the Osaka Queer Film Festival, both of which will be dealt with in a separate chapter. That is: they were all

[59] The lecture contents are available to read online at: https://kyoto-jinken.net/wp-kyoto-jinken/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/fac1bde229a2ff7346db9edbb8ef3953-1.pdf [Last accessed: 10/01/21, 13.12 GMT]

convened under the auspices of legal, medical, or academic institutions. They all took place in semi-professional settings - the shared study centre of the Consortium of Kyoto Universities; a lecture hall at Ochanomizu Women's College; the Okayama Convention Centre. They all dealt directly with hegemonic mechanisms of shaping and viewing the 'trans body'. If this dissertation up until now has engaged trans communities in Japan through the micro-level view, these sub-chapters provide a macro-level view of the systems enforcing 'how to be trans in Japan' through a Critical Trans Studies lens.

The Legal System and the Background to the 2003 *Gender Act*

Trans Legalisms and State Interfaces

> Principle 18: **Protection from Medical Abuses**
> No person may be forced to undergo any form of medical or psychological treatment, procedure, testing, or be confined to a medical facility, based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Notwithstanding any classifications to the contrary, a person's sexual orientation and gender identity are not, in and of themselves, medical conditions and are not to be treated, cured or suppressed.
>
> Principle 24: **The Right to Found a Family**
> Everyone has the right to found a family, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Families exist in diverse forms. No family may be subjected to discrimination on the basis of the sexual orientation or gender identity of any of its members.
>
> Yogyakarta Principles of Universal Human Rights for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI), 2007 [60]

[60] The Yogyakarta Principles address a broad range of international human rights standards and their application to SOGI [Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity] issues. On 10 Nov. 2017 a panel of experts published additional principles expanding on the original document reflecting developments in international human rights law and practice since the 2006 Principles, The Yogyakarta Principles plus 10. The new document also contains 111 'additional state obligations', related to areas such as torture, asylum, privacy, health and the protection of human rights defenders. The full text of the Yogyakarta Principles and the Yogyakarta Principles plus 10 are available at: www.yogyakartaprinciples.org [Last accessed: 12/12/21 15:15 GMT]

There is already a respectably-sized body of work on legal interferences with transgender life and the limitations of the neoliberal citizen framework of 'trans rights'. The Japanese government's take on transition, in common with the governments of e.g. the United Kingdom, Aotearoa New Zealand, and the United States, is that it is permissible and just about thinkable to swap one binary, physically embodied gender role for another; much current thinking on trans rights internationally focusses on e.g. the ability to change the gender marker on one's passport or medical records; the legal right of access to single-sex spaces like changing rooms or hospital bays; and right of access to team sports under one's true gender or eligibility for single-sex college acceptance.

However, social, sexual, and lethal violence against trans people remains a global epidemic. Statistics for the worldwide transgender murder rate from January 2008 - September 2019 published by Transgender Europe's Trans Murder Monitoring Project (TGEU-TMMP) record 3314 reported killings of transgender and gender-variant people in 74 countries across the globe.[61] The Movement Advancement Project and Center for American Progress (2015) identifies 'legal discrimination', 'lack of family acceptance', and 'hostile educational environments' as the three major factors which contribute to 15% of transgender Americans reporting 'extreme poverty incomes' (defined as a total income of less than $10,000 per year), as opposed to 4% overall.[62] The Williams Institute (Herman et al, 2019), in collaboration with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, puts the rate of suicide attempts by transgender and gender-nonconforming people at over 40%, compared to less than 5% across the overall population.

Why, in a time of increasing international legal and social awareness of transgender people, has the rate of violence against us remained steady or even increased? I suggest that the answer lies within systems of public gender regulation rather than without. Fogg Davis (2017) has done exemplary analysis of the presumed 'necessity' of gendering public spaces and identification documents on a case-by-case basis: his book is a

[61] Infographics and statistics pertaining to transgender murder rates worldwide can be found online at http://transrespect.org/wpcontent/uploads/2016/05/TvT_TMM_IDAHOT2016_Infographics_EN.png. [Last accessed: 15/11/16 18.51 GMT]

[62]Center for American Progress. *Paying an Unfair Price: The Financial Penalty for Being Transgender in Japan.* February 2015. Accessible online at: http://www.lgbtmap.org/file/paying-an-unfair-price-transgender.pdf [Last accessed: 15/11/16 18.57 GMT]

meticulous examination of individual case studies, e.g., gendered changing rooms, public bathrooms, single-sex educational establishments, and other situations supposedly dependent on the enforcement of public binary gender performance. Fogg Davis asks us to consider whether our current levels of recording and enforcing legal gender are necessary: I argue that they are not only unnecessary but actively damaging. Following Galtung (1969) and Spade (2011) I suggest that transphobia is a form of structural, or in Spade's terminology, 'administrative' violence. The concept of structural or 'administrative' violence articulates the processes by which supposedly neutral or protective social structures, including legal systems, medical professionals, and governmental bodies, can be contributory mechanisms towards the abuse of vulnerable groups. Galtung defines structural violence as "[A]voidable impairment of fundamental human needs" (1993: 106) that leads to disproportionate negative consequences for the demographic thus impaired, including increased incidence of disability or poverty, shorter life expectancy, and higher risk of hate crimes and discrimination. Spade (2011) specifically critiques the ways that trans-related legislation is processed in neoliberal discourses of 'human rights.' His argument is that e.g., anti-transphobia legislation situates the agent of transphobic violence as one individual motivated by prejudice, rather than recognizing the contexts and backgrounds of power structures which enable the individual's violent acts. According to Spade: "[Administrative systems that classify people actually invent and produce meaning for the categories they administer, and that those categories manage both the population and the distribution of security and vulnerability." (2011: 32) Under this interpretation, the legal structures of 'official' gender cannot be counted on to successfully end or even prosecute anti-transgender hate crimes, because it is *these legal structures themselves* that nurture and permit conditions under which hate crimes can happen.

The legal demand in Japan's 2003 *Gender Treatment Act* that the transgender individual surrender their reproductive capacity in exchange for State-sponsored recognition of their gender is a perfect illustration both of Spade's 'administrative violence' (the Japanese state will not arrest transgender people but will predicate full rights on the condition of sterilisation having been completed) and of this biopolitical reduction of the citizen to a body in a network of control. Understanding trans embodiment within a social

context must include recognition of the roles of of pollution, leakage, and taboo, both physical and symbolic, within the laws that seek to regulate transition.

There is no definition of 'a transgender body' that applies to all trans people in all cases, yet the imagined transgender body is figured as profane. Its construction is either grounded in the belief that it is sterile by nature, or, if it is not, it must then be 'neutralised' through medical intervention. There is no room for trans futurity in transphobic fantasies of the sacred. The sterilisation of the 'trans body' is required in order to prevent the contagion through reproduction of trans identity into the wider body politic. Sterilisation, and its attendant contravention of the right of the individual to private and family life,[63] is an unavoidable part of trans people's struggles for physical and reproductive justice. Twenty-four countries in Europe alone currently require sterilisation in order to change one's legal gender marker, as does Japan. Many of them are countries considered to be culturally and politically 'liberal', including Holland, Finland, and Norway.[64]

I have dealt in previous chapters with the contents of the Japan-specific 2003 *Gender Treatment Act* and the real-world effects of its demands in the lives of my respondents. It is in the thin end of the wedge - the point of friction between demands for sterilisation, divorce, binary identity etc. and the lived reality of the transitioning individual - that I believe the most fruitful ethnographic observations can be made. An accounting of the process by which the *Gender Treatment Act* first came into law is necessary to illuminate the ways in which trans people are constrained by the legal system in Japan even as they seek to improve it.

History of the 2003 *Gender Treatment Act*

At first glance, it may well appear to the transgender reader that *no* trans people were consulted at any stage of the process of bringing the *Gender Treatment Act* into law. Given the draconian nature of the requirements, including genital surgery and (in the original

[63] As enshrined in e.g. Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 23 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. See Honkasalo (2018) and Carasthasis (2015) for further discussion of transgender sterilisation mandates.

[64] Source: https://tgeu.org/24-countries-in-europe-still-require-sterilization-from-trans-people/

formulation of the law) forbidding people from transition if they had children, it reads very much like an imposition of cissexist requirements onto the 'trans body'. However, as discussed in a roundtable of LGBTQ activists in 2007, several high-profile trans people in Tokyo were amongst the foremost advocates for the formation of the law. Amongst them were the activists Torai Masae and Kamikawa Aya, the latter of whom went on to become the first openly transgender lawmaker in Japan. According to Torai, the impetus for the *Act* came from a member of the ruling LDP [Liberal Democratic Party]:

> It was around this time, 2000, that Chieko Nono, an LDP member of the House of Councillors, formed a study group about creating new legislation. Learning about GID at a sexology conference prompted Nono to think about whether she had not been mistaken, in her previous work as a midwife, in judging the gender of a newborn simply by looking at the infant's genitals. She asked us whether she could be of any help to people with GID. We immediately formed a project team and started a study group but we couldn't attract enough national assembly members. Many LDP assemblywomen came, but not a single middle-aged male member would come. Then the group was brought to a halt because Nono was appointed Vice-Minister of Health, Labour, and Welfare.
>
> (quoted in Fujimura-Fanselow 2011: 183,
> edited by Ikuko Sugiura, trans. Minata Hara)

According to Kamikawa, there was considerable trans input and trans lobbying throughout the process of drafting the *Gender Treatment Act*: building upon the initial study group described by Torai, a small group of trans people, her and Torai prominent amongst them, continued to give feedback and suggestions on the language of the bill, but they met with strenuous resistance amongst LDP lawmakers. For example, the original clause about transitioning people needing to be childless was to pacify politicians through all three readings:

> The bill had to gain unanimous approval from an LDP intra-party review by three bodies - the Judicial Affairs Division, the Deliberation Commission, and the General Council. If even one person in this process disapproved of the idea that people with

> children would be allowed to change their gender, the entire bill would have failed. (2011: 188)

Their compromises with the LDP were not received with complete acceptance amongst the trans community. Several other trans people who were active in the community at that time, amongst them Takafumi Fujio, have intimated that the perception amongst trans communities outside of Tokyo was of the Tokyo clique reserving to themselves the right to establish a 'trans narrative', and that it was only after the *Gender Treatment Act* had been safely passed that their stranglehold on discussing Japanese trans identities had relaxed. According to Fujio (trans. Wim Lunsing):

> The community in Japan - particularly in Tokyo - had an extreme bias toward seeing transsexuality as being inborn and a strong tendency to exclude others. This is because there is a history of using this as an argument in appeals for changing a person's legal sex on personal registration documents (*koseki*) as well as in appeals for the protection of human rights. It was only after the special treatment law for people with gender identity disorder was adopted that these other than 'typical' transsexuals let themselves be heard. It is a phenomenon of people who do not agree with the conditions of the special treatment law all together raising their voices.
>
> quoted in McLelland et al. (2007: 293)

Torai does not touch on that particular critique, but he does elaborate on the reaction they received amongst some quarters of the community:

> On learning of the inclusion of the so-called 'status regarding children' as one of the conditions for getting approval for a change in gender status, some GID people with children threatened to kill themselves, while others even warned us, 'Watch your back'.
>
> We felt at the time that we might not have a second chance if the bill didn't get passed at that time. We consulted with many people, including women involved in the enactment of legislation on domestic violence. Their advice was to 'poke a small hole and spread it wide'.

> But in the back of our minds we did have a concern that even if the law passed, it would be difficult to amend it.
>
> (quoted in Fujimura-Fanselow 2011: 188)

Nor was all of the criticism Torai received ungrounded. His conception of transness, which had a profound effect on shaping the *Gender Treatment Act*, is very much of the medical-pathological school of thought, with contempt and dismissiveness towards people who do not want to medically transition. As my respondent Hotaru explained:

> He was *the* most - one of the most vocal, in a way, trans people. But his emphasis was like...Torai himself is a trans man, and his account of himself was "I was trapped in a woman's body and the only thing that was wrong [with me] was my body". He even used this metaphor, like, distinguishing 'real' trans people or 'GID persons' from, sort of, the 'fake' ones by saying that if you're a real trans person or GID person, and you're trapped on an isolated island where there's no human beings other than yourself, you still want to have your body changed. But for other 'fake' or non-GID trans people, it's about other people's judgement [of you], so it doesn't really matter...or something.
>
> [LYMAN: Gosh.]
>
> Right? But that way of thinking really became mainstream. There was a big debate [in the Japanese trans community] about what makes somebody 'really' trans, and there was even some exclusion - kicking people out of the community whose genders were more ambiguous. It was pretty serious. This was around the late 1990s, early 2000s. So it definitely created a huge divide.

There was a later amendment to the *Gender Treatment Act* in 2008, which remains in force at time of current writing. The amended version maintains the requirements for sterilisation, full medical intervention, and legal singlehood at the time of petitioning to change one's koseki; its main difference from the 2003 law is that it allows people who have had children to transition, albeit with the requirement that the child/ren have

reached the age of majority, 20 years, before the parent can complete the transition process. While the amendment is liberalising in the narrow sense that people like my respondent Ikuko can now legally transition, the legacy of Torai's essentialist definitions of transgender identity is still firmly intact.

This history of the *Gender Treatment Act* brings two interesting facts to our attention. One of them is, as I discussed in the methodology chapter, the overriding presumed link between gender identity and heterosexual orientation. People who would be classed as 'heterosexual after transition' are allowed to marry after changing their koseki but not before; people who were in 'straight' marriages before transition were not allowed to remain married as a gay couple afterwards. I will go on to talk more about the marriage laws and their relation to the *Gender Treatment Act* later in this chapter: suffice it for now to say that the inter-association of marriage rights with eugenics laws is part of what makes mounting any legal challenge to the status quo of trans rights in Japan so very difficult.

The other fact is that Kamikawa and Torai's testimonies lay bare the mechanisms by which trans people are forced to work against their own collective best interests when engaging with the State. This is not necessarily a critique of either Torai or Kamikawa: they were both placed in the unenviable position of having to tread very lightly in creating a ground-breaking piece of legislation, and of balancing the needs of a vulnerable minority against the apathy or hostility of a convoluted legal process. Their role in the evolution of trans rights in Japan is historic and their achievements should be acclaimed. However, even with the good intentions that they had, they still could not avoid the issue of having to consciously curtail some of their own community's human rights in the service of providing any at all. I suggest it is therefore impossible, if tempting, to read the history of Japanese trans law as unilaterally imposed on a silenced trans minority by an officious cis majority. As this chapter will show, part of trans people's agency within these institutional systems can manifest in unexpected ways.

Navigating Gatekeeping and 'Dark Routes' in the Medical System

> 一度「正規ルート」から外れた場合、再び国内の医療にアクセスしにくいという問題も。手術のアフターケアも自己責任になる。
>
> Once you are cut off from the 'regular route', gaining access to medical care again inside Japan becomes a very difficult problem to solve. Surgical aftercare becomes your own responsibility.
>
> Yoshino Yugi, special lecture at the Kansai Queer Film Festival (2018)

The standard route for accessing medical transition in Japan begins with a referral from one's primary care provider to a specialist Gender Identity Disorder Clinic, either a private independent centre or one attached to a larger hospital, such as the clinics at Okayama University Hospital and Osaka Medical College. Guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of trans patients were implemented by the Japanese Society of Psychiatry and Neurology [Nihon seishin shinkei gakkai] in 1997, with the first gender confirmation procedures being performed in 1998 and 1999 (Ako et al, 2001), but to date, there are only five surgical centres in Japan that perform transition-related procedures.

Anyone seeking to transition must endure a period of what is known as 'Real Life Experience', which entails living in the social role of the 'target' gender (for example, a trans man wearing only 'male' clothes, using the men's bathroom etc) for a set period, usually around two years.[65] Following psychological, endocrinological, and pre-surgical assessments, the transitioning person then usually embarks on hormone replacement therapy [HRT]. They may or may not receive various forms of surgery according to their own transition goals and their overall state of health. If the transitioning person aims to change their legal gender, sexual confirmation surgery is usually the final step in the

[65] 'Real Life Experience' used to be considered a necessary part of transition in the UK; several of the current author's friends were forced to undergo it as recently as the mid-2010s. It was removed from the NHS guidelines for transition due to increased awareness of the dangers of expecting a trans person to live as their true gender while simultaneously withholding all endocrinological or surgical assistance to help them 'pass', thereby increasing their visibility and their direct risk for violent assault.

medical process. This is what is known as the 'Established route' [seiki rūto]. Others are available, but not endorsed by the medical system: these range from accessing medical interventions abroad, to self-medicating with hormones purchased online. Because all forms of transition-related medical care are at least in theory available via the seiki rūto, and because Japanese residents enjoy significant subsidies in national health insurance, any form of self-medication or treatment not covered by standard insurance (so-called 'independent treatment' [jiyū shinryō]) tends to be viewed with suspicion.[66]

As this brief sketch implies, there is a considerable amount of gatekeeping on the road to medical transition. Not only must trans people medically transition in order to be considered 'real' in the eyes of the state; they must also do so via an approved route. Treatment protocols for transition care are rarely tailored to the individual, and emergent treatments such as hormonal microdosing, which are becoming more widely accepted in the UK, the USA, and Canada have not yet gained a foothold in Japan. The rigidity of expected interactions with Gender Identity Clinics itself can erect barriers to access for the transitioning person. Accessing on-the-level transition care can be difficult if one has already begun self-administered hormone therapy, for example. Pre-transition psychological screenings and demands for real-life experience are not intended to aid individual trans people's wellbeing, but to filter out all but the committed few from going forward with their transitions. The case of Yoshino Yugi, which I discuss in more detail below, is a prime example of how such a rigid system's failures towards the people it is meant to serve often function as a feature rather than a bug. Yet it would be a mistake to presuppose that trans communities are in unwavering solidarity against a unilaterally-hostile medical establishment. As I will show, different actors within the community have their own standards against which to measure other trans people, and may have more or less power to enact those standards under different circumstances.

I begin this section, in keeping with the rest of this thesis, within the community itself at a grassroots level. I first examine the prevalence of interpersonal transition gatekeeping and the mechanisms through which it can manifest, before moving to a specific case study

[66] 'Independent treatment' is also colloquially known as 'the dark route' [yami rūto], which is indicative of the general attitude towards this form of access to treatment.

of the interplay between failures of the medical system and hostility from within the community as experienced and described by Yoshino Yugi. Finally, I draw on my participant observation of the 2019 GID Gakkai annual conference to analyse the medical faction in its own terms and what those terms reveal about conceptualisations of trans identity by cisgender professionals, as well as coming to deal with the issue of forced sterilisation as eugenic praxis.

Gatekeeping (within and without the community)

What was interesting to me was the gatekeeping I witnessed within the trans community in Kansai: specifically the fact that some 'established' trans people in the community - people who had medically transitioned years ago, and often without a doctor's supervision at the time - bore relatively little suspicion towards medical professionals but quite a lot towards other trans people, and in fact often seemed more suspicious of younger trans people than of the medical establishment.

This interested me chiefly because I had no particular assumptions regarding the relationship between trans people and the medical profession in a specifically Japanese context before I came to the field. I did have *some* speculations about Japanese trans people's relationship to state apparatus, some of which proved to be accurate. I had guessed, for example, that any 'official' statistics concerning trans people in Japan would be a considerable under-estimate of the number of people who would actually identify themselves under the 'trans umbrella' (transgender, X-gender, non-binary etc), due to the draconian levels of medical and surgical transition required before an application for a change of legal gender could be made. I heard from the majority of my respondents that this suspicion was true: Makoto and Hotaru were the most explicit in naming the surgical requirements as the reason they personally did not want to pursue legal transition, but I heard "Lots of people are put off by the medical requirements" repeated as a more general statement, both in semi-structured interviews and in general chit-chat with other attendees at Shinzen no Kai events. No-one specifically cited Fujio Takafumi by name, but elements of his 'middle way' approach (i.e., changing more quotidian documents such as health insurance cards and residence cards rather than putting all of one's eggs in the koseki basket) often cropped up as proposed solutions to the problem of changing one's

gender and legal name.[67] It is also possible that the culture of my specific field site influenced people's attitudes to the legal side of things: as S.P.F. Dale (2012) points out, the neologism *x-jendā* was first coined in Kansai, and the number of people I met who identified as X-gender or otherwise nonbinary was a stark contrast to e.g. Fujio's description of Tokyo's trans communities as predominantly trans-medicalist.

Nor was I surprised that the people most resistant to legal transition amongst my respondents were trans-masculine people and trans men. The reason for this lies in the disparities between surgical advancement for trans women/trans-feminine people, as opposed to that for trans men/trans-masculine people. Vaginoplasty has been developed to a high level of technical sophistication. It does not require skin grafts; it is usually a single-stage operation; as an elective procedure, it enjoys one of the highest patient satisfaction rates in the surgical field.[68] Gender confirmation surgeries for trans men, however, are a different story. Most are multi-step, involving some or all of chest reconstruction; hysterectomy; and phalloplasty. The phalloplasty alone is not one surgery, but sometimes two or even three; most procedures require a large skin graft taken from the belly, inner forearm, or inner thigh. The complication rate for phalloplasties corresponds to the multi-step nature of the surgeries. Unsurprisingly, many trans men and trans-masculine people feel that their surgical transitions are complete with only chest reconstruction, especially considering that longterm testosterone replacement therapy can stop menstruation altogether.

