Introduction

Desire is both of and beyond the everyday. In an ad for running shoes, for example, the figure of a man jogging at dawn on the Serengeti Plain both evokes a fantasy of escape and invokes a disciplinary norm to stay fit. The bottom line for the ad, of course, is to create a desire to consume, the promise being that with the purchase of these shoes, the consumer can realize yet also transcend the daily exhortation to perform.

To say this differently, there is something both real and phantasmic about desire. Yet this notion seems contradictory. Isn't there a difference between the desire to be fit, for example, which is realizable, realistic, and, in these senses, real and the desire to escape routine everydayness, which, for most of us, is inescapable most of the time? But is exercise real or phantasmic? Certainly not everyone works out, and even those who make exercise a part of their reality may do so in order to pursue a fantasy about themselves. And are escapes from daily routines phantasmic or real? An escape from the everyday is far more realizable for some people than even fitness. But here too what is fantasy blends into (and becomes indistinguishable from) the real: A vacation away from work may be a means of ensuring a higher level of work performance when one returns.

Looking back at the ad, we can see that the desires structured here reflect a certain perception and experience of the world: one that demands hard work, values high performance, and pleasurizes the foreignness of other worlds. It is in terms of this worldview that the desire to run hard is not so distinct from the desire to travel to the Serengeti Plain. One involves a daily workout, the other large sums of money acquired from years of saving or a high-powered job. Both are signs of hard work that, captured through desire, suggest both the realization of a fantasy and the phantasmal quality of the real.

My objective in this book is to contemplate how desire as something that segues both into and out of the realities of everyday life is configured through relations of production and consumption in late capitalist Japan. Specifically, I am interested in one domain of productivity: the home, where women, as mothers, have

been major contributors, albeit "indirectly," as Mary Brinton writes (1993), to the economic success story of postwar Japan. It has been the role of stay-at-home mothers (not a viable option for all families, of course) to oversee and therefore ensure the high performance of Japanese youth as they labor through the ranks of a highly regimented and competitive school system. In this educated and disciplined body of the child are rooted the labor force and consumer population of the Japanese state. In both cases, what is demanded is "the production of an exceptionally competent society whose members work remarkably well but do not, should not, produce spectacle as individuals" (Field 1995:26).

What children learn in Japanese schools is far more than the academic skills they are world-renowned for mastering. More important is an attitude toward work: a willingness to bend to the authority of the school system and an ability to mimetically reproduce its structure of endless surveillance, constant exams, and habitual memorization. As Foucault (1980) has written about the shift in western sexuality from something that once was a mere act to something now thought to constitute the very foundation of the "true" self, the postwar educational model in Japan exceeds being "merely" a school system and extends into a regime of test-taking that produces and centers the Japanese self. In what is called Japan's *gakureki shakai* (academic-pedigree society), the schools one attends almost totally determine one's future career. In turn, admission into high school and college is determined by performance on entrance exams, the rigors and stakes of which are well known to even preschool-aged children. In the name of offering preparation for these tasks, a whole industry of supplemental training—cram schools (*juku*), preparation schools (*yobikō*), written guidebooks, and sample tests—has built up since the 1960s and further encases children in work schedules that leave little time for anything else.

In such a society, where children must labor as hard as adults and adults must work hard just to monitor and pay for their children's education, what has emerged is a "new continuity between childhood and adulthood through technocratically ordered labor" (Field 1995:68). One significant effect of this continuity, Norma Field suggests, is the disappearance of childhood and play in contemporary Japan. What she means, in part, is that for children desire has become either absent or contained. "Perhaps even more important than training students in specific skills is ensuring the formation of an attitude that will tolerate a lifetime of arduous and/or dull tasks. Hence, the significance of establishing a horizon of desire and a range of sensibility in early childhood that will be compatible with such a life course" (Field 1995:58).

