

Staged Seduction:

Selling Dreams in a Tokyo Host Club

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In the host clubs of Tokyo's Kabuki-chō red-light district, ambitious young men seek their fortunes by selling love, romance, companionship, and sometimes sex to female consumers for exorbitant sums of money. *Staged Seduction* reveals a world where all intimacies and feigned feelings are fair game for the hosts who employ feathered bangs, polished nails, fine European suits, and the sensitivity of the finest salesmen to create a fantasy for wealthy women seeking an escape from the everyday.

Akiko Takeyama's investigation of this beguiling underground "love business" provides an intimate window into Japanese host clubs and the lives of hosts, clients, club owners, and managers. The club is a place where fantasies are pursued and the art of seduction isn't merely about romance; a complex set of transactions emerges. Like a casino of love, the host club is a site of desperation, aspiration, and hope, in which both hosts and clients are eager to roll the dice. Takeyama reveals the aspirational mode not only of the host club, but also of a Japanese society built on the commercialization of aspiration, seducing its citizens out of the present and into a future where hopes and dreams are imaginable—and billions of dollars can be made.

Akiko Takeyama is an Associate professor of Anthropology and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Kansas. Her research interests lie in changing gender, sexuality, and class dynamics in contemporary Japan. Her first book, *Staged Seduction: Selling Dreams in a Tokyo Host Club* (2016 Stanford University Press), theorizes the commercialization of feelings, emotions, and intimate relationships among socially marginalized populations, namely youth and women, in Japan's service-centered economy.