Although most of my first-hand testimonial about the prohibitive surgical requirement came to me from my trans male or trans-masculine respondents, I also spoke to a cis

[67] "Changing my personal registration is not one of my life goals; rather, opportunities to effectively support other people rank higher because I support a middle way! Without changing one's personal registration, the middle solution of changing only the details on one's resident card and insurance card makes it possible to help those who have not had sex-reassignment surgery." (quoted in McLelland et. al (2007: 293), trans. Wim Lunsing)

[68] According to a 2018 study by Massie, Morrison, Van Maasdam, and Satterwhite of women who had received penile-inversion vaginoplasty, 94% of respondents reported satisfaction with the outcome and 94% 'would undergo this surgery again', while 71% reported that the surgery had resolved their gender dysphoria. The study is accessible online at: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29794711/ [last accessed: 02/02/2021 11.36 AM GMT.] A 2017 study by Papadopolous et al. showed that 91% of respondents reported an improved quality of life; 100% of respondents stated that they had no regrets and would undergo surgery again: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28366591/ [Last accessed: 02/02/21 11.39 AM GMT].

woman, Kumiko, who is very involved with LGBTQ activism in Kyoto and whose ex-boyfriend is trans. She said that they had intended to get married but were unable to do so due to the state's medical demands: her boyfriend concluded that the risks outweighed the benefits for him when it came to surgical intervention, so could not change his legal gender to 'male', and they were not allowed to get married as an ostensibly female-female couple due to lack of marriage equality legislation. She explained that neither of them wanted to break up, but they both felt that the state burdened their relationship beyond a point where it was sustainable.

One indication that the mere presence of gender clinics in Japan is not a universal solution is the ongoing existence of 'medical tourism' groups.[69] Kumiko told me that her ex-boyfriend is one of the main coordinators for a medical tourism organisation serving trans men: they go to Thailand as a group in order to access surgeries and to support each other through their recoveries. Seeking healthcare abroad is often cheaper than going the domestic route. Prior to August 2018, neither Japanese national health insurance [kenkō hoken] nor private insurance companies covered any aspect of trans-related healthcare, landing trans people in the humiliating position of being forced to pay out of pocket for the medical interventions demanded by the state. National health insurance now includes hormone replacement therapies, gender confirmation surgeries, and other trans-related healthcare, but pricing remains competitive in Thailand. The quality of a given surgeon's experience is also frequently cited by trans people who are considering seeking healthcare abroad or who have gone that route themselves. Surgeons outside of Japan have the advantage of having performed many more gender confirmation surgeries than their Japanese counterparts.

For example, my respondent Momoko had transitioned around the late 1990s-early 2000s; at that time, there had been no established medical guidance for hormonal transition in Japan. She and other trans women in her peer group had to buy oestrogen tablets online, often from Thailand or from India, and had had to figure out the dosages that worked for them through a very dangerous system of trial and error. Momoko herself had come close to suffering a cerebral aneurysm through taking up to four oestrogen

[69] For more on which, see Aizura (2014)'s work on gender clinics in Thailand.

tablets every day during the first year of her medical transition. From the way she related her experiences to me during our semi-structured interview, I would have thought initially that she would encourage younger trans women to go through the organised medical channels now available to them. However, she was emphatic that she screens young trans people who ask her for advice on medical transition: if she feels that that they are insufficiently serious about transitioning, or that they do not have the emotional fortitude to keep to a treatment plan for the rest of their lives, she refuses to give them any information or contact details for various gender clinics in and around Osaka or elsewhere in Kansai.

I wish to make it clear that I do not blame Momoko at all for her desire to protect young trans women from the ordeal she experienced; nor do I believe that her motives are anything other than, from her perspective, altruistic. I do not know how many, if any, of the people she has judged to be 'unserious' candidates for transition have gone on to transition anyway under their own initiatives. The soft power of the *sempai* role is strong, especially when one's senior has the authoritative experience of transitioning before it was even legal in Japan.[70] However, what I do think her pre-screening reveals is an underlying dynamic of maternalism, seniority, and expected deference within trans communities that is not always visible to cisgender onlookers, or even to transgender people from a different background. One's transition is not a private affair, but something rather in the nature of a community concern. Momoko's gatekeeping is at least conducted out of care for the individual trans petitioner. There are, however, times when the suffering of one trans person may be treated as expendable against the greater good of the community. I turn now to examine one notorious example of this dynamic: that of Yoshino Yugi's medical malpractice lawsuit against the Gender Clinic of Osaka Medical University.

[70] It is not, however, a foregone conclusion that they did *not* transition: a very Japanese cultural dynamic is at play here, where if one does not wish to heed the sempai's advice, then a graceful ignoring-and-avoidance tactic is used in future social interactions.

Yoshino Yugi and the Lawsuit that Shook Trans Japan

In 2007, a transmasculine academic and researcher at Ritsumeikan University by the name of Yoshino Yugi sued Osaka Medical College's Gender Clinic on charges of medical malpractice and neglect. Yoshino had undergone a bilateral mastectomy and chest reconstruction, which was badly botched by the surgeon conducting the operation to the point of bilateral necrosis and nipple abscesses. They were denied aftercare and further corrective surgery by the Gender Clinic, which also disclaimed any responsibility. Yoshino-san won their case in 2010 and was awarded damages. The case sent shockwaves through the Japanese trans community both offline and online, with not all of the commentary by other trans people being positive.

Yoshino has written and presented extensively about GID as a diagnosis; about the relationship between transgender patients and gender clinics in Japan; and about their own personal experiences of the medical and legal sides of transgender life. I attended a presentation they gave at the Kyoto session of the 2018 Kansai Queer Film Festival on the topic of their legal case. All quotations reproduced below are taken from the handout they wrote for this presentation. The section of their talk that I wish to specifically highlight here is the section on backlash that they received from other trans people during the final stages of their lawsuit.

---

kuborie・2010年３月25日

#GID, #医療

ちょっとボーイッシュなかわいい声した女の子にしか見えなかったけど、子供の頃から自身の体に強い違和感があったんですかー

@kuborie: #GID, #MedicalTreatment It was impossible to see [Yoshino] as anything but a little girl with a cute, kinda-boyish voice. I guess they've such a strong sense of gender dysphoria ever since they were a kid, huh?

山本蘭＠RanYamamoto・2010年3月24日

> **吉野敏**さんの**裁判**が終了したとのこと。ようやくですね。医療の改善につながる勝利的な和解だ」と自画自賛されているようですが、大阪医大ではGID診療を止めてしまったし、ご自分がされたことの負の部分への精算はどうするつもりなのでしょうか？
>
> #Yoshino Yugi's #lawsuit is over at last. Seems to have taken ages, doesn't it? Yoshino-san, you're loudly patting yourself on the back about how this is a 'triumphant legal victory for improving medical standards', but...given that Osaka Medical College has stopped all treatment for GID patients, I wonder how you're going to make up for your own part in this shortcoming?

———

Yamamoto Ran, the author of the second Tweet, is a trans woman who lives in Tokyo, an activist on trans issues, and the spokesperson for the organisation *GID Japan*, which supports transgender people across the country. She is correct in stating that the Gender Identity Clinic at Osaka Medical College temporarily suspended all treatment for trans patients and ceased new patient intake as part of the terms of the university's settlement. This temporary suspension was inarguably a burden for the patients already enrolled at the Gender Identity Clinic, the more so because the clinic at Osaka Medical College was the only specialist treatment centre for gender dysphoria in Kansai at that time. Medical transition is time-sensitive: dysphoria, the *only* treatment for which is transition, can cause distress to the point of suicidality. Withholding or delaying necessary surgeries inflicts mental and physical distress on trans patients. Even less invasive forms of medical transition, like hormone therapy, must be administered on a regular and consistent schedule in order for the desired effects to manifest. Abruptly stopping hormone therapy can provoke mental health crises along with endocrinological and physical problems, not least of which involve the resurgence of unwanted secondary sexual characteristics from the patient's endogenous hormones (i.e., trans women may experience facial hair growth; trans men whose menstruation stopped during treatment with exogenous testosterone may find their periods beginning again).

That the Gender Clinic's temporary withdrawal of treatment represented a horrifying burden to its patients is clear. However, Yamamoto's response is curiously disingenuous on two levels. The first is that - as Yoshino themself acknowledges - the temporary suspension of treatment was undertaken in order for the hospital to conduct a serious review of the protocol failures that occurred during their treatment; to undertake a series of listening exercises with patients and staff; and to implement new standards for connected care throughout each patient's time at the clinic:

和解の条件

１、病院は、手術前の説明に足りない点があったことを認め、原告に慰謝料を支払う。

２、大阪医大病院のジェンダークリニックが手術をする・しないの判断は、この裁判とは関係がないという公式見解を出す。

３、今回の手術で起こったような連携不足を解消するため、違う科でもスムーズに連絡をとれるよう改善する。

４、和解後、原告の経験を聞く場を設ける。ジェンダークリニックに関わる医師と看護婦は参加し、感想文を提出する。

Conditions of the settlement

1. The hospital, admitting that there were several points lacking in the pre-surgical explanation, will pay damages to the plaintiff.

2. As for the decision on whether or not Osaka Medical College Hospital's Gender Clinic will perform surgeries [in the future], this court will give a separate formal decision.

3. In order to eliminate a lack of cooperation like the one that occurred after this surgery, [the hospital] will make improvements for smooth communication across different departments.

4. Following the settlement, [the hospital] will provide a place for listening to the plaintiff's experiences. Doctors and nurses who are affiliated with the Gender Clinic will participate and will submit a written account of their impressions.

While the temporary withdrawal of treatment would certainly have been a burden for the other patients at the Gender Identity Clinic, what Yoshino Yugi personally suffered more than justified the case they brought. Yoshino's suit alleged that possibility of surgical failure and tissue necrosis was not included in pre-surgical consent forms. Their surgical team did not provide any consistent aftercare. When they alerted the surgeon that their areolar tissue was actively necrosing, the reply was: "It won't necessarily be a serious problem for your recovery even if the tissue *has* necrotised; you can easily get a nipple transplant". The surgeon also failed to communicate with Yoshino's psychiatrist, to the extent that the psychiatrist was unaware that Yoshino had undergone top surgery at all. No psychological or psychiatric support was forthcoming, therefore, during a period of severe physical and mental difficulty. These are unacceptable failures.

Yoshino emphasised during their talk that they brought the lawsuit not only on their own behalf, but in an effort to prevent similar medical neglect happening to future patients of the Gender Identity Clinic. To be clear, it was not incumbent on them to do this: any single element of the failure of care they experienced would be sufficient by itself to justify their lawsuit. However, since Yoshino has consistently asserted their commitment to the interests of the broader trans community since 2006, Yamamoto's imputation of both blame and responsibility to them alone, coupled with a lack of care for their very real health crisis, strikes the current author as remarkably callous. Both Yoshino's treatment by some other transgender people, and the gatekeeping measures employed when deciding whether or not to grant newer trans people access to transition resources, complicate the presumption that trans communities stand united in the face of medical policing of transness. When it comes to arbitrary impediments to transition, sometimes the call really is coming from inside the house.

Part of the difficulty inherent to any attempt to ethnographise the medical side of transition in Japan is that, in the nature of much medical care in industrialised countries, it happens behind clinic doors and is considered a confidential affair. I spent a longer time in the field than many doctoral students are able to enjoy, but even so, the amount of trust and interpersonal negotiations required to accompany a transitioning person to medical or surgical appointments is far beyond the scope of PhD fieldwork. However, there are extra-clinical spaces in which trans people seeking surgical transition can get access to

information, community, and potential surgeons without the burden (or indeed the financial and emotional commitment) of a formal medical referral. In the next section, I analyse the single largest accessible field site for this kind of interfacing between transgender people and the medical establishment: that is, the annual professional conference for the Society for the Study of Gender Identity Disorder [GID gakkai].

Ethnographic Case Study: Okayama Conference (March 2019)

Skincare sample given to the author by a Shiseido sales representative at the Okayama conference. The slogan on the packet reads *From sometimes-sensitive skin to the skin you want it to become: D Programme.*

The annual professional conference of the Japanese Society for the Study of Gender Identity Disorder in March 2019 was a three-day event held at the Okayama Conference Centre, a large building approximately five minutes' walk away from the main station concourse. The conference draws academics, researchers, medical professionals, social workers, support group coordinators, and individual trans people from across Japan, with a few international speakers who work in aspects of trans healthcare ranging from surgical techniques to voice training and non-surgical interventions.

Before I left Kyoto to travel to Okayama for the conference, a local friend expressed reservations that it would be medicalised to the point of uselessness for any social-anthropological fieldwork. She was entirely correct about the culture of the organisation. The dominant and dominating assumption of almost every single paper, panel, and speaker was that transness is a pathology to be 'corrected'. There was no overt transphobia, by which I mean that there was great pride evident on the part of speakers and researchers regarding the strides made in tracheal shaving, phalloplasty, facial feminisation, chest reconstruction, voice therapy, and other specialist therapeutic techniques, but there was equally zero comprehension that any route to living a fulfilled trans life other than medical could exist for the individual. While there were papers presented by researchers who work on e.g., representations of LGBTQ people in children's educational textbooks,[71] or who do sociological fieldwork with the mothers of transgender children, the model of transgender-related awareness and representation they used was relatively unexamined: it remained the classic Pratchettian lies-to-children binary of gender options and cis-centric gender expression. Of fifty-three lectures and panel papers, only one, Sasaki Shōko's *Awareness-Informed Psychological Support for the Gender Spectrum* [jendā supekutoramu o ishiki shita shinriteki sapōto], took nonbinary and genderqueer identities as its topic.

Even outside of the purely surgical track, the more light-hearted elements of the conference assumed and enforced binary gender expression and beauty standards. Saturday afternoon, for example, saw two hours dedicated to a makeup and skincare workshop for trans women sponsored by the cosmetics giant Shiseido, entitled *Learning Skincare and Makeup in a Fun Way: How To* [tanoshiku shiru sukinkea & meikyappu How To][72]. The workshop featured appearances by Nishihara Satsuki, a popular NHK talent actress and winner of Miss International Queen 2015, along with the makeup artist NAO and Shun, a well-known trans radio presenter, MC, model, and presenter on LGBTQ topics

[71] Iwamoto Takeyoshi, Kanazawa University. *Concerning the handling of sexual minorities in school textbooks* [gakkō kyōkasho de no seiteki mainoriti no toriatsaukai ni tsuite], paper delivered at the 2019 GID Conference.

[72] As a trans man, I decided not to attend the workshop, as I do not wear makeup and was concerned that my presence might interfere with the observer principle.

for general audiences. The programme promised a panel discussion and an opportunity for open discussion amongst the participants as well as practical makeup instruction.

Shiseido also maintained a table in the conference centre's lobby, with cosmetic and dermatological products available for purchase throughout the event, attended by smartly-dressed sales representatives. I took the opportunity to chat to one of the representatives, a friendly middle-aged woman, while I was in the lobby waiting for the conference's closing remarks on the Sunday afternoon. She pressed a generous amount of free skincare samples into my hands while expounding on the benefits of the skincare line they market to transgender women. "It has a specially-balanced formula for sensitive skin", she told me. "People find that their skin type changes a lot when they start hormones. This line's very popular with our customers because it was developed with advice from medical professionals - the *D* is short for 'doctor'!" I said that in the UK, we have some famous transgender models like Munroe Bergdorf, but that cosmetics companies do not in general market directly to transgender customers. I saw the Shiseido free makeover stall at the Osaka Rainbow Festa; would she happen to know when Shiseido started advertising to LGBTQ people? I had not been expecting a definitive answer, and as such was surprised when she replied immediately and confidently that it started in 2011. This does however track with several of my respondents, both trans and cis, concurring that 2011 was around the time that the loanword *toransujendā* entered common Japanese parlance. This is notable because 'transgender' lacks both the medical valance of 'Gender Identity Disorder' and the reclaimed-slur aspect of *okama*: its semiotic neutrality may have helped to package trans people as a respectable potential customers rather than sufferers of a stigmatised diagnosis. This for me was the central tension of the conference: the speakers, attendees, and affiliated salespeople of cosmetics, school uniforms, books, and other materials did not give me the sense that they were in any sense trans-antagonistic or institutionally transphobic. Every intervention and study represented at the conference invoked progress, improvement, and refinement in transition medicine or the representation of trans people in mainstream Japanese society. Yet all of these interventions were intended to *normalise* transitioners, in every sense of the word, and help them blend in. The GID Gakkai does great work for the people who need it, but it very much represents the establishment face of transition access in Japan.

It is important to differentiate trans people's access to medical care, and their networking with medical professionals, from the creation and reproduction of intra-trans community. But this is not to say that the conference does not also present an opportunity for socialising and meeting other trans people, perhaps for the first time. Both Hanako and Momoko attend the conference every year: Hanako told me during our semi-structured interview that she has been going for about fifteen years now and knows just about everyone in the medical field in-country, as well as most of the other activists from different parts of Japan.

The conference ended on a Sunday afternoon; when I checked my Facebook feed after returning home to Kyoto, Momoko's social media was full of photos of herself and groups of trans girlfriends having lunch at ramen bars or lattes at the station Starbucks in between plenary sessions. Socialisation between trans attendees was not in any sense limited to extracurricular meetups in coffeeshops: the Society's organisers booked a ballroom on the top floor of a nearby hotel and held a lavish party for all attendees on the final night of the conference. Momoko took me by the arm and embarked on a whirlwind tour of the ballroom, from which I emerged with multiple business cards and a plate of cut fruit I did not remember picking up. She kindly pointed out significant figures in the professional scene before depositing me with a small group of people she judged to be sufficiently friendly and interesting. Because I had been on one particular lecture track all day, thereby unavoidably missing out on some others, I had not realised Hanako was at the conference until I bumped into her at the party and she poured me a drink. I tried to chat her up, being one of the few people I recognised from 'home', but she was in her element and kept catching sight of friends she sees at most once a year or every other year.

The party was a prime example of ethnomethodology in motion, albeit accidental on my part. No-one questioned my trans identity, nor why an anthropologist might be present at such an event. However, my foreignness resurfaced at multiple points over the course of the evening: more than once, deep in conversation with other people, I absent-mindedly picked up the large communal bottle of beer or mineral water from a nearby table in order to refill my drink. The bottle was promptly wrested from my hand so that my interlocutor could pour it instead, thereby maintaining the rules of hospitality that

separate us from the animals. That party also marked the first significant conversation in which someone asked me point-blank why I came to Japan to do my research instead of writing about trans communities in my own country - a question to which I still feel I do not have an answer. I had been asked that in Kyoto before and my interlocutors had been satisfied with the explanation that I had lived in Japan as a child and had always wanted to return. This explanation, which is not really an explanation at all, did not wash with my conversational partner in Okayama: *was nostalgia enough to build a doctorate on*, they wanted to know. *What could be so special about Japanese transness that I came all the way here and spent so much time and effort learning Japanese?* While I was eventually rescued from the excruciating fumble of my attempts to answer by Momoko whisking me away to talk to Professor Iwamoto from Kanazawa University, the question of domestic versus international audiences remained with me.

The conference had some scant international allusions, but only in the sense that Japanese surgeons and other medical professionals often collaborated with surgeons in other countries, especially Spain, Thailand, and Brazil. There was no reference to trans activism, trans identities, or trans communities in comparative international contexts outside of their respective medical systems. While there were a few Westerners in attendance, all of the people in that category with whom I could talk were academics working in Japanese universities or otherwise deeply involved with Japan and Japanese trans studies; all written materials, and all presentations, were in Japanese with no simultaneous interpretation on offer. My point here is not even to criticise the Society for the Study of Gender Identity Disorder in this regard. Trans Studies conferences in the US and UK feel no need to provide interpretation or materials in any language other than English, after all. I aim only to highlight the fact that the Society's focus and its audience are very much domestic despite the high level of international medico-surgical collaboration.

There is, however, one uncomfortable truth on which the conference's rich selection of papers and presentations never touched, perhaps because it is so normalised by the Japanese medical and legal systems as to be too obvious for regular acknowledgement. The truth in question is that the techniques discussed in such detail, including explicit photographs of genital surgeries in process projected onto the screen throughout the

keynote speech, are inevitably used in service of the Japanese state's sterilisation mandate for its trans citizens. I turn now to discuss that demand, and the eugenic practices past and present, of transition medicine both internationally and inside Japan.

Eugenics, Forced Sterilisation, and the Body Politic

> Legal gender recognition is a precondition for substantive citizenship in liberal democratic states, yet the process of granting this recognition constitutes state violence against trans people, implicitly sanctioning interpersonal transphobic violence. Sterilisation laws are justified through a pathologising discourse on transgender lives which constructs gender reassignment interventions as medical "treatment" of gender identity disorder
>
> Carasthasis (2015: 86)

The forcible nature of sterilisation was the elephant in the conference hall at Okayama. Indeed, despite the multitude of papers on improved surgical outcome and pioneering treatment techniques for gender confirmation procedures, the terms 'sterilisation' [danshu] or, perish the thought, 'eugenic sterilisation' [yūsei-shujutsu] were conspicuously absent. Japan's *Race Eugenic Protection Law* [Kokumin yūsei-hō], in force from 1940 until 1996, required citizens with developmental and some forms of physical disability to be surgically sterilised. Although they required some nominal consent from the patient, in practice this consent was not sought in any real sense of the term. Officially abolished 25 years ago, it evidently persists under the auspices of the 2003 *Gender Treatment Act*. This attempt to medically and/or socially control, or to make manageable, the bodies of particularly unruly subjects is not confined to transgender people within recent Japanese history. Rather, they should be understood alongside the aesthetic reconstructive surgeries undergone by the so-called 'Hiroshima Maidens' [genbaku otome]; the withholding of marriage and parenthood from known A-bomb survivors; the forced sterilisations of disabled people; the legal obfuscation of 'undesirable' Korean ancestry, etc. [73] Given the overlap of LGBTQ identity and disability within the

[73] This doubled Otherness of both gender and racial background played a key role in one of my respondents' family history. They grew up assuming that their family had been entirely Japanese and that their surname, Kitamura, had been the family name for centuries. However, towards the end of my fieldwork, they found

communities I knew, the long shadow cast by Japan's history of eugenic sterilisation must always be acknowledged in any discussion of sterilisation targeted at transgender people.