Despite Field's illuminating insights about labor, I disagree with her assessment of the place that desire consequently assumes in such a social order. My view is

that even in such a performance-oriented world, desire is not something that can be partitioned behind a "horizon" that serves to delimit it, if not eliminate it altogether. Such a suggestion implies a pure realm of play, desire, and childhood that could or did exist in a society not dependent on relations of late capitalist labor, as is the case in contemporary Japan.[1] I would argue instead that play and desire are always interconnected with the paths people assume to make a living, reproduce a community, and move from childhood into adulthood. In this sense, desire is not reduced or repressed as much as it is actively produced in forms that coordinate with the habits demanded of productive subjects. The "dullness" and "arduousness" of the tasks Japanese must execute over a lifetime, starting in childhood, are made acceptable not by the mere threat or force of an external structure (fear of failure on exams, for example). More powerful is the internalization of a different sort of process, one based on sets of desires that make the habitual desirable as well as making escape from the habits of labor seem possible through everyday practices of consumptive pleasure.

Mothers are doubly critical in such a process. They must ensure, on the one hand, that their children are working hard enough to realize their performative potential. Various strategies are used to achieve this end, including monitoring how children study at home, selecting supplemental education, and investigating the best school to fit a child's particular aptitudes. Throughout, women use maternal love and domestic space not, or not only, to provide a haven for children to escape from the labors demanded of them elsewhere, such as school. Rather, they suture home and motherhood to the very regime of a child's performativity, insisting that performance continue, even intensify, on familial turf.

On the other hand, the figure of the mother also appears, albeit in various guises, as a dominant motif in escapist leisure products, which are used, often continuously, by children as well as adults. This point is one of the main theses of this book: that the repetition and fetishization of certain motifs in mass culture—the infantilization of female sex objects (the *shōjo,* or young-girl phenomenon), voyeuristic peeping up skirts, sexual and sexist dominance, hugely sized phalluses, hidden pubises, eroticization of (female) underpants, breasts that alternate between being hidden and exposed—reflect, at least in large part, the desire to escape the performative ethos so insistently and incessantly demanded of contemporary Japanese and taught them, figuratively and usually literally, by mothers. I lay out the ways in which these fantasy configurations frame and reframe relations with mothers (who both metaphorically and metonymically stand for, or alongside of, wider economic and social relations) at great length in a number of the chapters in this book. Here, though, I would like to preface these later discussions with a word about why I find this terrain significant in terms of Japanese

postmodernism, the state of gender politics and ideology today in Japan, and the combination of these two in what I will argue is a non- (or not strictly) phallocentric economy.

Karl Marx wrote in the midnineteenth century about the phantasmic quality of commodities. Commodification transforms not only labor but also products of labor into "mysterious" and "enigmatic" things. "The form of wood, for instance, is altered by making a table out of it. Yet, for all that, the table continues to be that common, every-day thing, wood. But, so soon as it steps forth as a commodity, it is changed into something transcendent. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than 'table-turning' ever was" (Marx 1978:320). Once the humanness and particularity of our work is measured by a common standard, not only is the former eclipsed under the latter but also the latter assumes godlike power. Money can buy anything; hence, it is the possession of money, more than anything else, that determines the "properties and essential powers" of individuals (Marx 1978:103). Under capitalism, money serves as the medium of all value, though in and of itself it is nothing and its meaning resides in being a condensation and symbol of something else (labor). That people are mystified by this process, believing that the power of money exists as a natural property immanent in money itself rather than as its embodiment of labor and social relations, Marx referred to as the fetishism or reification of commodities. For him, this meant that the basis of a capitalistic economy and social order is a fantasy, one that turns "an image into reality and reality into a mere image" (1978:105).