Any state-mandated sterilisation policies enforced on any particular minority group always, unavoidably bring to mind Lemkin's (1942) original definition of genocide. In Article II part E, Lemkin states: "genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, as such...imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group." There are several immediate objections which arise with any attempt to fit this definition of genocide onto transition-related forced sterility. For one, Lemkin does not include gendered groupings in the definition, instead focussing on race, religion, ethnicity etc. For another, trans people as a demographic are not targeted for extermination in Japan. This is why the Yogyakarta Principles' (2007) statement against forcible sterilisation of transgender people in exchange for legal gender recognition is the more granular definition: specifically, Principle 18, the Right to Protection from Medical Abuse,[74] and Principle 24, the Right to Found a Family.[75] Carasthasis (2015), Honkasalo (2018), and Suess et al (2014) have all written on the abuse of sterilisation procedures as an attempted tool for 'containing' the threat that trans physicality is believed to pose to the 'healthy body' of the nation. In a paradigm for understanding transness that understands it only as an aberration to be corrected, transgender people's reproductive capacity truly becomes matter out of place. Japan is far from alone in coercing sterilisation as part of gender recognition: twenty-four countries in Europe and Central Asia alone (as mentioned

out that their Japanese grandmother married a Korean man and the young couple petitioned their local city hall for adoption of a Japanese family name, in order to conceal the husband's ethnicity and save the wife from the social embarrassment of a Korean married name. My respondent attributed their own 'foreignness', or what they perceived as their own 'difference from other Japanese people since childhood', in large part to this hidden Korean ancestry.

[74] https://yogyakartaprinciples.org/principle-18/

[75] https://yogyakartaprinciples.org/principle-24/

earlier) had this requirement as of 2019,[76] along with South Korea,[77] China, Taiwan, Jordan, and Guam.

Even with the history and continuing abuse of medical coercion levelled against minority groups within Japan, my respondents never used the word 'eugenics' directly when discussing the medical side of transition; nor did they tend to use words like 'forced' or 'coerced' in relation to the surgeries required to change one's koseki. Some, like my respondent Hanako, had no interest in parenthood anyway and accepted sterilisation with no compunction; some, like Ikuko, had already become parents of young adults and were not planning to have any more children; and some had the option of living elsewhere fulltime in the event that they wanted to transition medically in the future. They were, however, unanimous in agreeing that the current laws are too rigid; that they are overly harsh; and that it would be desirable to see them reformed in the near future. Reports on trans-sterilisation-related lawsuits were keenly followed and discussed online, e.g., in my respondent Ikuko's Facebook group for her activism study group NijiMix. Sentiments expressed on discussion boards like these were overwhelmingly supportive of the plaintiffs, in stark contrast to the abuse received by Yoshino Yugi on Twitter pursuant to the conclusion of their court case. This may not be unrelated to the proliferation of gender clinics and increased security of access to transition healthcare within Japan: as detailed above, the Gender Clinic at Osaka Medical College was the *only* Gender Clinic in southwestern Japan at the time of Yoshino's lawsuit, and it temporarily suspended all treatments while the lawsuit was being fought. The artificial scarcity of transition care nearly fifteen years ago may go a long way to explaining the hostility, because panic, from some quarters of the Japanese trans community at the time. It may also be due to increased community confidence in pursuing civil rights, contingent on

[76] https://tgeu.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/MapB_TGEU2019.pdf [Last accessed: 07/11/21, 14:44 GMT]. An important note: since this graphic was created in 2019, Hungary has revoked its previous law permitting trans citizens to change there gender listed on their birth certificates and identity documents. There is now no legal pathway to gender recognition for trans people within Hungary at all.

[77] Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. *South Korea: treatment of transgender people by society and authorities, including requirements and procedures to change one's gender on identity documents; requirements and procedures for exemption from obligatory military service for a male who is in the process of undergoing gender transformation; consequences for not completing military service, 2014-March 2016.* Accessible online at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/5729a1414.html [Last accessed: 12/12/21, 17:05 GMT]

growing visibility and the gradual improvement of public awareness vis-à-vis trans identity.

The Academic System and the Sphere Beyond the Seminar Hall

The third element of State-trans interfaces I wish to consider here is the academic and educational system. Trans people below the age of majority are not allowed to change their legal details. This means that almost all high-school-aged trans people have to apply to, and graduate from, university under their birth names and the sex they were assigned at birth. Apart from the mental and emotional distress this can provoke, university transcripts and graduation certificates under the wrong name and gender can cause problems for employment later in life, especially if the trans person wishes to live stealth after changing the details on their koseki. I focus here on tertiary education because there are so few data, and so little awareness, of transgender students at the primary or secondary level. This is not to suggest that there is none. There are support groups for trans children and their families in some large cities such as Nagoya, and several youth groups that care for trans children, such as the one run by Endō Mameta in Tokyo. Some schools have begun allowing students to pick their own combinations of gendered school uniforms or have made all uniforms officially gender-neutral; a sparse handful of academics work on LGBTQ representation in textbooks and school library materials; and several of the activists I know in Kyoto and Osaka do regular LGBTQ-related educational workshops at all levels from elementary to postgraduate. However, due to my focus on adult transitioners coupled with the paucity of ethnographic data regarding trans children in the Japanese school system, I focus here only on higher education.

Transgender men are almost universally elided from consideration of trans acceptance in academia, part and parcel of their general invisibility in popular culture. Trans women face the double-edged sword of disproportionate visibility and its concomitant harassment in the public sphere. The battleground for trans students at the undergraduate level, therefore, tends to be situated in all-female colleges and women's universities. There are eighty-two such single-sex higher educational establishments in Japan. Of those eighty-two, only two admit undergraduates based on self-ID rather than legal gender: Tokyo's Ochanomizu University was the first, followed shortly after by

Tsuda University. The Ochanomizu policy was preceded by at least two years of discussion and consultation ahead of the 2020 intake, but trans students are now accepted via self-declaration of their true gender, with no formal diagnosis of GID required for admission; they are also permitted to use their real names on their student ID cards and all college-related documents.

These universities' decisions to liberalise their intake procedures was not without controversy. It is not a coincidence that the first wave of anti-trans hate speech on Japanese-language Twitter sprang up shortly after Ochanomizu announced their trans acceptance policy in April 2018. It is to the colleges' enormous credit that they did not backpedal on their policy or apologise for the decisions that they made, given that coerced apologies are wielded to great success as a public-shaming tool by reactionaries in Japan. Indeed, the criticism that Ochanomizu received from transphobes appears to have only strengthened the university's trans-inclusive culture. Japan's first International Transgender Studies conference was held under the auspices of the university's Centre for Gender Studies in December 2019 and I was fortunate enough to be able to attend. The rest of this chapter will be dedicated to an ethnographic study of the same.

Ethnographic Case Study: Ochanomizu Trans Studies Conference (December 2019)

The Ochanomizu Women's College Transgender Studies Conference consisted of a one-day symposium with a group dinner afterwards, followed by a collaborative workshop with current Ochanomizu students the next morning. The symposium was highly international in outlook: the founder of the discipline of Trans Studies, Susan Stryker, gave the keynote; of the four lecturers, two were Japanese (Shimizu Akiko and Itani Ike), one Canadian (Nael Bhaji), and one American (Susan Stryker); and all papers and panel discussions were conducted in English with simultaneous Japanese/Korean interpretation via headsets. In stark contrast to the Okayama convention, which was convened and helmed entirely by cisgender professionals, only the convenor and staff member from Ochanomizu, Shin Ki-Young, and the Tokyo-based academic Dr. Shimizu Akiko are cis women. The keynote lecture and a 2/3rds majority of the panel papers were reserved for transgender speakers.

One significant data point in the Ochanomizu Conference was that, unlike the GID Society gathering in Okayama, none of my respondents from Shinzen no Kai attended. Absence is as important as presence in comparing the two events. I did not receive any direct explanations for this participation gap, but I believe it demonstrates the non-overlapping nature of the various trans communities within Kyoto and Osaka. As with the Kansai Queer Film Festival and, conversely, the Osaka Asian Film Festival, it appeared that information or interest in certain events was not equal across all trans social groups even within a small geographical reason. The Ochanomizu conference's academic nature was not necessarily a barrier: several of the Shinzen no Kai members are involved in higher or continuing education and are very active in attending study groups, public lectures, and other academic or academic-adjacent programmes. I was encouraged to attend the Ochanomizu symposium by the friend from Kyoto who was pessimistic about my chances of gleaning anything useful from the Okayama conference. She herself is not a member of Shinzen no Kai and is much more closely aligned with the Queer Students' Circle. As I detailed previously, she was correct in her assessment of the Okayama conference as transmedicalist. However, I met several people at the final-night party in Okayama whom I knew from Shinzen no Kai, while none of them attended or even seemed to know about the symposium in Tokyo. Avenues for accessing information, and personal or communal interest in different events, were evidently disparate across the Kansai queer networks in this regard as well.

One particularly on-the-nose element of the logistics involved in attending the conference came on the first day, when I encountered the the literal gatekeeper of Ochanomizu University. Following an attempted attack in 2018 by an intruder on the current Emperor's nephew Prince Hisahito, who attends the co-educational Ochanomizu Junior High School, security across both the middle school and university campuses has been stringently increased. This heightened security, coupled with the perception of single-sex environments as being 'safer spaces' for female students, means that everyone on campus is empowered to ask: who is permitted to access 'women's space'? The exchange was ostensibly so innocuous as to be forgettable - the guard at the front gate checked my name against a list of conference attendees and waved me through - but it took place at the centre of a highly symbolic confluence of gender, power, and protectionism. That is: the

koseki in its modern form, the linchpin of one's legal gender, is linked to the the system of imperial rule. Even in Japan's most progressive women's college, the protection of imperium and the 'protection' of young women is always a site of potential confrontation at the gates.

Since all of the conference panellists have been published elsewhere, and for the most part their papers were on international transgender issues and concerns, I will not be reproducing Stryker's, Bhaji's, or Itani's papers here. However, because Akiko Shimizu's paper concerned a topic of immediate and emerging relevance to the trans community in Japan, I believe it merits a closer analysis. Her paper serves as academic corroboration of what I had heard firsthand from individuals in Kansai LGBTQ circles and was reiterated by Dr. Itani in the closing discussion of the symposium: namely, that there is a rapidly-expanding, internet-based, and most critically *novel* strain of transphobia in soi-disant 'feminist' Japanese discourse.

Shimizu Akiko's Panel Paper

Dr. Shimizu's argument began by pointing out that we are, in this historical moment, at a particularly progressive point for Japanese higher education and its acceptance of trans women. This progression is accompanied by a contingent backlash, made visible as a rise in online transphobia. Definite numbers on the perpetrators of 'feminist' transphobia in the Japanese Twittersphere are difficult to come by, particularly as the accounts peddling this form of bigotry are invariably anonymous. However, Dr. Shimizu estimated there to be circa 1000 active Japanese Transgender Exclusionary Radical Feminist [TERF] Twitter accounts as of December 2019.

Crucially, and despite the framing of Japanese-language trans exclusionary feminist rhetoric as a 'foreign import' by my respondents in the Kansai community, she noted that TERF discourse is not wholly imported. It is instead an important part of Japanese nationalism, which plays on traditional models of gender and the family, with men as stoic providers and women as 'good wives and wise mothers' [ryōsai kenbo], for its emotive

appeal to domestic audiences.[78] There seems to be a general agreement that TERF discourse as a concerted movement exploded onto the Japanese Twittersphere in Summer 2018; strongly transphobic sentiments were not previously voiced aloud, even if cis feminists and women who would not necessarily describe themselves as feminists are not always trans supportive in real life. This avoidance of explicitly bigoted rhetoric seems of a piece with talking about LGBTQ issues in general in Japan: relatively few people would express open denigration of trans people but would not necessarily be comfortable with trans people in spaces not designated for entertainment.

Part of this frustration on the part of cisgender women, she suggested, comes from the fact that cis women are given 'advice'[79] on femininity by AMAB drag performers. This dynamic of male-assigned entertainers setting standards and trends for 'femininity' dates back in one form or another to Edo-period *onnagata* [female-role specialists in the Kabuki theatre]. However, the 'LGBT boom' of the late 1990s brought a new visibility to drag queens in Japan and made possible the publication of books like IKKO's *Rules for Women* [Onna no hōsoku], a makeup lookbook which promises to make the cisgender female reader as elegantly feminine as IKKO herself. In Dr. Shimizu's view, later corroborated in the panel discussion by Dr. Itani, the 2003 *Special Act on the Handling of Gender for Persons Diagnosed with Gender Identity Disorder* placated public opinion because, as she sardonically put it, "those people have a disease": transness was (and is) presented as a pitiable medical condition with a fortuitous cure and no element of self-determination.

In considering the actual sources for this translated TERF rhetoric, there are some traceable links to trans-exclusionary activists in South Korea and the UK. These arguments seem to be disseminated mostly by SNS accounts and blogs that translate soi-disant 'feminist' articles from English and Korean. However, these texts would not have had such an impact if there was not already a baked-in audience for their arguments in Japan. Prior to 2018, the transphobic elements of these feminism-in-translation blogs' outputs were easier to overlook: they were fewer in number and scattered amongst legitimate feminist discourses, such as powerful critiques of patriarchy and anti-rape or

78 Tomomi Yamaguchi's chapter on anti-feminist nationalist women's groups in Tokyo (in Robertson (ed.) 'Politics and Pitfalls of Japan Ethnography', 2009) may be relevant here.

79 Perhaps more accurately 'critique' and/or 'chastisement'.

anti-harassment messages. Dr. Shimizu sees the rise in transphobic Japanese feminist discourses as being linked to the rise of #MeToo (and the domestic hashtag #KuToo) as a vehicle for expressing women's anger and rage. Since, in her account, Japanese activist movements have always looked abroad for solidarity and inspiration, it is unsurprising that Japanese women looked to, and translated from, international feminist movements and discourses. Anger and fear are, after all, formidable recruiting tools: they are employed by Japanese women's collectives and political organisations for a multiplicity of ends, from anti-eugenicist disability rights movements to anti-nuclear mothers' protest collectives, to ultra-nationalist women's groups dedicated to upholding the purity of the Japanese family and nation. Progress on transgender rights, such as abolishing the genital reassignment surgery requirement or legally recognising trans women as the mothers of their children, is presented as a demand for 'normal' women to share what few rights and safe spaces they have gained.

Dr. Shimizu pinpointed the anti-feminist and moral conservative backlash of the 1990s and early 2000s, led by the LDP, as having laid the foundations for reactionary attitudes to trans people.[80] Conservative strategists picked what they thought were the most scandalous and controversial aspects of feminism and gender theory, such as teaching sex education in schools from kindergarten onwards; voluntary sterilisation of 'healthy' women on demand, and the spectre of transgender women in single-sex spaces such as onsen and hospital wards. Much of the mainstream feminist movement in Japan then threw LGBTQ people directly under the proverbial bus in a misguided attempt to defend what gains they had achieved. According to Dr. Shimizu, mainstream Japanese feminists often team up with the LDP and moral conservative activists on the basis that, as she put it, "Trans people are provoking backlash against feminism on the part of 'ordinary' women". Dr. Shimizu's main concern - one that I share - is that liberal/leftist feminist Japanese Twitter has been ignoring TERFs but their conservative counterparts have *not*. The efforts of transphobic reactionaries have found a receptive audience amongst some cisgender lesbian, gay, and bisexual audiences: for example, fearmongering about pre-operative or non-operative trans people in public bathhouses [onsen] has been used to

[80] Ironically for a nationalist movement, a considerable portion of this rhetoric comprises transnational talking points borrowed from right-wing counterparts in North America, such as Focus on the Family and the Family Research Council.

stoke transphobia amongst conservative gay communities. Some Twitter activists, for example, are already at the point of suggesting gender ID checks and surveillance cameras onsen.[81] Although full-on transphobic hate campaigning is not in evidence yet, the community should be on high alert for any signs of its commencement.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The role of institutions in trans life can be difficult to track precisely because their influence is not immediately evident in the day-to-day. The mechanisms behind, say, the koseki system are not always visible, or are scattered across so many different interfaces between the individual and the system that it is not easy to pinpoint the collective sourceof disparate problems.

Keeping the family registry as our example: a person's koseki determines the details listed on the identity cards and personal identification numbers, which in turn controls their employment, education, health insurance, marital eligibility, inheritance rights, use of gendered spaces like hospital wards, and many other areas of public and private life. Not only does one registry system serve as the foundation for multiple areas of legal personhood, it is very difficult to change. The koseki functions as a microcosm of the larger underlying issue with which activists and law reform advocates are faced: any attempts to change personal and family law in Japan inevitably run up against the nigh-impossibility of amending the postwar Constitution. This is why issues that affect trans people may seem disparate or unconnected but too often find any progress blocked by the same restrictions.

Spade's (2011) and Galtung's (1969) formulations of administrative and institutional violence are particularly relevant here. Japan is generally considered to be a 'safe' country for transgender people with regards to violent crime, assault, or transphobia-based murder: the Transgender Murder Monitoring Project[82] lists only one known murder of a

[81] One theme on which Anglophone and Japanese transphobes are in agreement is their belief, not borne out by any reliable evidence, that they can 'always tell' if a person is transgender.

[82] Available online at: https://transrespect.org/en/map/trans-murder-monitoring/ [Last accessed: 13/12/21, 15:13 GMT]

transgender person in Japan on the basis of their gender identity between the years 2008 and 2018. However, institutional structures that place arbitrary, invasive requirements on transitioning people cause and encourage the circumstances for violence against trans people to exist. For example, being forced to go through university under the incorrect name and gender can out a person when applying for jobs, leaving them vulnerable to employment discrimination. Having a disjunction between one's gender presentation and one's identifying documents can be dangerous. As we heard from my respondent Ikuko in Chapter 3, she has not faced any overt discrimination at her job to date, but that is because she has not yet been able to change her gender marker, thus so far avoiding any potentially uncomfortable conversations with the Human Resources department. Disclaiming all responsibility for medical aftercare, as Yoshino Yugi's surgeons did, is medical violence.

Nor does anti-trans violence in Japan only operate along one vector, from the institution towards the community; from the mainstream against the minority. Although there is a considerable differential in power between the State imposing mandates for transition and individual people gatekeeping transition access, transgender people themselves are also capable of making transition more difficult to access. We see this most starkly in the Yoshino Yugi case, when high-profile trans advocates like Yamamoto Ran blamed them for the temporary closure of Osaka Medical College's Gender Identity Clinic during the period of their lawsuit's settlement. This demand for one person to suffer in silence on behalf of the community may strike the reader as unfair precisely because Yoshino was trying to prevent similar medical malpractice from happening to other trans people. One question to which I was never able to discern a precise answer was: how much of the disapproval Yoshino received was due to their non-binary identity? I believe it cannot be disregarded as a potential aggravating factor. The question of who 'counts' as trans - who is permitted some contingent form of legal identity and visibility - has been a significant element in the contestatory and constructed nature of legal trans visibility in Japan since 2003. While transgender people *were* involved in writing and passing the law, they felt constrained to the most palatable possible language and the most comprehensive medical requirements, to which they received significant and, I would argue, understandable backlash from within the trans community, especially from transgender parents who saw any future transition opportunities taken away from them for the greater good. Nor did

it necessarily have to be that way: Torai Masae's transmedicalist views predispose him to reject non-binary and non-medicalised transgender identities on ideological grounds, for example. Being transgender does not mean that one is committed to an expansive vision of trans liberation. The Japanese Society for Gender Identity Disorder and its conference programme demonstrates an enduring commitment to the idea of transness as a pathological condition, treatment for which involves conformity to one of two binary options.

It would however be misleading to disregard the growing interest in alternative ways of conceptualising transgender identities, as well as the small but significant gains trans people are making with regards to the educational system. The fact that two prestigious women's colleges, Ochanomizu and Tsuda, have changed their enrollment policies to allow self-identifying trans women as undergrads is groundbreaking, as was the success of the 2019 Ochanomizu Trans Studies Conference. The fact that both are single-sex establishments has become something of a flashpoint for both pro-trans and anti-trans feminist argument in Japan, as we saw from Shimizu Akiko's paper at the Ochanomizu conference; much about the future of trans acceptance in Japanese tertiary education has been suddenly laid open to questions. Will co-educational universities also allow trans undergrads to use their real names and genders? Will public universities with greater enrollment numbers (Tsuda and Ochanomizu are both private establishments) also be persuaded to adopt self-declaration in applications from high school graduates? What form is the backlash against trans women triggered by the Ochanomizu decision now taking elsewhere in Japanese public life? The first two questions remain, as of this writing, unanswerable: it is to the third, and to trans-related social and political activism, that I will now turn.