Slavoj Žižek, writing in the late 1980s of what he calls the "post-ideological world" (and what I assume others such as David Harvey and Fredric Jameson mean by postmodernism), also speaks of commodity-based economies in terms of fantasy. The false consciousness of which Marx earlier wrote, however, has now disappeared, meaning that "when individuals use money, they know very well that there is nothing magical about it—that money, in its materiality, is simply an expression of social relations" (Žižek 1989:31). This does not mean that Žižek finds people today somehow more insightful about the illusory nature of commodification than they were at an earlier stage of capitalism. Rather, the point at which the "fetishistic illusion" sets in has merely shifted; now people know money is no more than an image and yet engage in its economy where use-values have been increasingly replaced and displaced by images (one of the primary definitions of postmodernism) all the same. For Žižek, then, the reality that Marx be-

lieved had an existence despite its distortions by fetishistic ideology no longer exists (if it ever did). Hence, images are (already) reality, and the real is (also) imaginary. Or, to say this better perhaps, the real and the phantasmic are so intertwined as to have become indistinguishable.

In Japan, the same process is at work, but with a particular twist. Under postwar conditions, it is academic performance that has increasingly become the common standard of value in the economy. This means that in the marketplace of careers and jobs, it is the test scores and schools attended as youths that operate as the currency of exchange for adults. There is nothing particularly magical about this. Almost none of the Japanese—children, students, mothers, housewives, white-collar workers, government officials, even teachers—I have ever spoken to about the *gakureki shakai* system believe that the inherent worth of an individual is ultimately measurable by how one performs on academic tests. There is a general consensus, in fact, that too much weight is placed on academic success in Japan, that too much of its schooling is geared to test-taking, and that too much pressure is placed on Japanese children to study. The fixation on exams, then, is seen as both excessive and arbitrary: the means adopted by the government and the economy to determine who in society should get the best jobs. Despite the ability to stand back, as it were, and critically assess the narrow and rigid fetishization that exam-taking assumes within the schools and society at large, however, there is a general acquiescence among Japanese to the *gakureki shakai* system in practice. I constantly hear Japanese speak of it as "*shikata ga nai*" ("that's life," "there's nothing one can do about it," "that's the way things are") and witness how central its rigors are in the lives of my friends.

This willingness to live by the rules of a system in which one does not fully believe is what Žižek means by living in a postideological world. "People no longer believe in ideological truth; they do not take ideological propositions seriously. The fundamental level of ideology, however, is not of an illusion masking the real state of things but that of an (unconscious) fantasy structuring our social reality itself" (Žižek 1989:33). For Žižek, there is a fusion between what is real and what is phantasmic; despite knowing that exam scores are merely an artificial and arbitrary assessment of value, one acts as if they were real anyway. We have become "fetishists in practice, not in theory" (1989:31) and engage in what he calls "ideological fantasy." This notion of the ideological fantasy strikes me as particularly apt for discussing Japan's economy based on the academic performances of test-taking. Further, it offers a way of talking about gender politics in Japan and what is distinct, if not altogether unique, about such politics in Japan's site of advanced capitalism in the postwar era. Namely, women are both discriminated against and pivotal to an economy so dependent, as is Japan's, on the academic performance of its children. It is women, as mothers, who not only oversee the educational

regimens of their children but also, and more importantly perhaps, fuse these closely with practices of maternal nurturance, indulgence, and love. What is, on the one hand, ideological—that test scores are a sign of and for economic value—becomes sutured to and blurred with what is, on the other hand, a fantasy of imaginary union with mother. When mothers I knew, for example, played for hours with their children in ways that would also (and continuously) stimulate intellectual skills, this was a practice in which ideology and fantasy, work and play, discipline and desires became melded and blurred.

Only within the subject position of motherhood, however, linked as it is to both heterosexuality and family, are women assigned such a central role within the economy. In other spheres, namely the labor market and education, women do not receive parity with men. This inequity exists despite the fact that gender discrimination has been outlawed both in the school system (by the democratic constitution of 1947) and the labor market (by the Equal Employment Opportunity Law [EEOL] passed in 1986) and despite the realities that more women than men continue on to secondary education,[2] and 40.8 percent of the total Japanese workforce is currently[3] female (Buckley 1993). That is, although women are very much present in the spheres of both school and work, their presence is shaped by an ideology that considers their so-called real (or what Žižek means by fantasy) role to be raising families and managing homes.

To start with school: Although more women than men acquire a secondary education, far fewer women enter four-year universities (only 482,844 of a total of 1,861,306 entering universities in 1988), and far more are entering two-year junior colleges than are men (out of a total of 444,808 in 1988, 402,265 were women) (Buckley 1993). These statistics reflect the Japanese opinions gathered in surveys that it is more important and desirable for sons to attend university than daughters (44.9 percent for sons in contrast to 18.6 percent for daughters, according to a 1982 survey). The link between school and future career seems weaker for women than men, or, more accurately, the link between type of schooling and type of career is different. Indeed, Japan is the only industrialized country where education has a negative effect on women's employment (Tanaka 1995). The more educated a woman, the less likely she is to enter full-time employment and the shorter her average periods in the workforce (Buckley 1993). As many of my friends have told me, however, this does not mean that the education a woman gains has no value. Rather, it increases her desirability in marriage for, among other reasons, the skills it gives her as an "education mother" (*kyōiku mama*).

In the labor force, 50.7 percent of all women aged fifteen and above are employed in wage labor (Kawashima 1995), and they are working at older ages (the average age of female workers is midforties), beyond marriage (the majority of

working women are now married), and for longer periods of employment (an average of 6.3 years of continuous employment in comparison to 11.3 for men) than ever before (Buckley 1993). Still, women's wages average only 60.7 percent of men's, 29.3 percent of women are working at part-time rather than full-time jobs (Kawashima 1995), and only 28.9 percent see their wages as supporting a household rather than supplementing its income[4] (Buckley 1993). Women definitely seem to be on a different track in the work world, yet such differentiation can no longer be officially mandated by employers. The Labor Standards Act has been dismantled that, by outlawing certain jobs and hours as "dangerous" to women and by securing maternity and menstrual leave, worked in the postwar era, as Sandra Buckley (1993) has noted, to protect the reproductive functions of women workers more than the workers themselves. Since the imposition of the EEOL, companies cannot restrict employment choices to women by enforcing, for example, mandatory retirement upon marriage or the birth of a child (as was common company policy before). Many workplaces have subsequently introduced a two-track system that allows women the choice between the *sōgōshoku* (career track leading to managerial positions) and the *ippanshoku* (secondary track). It has been found, however, that few women choose the former, and when they do, their attrition rate is 50 percent (Kawashima 1995).

Some feminist labor observers (Buckley 1993; Uno 1993; Kawashima 1995) explain the reluctance of Japanese women to choose career paths within the workforce as a factor of the masculine model on which those career paths (and the entire workforce itself) remain based. This model of working hard at a job to which one must be primarily and constantly committed is unacceptable for some women not only because it is difficult to maintain while also managing a household (for those who want to marry, which still includes the vast majority of adult women despite the fact that they are marrying later and having fewer kids[5]) but also because it is thought to be grueling, inhumane, and distasteful in its own right. None of the mothers I interviewed for a postdoctoral project on urban middle-class women longed for the work worlds their husbands inhabited that demanded long days of work, nights out drinking, and an obsequious demeanor in front of bosses. What they did admit, nonetheless, is that without a paycheck equivalent to that of their husbands, their life choices remained limited (divorce wasn't a possibility, for example, because financial independence would be so difficult) and their social status lacked the weight of that of a wage earner, particularly one who could support (rather than merely supplement) a household.