CHAPTER 7: MAKING THE ROAD

> I am trying to tell a story: a story of feminist/queer struggles in Japan in the last twenty years, which may or may not be related to all those contemporary theoretical concerns and fads in Anglo-European language academia, but exact forms of whose relation to the latter is certainly not obvious; a story where the imported and the indigenous, the transnational and the local, have entwined with each other and been played out to shape a distinctively local and inherently transnational form of politics of genders, sexualities and bodies. This is a story of 20 years of cultural and political struggle that does not necessarily have a clear and exciting narrative, a happy ending, or even an inspirational lesson. It is a story of tedious repetitions, a messy and disorganized "plot-what-plot" and crushing disappointments.
>
> Shimizu (2020:89)

Introduction

In a stark contrast to the stereotype of Japanese people (in general) and Japan's minority groups (in particular) as apolitical or uninterested in social activism,[83] I encountered multiple activists and activism groups in both Kyoto and Osaka over the course of my fieldwork, including some that were started during the nationwide State of Emergency regarding the novel coronavirus in 2020. The latter cases were not surprising: queer activism is often born out of crisis and plague, as with the legendary AIDS activist group ACT-UP in the United States. It is true that the prominence of, and mainstream interest in, LGBTQ rights have accelerated over the last five years or so, and that the recent nature of this visibility is reflected in some of the formally-organised activism groups; for example, my respondent Ikuko's group NijiMix began in April 2020, and the national pressure

[83] The perception of Japanese people, especially Japanese youth, as apathetic towards politics (including, or especially, gender and sexuality activism) continues to excite a great deal of commentary in both formal and informal fora. For discussion and critique of which, see Hane (1988); Shigematsu (2012); Shimizu (2020); Steel (2004); and Yamaguchi (2009)

group Marriage For All Japan was founded in 2019 off the back of a class-action lawsuit for access to equal marriage filed by a group of gay and lesbian couples.[84]

However, not all of Japan's LGBTQ rights initiatives are so recent. Some nationwide groups and high-profile activists gained prominence around a decade to fifteen years ago, including the *Association of LGBT Family and Friends* [LGBT no kazoku to yujin o tsunagu kai], founded in 2006[85]; Tanaka Ray and the sexuality activism group *Rockdom of Sexuality* started publishing on trans identity in 2007, and Yoshino Yugi brought their lawsuit against Osaka Medical College in 2008. Torai Masae, who transitioned medically in America in 1987, published his book *The Transgender Age: Gender Identity Disorder Today* [Toransujendā no jidai: seidōitsusei-shōgai no ima] in 2001. The Kansai Queer Film Festival was founded in 2005; its director, Hibino Makoto, is a high-profile figure in some of the local LGBTQ circles. There are also various LGBTQ study and student groups affiliated with universities in Kyoto, including Bukkyō Daigaku's LGBTQ Buddhist discussion group; Ritsumeikan's *Gender/Sexuality Project* (established by Yoshino Yugi in 2002); and Dōshisha's now-defunct Queer Studies Association.

According to my respondent Hanako, who volunteered with the Association of LGBT Family and Friends for two years, the group's genesis came about thirty years ago:

> 十三年前に、尾辻かな子さんという、今も衆議院議員をされてる方がいらっしゃいますけど、初めて大阪の府議会議員に当選された時、その時は女性議員として普通に議員活動されてたんですが、自分がレズビアンだということをカミングアウトした。その時にお母様が非常にいっくりしたんですね。それでどうしようと思った時に、周りの人にいろいろ聞いてみたら、やっぱり自分の子どもも同性愛者だとか、あるいは性別違和を抱えているとか。っていうことがだんだんつながっていって、神戸で十三年前にNPO法人として設立された。これが今もずっと続

[84] Marriage For All Japan. *Marriage Equality FAQs [English Version].* Accessible online at: https://www.marriageforall.jp/en/marriage-equality/faq/ [Last accessed: 11/12/21, 14:00 GMT]

[85] The Association of LGBT Family and Friends [LGBT no kazoku to yūjin o tsunagu kai]. *Activism Achievements* [Katsudō jisseki]. Accessible online at: http://lgbt-family.or.jp/about/history [Last accessed: 11/12/21, 15:30 GMT]

いているという。今では神戸をホームにして東京・名古屋・福岡の四つで活動してます。

There's a politician called Otsuji Kanako who's still a member of the Lower House these days. She started out by being elected a member of the Osaka Prefectural Assembly thirty years ago; at that time she was performing regular assembly member duties, but then she came out as a lesbian. Back then, that was a real shock for her mother. When [her mother] was trying to figure out what to do, she started to hear various stories from the people around her; it turned out that their own children were also gay, or that they might have gender dysphoria, etc. As they gradually came together, they established The Association of LGBT Family and Friends - what we call 'Japanese PFLAG' - as an NPO group in Kobe, thirteen years ago. It's still active today. The Association is currently based in Kobe, but has expanded to Tokyo, Nagoya, and Fukuoka - four places in total.

Amongst my respondents who were involved in trans-related outreach, education, and consciousness-raising, there was a multi-'generational' aspect to their activism. Hanako (early 60s), chronologically the eldest of my respondents who would describe themselves as having been involved in LGBTQ activism, has been a member of Japanese PFLAG since before transition was legalised in Japan; Momoko (late 30s) has been an educator for over a decade; Ikuko (between them in age) started NijiMix in the Spring of 2020. Chiaki, in his mid-40s when I met him, began his activism as a career and financial counsellor for LGBTQ clients on his return from several years of living abroad in Canada. The most recent time I was able to see her in person, which was December 2019, Hanako told me she was ready to 'pass on the torch'. She was glad that Ikuko was launching something new but felt that her own time in queer activism was drawing to a close and wanted to focus more on finding disability support groups after a recent diagnosis.

As for the nature of the organisations and collectives like NijiMix in which queer activism occurs, they often function as a combination of study groups [benkyōkai] and community groups [kōryūkai]. While both of the two main LGBTQ groups with whom I did participant observation hewed to this loose structure, there was a distinct difference in activism and intersectionality between the Shinzen no Kai group and the Queer Students' Circle. The

latter was much more interested in queerness as political praxis and destabilising theory; they primarily identified their activism as 'Queer' rather than 'LGBTQ' and adopted the slogan 'Weird x Perverted' [taihen x hentai] as a reclamatory label. An explanation for the Weird x Perverted phrasing appears on the Kansai Queer Film Festival website as follows (translation my own):

> Gender, love, and ways of life are diverse: we gather with that in mind. However, over time, we find that we ourselves are ignorant and sometimes unable to accept the sexuality of others. It's not uncommon for queer events to attract only gay men, even if they are advertised as being for 'LGBT' people. We contain not only sexual discrimination, such as androcentrism and indifference to bisexual and trans people, but also discrimination on other bases than sex (Japanese-centrism, colonialism, hearing/non-Deaf privilege, etc.).
>
> Creating a "minority among the minority", prioritizing within limited resources, and indifference to familiar discrimination and oppression are not problems that affect only the mainstream society.
>
> Beware of single issue principles and simplified clarity! It is very 'Taihen' [strange; difficult] to faces our own complexity and our own privileges and to gain true diversity.
>
> Although the term "LGBT" has become popular these days, our lives cannot be expressed in simple terms such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and heterosexual. Sometimes a person may find that the gender of a loved one or their own gender may 'metamorphise'. [...] We want to say not only that 'Normal people are *hentai*' but also that 'You too can become more *hentai*'.[86]

As discussed in Chapter 5, the Queer Students' Circle was also more proactive in forging alliances with groups that were not specifically LGBTQ, e.g. Koreans and people of Korean descent resident in Japan [zainichi Kankokujin]; Okinawans; disabled people; and other

[86] Kansai Queer Film Festival organisers. *Weird x Perverted* [Taihen x hentai]. Accessible at: https://kansai-qff.org/2017/kqff.html [Last accessed: 24/08/21, 15:15 GMT]

Asian/Pacific Islander survivors of colonialism and imperialism, etc. Shinzen no Kai-affiliated groups tie their activism to what may be achievable within legal frameworks for social change: their petitions and other campaigns are targeted at changing koseki laws and agitating for equal marriage in Japan. They are more likely to advocate using the court system to raise lawsuits and awareness. This is certainly not to say that there was no overlap between the two. Shinzen no Kai's related ecosystem of activists had international members and connections; the Queer Students' Circle also used the legal system when and where necessary, cf. Yoshino Yugi's lawsuit against Osaka Medical College Gender Clinic. However, the former group seemed to me to be more pragmatic, centring their activism on the question of *how can we practically achieve what we want within the existing limitations of the system?* The latter was more interested in problematising those existing limitations and assumptions per se. Neither approach is intrinsically superior to the other: both are necessary for radical expansion of ways in which LGBTQ lives and identities can flourish.

Structure of this chapter

The central question of this chapter is: What do trans (and other LGBQ) people want to see happen politically, materially, and socially with regards to trans rights in Japan, and how are they setting about achieving their stated goals?

From discussions with my respondents, and from attending lectures on LGBTQ law/policy, and from participant observation at study groups like NijiMix, these are what seem to be broadly agreed-upon as the three most pressing issues in Japanese LGBTQ activism:

1. Changes to the Gender Recognition Act that remove any and all medical requirements, especially sterilisation

2. Marriage reform that gives equal rights and privileges to all couples regardless of gender, including inheritance rights, hospital visitation, and an end to the forced divorces of gay trans people.

3. Comprehensive anti-discrimination law that covers housing, employment, education, healthcare, access to services, and other key issues.

The rest of this chapter will analyse these three tentpoles of the Japanese LGBTQ movement with varying degrees of granularity. I begin from Point 3 above by giving an overview of the proposed anti-LGBTQ-discrimination Diet bill and the anti-LDP-homophobia protests of late May 2021.

Following Point 2 above, I move to in-depth analysis of one specific LGBTQ activism target (marriage) and the controversies surrounding it within activist communities. That will lead into the issue raised by Point 1 above, which is closely interlinked with unequal access to marriage for even medically transitioned people: that of sterilisation. I discuss my respondents' and other Japanese trans people's stated aims in terms of potential change or abolition of the sterilisation statute. Building on the previous chapter's discussion of the history and continuing practice of sterilisation in Japan, this chapter examines the effects that sterilisation mandates have on transgender people's lives: in particular, how activist pushback against sterilisation is gathering pace.

Because sterilisation and gender confirmation surgery figure so prominently in transphobic discourses of the body, and because these specific discourses have been steadily gaining prominence and currency in Japan since 2018, I then provide a summary of transgender-exclusionary arguments, in order to explore its real-world manifestations and their effects on transgender people in Japan.

I conclude this chapter squarely back in the ethnographic realm via examples of trans/queer activism in practice in Kyoto and Osaka.

LGBT rikai zōshin hōan and queer politics in an Olympic year

As of Summer 2021, Japan has no comprehensive anti-discrimination bills protecting *any* minority groups at the federal level.[87] Discrimination in housing, education, healthcare, employment, and access to private businesses is not subject to any legal impediment. The lack of protection for minorities in Japan has been consistently raised as an issue for many years across a broad rainbow of discriminatory axes, from bans on foreigners entering onsen[88] to reports that 9 out of 10 private housing units in Tokyo refuse to rent to foreigners;[89] to hate speech against Koreans and Japanese people of Korean descent;[90] to bans on transgender employees using the appropriate bathrooms at work;[91] to attempts to police transgender workers' gender expression while on the job;[92] to refusal of housing for gay couples reported by several of my respondents in Kansai. A few individual municipalities, like the city of Takarazuka, have passed anti-hate-speech resolutions; in June 2020, Mie Prefecture became the first region to ban non-consensual 'outing' of LGBTQ people by third parties. However, even the expanding same-sex domestic partnership registration systems patchworked across Japan do not offer any material

[87] *NGO Report on the Issue of Hate Speech in relation to the issue No. 10 of the List of Issues adopted by the Human Rights Committee, (CCPR/C/JPN/Q/6),* prepared and submitted by the NGO Network for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Japan (ERD Net). Accessible online at: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared%20Documents/JPN/INT_CCPR_CSS_JPN_17357_E.pdf [Last accessed: 1/12/21 11:00 GMT]

[88] Magner, Mark. *City Awash in Controversy Over Hot Springs' Ban on Foreigners.* The Los Angeles Times, February 19 2000. Accessible online at: https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-feb-19-mn-516-story.html [Last accessed: 10/12/21, 09:38 GMT]

[89] Margolis, Eric. *What's Behind Housing Discrimination in Japan?* The Japan Times Online, May 31 2021. Accessible online at: https://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2021/05/31/how-tos/housing-discrimination-still-problem-japan/ [Last accessed: 10/12/21, 09:40 GMT]

[90] Osumi, Magdalena. *In Rare Ruling, Court Fines Japanese Man Who Anonymously Posted Hateful Anti-Korean Remarks Against Teenager.* The Japan Times Online, January 16 2019. Accessible online at: https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/01/16/national/crime-legal/rare-ruling-court-fines-man-anonymously-posted-hateful-anti-korean-remarks-teenager/ [Last accessed: 10/12/21, 09:42 GMT]

[91] Murakami Yuri. *High Court Backs Bathroom Ban for Transgender Employee.* The Asahi Shimbun Online, May 28 2021. Accessible online at: http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14360334 [Last accessed: 10/12/21, 09:45 GMT]

[92] Endō Takashi. *Judge Orders Taxi Company to Let Transgender Woman Drive.* The Asahi ShimbunOnline, September 1 2020. Accessible online at: http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/13687063 [Last accessed: 10/12/21, 09:47 GMT]

protection for gay couples, including inheritance rights, hospital visitation, pensions, or survivorship rights.[93]

In order to combat this longstanding human rights issue, a multipartisan opposition working group in the Lower House of the National Diet introduced an anti-discrimination bill in December 2018, for consideration in 2019. The original text of the bill, which would have included concrete penalties for businesses and individuals who engage in anti-LGBTQ discrimination, was rejected by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party [Jimintō] 94. The LDP proposed their own anti-discrimination bill instead, headed by the Chair of the Committee on Sexual and Gender Minorities, Inada Tomomi. The proposed text of the LDP-authored bill removes any provision for material penalties and significantly waters down the thrust of the original, replacing 'anti-discrimination measures' with a generic 'increase in awareness and understanding of LGBTQ people.' Despite the milquetoast nature of the revised bill, a scandal broke in the last week of May 2021, with reports of anti-LGBTQ hate speech during a meeting held to discuss the bill at the LDP headquarters on May 20th. Approximately a hundred LGBTQ people and allies held a protest rally outside the headquarters in Nagata-chō on May 21st; a signature campaign demanding a retraction of the remarks and a formal apology has garnered nearly 100,000 respondents.[95,96] Despite public opprobrium at the use of hate speech by party members and broad support for a comprehensive anti-discrimination bill - and despite the efforts

[93] The body of the predeceased spouse belongs to the birth family and not the surviving spouse, which provides a way for homophobic or un-accepting relatives to shut the living spouse out of funeral arrangements and re-closet or misgender the deceased. Historically, gay couples in Japan have practiced adult adoption, designating the younger spouse as the heir of the elder.

[94] A necessary disclaimer: Japanese political party affiliation is not as clear an indication of stance on LGBTQ rights as it is in, say, America. Several of the politicians most in support of LGBTQ-related legislation historically have been women of the Liberal Democratic Party, including Nono Chieko and Inada Tomomi; the Communist Party of Japan has LGBTQ rights as a distinct part of its platform, but even some members of staunchly rightwing parties like Komeitō have voiced support for the LGBTQ Awareness Bill under current consideration.

[95] Tsuboike Jun. *"Don't associate transgender women with criminality!": Protest rally in front of the Liberal Democratic Party headquarters after series of anti-LGBTQ remarks* [Toransujendā josei o hanzaisei to musubitsukeruna Jimintō honbu-mae de kōgi shūkai: Kaigō de aitsuida sabetsu hatsugen o ukete]. Huffington Post Japan, May 24 2021. Accessible online at: https://www.huffingtonpost.jp/entry/story_jp_60a85018e4b031354797192f?fbclid=IwAR3Q127c0Hwyy8lJJWfkfurKGV1RN5bZ1iTGc8sps44lFpPcGRHAJPbuRGA [Last accessed: 11/12/21, 09:02 GMT]

[96] *Petition: The LDP should revoke and apologise for the discriminatory comments towards LGBT Community.* Source: https://www.change.org/stop-lgbtq-hate-by-ldp-en [Last accessed: 11/12/21. 09:05 GMT]

of multiple politicians, including the bill's LDP champion Inada, who vowed to not give up on getting the bill passed ahead of the Tokyo Olympics[97] - it died in committee on the grounds that there was insufficient time to pass the bill prior to the Summer recess.[98]

Inada's attempt to pass the bill ahead of the Olympic opening ceremonies was not coincidental. Several Japanese LGBTQ rights orgs, activist groups, and individuals have used the 2021 Tokyo Olympics to bring attention to the parlous state of legal protections for queer people in the country. Human Rights Watch's official Japanese chapter sponsored a petition for anti-discrimination legislation in a campaign linked specifically to Japan's human rights responsibilities as a host country, for example;[99] the opening of the pop-up community centre Pride House Tokyo was timed explicitly to coincide with the advent of the Games.[100] Multiple lawyers' associations whichspecialises in LGBTQ rights signed an open letter from Human Rights Watch that describes Japan's current laws as being 'at odds with' and 'contravene' the Olympic Charter and its requirements to respect human rights in the host country.[101] While the current author finds it difficult to believe that anyone involved in human rights activism is naive enough to think the Olympic Charter is worth the paper it is written on, the Olympics provided a useful opportunity for LGBTQ people to seize the microphone while international attention was focussed on Japan.

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[97] Mainichi Shimbun staff writers. *LGBT bill: Ms. Inada tweets "I'm not giving up yet" - LDP announces the bill is dead via Twitter* [LGBT hōan, Inada-shi wa "Watashi wa mada akiramenai": Jimintō okuri tsuīto]. Mainichi Shinbun, May 29 2021. Available to read online at: https://mainichi.jp/articles/20210529/k00/00m/010/210000c?fbclid=IwAR32uEAhvRVsXFMcKtoPlV2mMATpYmdvtZEGHujt3lWJQSiPRjy-OjyH0cs [Last accessed: 11/12/21, 09:00 GMT]

[98] An interview with Inada Tomomi can be found here, in which she discusses the bill and her motivations in trying to get it through the Diet: https://www.tokyo-np.co.jp/article/111392 [Last accessed: 11/12/21, 09:06 GMT]

[99] *Japan: Pass Equality Act Before Olympics.* Human Rights Watch, March 25 2021. https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/25/japan-pass-equality-act-olympics [Last accessed: 11/12/21, 09:09 GMT]

[100] *Pride House International.* Website: http://www.pridehouseinternational.org/mec-events/tokyo-japa-2020/ [Last accessed: 11/12/21, 09:11 GMT]

[101] Human Rights Watch Japan. *Request for a Law to Protect Against Discrimination Based On Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Ahead of the 2020 Olympic Games* [2020 Tōkyō gorin taikai ni mukete seiteki shikō / seijinin ni yoru sabetsu kara no hogo o sadameru hōritsu o motomeru yōsei-sho]. Available to read online at: https://www.hrw.org/ja/news/2021/01/25/377670 [Last accessed: 11/12/21, 09:13 GMT]

An interesting wrinkle in Japanese Olympics-related LGBTQ activism is that several of my respondents are also active in the #NoMoreOlympics and other anti-Olympic movements, both in Japan and internationally. Their motivations are often specifically feminist and LGBTQ-informed - they oppose the persistent refusal on the part of the International Olympic Committee to consider barring host applications from countries with anti-LGBTQ legislation; the intersexism suffered by athletes like Caster Semenya - as well as solidarity with unhoused people, migrant and construction labourers, women's rights activists, workers' unions etc. For some of my respondents, both the Olympics themselves and the tepid anti-discrimination bill were symptoms of the same malaise: in neither case could the master's tools ever dismantle the master's house. There was thus a visible divergence amongst different factions of the community as to whether or not electoral politics were even a viable vehicle for improvement in LGBTQ rights and protections, and a secondary disagreement over whether or not the Olympics were a legitimate pretext for drawing attention to queer issues. Some of my respondents circulated anti-Olympics petitions on social media throughout the Summer of 2021, while others praised Pride House Tokyo as positive recognition and representation of Japanese LGBTQ communities in the international press.

These divergent viewpoints amongst trans and other queer people are not limited to disagreements over the viability of electoral politics but extend to specific tangible goals that are often perceived as being of universal desirability. Equal marriage is prominent amongst these supposed goals. Not every LGBTQ person in Japan who engages in political activism prioritises marriage equality, and a considerable proportion of Japanese feminist (especially lesbian feminist) thought opposes marriage as a concept. In the next section, I expand on equal marriage both as a cause célèbre for Japanese LGBTQ activists and as a source of tension and controversy in intra-community discourse.

Equal Rites: The Issue of Same-Sex Marriage in Japan

I focus on marriage as a flashpoint in queer activist discourse here precisely because of its potency as a symbol both inside and outside of Japan. It is relatively palatable to non-LGBTQ people; it can be an assimilationist tactic; it is emotionally appealing; it brings a raft of material and financial benefits; it grants a profound form of legitimacy and

recognition to a relationship. Yet in many places, especially places with right-to-work laws, it does not protect against any other myriad forms of discrimination. A gay couple can get legally married one day and legally fired from their jobs or evicted from their housing the next day. The problems complicating equal marriage as an ideal also highlight other minority issues within Japan's LGBTQ community, such as disability rights; the problems faced by *mukosekiji* [people without a family registry]; and the legal tangles of international relationships. Equal marriage certainly is a key demand of LGBTQ activism in-country and has been for over a decade, but I argue that it not *as* central to Japanese queer organising as e.g., a comprehensive anti-discrimination bill. Regardless, because it is an issue which Shinzen no Kai and NijiMix vocally support and was cited as important by several of my respondents, I believe it to be useful here as an illustration.