In a capitalist economy where money is the common standard of value, gendered ideologies have often operated to differentiate between the wage-earning labor of males and the unpaid domestic labor of (primarily) women in ways that come to be symbolized in a sexual language of phallic power. As feminists (see

Hartmann 1981) have long pointed out, the logic of commodity fetishism at work in capitalism all too easily fits and breeds a logic of phallic fetishism at work in an ideology of masculinism. Under both systems, one particular part of a much wider system comes to stand for primary value. For capitalism, this item is money, which condenses larger relations of production and reproduction into a single object. For masculinism, this object is the penis, which condenses wider relations of gendered work, family, sexuality, and procreation into a single body part. In both cases, there is belief in a hierarchy, in a value that supersedes all others and is used to judge everything else as subordinate. When both money and men are given such authority, a chain of social and economic relationships is likely to develop. For example, the domestic work of reproducing the labor force is kept unpaid, women are assigned this work and men are largely excused from it, wage labor is given more symbolic capital than domestic labor, and males have a social power and dominance that females lack.

Although all of these relationships are certainly present in contemporary Japan, I argue that the capitalistic phallicism they so strongly suggest is complicated by the presence of an additional social and economic fact: the value placed on academic performance and the central role assigned mothers in its production. But if women are so crucial in Japan's postwar socioeconomic formation, we must nevertheless be cautious in applying a "separate but equal" model that implies that domestic (by primarily women) and wage labor (so masculinized that women earn only 60.7 percent the wages of men) are equally valued. Such a model, put forth to describe Japan by some Japanese (including some feminists such as Iwao Sumiko), overlooks some key facts, including the powers and authorities that constrain women's full entry into the labor market; keep men from assuming domestic responsibilities (and also keep them increasingly from home altogether); require that more women seek employment to help defray children's educational costs but restrict these jobs to low-paying, part-time ones that can accommodate the management of home; and retain an ideological notion of male dominance that breaks out in patterns of wife abuse, sexual philandering, and macho aggression. The very ideology of marriage and family, in fact, particularly when encased in the rhetoric of Japanese cultural values with their demand for supreme self-sacrifice on the part of mothers, appears to embed women in an economy in which their value remains forever subordinate. Even as "education mothers," after all, the role assigned women is to oversee the movement of a child, particularly a boy, into a labor market to which full access is denied to women themselves.

This situation represents a tension or contradiction in the gendered embodiment of Japan's postwar economy. Although maleness and money still carry a primary value, the production of each is critically dependent on mothers. This means that although there is still some belief in the superiority of maleness, which

leads to a fetishization of the distinguishing male body part, the penis, the "phallus" that emerges is also marked, sometimes scarred, by its dependence on female mothering. Therefore, in order to speak about the desires and fantasies that arise out of this complex set of gendered labor and familial relations in contemporary Japan, we cannot rely on a model of phallocentrism that treats the phallus as a pure and simple homologue to capitalist currency (as, for example, Goux does in a brilliant but Eurocentric discussion [1990]). By this line of reasoning, males seem to have direct access to power, while the bodies and labors of women are regarded as mere "lack."

Neither of these premises works in explaining the popularity of a recent best-seller whose central character is a young woman, Mikage, who loves to cook in a postmodern kitchen set up by her friend's mother, who was the father until his sex-change operation after the death of his beloved wife. The blended parent, Eriko, plays a key role in the story, but her identity is clearly as mother, albeit one whose adoption of this role has required that he get rid of his penis. This novel, *Kitchen*, is interesting not only for the portrayal of its three main characters, who are all ambiguously gendered and form a nonconventional family unit, but also for its author, Yoshimoto Banana, who self-identifies as a *shōjo* (young female) and crafts her writing style to be popular culture rather than high literature. Of even greater interest, given these two facts, is the choice of *Kitchen* by Japan's Foreign Ministry to dispense to all its international guests attending the G-7 (leading industrial democracies) summit held in Tokyo in 1993 as a way of informing them about the current (postmodern) state of Japanese culture (Treat 1995).[6]

In John Treat's analysis of *Kitchen*, he notes that "masculinity of any sort seems lacking in this novel, as does the sort of femininity predicated on an essential difference from masculinity" (1995:291). Further, he points out, there is an absence not only of explicit gender differentiation but also of sex. In this context, Treat characterizes the entire novel as suffused with the warmth and nurturance that emanate from the hearthlike kitchen and center the narrative even though the kitchen here is full of commodified contraptions that make it as much a fantasy of late capitalist consumption as anything "real." Linking this central trope of kitchen to the lack of gender contrast and sex, he argues that *Kitchen* presents "an anti-Oedipal scenario, one in which the kitchen and Mikage's recipes have superceded the traumatic conflicts that Freud predicts for us; in which *Kitchen*'s warm and fuzzy feelings have replaced the struggles that 'normal sexual development' mandates" (1995:291).

What can it mean that a novel whose only male adult has been dephallicized and transformed into a mother and whose primary character is a woman who shows love for others by preparing and serving them food has been selected by the Foreign Ministry as an exemplar of Japanese culture today? What it suggests to

me is a highlighting of how central the role and figure of mothers is today in Japan and how downplayed, even problematic, the place of men and masculinity (as well as genital sex, but that's a matter more for the rest of this book) has simultaneously become. It further encodes an emphasis on the relations between people rather than on the individuality or individuation of particular persons. This feature of interrelationality resonates with what many scholars and officials have called Japan's "particular characteristic" of postmodernist capitalism. In Prime Minister Ohira's 1980 plan, for example, to "transcend the modern" by returning to a foundation based on Japanese culture, the invocation was made to a "restoration (*kaifuku*) of warm family relations in family, workplace, and local regions" (quoted in Harootunian 1989:80). Though Ohira was calling for the return of something he believed to be an old cultural pattern—the value of relationalism (*aidagarashugi*), which privileges the relations between human and human and part and whole—he was asking for this pattern to be channeled to the buildup of a new economic order. As Harry Harootunian has pointed out, this principle of relationalism intended as the undergirding of the Japanese cultural form of late-stage capitalism resembles a game of "scissors, rock, and paper" in that it opposes binary oppositions and is the opposite of a structure in which "sharp distinctions between two things" are made (Harootunian 1989:80). The latter structure is thought to characterize western thought and culture, of course; it is also the description given the phallus by such western psychoanalytic thinkers as Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. Lacan, for example, treats the phallus as a signifier for power (the paternal signifier) that cuts off the imaginary merging between mother and child and forces the child (through the threat of castration) into the symbolic realm of language, rules, and taboos. In this model, the phallus is a social force that demands individuation of children away from others, especially mothers.

This phallic model is at the root of what Asada Akira calls the "industrial 'adult' capitalism"[7] that dominates in the west. Individuals internalize the phallic threat issued by the father, both his sternness and the fact that he is seen as a rival by the child. In doing so, they begin to compete with themselves and become workers who can labor independently with motivation that comes from the self. This construction of labor relations in the west (which borrows from Deleuze and Guattari) is strikingly different from the capitalistic model at work in Japan that Asada calls "infantile capitalism" and characterizes in the following way: "The Japanese family is an essentially maternal arena of '*amae*,' indulgence, and both the father and family are softly wrapped in it. . . . In Japanese companies, the clever management, rather than mobilizing the entire company around its positive leadership, functions as an apparently passive medium which prompts agreement to be spontaneously formed from the bottom up" (1989:276).

Once again, then, we've returned to mothering as the key, "indirect" as this may be, to the economic productivity of Japanese capitalism today. And once again, we hear it spoken of in terms of desires that "softly wrap" Japanese subjects within regimes of work that are expected to yield high performance. How to treat this model of mother-dependent economic values in a symbolic currency of sexual desires is the project of *Permitted and Prohibited Desires.*

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I would like to say a brief word now about the chapters that follow and their organization. Each is informed by the set of material relations in postwar Japan that I have laid out in this introduction, and each is driven by my aim to question how these relations are organized, escaped, contested, revealed, and problematized in forms of desire that are at once permitted and prohibited. By these descriptors, I mean to show how desire is something that is constructed both as a part of our everyday work worlds (hence, permission) and as something that takes us beyond to a place that feels refreshingly transgressive (prohibition, often staged).