Marriage is one area, both in Japan and e.g., in the UK, where the interests of trans people and the interests of their cisgender LGB counterparts do not necessarily *always* overlap. Straight trans people who have completed legal transition are allowed to get married in Japan. Several high-profile trans women have taken advantage of that right; Chii, the author of the 2016 autobiographical manga *The Bride Was A Boy* [Hanayome wa motodanshi], is legally married to her husband, as is the blogger and memoirist Nōmachi Mineko, who is married to well-known gay rights activist Fushimi Noriaki. Some trans people who married before coming out are able to remain married by dint of not medically transitioning, such as Mitsuhashi Junko; still others, like Fujio Takafumi, find divorce to be a liberation after doing what they regard as their duty to reproduce, or after trying their hardest to be 'cured' by normality. It is worth noting that the rules surrounding heterosexual marriage pursuant to legal transition disproportionately affects trans men for the reasons discussed in Chapter 6: namely, that trans men are less likely than trans women to undergo the genital surgeries demanded by the state in exchange for legal recognition, due to the perceived or actual risks of multi-stage phalloplasty and metoidioplasty.[102] The trans community may therefore be said to have attitudes towards marriage as a civil rights goal that may diverge both from their

[102] While I believe it is both counterproductive and unrealistic to attempt to determine if trans men 'have it worse' than trans women, or vice-versa, it is nevertheless important to be aware of the different ways that transphobia is deployed against trans people on the basis of their presumed or actual genders. The only possible answer being, of course, that all trans people are subjected to transphobia in different ways - what we might describe as Infinite Discrimination in Infinite Combinations.

cisgender LGB counterparts and from heterosexual cisgender people. Straight trans people, especially straight trans women, have the same marriage rights as their cisgender sisters, while gay trans people find themselves unable to marry even after ticking every legal box related to their gender. Significantly, nobody I talked to in person over the course of my fieldwork mentioned this disjunction on the basis of sexual orientation after transition. I do not have any particular explanation for this, but I believe it may be due to the general invisibility of gay trans people even within trans organisations, publications, and pop culture representations.

The issue of trans people's unequal access to marriage has not gone completely without notice or comment. The *Yomiuri Shinbun* newspaper, on March 29th, 2019,[103] published a brief article on an anonymous trans woman's application to the Kyoto Family Court for permission to change the gender listed on her koseki without divorcing her wife. This also was rejected. The plaintiff had undergone gender reassignment surgery in 2014; her daughter was above the age of legal adulthood; and she had the full support and blessing of both her wife and her daughter in completing her transition. She and her wife had been married since 1995 and did not wish to separate. However, the Family Court rejected her application on the grounds that allowing it would first entail fundamental changes to the current civil code, which does not recognise same-sex marriage.

Although I was unable to follow up on her stated intention to appeal the verdict to a higher court, and though the topic of trans people's access to equal marriage, never terribly prominent, subsided from public attention for a year or two, the topic was thrust back into the spotlight as of June 2021, with a lawsuit brought by Morita Midori and Elin McCready, an international trans-cis couple in Tokyo. McCready and Morita's story has already been picked up by major Japanese news outlets reporting in both Japanese and

[103] Yomiuri Shimbun staff writers. *Rejection of Request to Change Gender While Still Married* [Kon'in-chū seibetsu henkō mōshitate o kyakka]. Yomiuri Shimbun print edition, March 29 2019.

English, including by NHK[104] and by the Asahi Shinbun.[105] A brief summary of the background to their lawsuit is as follows: they were married as a 'heterosexual' couple in Japan in 2000, prior to McCready's transition, and have three children. McCready legally changed her gender in her home state, Texas. The gender now listed on both her Japanese residence permit and her American passport is now 'female'. So, to a certain extent, the Japanese state obviously does recognise her gender. However, when she went to their local ward office in Tokyo to update the gender listed on her marriage permit and bring it in line with her gender as recognised by the state on other legal documents, her request was refused on the basis that Japan does not recognise same-sex marriage. As a kind of workaround similar to the practice of adult adoption, the clerk suggested listing McCready's Japanese wife as a female relative such as a sister or cousin - a suggestion which McCready rightly rejected. The couple are suing on the basis of gender discrimination and human rights infringement.

Issues such as these - uneven recognition of a trans person's legal gender; unequal access to marriage between gay and straight trans people - uncomfortably underlie any positioning of equal marriage as an unambiguous social good. Many Japanese LGBTQ people and feminists are wary of marriage activism, especially any agitation for equal marriage that can be appropriated by conservative-sponsored messaging like the LDP's appeal for 'understanding and awareness', as being only sound and fury, signifying nothing. The two most significant points for Japanese queer/feminist critiques of equal marriage are as follows:

1. It provides a great opportunity for the government to noisily furnish window-dressing without having to pass legislation that could lead to any tangible improvements in LGBTQ lives: no material benefits that usually come with marriage, no anti-discrimination legislation, etc.

[104] NHK staff writers. *Woman Who Changed Gender in America Sues Over Gender Change Not Being Permitted On Japanese Residence Certificate* [Amerika de seibetsu-henkō Nihon de jūmin-hyō no seibetsu-henko mitomerarezu josei ga teiso]. NHK Online, June 21 2021. Accessible online at: https://t.co/itMziqm26y?amp=1 [Last accessed: 11/12/21, 09:2O GMT]

[105] Murakami Yuri. *Transgender American and Her Wife Sue Over Gender Registry.* The Asahi Shimbun Online, June 22 2021. Accessible online at: https://t.co/3lNQVWiKuc?amp=1 [Last accessed: 11/12/21, 09:21 GMT]

2. It still takes the imperial koseki system as its foundation, which is especially important for anti-imperial and anti-colonial Japanese feminism: if the Emperor is still the ultimate patriarchal head of every family, marriage cannot be equal and it cannot be anti-imperial (Nakajima, 2000 etc).

Lunsing (2000), Nemoto (2008), Tokuhiro (2009), Ezawa (in Fujimura-Fanselow et al, 2011), Kato (2012), Fukuda (2013), and White (2021) have all written extensively on Japanese ambiguities and tensions around marriage. Some - although by no means all - draw on feminist critique. Of these, the concept that I want to consider here is that analysed by White (2021): that of *jijitsukon*, or 'common-law' marriage that is not recognised by the state. Although the subjects of White's ethnography were cisgender, heterosexual women who refused to be listed in their husbands' koseki, the word 'jijitsukon' [lit. 'true marriage'] is sometimes included amongst the domestic arrangements covered by the partnership recognition systems being implemented across Japan, primarily for the benefit of LGBTQ couples. Same-sex partnership recognition policies [pātonāshippu sensei seido] began in Tokyo's Shibuya and Setagaya Wards in 2015; as of current writing, they are now available in 130 municipalities,[106] including Kyoto as of 2020. At least two or three cisgender gay couples I knew in Osaka registered under the partnership declaration system, but amongst my transgender respondents, only one person did so during my time in Japan. This singularity amongst my respondents is due to a confluence of factors. One key reason is that most of them were not at a place in their lives or relationships where they were looking to formalise a relationship. Several had bad experiences with transition-related divorces from what were previously heterosexual marriages. Another was that the partnership system does not confer any legal rights on the couple: co-parenting, hospital visitation, inheritance, and other significant benefits of marriage remain unrecognised at the federal level.

As the fact that one of my respondents *did* choose to register her relationship shows, it is not the case that transgender people are barred from accessing the partnership system.

[106] Japanese LGBT Support Collective [Nihon LGBT sapōto kyōkai]. *About the Partnership Declaration System* [Pātonāshippu sensei seido ni tsuite]. Available online at: https://lgbt-japan.com/partnership/ [Last accessed: 24/11/21, 20:43 GMT]

Anyone who has not changed the gender on their koseki is able to register with a legally same-sex partner. For example, a trans woman who still has 'male' marked on her identity documents is permitted to register a partnership with a cisgender man or with another trans woman whose legal sex is listed as male. I suggest that the lack of material benefits associated with formalised marriage, coupled with the potential for hurt and humiliation involved in registering a 'same-sex' partnership which misgenders one or both people in the relationship, is a strong disincentive for trans people contemplating domestic registry. My respondent's partnership registration spotlights exactly that unequal access to marriage and legal couplehood faced by many transgender women in Japan. Despite being a straight woman in a relationship with a cisgender man, she had not yet been able to change the details on her family registry. Their partnership was therefore recorded as a same-sex registration between two men.

If heterosexual transgender people do wish to access formalised marriage in Japan, they face a medical barrier higher than their counterparts in many countries, including Ireland, Malta, the United Kingdom, Canada, and much of the United States. Despite handwringing about the country's falling birthrate being, at this point, a popular national pastime, trans people are still required to trade their fertility for the right to be married - indeed, for the right to be recognised at all. I touched on this topic briefly in the last chapter, but will now turn to a closer analysis of one of the gravest, hardest-fought issues facing Japan's trans communities: that of mandatory sterilisation.

Sterilisation and Its Discontents

Trans people who pursue legal transition in Japan must appear before their local Family Court at least once, usually at the end of their surgical process, in order to present a formal request to change the name and gender on their koseki. This is usually a straightforward request, according to my respondents; more a matter of rubber-stamping than of convincing the judge of the validity of their request. However, the existence of a routine procedure for updating the family registry does not represent proactive progress towards, say, the eventual and total removal of the discriminatory requirements for sterilisation, divorce, and waiting for the applicant's children to reach the age of majority. When trans people in Japan have attempted to pursue such progress

via the judiciary over the last decade, the primary mechanism to which they have recoursed has been individual cases brought to local or prefectural Family Courts. These cases are often reported across mainstream media, from broadsheets such as the *Yomiuri Shinbun* and *Chunichi Shinbun* to LGBT-centred websites like *Out Japan* (www.outjapan.co.jp). It should be acknowledged that coverage of these cases, even in conservative-leaning papers, is generally neutral and absent the moral panic too often present in UK newspapers' reporting on trans issues.

I have selected the two highest-profile cases involving contestation of the sterilisation requirements by trans plaintiffs, by which I mean the two cases which have received the greatest attention and reportage both in LGBTQ circles and in general-interest media outlets, for analysis here. The first has been decided already and ended in a disappointing result for the plaintiff, while the second has yet to have its full day in court. However, their cases were rejected for different reasons: reading both cases side-by-side casts light on the reasoning used to block the singular goal of removing the sterilisation requirement, separate from other aspects of trans family law. I have already covered the bare-bones legal side of sterilisation and its implications for Japanese trans people elsewhere in this dissertation. I will not retread that ground here. Instead, this section will focus on the complexity of transgender people's reactions to enforced sterilisation; how transgender people want the law to change; and the specific methods they are using to move the needle on medical coercion.

It is of course necessary to remember that not all trans people feel that sterilisation is bad, or that it is bad *for them*. Some people feel relieved; others feel affirmed; others may feel devastated, or coerced into operations they did not want, or like they are permanently unable to fulfil 'true wo/manhood' by not conceiving and/or birthing their own children. While my respondents agreed collectively that the sterilisation laws are unjust and should be abolished, they very rarely spoke in detail about their own experiences of, or personal feelings about, sterilisation. There were various reasons for this. One of my respondents had already had two children with her ex-wife prior to her transition; she maintained good relationships with both of them (one already a *shakaijin*, or adult embarked on the world of work and social responsibilities, the other just entering university). Another respondent identifies as asexual and aromantic, with no interest in

parenthood or romantic relationships, and so her own transition goals were in more-or-less happy accord with government requirements. Some of my transmasculine friends did want to leave the possibility of pregnancy open in the future. Many of my respondents had experienced terrible rejection from their families of origin and were opposed to (or perhaps afraid of) replicating fraught family dynamics with potential children or did not wish to expose them to anti-LGBTQ bullying by their peers.

For most trans women who choose to legally transition, sterilisation is a side-effect of vaginoplasty i.e. the two are not separate procedures. For trans men, however, the most common medical interventions are mastectomy and chest wall reconstruction ('top surgery') coupled with masculinising hormone treatment, which itself is in general sufficient to stop menstruation after a certain amount of time has passed. Transmasculine sterilisation therefore involves the separate specific procedure of a full or partial hysterectomy, which can have a notoriously difficult recovery process. As discussed previously in this thesis, trans men are also less likely to undergo genital surgery than their female counterparts. What this translates to in practice is that trans men are required to have more, and more invasive, procedures than trans women in order to gain anything near legal parity. While trans men in Japan seem as a general rule to be erased from consideration along similar lines as trans men in the Anglosphere, both of the high-profile lawsuits against transgender sterilisation launched 2018-2021 were brought by trans men, Usui Takakito and Suzuki Gen. I now turn to explore how both Sukuzi's and Usui's cases illuminate the difficulty of pursuing justice for transgender people as relates to particular aspects of Japanese law.

The first case, brought by a trans man named Usui Takakito seeking the right to change the gender listed on his *koseki* without first submitting to sterilisation, ended in a rejection by the minor chamber of the Supreme Court in January 2019. As reported by Mari Yamaguchi for the Associated Press, the majority opinion from the four-judge bench was that the sterilisation requirement was necessary to, supposedly, prevent confusion in society and in the family:

> The court unanimously rejected the appeal, finding the law could be understood as addressing concerns about confusion about

> parentage if a person who underwent a legal change in gender without surgery had children based on their "old" gender, and seeking to avoid sudden changes in longstanding distinctions made between men and women "based on biology."

However, they recommended that the sterilisation clause be subject to periodic review as public opinion changes, and called for greater social embrace of sexual and gender diversity:

> The two judges proposed regular reviews of the law and appropriate measures "from the viewpoint of respect for personality and individuality," according to Japanese media reports.[107]

Two of the justices added that the 2003 *Gender Treatment Act* as a whole should be subject to judicial review to determine whether or not it was constitutional, and that they suspected it will in fact prove unconstitutional under close reading.[108]

The latter case, which has yet to reach a verdict, is being brought by a trans man named Suzuki Gen, of Hamamatsu City in Shizuoka. He filed a petition for a change of legal gender without sterilisation to the Shizuoka Family Court in Summer 2020.[109] He cited the Tokyo

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[107] Yamaguchi, Mari. *Japan upholds sterilisation requirement for gender change*. The Associated Press, 25 January 2019. Accessible online at https://apnews.com/article/9ef16f52e9b94b9a838b17a63c6c1e8d. [Last accessed: 25/01/21, 16:28 GMT]

[108] For representative and contemporary Anglophone reporting on which from inside Japan, see James Griffiths and Yoko Wakatsuki's article *Trans People Must Still Be Sterilised Before Changing Gender in Japan After Top Court Upholds Ruling* (CNN, January 25 2001). Accessible online at: https://edition.cnn.com/2019/01/25/asia/japan-supreme-court-trans-intl/index.html. [Last accessed: 11/12/21 09:23 GMT].

An analysis of the ruling in question by Colin P.A. Jones can be accessed here: https://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2019/02/06/issues/supreme-court-hews-letter-law-gender-identity-laying-groundwork-future-challenges/#.XrmLRRMzaCU [Last accessed: 03/05/20, 15.12 JST].
It is hindered by the author's continual foregrounding of cisgender concerns; its reasoning would be stronger were it focussed on transgender people, who are the actually-existing target of this legislation. However, it is difficult to find English-language commentaries on this particular Supreme Court judgement, and I include it for background reading.

[109] Chunichi Shimbun staff writers. *Mr. Suzuki of Hamamatsu Prepares To File Petition to the Family Court for Changing Gender Without Surgery* [Shujutsu sezu ni seibetsu-henkō o Hamamatsu no Suzuki-san ga kasai mōshitate junbi]. The Chunichi Shimbun Online, December 31 2020. Accessible online at: https://www.chunichi.co.jp/article/178984?fbclid=IwAR3tbzkv6mWRkeIIl8nAU_yPhmLStmPN3gVbqCNlVTn0RCWO46s822mtQm4 [Last accessed: 12/01/21 17.33 GMT]

Olympics as his inspiration for bringing a case at that particular time, in that the Olympic Charter forbids discrimination against sexual and gender minorities; his opening argument was that Japan, as the host country, is (or should be) required to amend its laws in line with the Charter. The January 2021 *Chunichi Shinbun* report on his case did not explicitly outline his lawyer's planned arguments; as a link to the online edition was posted by my respondent Ikuko-san to her activism study group NijiMix's Facebook page, I tried to gauge whether or not my respondents back in Kansai had any insight as to Suzuki-san's legal strategy:[110]

LYMAN: I wonder what argument his lawyer is planning to use? All the recent petitions for a change of gender brought by people who haven't received surgery have ben rejected, right? The current law seems very rigid...

IKUKO: That's right. Since it's so very difficult, it would be great if this [case] becomes a breakthrough.

LYMAN: That kind of breakthrough would certainly be desirable!

[110] I have not been able to find any evidence to confirm whether this is actually the case, but it would be very interesting if Suzuki's lawyer tried the same legal route that Setsu Shigematsu (2012) describes *uman ribu* [women's liberation] activists as using for the legalisation of abortion in the late 1970s: i.e., an appeal to existing equality law which rested on proof that certain legal requirements (sterilisation, forced birth etc) represented a discriminatory burden on one demographic.

The simple double standard of the Japanese legal system has a negative effect on trans people's personal lives whichever decision they make. A trans person's transition will not be legally honoured unless they are sterilised, but even people who *are* sterilised do not necessarily have the right to be, or to stay, married; nor do they have any automatic right to many privileges and protections enjoyed by their cisgender counterparts. Despite the fact that sterilisation is pushed so demandingly, however, and despite the fact that it affects trans men more than trans women, it is the spectre of the 'fully intact' pre-or-non-operative trans women (figured in transphobic parlance as a sexually predatory man) occupying 'women's space' which becomes the scapegoat of transphobic discourse, and which is an increasingly aggressive trope pushed by transphobic activists. I turn now regretfully to analyse these specific manifestations of transphobia and anti-transgender discourses unfolding within the current Japanese discourse.

TERF Wars

> **Mako:** I can understand the attitude of lesbian feminists who want to exclude transsexuals. I want to exclude transsexuals, too.
> **Fushimi:** You, too, have a TS [transsexual] phobia!
> **Mako:** I don't know whether you can say it's a phobia. If I look at it from their point of view, I think that's what I'd feel.
> […]
> **Mako:** [W]ithin the lesbian movement and community I understand the lesbian separatist feeling that they will be with only lesbians, and lesbians born as women. You know genderisation starts from the moment of birth. So someone born and raised male still retains some maleness. I also have some remaining. Even though I wasn't raised hearing "Be masculine", through TV and comics I have a gender bias. If you go to school you're going to be educated as a boy, so matter how much I think I'm not a man, some of this rubbed off on me, so I understand the lesbians who won't accept a lesbian who used to be a man.
> **Fushimi:** But you want to be accepted.
> **Mako:** Yes. This is a painful area but, yes.
>
> Interview between gay activist Fushimi Noriaki and 'Mako', a trans woman; quoted in Summerhawk et al. (1998: 64)

Much though they would hate being included within the remit of trans theory, any overview of the evolution of Transgender Studies as a discipline must reckon with the body of work produced by second-wave feminist writers and gender theorists that is profoundly hostile to transgender people and identity. As Yamaguchi (2009) points out in her ethnography of right-wing and anti-feminist women's groups in Tokyo, the arc of women's gender-related activism does not always bend towards justice and must be taken seriously as an organising force in its own right rather than merely a reactionary backlash.

Within the Anglosphere, beginning with Greer (1970), Daly (1978), and Raymond (1979), and continuing through Jeffreys (2014), Shrier (2020), Stock (2021) etc. today, a continuum of what may be glossed as thought has emerged under the collective term 'Transgender Exclusionary Radical Feminism' (hereafter TERF). There are three key ideas common to this continuum:

I. Biology is destiny: the biological categories of 'male' and 'female' are fixed and essential. Transition from one to the other is impossible. There are certain qualities 'innate' to one or the other or the binary sexes; some trans-exclusionary writers add a spiritual dimension to their understanding of 'innate womanhood', where others favour a pseudo-biological or sociological bent, e.g., stating that men are more 'naturally' violent or that women are 'naturally' nurturing.
II. Socialisation is also destiny: the gendered socialisation of children from infancy onwards affects each gender so thoroughly that people who transition in adulthood cannot claim common gender-socialisation experience with their cisgender peers. Trans women were not 'socialised female' as children, and therefore they do not and cannot claim a 'shared girlhood' with cis women (although trans men *can*, even if against their will, since trans men in this paradigm are conceptualised as confused women rather than true men).[111]

[111] The 'Shared Girlhood Fallacy' has been critiqued along multiple axes not only by trans theorists but by writers on race, class, and dis/ability; the 'shared girlhood' envisioned by prominent TERF theorists is inevitably and exclusively white, middle-class, and able-bodied. See Erevelles and Nguyen (2016).

III. Violence is intrinsic to 'manhood' both biologically and through social construction. 'Womanhood' is to be understood as a site of oppression: women are oppressed on the basis of their biology and subject to violence from men. Trans women therefore commit symbolic violence against 'real women' by 'forcing themselves' into the safe space of an oppressed group, while trans men are victims who labour under the false consciousness of believing themselves to be male.