Given the nature of my own desires in this project, to both understand something of the terrain from which desires are being produced and pursued in the Japan of the 1980s (my main historical focus, which bleeds both forward to the 1990s and back to the entire postwar period) and come up with analytical means by which to make critical sense of these behaviors, I am faced with a major and certainly unwieldy task. I also feel that there are few, if any, models I can follow. I am dealing with a place that does not fit easily or cleanly (as perhaps no place does these days) into any one theoretical or ethnographic paradigm. Japan is nonwestern but no longer "traditional"; it is at a late stage of capitalism but in a form that is recognized by many to be culturally "Japanese"; sexuality assumes patterns here in sites as different as the family and mass culture; and gender relations are incredibly complex in ways both real and phantasmic. To deal with such complications, I have made choices in both the parameters of my study and the methods I have adopted in carrying it out.

First, I pursue common themes in my study of gender and sexuality that are traced throughout all the chapters and therefore provide a common focus. These include looking at escapist and work-oriented desires that are embedded in an economy that values money and hard (i.e., academic) work and that accompanies a sexual symbolics that resists rigid characterization as either phallocentric or matricentric.

Second, the research methods I use are both varied and experimental. I rely on the anthropological conventions of fieldwork and ethnography in only two of the chapters, which draw on a postdoctoral research project I conducted in a Tokyo

neighborhood among middle-class Japanese mothers in 1987–1988. In the other chapters I look mainly for sites or practices of cultural behavior that I analyze as being paradigmatic of wider relations involving labor, performance, desire, and fantasy. Many of these are texts, such as particular kinds of stories, scenarios, images, or gazes, that I argue are especially good arenas for studying desire, which is itself elliptical, indirect, and symbolic. I thus try to blend here methods of analysis that are both textualist and anthropological. The former I cull from film theory, psychoanalytic theory, feminism, and cultural studies, and I sometimes scrutinize a particular theoretical concept such as "the male gaze" for its applicability to a nonwestern setting such as Japan. For the latter, which demands an attentiveness to the everydayness of people's lives, relationships, and cultural categories by which certain texts acquire both meaning and pleasure, I experiment with a number of strategies. I use Japanese scholarship, research, and lay commentaries on material such as comic books; consider both the specific and general dynamics of social/economic/familial relationships that contextualize the reading of the stories I examine; and refer to discussions, observations, and knowledge I have acquired in the field concerning pleasure, desire, play, and fantasy. I have been unable to conduct surveys or interviews with audiences of specific texts, but, given the nature of my interest in fantasy and desire, I am not altogether convinced of the reliability of such a research technique.

In Chapter 1 of the book I lay out my scholarly position in terms of the academic fields within which I work: Japanese studies, anthropology, feminism, and cultural studies. Looking at the various academic blind spots I have had to navigate in doing this project—against theory in Japanese studies, for example, and sexuality in anthropology—I make a case for studying sexuality even in a nonwestern culture with a version of psychoanalytic theory.

In all of the following chapters, I look at ways in which everyday labors and performances are enmeshed within stories or fantasies of desire. Sometimes these fantasies appear to invert or disassemble labor sites; at other times they are worked into a form of labor as if to lace and embroider the latter with design. The former pattern is the one I trace first. In Chapters 2 and 3, I examine sexual motifs in the mass culture of *manga* (comics) and *anime* (animation). In Chapter 2 these are a form of male gazing found in cartoons and comics targeted to children. The look is fashioned as coming from male watchers, and the objects of the look are females who are either naked or eroticized at particular erotogenic zones (breasts, genitals, buttocks). Mothers whom I have spoken to find this form of presentation relatively harmless and view it as an acceptable forum for escapist leisure that takes children away from the hard work that otherwise consumes their lives (especially those of boys). Keeping in mind Field's observation of the continuity in labor between childhood and adulthood in contemporary Japan, I see in this

child's practice a phantasmic practice of leisure that continues into the adult media I examine in Chapter 3. Here I focus on *ero manga* (erotic comics for men) with their dominant tropes of sadomasochism, macho dominance, analism, and deferral from genital copulation, which I read in terms of the consumptive patterns by which *manga* are engaged (typically outside the domains of home and work and in ways that make the reading compulsively fast). I suggest that part of the fantasy at work here is positioning readers in relations of voyeurism, fetishization, and consumption that permit but also contain the illusion of escape that is being fostered. That the stories highlight violence in ways that continually allow the violator to remove himself from the softly rounded body of a female I also read as a desire to extract oneself from mothering, both real and metaphoric.

In the next two chapters (4 and 5) I look at practices that build desirability into habits of everyday performance. Both of these chapters are grounded in the particular site of nursery school, specifically the nursery school my son attended in Japan and that I observed. In Chapter 4, I analyze the lunchboxes mothers make with great artistry and elaboration for their children to take with them to school and the contents of which children are required to eat in full as part of the disciplinary habits they must adopt at school. Mothers are thus expected to teach and encourage children with the aesthetics of food, and children, it is ideologically hoped, will consume rules and school order along with the scenarios of rabbits and bears designed in their lunches. In Chapter 5, I extend this analysis into other habits of labor and love that mothers are asked to perform for their nursery-school children. Throughout, the message is to utilize pleasures the mother is best able to provide toward the end of getting children to perform certain tasks. Making everyday work both habitual and desirable for children is the ideology of motherhood women are asked to uphold.

In the rest of the book (Chapters 6 and 7), I extend and problematize the linkage between performance and desire that I have treated more as two separate patterns in the earlier chapters. In Chapter 6, I look at a host of stories about mother-son incest that were faddish in a spectrum of the mass media in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In all, the elements of the narrative were so consistent as to form a mythic pattern: Boys, at the point of studying for entrance exams, become sexually distracted, which prompts their mothers, all following the model of the good "education mother," to assist them with sex. Except for the incest, all of these stories are realistic in the normative sense of children and mothers forming a labor team to study for exams. Troubling therefore the very meaning of normativity as well as transgressiveness (as incest would otherwise appear so clearly to represent), these stories point to both the phantasmic quality of the real and the real quality in fantasies. Chapter 7 concludes the book and is a multilayered analysis of Article 175, the law against obscenity that has remained basically consistent since

its inception during Japan's period of modernization. Its injunction against the realistic depiction of genitalia (including pubic hair) seems mysterious given that, under the same law, almost every other sexual or bodily depiction, including sadomasochism and analism, is permitted. I question the notion of "obscenity" here, tracing how it allows for a very real policing of mass media at the national and public borders of Japan as well as produces pubic fantasies in very particular forms. My conclusion is that these sexual fantasies that circulate as mass culture wind up protecting and, in some sense, reinscribing a "real" center to the home. Mothers, of course, are who and what I see as occupying this center.

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At the end of all this, I feel my work has just begun. The story of *Kitchen*'s Eriko stays in my mind as that of a figure who represents a new kind of mother with ever new possibilities for sexual and gendered configurations. Here is a mother who has emerged out of a man. Elsewhere in the mid-1990s landscape of mass culture in Japan, there are increasingly such blended, rearranged, multiply constructed, cyborglike models of gender that defy any neat differentiations between femaleness and maleness. Ranma 1/2, for example, is a popular cartoon figure who, though a boy, morphs into a busty female when splashed with cold water. Does this mean there is a woman inside of every man—a mother, perhaps? Women are changing too. More female superheroes are stars now, some (Sailor Moon, for example) far more popular than any male superhero.

However, until men assume the responsibilities of child-raising and home care more than they have in the 1990s, the figure of primary childcare provider, with the ties this role has to academic performance, will remain gendered as mother. And along with this social fact will be the circulation of desires that both reframe this reality and promise its phantasmic escape.