It is worth noting, however, that Jeffreys, Stock, and their fellow travellers still permit mastectomy survivors, hysterectomy etc. patients, amenorrheal people, infertile people, and childfree people to enter under the umbrella of 'real womanhood', provided that the natal vagina is present or even that it had been at one point.[112] Nor is the actual presence or absence of a certain physical characteristic sufficient make this line of reasoning cohere: a vagina 'makes one a woman', but even if a trans woman *has* a vagina, the historical existence of her penis renders her vagina insufficient. A womb is said to be crucial to womanhood, as are breasts, but someone who has had both a hysterectomy and a double mastectomy can still be counted a woman in good standing because of her historical possession of those organs. When truly frustrated, defenders of this bioessentialist view have a tendency to fall back on chromosomes as the last line of biological defence. However, sex karyotyping of newborns is rare, expensive, and carried out only when initial observation indicates significant variations. Few people know their own chromosomes. Even fewer are aware of other people's. One of the greatest problems present within this discursive vein is the volatility of the 'trans body' and the inaccuracies inherent to positing 'the trans body' as a bounded, predictable set (or indeed positing 'the cis body' analogously). It is almost impossible to define womanhood in terms that include every person assigned female at birth and exclude every person assigned male at birth.

The discourse in this latter category of 'embodiment' is focussed specifically on transgender people's biological bodies, with the attendant focus on what is (not) present within the body and how it is (not) changed. Trans physicality is figured either in terms

[112] Trans men who have undergone full phalloplasty are still counted by TERFs as 'women' for purposes of this argument. The current author has yet to hear a convincing argument for why cis men's phalloplasties after injury or illness count as 'real' penises, but trans men's constructed via the same procedures do not.

of excess – as having both breasts *and* a penis – or in terms of a mutilating amputation, as with Shrier's (2020) fear-mongering description of transition as 'irreversible damage'. Foremost amongst these anxieties is the process of genital reassignment surgery, and to be most specific, the form of GRS that involves the reconstruction of a natal penis into a vagina. Phalloplasties from the 'starting point' of a natal vagina are much under-studied and under-discussed, even within transgender communities, and a great deal of further demystification and work around the procedure remains to be done. These anxieties find expression in the vernacular discourse around GRS, specifically descriptions of the process as 'cutting off [your] dick', 'chopping [your] penis off', and other inaccurate reductions of the process down to a child's drawing of castration anxiety.

The emotion at the heart of anti-trans backlash, as with many other forms of bigotry, is fear. This fear, or perhaps more accurately this anxiety, is all-too-often manifested as fragility, as Potts (2016) explains in her definitional essay on the subject:

> Cis people exist in a social environment which validates their genders and reinforces a gender binary which corresponds to their lived experiences, giving them relative privilege to trans people. Cis people therefore have a low tolerance for that which challenges their gender identities and their conceptions of gender more broadly. Cis fragility (drawing on white fragility in critical race theory) is rooted in a desire to restore and reproduce cisnormativity. It is a combination of lack of stamina in interrogating their conceptualizations of gender, as well as a resistance to challenging those conceptions.
>
> Morgan Potts, *Cis Fragility* (2016)

The questions I now want to consider are: How is cis fragility expressed in specifically Japanese circumstances? What kind of phrasing, and what arguments, do Japanese transphobes employ? And what triggered a sudden outpouring of anti-transgender animus in Japan since 2018?

Towards a Recent History of Transphobia in Japan

There is a pre-existent tension between different demographics of feminist and non-feminist Japanese women; there is also a recent history (indeed, an ongoing present) of soi-disant 'feminist' collaboration with the Liberal Democratic Party and their fellow travellers in reactionary conservative movements, as detailed by Yamaguchi (2009), Shigematsu (2012), and Shimizu (2020) amongst others.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, if there was one discrete event that opened the floodgates of transphobia on the Japanese Internet, it would seem to have been this: Tokyo's Ochanomizu University, one of the oldest and most prestigious all-female colleges in Japan, announced in 2018 that they would start accepting transgender women and girls as students for all levels from undergraduate to research on the basis of their self-declared gender.

The backlash was immediate. I spoke to several people both at the time of Ochanomizu's announcement and at least eighteen months later, after trans students accepted under the new rules had already completed their first academic year. My interlocutors included Hotaru and their partner; Hibino Makoto, the director of the Kansai Queer Film Festival; Kanno Yuka, my supervisor at Dōshisha; Shimizu Akiko, a researcher in gender, sexuality, and feminism at Tokyo's International Christian University; and Vienna, a trans woman who was herself an international research student at Ochanomizu at the time. All expressed shock and unease both at the quantity and the speed of this newly-manifested hate discourse. Although there was increasing scholarly attention being paid to the problem by the time I left the field, cf. Shimizu Akiko's panel paper at the 2019 Ochanomizu Trans Studies Conference, nobody was repeating verbatim what form this hate speech took. For the purposes of this chapter, I sought it out firsthand on the Internet using a combination of English-and-Japanese-language search terms such as 'Transphobia in Japan', 'トランス女子は女子です' [trans women are women], and 'トランスジェンダー差別' [anti-transgender discrimination]. The hits soon piled up. A particularly alarming article on the English edition of the Mainichi Shinbun entitled *Misinformation on Transgender Women Spreads in Japan, Even At LDP Study Session*

caught my eye.[113] Although long, I believe that it is worth close reading, as it both summarises the main talking points as currently deployed by Japanese transphobes and indicates the level of audience this hate speech now enjoys.

> A study session under the theme "LBGT out of control" was held in Tokyo's Nagatacho district at noon on March 26 by a ruling Liberal Democratic Party parliamentary group promoting female lawmakers' empowerment. The group is co-headed by former Defense Minister Tomomi Inada.
>
> Diet members, local assembly members and other participants were apparently seen nodding while listening to a lecture that portrayed transgender women as a threat to cisgender women (those registered as female at birth and identifying as women). The lecture was given by Koji Shigeuchi, adviser to the LDP's committee to study sexual orientation and gender identity. [...] Shigeuchi, who is male, apparently said if the LDP's bill does not pass, "I could say that I'm a woman from today and be able to enter women's bathhouses." His explanation seemed to suggest that men could participate in sports as women and enter women's bathhouses simply by saying they were women. His theory was that this kind of environment "is dangerous for women," and that trans women pose a threat to cis women and their empowerment, according to participants. [...] Shigeuchi is the representative director of the Association for the Promotion of LGBT Understanding. The general incorporated association's website describes him as having been active in advising the government to gain further understanding of LGBT issues. In 2016, he received the Japan Pride Award from Fruits in Suits Japan, another LGBT-related general incorporated association, along with Inada.

One notable difficulty in analysing reports such as this one is finding sources for the kind of rhetoric Shigeuchi is peddling here. Where is this discourse coming from? The standard

[113] Fujisawa Miyuki. *Misinformation on Transgender Women Spreads in Japan, Even At LDP Study Session.* The Mainichi Shimbun Online, May 20 2021. Accessible online at: https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20210519/p2a/00m/0na/025000c [Last accessed: 11/12/21, 09:27 GMT]

explanation I heard from my respondents as to the entry-point of transphobic feminist discourses in Japan was 'trans-exclusionary feminist theory translation accounts on Twitter'; we may reasonably guess that Shigeuchi is not following feminist translation microblogs on Twitter as his primary source for trans hatred, so we must ask ourselves where he may be parroting it from. Yamaguchi (2009), Hori (2019), and Shimizu (2020) offer one likely avenue through their work on international cooperation between Japanese reactionary conservative movements and their fellow travellers in America, especially groups like Focus on the Family International and the Family Research Council.[114] Shimizu in particular identifies a willingness on the part of some minority groups (in her case, 'mainstream' cisgender feminists, mostly heterosexual) to ally with conservatives in order to gain what they see as strategic advantage over other minority groups they perceive as a threat to the limited privilege they can possess.

> Regarding the view that trans women pose a threat to women-only spaces, Yuriko Iino, a project research associate on the study of feminism at the University of Tokyo, says posts that exclude or attack trans women began to stand out online in Japan around July 2018, when Ochanomizu University -- a women's university -- announced it would accept transgender women as students.
>
> Similar movements occurred in the U.K. after a bill to allow people to legally change their gender status by self-declaration was proposed in 2018. Some opponents of the bill deliberately spread misinformation, saying, "men can enter women's bathrooms if they say they are women," to evoke anxiety and make the existence of trans women seem dangerous.

Here the article makes explicit the international inspiration for at least some transphobic talking points now cropping up in Japan. While the proposed bill in the UK has been rejected as of current writing, it is interesting to me that bad-faith misinformation about its putative consequences has so captured the imaginations of transphobes worldwide,

[114] Long-identified as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. See: https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/family-research-council (Last accessed: 24/06/21, 15:12 GMT)

while the conditions of actually-existing self ID laws in e.g. Malta and Ireland are so carefully ignored.

> Tateishi commented, "When it comes to facilities where all users have to get undressed, it can be considered a reasonable decision to treat people differently depending on whether they've had surgery or have physical gender differences." In other words, if it's a place where other people can see their genitals, facilities can restrict a transgender person's use depending on the situation.
>
> Some say that there will be an increase in the number of male sex offenders posing as trans women, but the lawyer clearly stated that stereotyping transgender people as potential criminals "is prejudice and discrimination." Even if a man who is arrested for a sex crime lies that he "is a transgender woman," the nature of the crime does not change, and he cannot use that as an excuse.
>
> Tateishi pointed out, "Whether a person is transgender or not can be determined swiftly by examining the presence or absence of gender changes, whether the person has a history of hormone therapy and other information. Even in a case where a man pretends to be a woman and breaks into a facility, it should be discussed separately from transgender issues."

Even cisgender people who are nominally on the side of allying with trans people too often assume that all trans people have, want, or can swiftly and easily obtain both surgery and hormone therapy, and that there are visible signs and wonders on the body to differentiate trans people from our cis counterparts. That the spectre of 'men invading female spaces' has even entered Japanese discourse as a reasonable fear to consider is a worrying development. There is, however, concerted pushback from other representatives of the legal profession on this theme: Nakaoka Shun, herself a trans woman and a lawyer with a firm in Osaka that specialises in domestic abuse, women's rights, and LGBTQ-related cases, wrote an editorial calling for a decrease in hysteria around the discussion of trans women in public life.[115] She makes the critical

[115] Nakaoka Shun. *Thinking About the 'TERF' Controversy From the Field of Legal Practice* [Hōritsu jitsumu no genba kara 'TERF' ronsō o kangaeru]. Blog post written for the Women's Action Network, August 27 2020. Accessible online at: https://wan.or.jp/article/show/9099 [Last accessed: 11/12/21 09:30 GMT].

point that pre and non-operative trans people are excruciatingly aware of our physical configurations and, far from wishing to expose ourselves aggressively in gendered space, uniformly *avoid* circumstances in which our naked bodies might be open to scrutiny. This experience is all too familiar to trans people as a demographic. Trans people's fear of being outed, challenged, or clocked in public space is exactly what *prevents* us from casually using gendered spaces like single-sex toilets or single-sex onsen facilities, often to the point of dysuria and an increased risk of UTIs. These appeals to reality have found as little purchase in Japanese discussions (Nakaoka's editorial was the first example I found of someone saying this in print) as they have in their Anglophone counterparts, for much the same reason: namely, that transphobia and its purveyors are not interested in facts.

From the august pages of the Mainichi Shinbun to the rather more freewheeling world of social media, I steeled myself and spent several autoethnographically-unpleasant hours sifting through Twitter hashtags and blog posts that purport to be from individual women in Japan, although my respondents with whom I discussed this phenomenon back in Kyoto suggested that many of these accounts may be run by one or two individuals in order to artificially inflate their own reach. I selected one trans-related Japanese hashtag, #私はトランス差別に反対するフェミニストです [I am a feminist who opposes transphobia], and scrolled through approximately a hundred tweets that contain the tag in question.

The following post on a popular microblogging site (linked from the writer's Twitter account) is representative of what is passed off as thought in transphobic Japanese-language circles online:

> このnoteは、「性別の自己決定権とその尊重」を掲げる「トランスジェンダリズム」という思想に対する私個人の疑問や感想を少しずつ言語化することを目的として、2020年9月より開始しました。

私はフェミニストを自認していません。フェミニズムの知識も乏しい一般女性の視点でこの問題を考え、疑問に思うことに対しては「おかしいものはおかしい」と言っていきたいと思います。

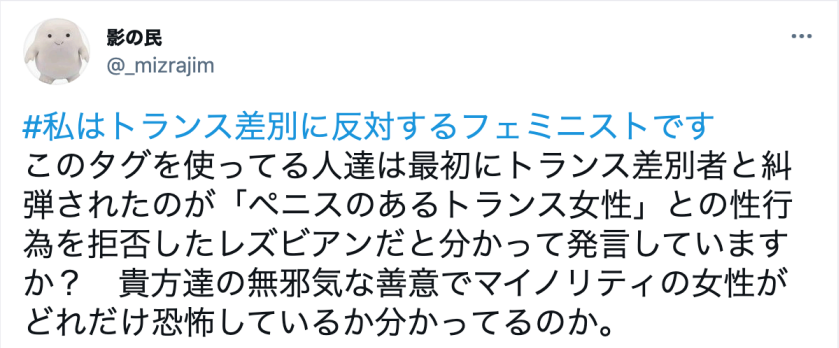
多くの女性たちに、トランスジェンダリズムが女性に与える影響を「自分の問題」として考えてほしいと思っています。

I started this note in September of 2020 with the aim of gradually verbalising my own personal doubts and impressions of the idea of 'transgenderism', which advocates for 'the right to gender self-determination and respect for that right'.

I do not identify myself as a feminist. I want to come at this from the angle of being a normal woman who has little knowledge of feminism, and I reserve the right to say that 'what's weird is weird' to people who people who might have doubts about that.

I want lots of women to consider the impact that transgenderism has on women as being a problem that directly concerns them.[116]

Various Tweets espoused this same idea of trans women's existence as a danger from which fragile, delicate cis women must be protected:

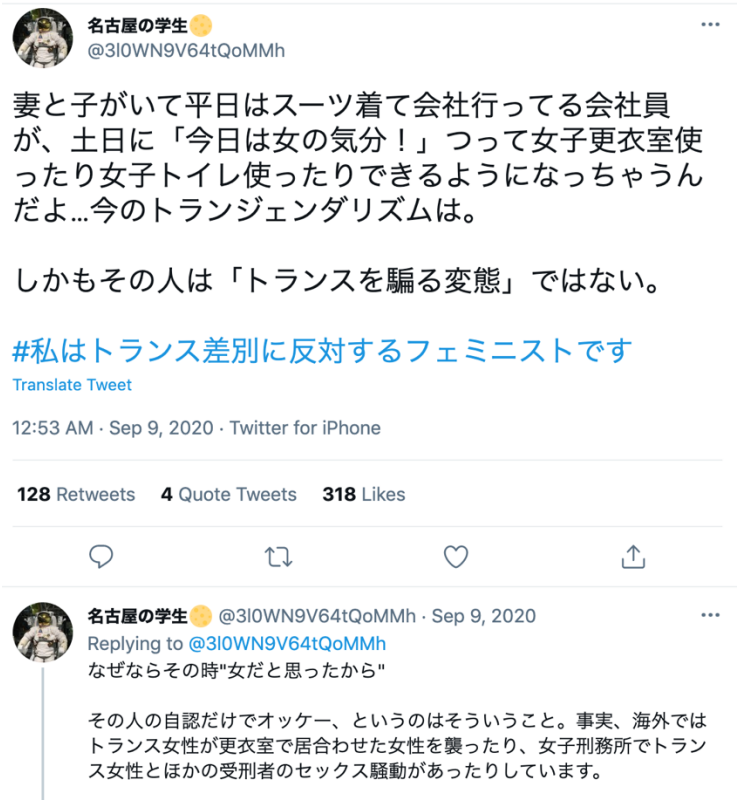


@ShadowPeople: #IAmAFeministWhoOpposesTransphobia

[116] Blog post accessible online at: https://note.com/motop_karimen. [Last accessed: 11/12/21, 09:33 GMT]. A more literal translation of that last sentence, 'I want lots of women to think of the impact that transgenderism has on women as being their own problem', is ironically closer to the truth - cisgender women's transphobia *is* their own problem, one that they need to work through on their own without harassing trans people about it.

> Do the people using this hashtag know that the first person to be accused of discriminating against trans people was a lesbian who refused to have sex with a trans woman with a penis? Do you know how frightening your 'innocent good intentions' are for [sexual] minority women?

Although most of the tweets that used this hashtag were trans-positive, the phenomenon of transphobes appropriating pro-trans hashtags to spread bile was evident. There was liberal use of loanwords like 'TRA'[117] borrowed from English, as well as Tweets linking trans women with sexual predators. What is immediately arresting about trans discourses on Japanese Twitter, both positive and negative, is the amount of their overlap with international trans-related hashtags like#IStandWithJKRowling and #IStandWithKeiraBell (which indicate the user's support of both women's transphobia), alongside pro-trans videos like Natalie 'Contrapoints' Wynn's video essay *Gender Critical* with Japanese subtitles.



@NagoyaStudent: "So we're getting to the point where a salaryman with a wife and kids can wear a suit to the office all week,

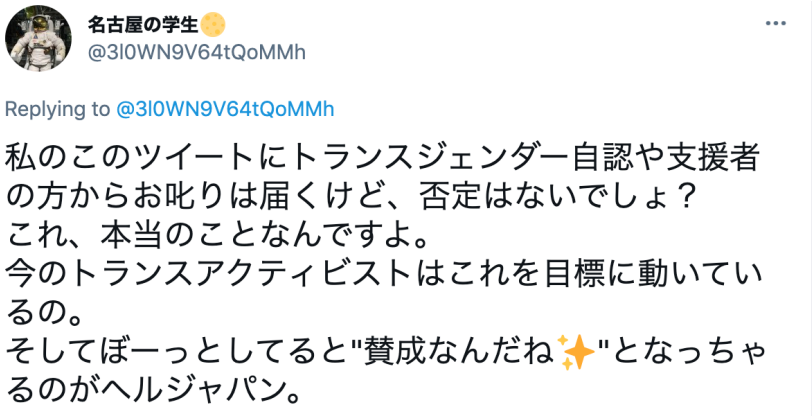
[117] 'Trans Rights Activist', used as a dehumanising noun to refer to any trans person.

but on Sunday they get to say "today I feel like a woman!" and use women's changing rooms and girls' toilets just like that... This is what modern transgenderism is.

Furthermore, these people aren't "perverts taking advantage of 'real' trans people".

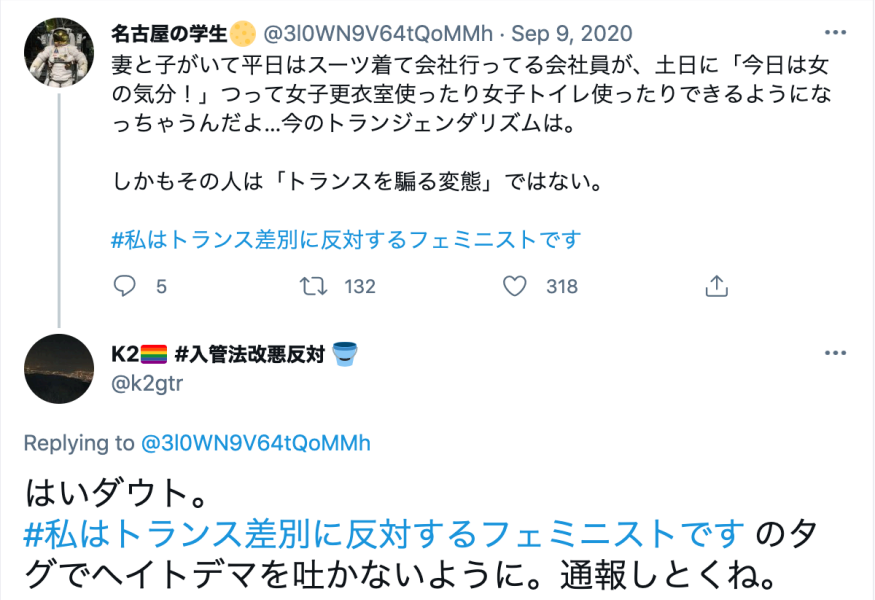
Their excuse would be "At the time, I thought I was a woman."

That's what these people mean by 'being OK with gender self-ID'. The truth is that trans women overseas attack real women in female changing rooms, and there are sexual disturbances between trans women and other inmates in women's prisons.



@NagoyaStudent: I get scolded by trans people in favour of self-ID and their supporters because of this tweet, but they don't deny it, do they?

It's because this happens to be the truth, you know.
Today's trans activists are working towards this goal.
Hell Japan is turning into a place where if you don't speak out [against self-ID], people will assume that you consent.



> **@NagoyaStudent:** "So we're getting to the point where a salaryman with a wife and kids can wear a suit to the office all week, but on Sunday they get to say "today I feel like a woman!" and use women's changing rooms and girls' toilets just like that... This is what modern transgenderism is.
>
> Furthermore, these people aren't "perverts taking advantage of 'real' trans people".
>
> **@k2gr #OpposeMigrationLawDeterioration:** "Yeah, I doubt it. Don't you dare use the #IAmAFeministWhoOpposesTransphobia hashtag to vomit out hate. I'm going to report you." [118]

The most striking aspect of these Japanophone soundbites in favour of trans exclusion is their lack of original thought. By that I do not only mean that they are banal (which they are), or that they are not based in anything approaching facts (which they are not), nor even that their main appeals are emotive and scaremongering rather than intellectually novel. What I mean is that these Tweets, Notes, microblogs, and other expressions of online transphobia are 1:1 exact translations of the same tired talking points peddled by English-speaking transphobes ever since Mary Daly's work was considered relevant.

[118] The 'deterioration' of legislation around immigration and refugees referenced in this hashtag refers to proposed harshening of Japan's already-draconian treatment of resident non-citizens. It is not a nationalist slogan; quite the opposite.

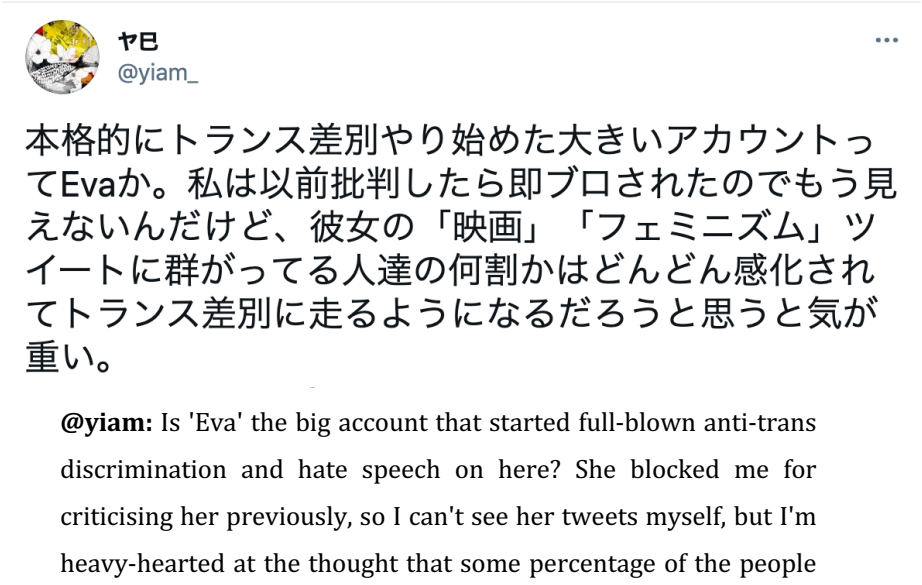
Trans women are violent; trans women are sexual predators; trans women pretend to change their genders on a whim in order to access vulnerable cisgender women; transness is a threat to all 'real women' everywhere. The mindless copying and mouthing of pre-packaged transphobia from the Anglophone world would be more dispiriting only if its tedium did not outweigh the distress it attempts to inflict.[119] As we might expect, the *only* trans people mentioned in these discussions are trans women. One glaring omission I noticed while scrolling was that there was no sign at all of the Anglophone TERF rhetoric about trans men as 'confused girls' or 'lost lesbians' translated into Japanese: trans men are not infantilised in the transphobic Japanese imaginary, it seems, but are simply non-existent. Even the noxious #IStandWithKeiraBell hashtag does not indicate deeper discussions or independent thought on transmasculinity and detrans women in Japanese transphobia, representing instead another convenient mode of attack on transgender women.

The only aspect of Japanese-language TERF discourses that might be considered somewhat derived from the culture, rather than merely copy-pasted from the Anglophone original, is the phenomenon of feeling a simultaneous lack of care *from* others and an overburden of expected care *for* others on the part of Japanese women. Several trans-hostile Tweets I saw were addressed to an imagined audience of trans women, although referring to them as men, and took the form of scolding along the lines of 'You [men] can't expect us to take care of your feelings [anymore]; we women are exhausted'. Another manifestation of cis women's anti-trans animus that may come from a Japanese-specific cultural frustration takes the form of a backlash to drag queens and transfeminine entertainers like the makeup artist IKKO. A relatively popular vector for gender-based comedy in Japan involves cis female participants being 'schooled' by drag queens in all the ways they are performing femininity incorrectly. The drag queens or transfeminine entertainers claim they speak from authoritative experience in having lived both sides of gender. IKKO's makeup manual, for example, is titled *Rules for Women: How Women Can Polish Their Hearts To Attract Good Luck* [Onna no hōsoku: kōun o hikiyoseru kokoro to onna no migakikata]; this form of misogynistic criticism in the guise of humour is, in all fairness, objectively obnoxious.

[119] As a friend of the current author once meditatively remarked: "I should improve the quality of my opponents."

A sense of frustration with gendered expectations of emotional labour is not itself indigenous to Japan: emotional caretaking is the common demand made on every non-straight-male person under patriarchy worldwide.[120] However, I suggest that Anglophone TERFs are more likely to play on their own *victimhood* ('women have been oppressed by men and you won't let us alone even in our own spaces') while Japanophone TERFs play on their own *martyrdom* ('we refuse to be 'good wives and wise mothers' [ryōsai kenbō] and look after men's feelings anymore').

This is not to say that pro-trans feminists are not fighting the good fight on the Japanese Twittersphere. The *Trans-Inclusive Feminism*[121] blog keeps an ever-expanding collation of articles on transphobia, trans-antagonistic feminism, and trans-inclusive feminism from both Anglophone and Japanophone sources, with significant contributions from feminists working within Japanese academia e.g., Hori Akiko (2019) and Shimizu Akiko (2021). Several prominent Japanese feminists on Twitter, including Ishikawa Sachiko, express continual support for trans people. The number of pro-trans and trans-inclusive Tweets I found under the hashtags that I searched far outnumbered the anti-trans hate speech, including Tweets that warned about known TERFs in the community:



@yiam: Is 'Eva' the big account that started full-blown anti-trans discrimination and hate speech on here? She blocked me for criticising her previously, so I can't see her tweets myself, but I'm heavy-hearted at the thought that some percentage of the people

[120] cf. Hothschild (1979)
[121] Online resource available at: https://transinclusivefeminism.wordpress.com/ [Last accessed: 11/12/21, 09:35 GMT]

> who flock to her for her 'movies' and her 'feminism' will be quickly radicalised and run headlong into transphobia.

Even though the current backlash by now has found an unfortunate foothold in Japanese-language Twitter, the country's feminist movement is not willing to cede ground without a fight.

NijiMix and grassroots queer activism in Kansai

I move now back out of Twitter's anonymous free-for-all, into ethnographic study of the grassroots activism and consciousness-raising in which my respondents engage within their communities. Of my main field communities within Kyoto and Osaka, the Queer Students' Circle would seem at first glance to be the more politically-active of the two. They run the Kansai Queer Film Festival; they are, as a group, involved in intersectional activism with zainichi Korean groups, disability advocates, and feminist collectives; their stated *taihen x hentai* values are more confrontational than Shinzen no Kai's somewhat more middlebrow culture. However, I had in practice more exposure to the activism undertaken by my respondents from Shinzen no Kai. One reason for this is that I simply spent more time in and around Shinzen no Kai and its affiliates; they were my primary field site and they were the respondents I got to know best. Another reason, however, is that I found it very difficult to break into the Queer Students' Circle. My Japanese comprehension was passable by the time that I first attempted to make inroads to the group, e.g., by offering my services as a volunteer for the 2019 Queer Film Festival, but I was rebuffed by the director, who functions as the gatekeeper for participation in that broader community. I therefore concentrated my efforts on the community with whom I already had a friendly rapport; the history of radical trans politics in Kyoto remains crying out to be written in future.

Amongst my Shinzen no Kai respondents, Ikuko-san, Momoko-san, and Chiaki-san all do public education and outreach on LGBTQ subjects in the Kyoto and Osaka areas. They give workshops at middle and high schools; talk to government and municipal staff at e.g. Kyoto City Hall or ward offices across the greater Osaka metropolitan area; hold sessions with specialist pre-medical schools in Osaka on informed care of transgender patients;

pass out flyers and informational leaflets to commuters outside major train stations; and receive invitations from the Takarazuka City Board of Education to do elementary school assemblies on LGBTQ awareness and anti-bullying initiatives, amongst other activities. The degree to which these educational efforts have been welcomed or sought-out by various institutions has increased rapidly even over the course of my fieldwork. I was told that one respondent's offers to hold such a workshop at Kyoto City Hall were rebuffed in 2018, but the climate had shifted by the time I left Japan in August 2020, such that governmental offices in Osaka were being officially graded on their LGBTQ-friendly credentials.

One of the newest activist organisations, and my very last site for participant observation, is NijiMix, an LGBTQ activism and study group based in Osaka. It is the brainchild of my respondent Ikuko, who founded the group in April 2020. She had invited me to participate in December 2019, when she first announced that she would be founding the group; at the time, I planned to be back in England after a last three-month trip to Japan (January-March 2020) in order to tie up any loose ends from fieldwork and conduct any last interviews I could arrange, but the outbreak of the novel coronavirus extended my stay in-country until September that year. NijiMix wears many hats as an organisation. Its primary function is as an educational study group geared towards LGBTQ activism, with a particular emphasis on sharing trials, triumphs, and tactics from people with longer experience in the field. We could say that NijiMix is the activist wing of Shinzen no Kai: it was founded by a Shinzen no Kai member and the founder/director of Shinzen no Kai is himself on the organisational board of NijiMix. While NijiMix is more overtly 'political' and Shinzen no Kai is predominantly social, there is also a community aspect to the former, as summarised by Ikuko-san on the splash page of the organisation's website:

> NijiMix は、LGBTQ+の人々や、その理解者のみなさんが定期的に集うことで、互いにつながりを作ることのできる居場所を提供することを大きな目標としたコミュニティです。
>
> その場で、互いに自らの思いを共有し、また、これから生きていくお手本となるような人と知り合えることで、自身の生き方に自信を持っていただければと思い、設立しました。

> みんなの居場所（勉強会、交流会）は、どなたでも、参加いただけます。
>
> NijiMix is a community established with the big goal of providing a safe, welcoming space where LGBTQ+ people and allies can get together on a regular basis and form connections with each other.
>
> We set it up as a space for people to share their thoughts with each other; to meet [LGBTQ] role models for their lives going forward; and to gain confidence in living their own way.
>
> **Everyone is welcome to participate in this welcoming space (study group, community group, etc).**

The word I have translated here as 'welcoming space' is once again *ibasho*. It carries here both its connotations: that of a place where one can be seen and accepted for the whole person that they are, including their queerness, disability, trans identity etc, and also somewhere that emotional care is available, including advice and sympathy.

I was only able to attend two NijiMix meetings - the inaugural and the following one - as they were held over Zoom during the period of the Emergency Declaration in April 2020; meetings afterwards were held in-person in Osaka, but I was unable to travel from Kyoto to attend, as inter-prefectural travel was strongly dissuaded. I have however been able to keep up with news from the organisation via their lively Facebook and LINE groups, which share articles about LGBTQ rights, protests, court cases, human-interest stories, and coverage of the group itself from local newspapers; post write-ups of group actions such as public outreach and social events; and provides space for people to ask questions and learn more about queer issues under the hashtag #こんな事が知りたいわからない [I Don't Know But I Want To Know].

The format of each meeting is as follows: Ikuko-san welcomes the participants and gives a brief introduction to the meeting's featured guest speaker; the participants introduce themselves; and the featured guest speaker gives a talk lasting approximately forty-five minutes to one hour. The second hour is dedicated to a Q&A and small-group discussion of interesting points raised by the guest speaker. NijiMix's inaugural guest speaker was Eitaro, the founder and director of Shinzen no Kai, who spoke about his last 15 years of

gay activism and his experience of registering with his partner under Osaka's recently-introduced domestic partnership system. The second speaker in the following meeting was Inoue Hitomi, a well-known lesbian activist with Marriage For All Japan, who has also registered in a civil partnership in Osaka and who participated in a group wedding in 2014 as performance protest.

In the breakout rooms of the inaugural Zoom meeting, the participants discussed our various motivations for joining. Most but not all of the attendees came from Kansai's LGBTQ communities. Some, like Eitaro and Momoko, had been activists for over a decade. Some were friends of Ikuko, both LGBTQ and allies, who had come out to support the launch of her new group; she is active in a community-based lifelong learning group in Osaka which frequently discusses parenthood, modern gender roles, and social diversity, and although it is not an LGBTQ-specific organisation, there seemed to be a respectable amount of overlap between the two associations' aims and values. One or two of the attendees were not LGBTQ but worked in social care, education, hospital patient liaison services, and other roles where some degree of familiarity with LGBTQ cultures was essential. There was also a broad spectrum of familiarity with the legal and political side of queer rights, both domestic and international: some Japanese attendees, especially people who had come out recently or who did not have any hands-on experience of activism were unfamiliar with the last decade of LGBTQ rights progress in Japan, for example. As I was the only foreigner and the only British person present, several people wanted to know about the current state of equal marriage laws and anti-discrimination protections in the UK, which I did my best to explain. There was an evident interest in activism and practical engagement with queer liberation: at least thirty people were in attendance each time for the two Zoom meetings I attended, which may sound small but is a decent size gathering when one takes into account both the size of the LGBTQ community overall and the further subgroup of people within the community who wish to be involved in activist organising.

While my participant observation opportunities at NijiMix were curtailed by the pandemic, their activities have increased in both frequency and visibility since last year. They have set up a table with educational material at Osaka's Umeda Station and flyered

commuters and pedestrians; registered as a formal NGO; and recently enjoyed an All Bodies Welcome trip to a local onsen, which was covered by local newspapers.

Photograph taken by one of the NijiMix organisers on their recent onsen trip, Autumn 2021. Shared with their kind permission.

Anthropologists always leave the field with something unfinished and multiple loose threads not quite tied off, but it was especially difficult for me to leave just as something so new and so significant was beginning amongst my respondents; I hope to return to Osaka in the years ahead in order to continue chronicling this new chapter in Kansai's queer history.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

> And yet, the dilemma for the national government is that they cannot appear as inconsiderate to LGBTQ+ rights, especially in the face of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Under such circumstances, if the government can demonstrate, to the international community, that

> it is making efforts to protect and promote LGBTQ+ rights and diversity, without actually making any effective legal or systematic changes that may offend the conservative constituency, that would be ideal.
>
> Shimizu (2020)

Despite the upswell of interest in, and attention to, LGBTQ rights in Japan over the last fifteen years or so, the road to tangible progress is still rocky. Part of the difficulty of changing marriage laws, for example, rests in revising the postwar constitution and its definition of marriage; part of the difficulty in changing gender laws, similarly, is that legal personhood depends on the koseki. Any attempt to revise or change the koseki system would be a fundamental upheaval of the post-WWII Constitution. Part of the difficulty in improving the legal condition for people in Japan is that it is something of a hydra: there are multiple moving parts - civil marriage, family law, eugenics laws, inheritance law - which combine and overlap to block progress for trans people; the *Gender Treatment Act* is not the one discrete target on which activists can focus their sights. The anonymous trans woman in Kyoto was not allowed to change the gender on her koseki without divorcing her wife because same-sex marriage is illegal in Japan: here we see the links between gender identity and presumed heterosexuality made explicit in law. To be a real woman - to be a *marriageable* woman - in Japan is to be heterosexual, through legal force if necessary. A woman cannot assert her identity as wife and/or mother without reserving those identities exclusively for participation by men. Usui was not allowed to change his documents without sterilisation due to a combination of eugenics and moral panic. There is no one rule that applies to all of the court cases regarding trans identity that have made national or regional news in Japan over the last five years. What they indicate taken together is a Gordian knot of assumptions about gender, sexuality and physiological sex.

Contrary to the stereotype of the Japanese populace as generally 'apolitical', and to the image of trans people as isolated individuals, the trans community and their allies in Kansai are engaged in a constant movement towards improved public awareness and legal rights. It is certainly not the case that the trans community in Japan is unengaged in activism or uninterested in gaining ground within the limited rights framework available to them, but rather that the odds stacked against legal progress are so high that the

struggle remains functionally invisible. One anecdote from my time in Kyoto in particular summarises the problem with brutal succinctness. Towards the end of my fieldwork, I was conducting a semi-structured interview with a locally well-known trans activist and educator. At the end of our hour of discussion, I asked him to describe his greatest challenge and his greatest success as an activist. He sighed deeply and told me "Well...the truth is that I've been doing this for a decade and I can't name a single success. We haven't been able to claim a victory at all."

Yet there are encouraging signs. The fact that the protest rally outside the Liberal Democratic Party headquarters garnered so much attention in the national press, including such high-profile news outlets as the Huffington Post Japan, the Mainichi Shinbun, and Kyodo News, and the fact that so many people signed the petition demanding an apology and retraction of the remarks, is significant: public opinion is against open homo/transphobia and the mainstream media coverage of LGBTQ issues is in the main respectful. Even the bill's champions within the LDP are visibly dissenting from their colleagues, not to mention members of very conservative parties like New Komeito. However, the increasing linkage of trans women with criminality at the political level is unnerving, especially the speed and aggression with which this kind of transphobic, and specifically transmisogynistic, discourse has made its way to official briefings since July 2018. Koike Yuriko, the Mayor of Tokyo, has finally bent to pressure and agreed that Tokyo will institute a citywide domestic partnership registration system: Setagaya and Shibuya Wards have have had such systems since 2015, but the extension of registration to the whole Greater Tokyo Metropolitan Area will have a significant symbolic effect.

Though political reactionaries have never had a problem with alliance-building across borders (Yamaguchi 2009; Shimizu 2020), LGBTQ movements in Japan have a complex relationship both with international solidarity and with domestic intra-community issues. The presumed lack of common cause between transgender people and their cigender LGB+ counterparts was a particularly sore point: the transphobic 'LGBTQ consultant' Shigeuchi's identity as a cisgender gay man so aggressively opposed to trans women corroborates a statement made by my respondent Momoko during our semi-structured interview: namely, that transgender issues and LGB issues are completely separate for

her, and that (in her experience) cisgender people are either disinterested or actively hostile to trans people. She expressed frustration that there are many more generically 'LGBT' groups than there are groups for transgender people specifically, though the latter have unique needs, experiences, and fears that non-trans support and community groups are not equipped to deal with appropriately.

Even when there is interest on the part of activists inside Japan, outside the country, or both, attempts to create connections of international solidarity do not always see much success. It can be hard to say whether the much-vaunted language barrier or a preference for focussing on domestic affairs is at the heart of this disjunction, although it could of course be both; Hanako told me during our semi-structured interview that various American LGBTQ organisations had reached out to her in the past via email to ask for information on their Japanese counterparts, but she had had to explain to them that the Japanese organisations had basically no English speakers or English-language materials available:

> えっと去年かな、アメリカの、そのLGBTのサポート団体からEメールが来まして、どうもデータベースを作ってるみたいで、その中でこう確認で、問い合わせ先のEメールアドレス、電話番号とかが間違いないかというようなメールがきて、それで私はOKだと。No problem, but Japanese only と英語で返事をしました（笑）一応ね、その回答はしてます。私がスタッフやって一年……二年ほどの間でもその問い合わせが一件は来ました。あとはもうジャパニーズオンリーです（笑）調べてる人がアメリカにいるっていうのは確かです。私も十年前にトランスする時に、アメリカのトランスジェンダーの団体にもちょっとメールを出したことはあります。興味があったんです。

> Last year [2018], I got an email from an LGBT support group in America. They were trying to make some kind of database and they asked me to confirm some details; they asked me to confirm that the contact details [of the Association of LGBT Family and Friends], like the e-mail address and the telephone number, were correct. My information was OK. But I replied to them in English to say *No*

> *problem, but Japanese only* (laughs) That was more or less my response. I was a volunteer staff member for one...nearly two years, but even in that short time, there was at least one other case like this. After that, it was all 'Japanese-only'. (laughs) The person looking it up was definitely in America. I also tried sending an email to an American transgender association, ten years ago, when I was transitioning. I was interested in their work.

For the Queer Students' Circle, a more conscious centring of domestic Japanese LGBTQ concerns grew out of a political commitment to Japanophone bodies of work and opposition to Anglophone linguistic imperialism. However, as discussed in Chapter 5, the desire for internationalism and the international makeup of the community, including foreign research students at KyoDai; nisei and sansei Japanese-Americans who were native English speakers; and non-Japanese permanent residents in Kyoto, did not always sit easily alongside the group's stated dedication to the production of uniquely Japanese discourses. This is not to say that there is no interest in, nor increasing awareness of, Japanese trans people's plight outside of the country. The BBC's Japanese service produced a short video on trans people's struggle for legal recognition,[122] while the the High Court's ruling in the Usui case was reported on in English by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, CNN, NBC, the Associated Press, France 24, the Economist, and Pink News, amongst others. International attention can bring pressure to bear on the Japanese government in ways that domestic attention is not always able to achieve.

The most important point in my assessment is that the sclerotic nature of Japanese politics is out of step with the actual social progress happening at the grassroots level. The educators I knew in Kyoto and Osaka are receiving regular proactive invitations from schools from primary to tertiary level. LGBTQ-related education at elementary and middle schools itself is receiving scholarly attention, as are the experiences of the families of transgender children. The fact that both Shinzen no Kai and NijiMix count mothers of transgender kids, LGBTQ allies, and care professionals - a middle-school librarian looking for LGBTQ book recommendations; a hospital pastoral care team member; a family

[122] *Trans in Japan: Sterilisation and legal gender recognition* (dir. Sybilla Patrizia). BBC News, 8 April 2021. Available online at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-asia-56670164 [Last accessed: 12/12/21, 13:50 GMT].

therapist - amongst their members is also encouraging. While every ethnographic dissertation is by its nature a snapshot of a particular time in the community it describes, this chapter is especially so, I feel: despite the disappointment of the proposed LGBTQ anti-discrimination bill, the Suzuki and McCready-Morita cases are advancing through the courts, and NijiMix has already completed an energetic first year. Whatever happens next, the first generation of post-legalisation Japanese trans activism is only getting started.

CONCLUSION

I begin this conclusion with a summary of the current state of Trans Japan and its greatest points of tension and dissent. I discuss my respondents' own stated desires for change and their perceptions of how things will or might change in the future, looking ahead more or less in line with the GID Gakkai's 2019 conference theme, *The Next Step in the Next Decade.* I also take this opportunity to review some issues I was unable to fully investigate during my time in Kyoto, their relevance to my work, and the potential for post-doctoral research on these topics. I end this dissertation by summarising five key points and findings from my fieldwork.

The most important point for any analysis of the relationship between trans people's real lives and the requirements for legal transition in Japan is that the current transition law, 2008's revised *Act on Special Treatment Regarding Gender for Persons Diagnosed With Gender Identity Disorder*, is not fit for purpose. My respondents were unanimous on this point. The law's unfitness was also acknowledged as such by the High Court justices' opinions that its legality would not hold up under a judicial review (Yamaguchi, 2019). The *Act* was passed as a compromise to begin with; as acknowledged by Kamikawa and Torai; elements of it were deeply unpopular amongst the trans community even at the time. In 2003 simply having a legal route, any legal route to recognition of one's true gender was a momentous achievement. Nor, as discussed previously, has it always been bad to all of my respondents, as we can see from the testimonials of Hanako, Ikuko, and Momoko. However, we are now twenty years on from the first gender reassignment surgeries performed in Japan: the limitations of the rights framework for trans citizens are becoming ever more glaring. A trans person is free to change their legal name and gender, but only if they align themselves permanently and exclusively with one of two approved genders; only after coerced surgery, after sterilisation, after renouncing the right to parenthood if the petitioner does not already have children. Trans people have no housing protection, no employment protection, and *at best* conditional access to marriage and inheritance rights. It is not therefore surprising that the majority of trans and genderqueer people in Japan are not visible in the official records. My respondents all agreed that the law as it stands now is strict and inhumane. They all agreed that it would be neceessary for the law to change in the future: there was a general consensus

that surgical and sterilisation requirements should be removed, with a few people expressing a desire for non-binary options to be available, e.g. on passports or family registries. However, none of them believed that change would come quickly or easily, or indeed within any timeframe shorter than a decade from now.

What is interesting is that we appear to be in a second wave of trans-related activism in Japan, this time on a wider scale. If the first version of the *Gender Treatment Act* was advocated for, and indeed curated by a relatively small circle of trans people in Tokyo, the trans-related legal cases being brought to court and hitting the mainstream media now are more dispersed across the country. Grassroots efforts at consciousness-raising seem to be gaining ground, as in the case of NijiMix, and there is also a healthy amount of activism and community-building that serves and nurtures local queer people. This latter category, which includes both Queer Shokudo, Shinzen no Kai, turns its focus inwards to LGBTQ people rather than expending all of its energy into educating cisgender, heterosexual audiences. Even volunteer groups like IroIro Kyoto are not protesting on the national stage, but pursuing a strategy of 'winning hearts and minds' on the local level by showing up as queer people to do good in public.

This is not to say that the arc of trans history bends inevitably towards liberation, nor that every trans person in Kansai finds the conditions for trans existence to be improving. I say that grassroots queer activism is gaining ground, but I also feel that it would be beneficial to have more information on postwar, pre-millennial trans life in Kyoto and Osaka be accessible for comparative and historiographical purposes. I would ideally have liked to have access to the archives of postwar transgender life compiled by Mitsuhashi Junko at Chuo University in Tokyo, but the archives are not stored in a permanent collection; rather, and in keeping with the migratory and community-based nature of much trans history, they comprise several storage boxes in the living room of whichever postgraduate student has currently agreed to take them for safekeeping. Access to the Chuo archives is therefore a goal for post-doctoral research but was compensated for by the abundance of blog posts, educational leaflets, short films, and other ephemera produced and disseminated across Japanese-language social media such as Twitter, Facebook, and LINE. I was unable to make contact with anyone who identifies themselves as transgender and hikikomori; there were other categories and intersections of trans

identities that exist but about which I was unable to hear any firsthand narratives, e.g. from people who were trans and Okinawan; trans and deeply closeted; trans and of mixed Japanese and non-Japanese parentage, etc.

Nevertheless, I believe it is accurate to say that awareness of transgender identities, and interest in LGBTQ life and culture, is enjoying a second renaissance after the 'LGBT boom' of the 1990s. The number of invitations for workshops extended to my respondents who work as trans and queer educators are increasing, as is the diversity of the inviting institutions. Ten years ago, as one respondent told me, they might have only been invited to address civil servants, Gender Clinic staff, or ward office employees who directly handled the paperwork for transition. These days, the invitations come from pre-med and medical colleges, elementary schools, parenting groups, adult education classes, and law firms. Despite the firmly medical model of transition presented by the GID Gakkai, I suggest that Japanese discourses are now moving towards a growing rejection of GID as an analytic model: the preference for the neutral loanword *toransujendā* over the pathologising term GID is one indication of such, as is the quip by the director of the Kansai Film Festival that her heart sank at the prospect of yet another film about Gender Identity Disorder, or the reluctance of the participants at the Ochanomizu Trans Studies Workshop to name *seidōitsusei-shōgai* as a term in use to describe transness in Japanese. Perhaps the most tangible measurement of trans acceptance, albeit somewhat cynical, is the pink yen: transgender people are now considered by mainstream brands like Shiseido to be a marketable demographic.

Progress in visibility and institutional acceptance:

an educational leaflet entitled *Do You Know About LGBTQ?,* published in October 2021, produced by Kyoto City Council and illustrated by a student from the Manga Department of Seika University. [123]

What then are we to make of all these data points - growing acceptance in the school system versus the inflexibility of the legal system; the communal movement away from

[123] Source: https://www.city.kyoto.lg.jp/bunshi/page/0000289448.html?fbclid=IwAR2PAhpxtgtdGZ-AzH-dTY4FhfKiC1QsqTriM9WbqmpgZSfqVQ-eUmAq71I [Last accessed: 13/12/21, 13:11 GMT]

the GID model even as the medical system doubles down on it; the signs of progress contrasted with the very real accounts of hardship and discrimination I heard from the people around me? I have collated five key points from my fieldwork findings. These are not comprehensive; nor are they intended to be prescriptive. Rather, they represent the most immediate and interesting aspects of the many moving parts that make up trans life in contemporary Kansai, and serve as indicators for the direction of future research.

1. *Trans communities exist and thrive outside of Tokyo*.

This observation might seem rather banal, but it cannot be emphasised enough considering the lack of critical attention to transgender communities in Japan's other cities, along with the surprise evinced by my London-based interlocutors. The silence in the ethnographic record requires considerable redress and attention in future: this thesis represents one small effort towards a closing of that gap. Rural, prefectural, and regional Queer Japan needs much more attention and care, as does work on Queer Kyoto from a Kyoto Studies perspective. Kyoto enjoys a special reverence and resonance though its role as the 'ancient capital', and as such the custodian of traditional culture, in the popular Japanese imagination. Relatively little ethnography has been undertaken to date on modern Kyoto and its resident minorities; some progress is evident in this area via Daniel Milne and Ran Zwingenberg's upcoming *Dark Kyoto* conference, scheduled provisionally for Summer 2022, but Queer/Trans Kyoto promises to be a fruitful area for investigation.

2. *There is a lively amount of dissent within both LGBTQ communities broadly and trans communities specifically.*

This is not unique to networks of trans and queer people outside Tokyo, either, but is common across Queer Japan and to collective LGBTQ endeavours internationally as well. LGBTQ communities may be tight-knit but they contain a multitude of identities, experiences, and goals - not all of which are reasonable disagreements on which everyone can amicably dissent. As I outlined in the introduction, trans people do not generally constitute enough of a numerical majority to form a trans community distinct from any LGBTQ organisations in their local area: if one wishes to access queer collective life to any extent, one's options may be limited to a group formed mostly of cisgender gay men, for

example. Both cis and trans people may how or even i*f* trans people fit into the rest of the LGB; transphobia on the part of cisgender queer people is a real issue, analogous to some heterosexual Japanese feminists' rejection of lesbian and bisexual women from any solidarity. Trans people have intra-trans arguments on the desirability or logistics of access to legal and medical care, and on the role of community gatekeeping. This includes, as we have seen, overt or covert demands for individuals to suffer on behalf of the community, as with Yamamoto Ran's scolding of Yoshino Yugi, or Fujio Takafumi saying that many trans people self-censored in public before the 2003 *Gender Treatment Act* was safely in place. LGBTQ groups as imagined communities are perfectly able to imagine some existing members as being outside of the community, after all.

3. *That real dissent notwithstanding, there is also an enormous amount of solidarity, kinship, and care*.

As I have observed said throughout this dissertation, the analytic unit of transness in Kansai is the community rather than the individual. I saw firsthand, heard about from my respondents, and read the work of trans networks going back much earlier than indicated in the extant literature; trans writers creating books, blogs, and zines that have simply never been translated into English or cited by Anglophone researchers; and forms of trans life that are never represented in popular culture. This latter category includes youth groups and family support organisations for transgender children and young people, such as the one run by Endō Mameta in Tokyo and the one in Nagoya for which my respondent Hanako had volunteered. It includes people like Ikuko and Hanako, whose transitions in the workplace went smoothly; people like Makoto and Hotaru, who live their genders outside of State recognition but distinct from cisgender norms; and people like Momoko and Chiaki, whose professional as well as personal lives are devoted to furthering LGBTQ awareness and acceptance.

4. *Heterosexuality is inextricable from transness in the popular construction of gender, but this construction is not always borne out on the ground.*

Perhaps even more than heterosexuality being inextricable from transness, it would be accurate to say that the assumed unbreakable bond is between heterosexuality and 'proper gender' *tout court*, whether that gender is cis or trans in nature.

The natural attitude to gender, as discussed in the *Methodology* chapter, reveals common assumptions about the role heterosexuality plays in constructing gender. For example: the fact that heterosexual trans people are able to marry after transition, while gay trans people *and* gay cis people are barred from doing so, indicates that transness is not the sticking point when it comes to having a romantic relationship validated by the state. Whether cis or trans, to be worthy of legal recognition is to be heterosexual. This perceived disconnection between trans identity and non-straight sexuality is elided even in the context of court cases that are pleading for a trans person's marriage to legally become a same-sex union: in all of the articles, blog posts, and newspaper reports that I read about trans people petitioning to stay in what became same-sex marriages after transitioning, the words 'lesbian' [rezubian] and/or 'bisexual' [baisekushuaru] never featured once.

Gay trans people are invisible not only within straight, cisgender Japanese society's image of transness, but within the community as well, to the extent that Torai Masae could say, only a decade ago: "There are almost no gay trans men, at least to my knowledge. " (2011: 185) Magazines produced by and for trans men, as Yuen's research shows, are written, staffed, and promoted in the main by straight trans men and represent straight trans men; gay trans people are completely invisible in TV programs and even on the queer film festival circuit. The few trans authors who have achieved breakout popularity in Japan are almost all in heterosexual or in opposite-gender marriages. Pop culture representations of trans people by cis Japanese authors, such as Yoshimoto Banana's *Kitchen* (1988) or Murakami Haruki's *Kafka on the Shore* (2005), range from the well-meaning but offensive, as with the former, to not only offensive but downright incoherent, as with the latter, [124] but all involve some form of supposed heterosexuality on the part of the trans characters.

[124] Murakami's characterisation of the character of Oshima is worth mentioning here as representative of well-meaning transphobia in Japanese pop literature. When accused of sexism by two female characters, Oshima delivers the following monologue: "He then places both hands on the counter and says, "As you can see, biologically and legally I am undeniably female. Which is why what you've been saying about me is

Yet, crucially, this assumption is not true. As we saw in Chapter 3, *Against a Trans Narrative*, only one of my respondents identified herself as heterosexual. Asexuality, pansexuality, catch-all 'queerness', and other orientations were well-represented, which puts the lie to the idea that all transgender people are straight and no-one has ever met or heard of queer people within trans kinship groups. Decoupling gender identity and compulsory heterosexuality will form a considerable amount of the work involved in complicating dominant models of gender, both for trans people and their queer cis companions in community.

5. *Trans people are able to be okay.*

More than anything else, this is what I consider to be the key takeaway from my research. The model for understanding contemporary transgender life in Kansai is not transness as a medical pathology, lived out only in Gender Clinics and post-operative recovery rooms; nor as the offstage elements of onnagata life as laid out by Yoshizawa Ayame and recorded in *Precepts for the Actor* (1776); nor solely confined to drag bars and the red-light demimonde. It is not discrete and disaparate individuals hastening through medical transition as fast as possible in order to change their koseki and henceforth live in stealth. It is Aultman on trans happiness. That happiness may be and often is contingent on particular spaces, times, or events. It may involve lifeways that are considered undesirable, such as divorce, singlehood, or foregoing parenthood; unhealthy or mentally ill, such as sterilisation, or making oneself vulnerable to employment, housing, and healthcare discrimination by coming out; or stigmatised, such as working in the entertainment sector or the sex trade. Coming out as trans still, too often, runs the risk of

fundamentally wrong. It's simply impossible for me to be, as you put it, a typical sexist, patriarchal male." "Yes, but--" the tall woman says but then stops. The short one, lips tight, is playing with her collar. "My body is physically female, but my mind's completely male," Oshima goes on. "Emotionally I live as a man. So I suppose your notion of being a historical example may be correct. And maybe I am sexist--who knows. But I'm not a lesbian, even though I dress this way. My sexual preference is for men. In other words, I'm a female but I'm gay. I do anal sex, and have never used my vagina for sex. My clitoris is sensitive but my breasts aren't. I don't have a period. So, what am I discriminating against? Could somebody tell me?" (2005: 98)" Put simply: trans people do not talk about their bodies this way. We might confidently say that *no-one* talks this way. While Murakami is clearly attempting to write from the perspective of a gay trans man in this passage, his insistence on the terms 'biologically female' and 'female, but gay' and his prurient listing of Oshima's body parts betrays a fixation on the misconception that trans men still count as female, and that the sex they may or may not have with cisgender men must involve some smack of heterosexuality.

disapproval or disowning from one's family of origin. Yet none of these daunting and intimidating issues precludes the formation of trans community in practice. The trans people I met on fieldwork, and whose community I was given the privilege of entering and witnessing, are successful in their lives. They are educated; they are part of an emotionally and physically close-knit support network; they have a diverse array of hobbies that they have time and money to pursue; and they have all found the space to make lives that work for them and are not necessarily bound to the state-issued directives on what it means to be trans.

An Epilogue: ...But The Mind Will Settle It

You are not required to complete the work, but nor are you at liberty to abandon it.
- Pirkei Avot *2:16*

Writing a PhD thesis is never an easy task. Writing *this* thesis entailed an abrupt shift in my own embodied relationship to transness and trans time: I delayed any form of medical transition throughout my three years in Kyoto and planned to put it off still further until my viva was safely in the rear-view mirror. The mysterious synthesising process that transmutes raw data into ethnography was not content to stop at the margins of my pages, however, and I began hormone replacement therapy in June of 2021. All of my trans life contained in this dissertation, from Kyoto to London, from social transition to HRT, happened under the worst backlash against transgender rights since the Weimar Republic. The times when I believed it would be safer both personally and professionally to end my PhD journey often outnumbered the times I felt optimistic or even positive about conducting trans research in such a hostile environment - not in Japan, but in my own country, the UK. What kept me on track, alongside the unrelenting support of my advisor, my family, and my trans communities on both sides of the planet, was my knowledge that to quit would not only be to say that my respondents' lives and insights did not matter, or were not valuable enough to be recorded, but would also be to knowingly throw another trans researcher under the bus. I could not allow myself to withhold that bit more visibility, collegiality, and resilience to other trans ethnographers present and future. As the great American philosopher-poet Vienna Teng once put it: *you've got to do this...for all of us.*

The results of my work could not and were never intended to be in any sense the 'last word' on Trans Kansai; rather, following Wittgenstein, I hope wholeheartedly that others will come and do it better. Nor is it within an ethnographer's necessary remit to end on a cheerful note. Our job is to observe the world as we found it, not the world we expect, hope, or might prefer to find instead. I do not know what the near future holds for trans people in the UK or in Japan, as it seems we find ourselves in dark times, but to end on a pessimistic note would do a disservice to the fact that being transgender is good on its own merits and that being transgender in community is one of the ongoing joys of my life.

I leave the last word to my respondent Ikuko-san. As we finished our semi-structured interview in April 2018, she wished me good luck with the rest of my fieldwork. I said something along the lines of "I'll certainly try my best" [zehi ganbarimasu] to which she replied, "Let's do our best as trans people, together!" [toransujenda toshite issho ni ganbarimasho!]

APPENDICES

1. Pre-Interview Information Sheet (English and Japanese)

Over the last twenty or so years, there has been a gradual increase in awareness of transgender issues in Japan. Through several TV programmes, books, songs etc, popular culture has provided occasional opportunities for conversations that touch on transgender identity. A few examples would be Banana Yoshimoto's book Kitchen, Haruki Murakami's book Kafka on the Shore, and the popular NHK TV programmes Girls' Life and In Order for Me to Be Myself.

However, because the majority of these books and programmes are produced by people who are not transgender, the voices of actually-transgender people continue not to be heard. Given that the Supreme Court recently upheld the sterilisation requirement of the 2003 Gender Recognition Act, it is evident that there is still a great deal of ignorance and misinformation about transgender lives.

I believe the thoughts, feelings, and opinions of actually-transgender people on this topic are the most important ones to listen to.
Because I myself am a transgender anthropologist, I decided to write on contemporary Japanese transgender life and identity for my PhD thesis.

Initially, the most significant previous ethnographic/anthropological research about my subject is Valentine (2014)'s study of transgender people living in New York City. As well as that, there are also McLelland et al (2007) and Summerhawk et al (1998)'s sourcebooks of LGBT Japanese life histories in English translation.

My research follows in this vein. I am predominantly interested in the lives and identities of transgender Japanese people and other transgender people living in Japan, of any age, whether they have undergone medical treatment for Gender Identity Disorder or not. For my thesis, I am collecting and recording life histories via interview.

日本で過去 20 年間「トランスジェンダー」の話題について意識はだんだん出になっています。番組や本や音楽など、大衆文化通じて触れる機会が時としてなっています。いくつかの例は吉本バナナが書いた「キチン」、村上春樹が書いた「海辺のカフカ」、NHK の人気な番組「女子的生活」と「私が私であるために」です。

しかし、その番組や本の大部分はトランスジェンダーではない方が作られていますので、トランスジェンダーの当事者の声は聞きなくなって続けています。
日本最高裁は最近 2003 年の「性同一性障害者の性別の取扱いの持例に関する法律」の「生殖腺がないこと又は生殖腺の機能を永続的に欠く状態にあること」の部分を支持しましたから、今も蒙昧と偏見がたくさんあるようです。
「トランスジェンダー」の話題については、トランスジェンダーの当事者の意見や感情や経験が一番大切だと思います。

私自身は社会人類学の研究しているトランスジェンダーの人ですから、現在日本のトランスジェンダー生活とアイデンティティを博士論文のテーマに選びました。
私が最初に触れた先行研究は、Valentine (2014?)によるニューヨークに住んでいるトランスジェンダーの当事者を対象にした聞き取り調査です。また、McLelland et al (2007)と Summerhawk et al (1998)による英語で翻訳した LGBT の日本人のライフヒストリーという種本があります。

この私語りの通りに研究をしています。トランスジェンダー日本人と日本に住んでいる外国人の生活とアイデンティティについて重点的な興味があります。研究の対象している人はトランスジェンダーのみんなさんです。あらゆる年齢とか性別の人々で、GID 障害医療や手術をしたかどうか人のライフヒストリーを聞きたいんです。私の論文のため、インタビューでそのライフヒストリーを録って集めます。

2. Interview Consent Form (English and Japanese)

Before we begin the interview, I have to confirm a few things.

インタビューの前に、確認事項があります。

In order to protect your privacy, I can use a pseudonym for you in the text.

プライバシー保護のために、文中で別の名前、仮名が使えます。

Which would you prefer: to use your real name; to select a pseudonym for me to use; or to use a pseudonym that I pick for you?

実名を使わせていただくのと、ご自分で仮名をつけられるのと、私が考えた仮名を使わられるのと、どれがいいですか。

You may stop participating in this interview or this research at any time and for any reason.

いつでもどんな理由でも研究やインタビューへのご協力をやめていただいてもかまいません。

Would you like to receive a copy of this recording or a written transcript of this interview?

このインタビューの筆記録か録音のお受け取りを希望されますか。

I would like to explain how I am planning to use information from this interview.

今日のインタビューにお聞きした情報の使い方についてちょっと説明をしたいと思います。

I will use portions of this interview in my doctoral thesis, as well as lectures, articles, and other kinds of academic work.

博士論文とか講義とか論説等でこのインタビューを使わせていただくつもりです。

If you have questions or concerns about this research, please feel free to contact my research supervisor Dr. Fabio Gygi.

もしこの研究についてご質問、ご心配がおありでしたら、研究指導教員ギギ・ファビオ博士にお気軽にお問い合わせてください。

Dr. Gygi speaks fluent Japanese and will be able to answer any questions you may have.

ギギ博士は流暢な日本語が話せますので、どんなご質問でも答えられます。

3. TRICON Informed Consent Questionnaire

* What is the specific objective of the study and its intended impact on future trans lives?

* Who is/are the principal investigator/s?

* What is/are the sponsoring institution/s or organization/s?

* How are trans scholars/researchers included in this research work?

* Who is funding the study? Describe any conflicts of interest.

* Is there Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) approval for this research? Describe ethical practices specific to trans subjects.

* How are trans scholars represented in the institution's IRB or HRPP staff?

* What is the target study population? Describe geographic scope, languages, and intersectional inclusion.

* Is there a cost or travel requirement, or is there compensation for participants?

* Will the results of this research be published in open access journals or channels?

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