push the button

Elizabeth Rodwell

INTERACTIVE TELEVISION AND COLLABORATIVE JOURNALISM IN JAPAN

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NHK-NTV collaborative broadcast event *60 Ban Shōbu*,
showing the use of a mobile interface for interactive television.
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Introduction

PUSHING BUTTONS

Late one night on TV Tokyo, one of Japan's major networks, the latest project of one of Tokyo's most adventurous young companies is about to begin. The air is filled with tension of a sort both manufactured and autonomic. As with all live TV, and particularly the nascent genre of interactive television, there exists the potential for massive and spontaneous failure. As one employee later confessed, everyone's heart was racing, *dokidoki*. "We can't fail" (*Shippai dekinai*), he thought.

Bloody Tube, as the program is called, is an interactive game show allowing viewers to participate in a spacecraft race using smartphones as game controllers. Teams are divided according to blood type and directed by four guest hosts as the race unfolds within the simulated blood vessels of a female idol, Dan Mitsu. Several months earlier in 2013, *Bloody Tube* was still in pieces around the offices of a forty-one-person interaction design agency called Bascule.[1] Long before the summer evening when its staff gathered in a TV control room, Bascule's designers carefully plotted the position of cameras and fabricated a reproduction of Dan's body to test 3-D projection mapping. They storyboarded the animation sequences

and sketched concepts for the program/game's animated *masukotto kyara* (mascots). Across many, many meetings they assembled a languid three-and-a-half-minute opening sequence for *Bloody Tube*, to entice audiences accustomed to conventional forms of passive pseudoresponse to join in a new kind of spectacle, within which technology was as much on display as Dan Mitsu's *utsukushii karada* ("beautiful body," in the words of the emcee). The final effect was part *The Matrix*, part *Tron* or even *Ghost in the Shell*, and it was also an attempt to create an immersive, interactive playground where viewers could come together as a public to experience television watching—or television using—as a communal activity.

Programs such as those constructed by agencies like Bascule, teamLab, and the in-house production teams of the major networks were, in the early 2010s, emergent. This is to say that just over a year earlier, there had been none. But in the immediate post-Fukushima era, the interest in and the effort to create interactive television increased dramatically. Driven by technology such as (television network) NTV's "Join TV" and Bascule's "Massive Interactive Entertainment System" (MIES), this kind of television raised provocative new issues for the theoretical apperception of what television means and what it is.

Television in Japan has been a contested medium since the 1950s, but this has especially been so since the 1964 Tokyo Olympics catalyzed rapid changes in broadcast infrastructure and a renewed focus on television's potential. One legacy of this field of media critique, TV Man Union (Terebiman Yunion, or TVU), was founded in 1970 by former Tokyo Broadcasting Service (TBS) network directors Hagimoto Haruhiko, Konno Tsutomu, and Muraki Yoshihiko as an independent and mutually owned creative group. Influenced by an earlier twentieth-century discourse on documentary cinema's role and artistic potential, this "union" challenged the (still) dominant model wherein production companies served as subcontractors to the TV stations and established TV Man Union as Japan's first independent production company.[2] Foreshadowing the media self-enquiry discussed in this book, this effort also arose out of a tension between media professionals and conservative Japanese politicians over what kinds of political commentary can be broadcast. Like many thought leaders featured in the subsequent chapters, TV Man Union's founders established their legacy through an enduring manifesto, titled "You Are Just the Present," within which they argued for the capacity of television to celebrate the everyday and to divest documentary video from a need for artfulness over authenticity.[3]

Echoes of the TVU venture also exist in the numerous experimental and innovative media-related groups found in contemporary Tokyo, and in the precedent that some of the most prescient mass media critiques would come from those who once worked for the major networks (e.g., Hori Jun, Shiraishi Hajime). They also reflect a historic schism between those who believe change can come from within the TV system and those who wish to demolish it in favor of something more democratic.[4] I highlight TV Man Union here within the history of Japanese media theory, because of the empathy between its specific provocations and those of the interactive media experiments in this book. Konno Tsutomu writes about ownership over the present (*genzai*) as something "difficult for power to allow,"[5] which we see challenged by programs like *The Compass* (chapter 2) and by the activities of the Free Press Association of Japan and Independent Web Journal (chapter 3).

TV Man Union's arguments arose within an ongoing tradition of media industry insiders and critics alike scrutinizing the interplay between presentation strategies, capitalism, and audiences. In 1957, influential social critic Ōya Sōichi famously referred to television as turning the Japanese public into a nation of "100 million idiots" (*ichioku sō hakuchi-ka*).[6] Media critic Uesugi Takashi later appropriated this phrase in the "100 million brainwashed" subtitle of his own 2011 book, to underscore his perception of a public that blindly accepts media narratives.[7] But what if these "brainwashed" audiences could have a direct hand in shaping the contents of the programs themselves? And if this strategy could align the medium with the ethos of other contemporary media forms?

Despite Japan's embrace of its reputation for technological innovation, the country's use of a sophisticated interactive TV infrastructure has generally gone unnoticed, even domestically. If the questions often posed to me by Americans are any indication, Japanese TV has a transnational reputation for wacky and extreme stunts or placing foreign celebrities in awkward situations (the *Lost in Translation* effect[8]), by contrast with the documented conservatism of its mass media. But significantly for this project, television in 2010s Japan was characterized by long-standing tensions for which the massive 2011 earthquake and Fukushima nuclear plant disasters merely acted as an accelerant. The burden of declining ratings and advertising revenue, combined with a crisis of faith in television's capacity to provide essential information during that disaster, led mainstream TV professionals to seek novel ways to maintain television's slipping dominance in the

media sector. Historically speaking, interactive TV seems a logical progression from the problem that "young people aren't watching television," to the cause, "because they are spending their 'media time' engaged with interactive technology," to the solution, that "we should create programming that combines the platform of television with the interactivity of these devices, appropriating them directly as part of the viewing experience."

Born out of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Tokyo in the two years immediately following the Fukushima nuclear disaster, *Push the Button* explores how interactive television and audiovisual media producers—both in the mainstream television industry and the nascent independent news media sector—conceived of ways to marry interactivity to a mass medium that has long been critiqued for its monodirectional approach to transmission. Against the chronic ambiguity of these terms, some of the core questions posed by this book are the following: What constitutes interactivity, and how do interactive media authors envision audiences and publics as coproducers? How do producers build programming around opportunities for interaction as they seek to bridge audience participation to television content? While I initially conceived of my fieldwork as being about the contrast between open versus closed systems of knowledge production, I have largely moved away from the limitations of this framing. But the interactive projects I describe can still be divided according to their resources, production facilities, and the legitimizing framing of institutions. This insider/outsider divergence remains one of the core binaries operating in this book.

I chose to study Japanese television because of a cosmonaut reporter. When I learned that the first Japanese citizen in space was TBS journalist Akiyama Toyohiro, sent by his employer aboard a Soviet rocket to document his experience on TV (for an impressive 36 percent audience share), I was curious about how the medium's public significance and authority had evolved since then.[9] The broadcast conglomerates (*media konguromaritto*) seemed both powerful and perilous—and essential to consider if one wished to write about Japan. As sociologist John Clammer has observed, "The sheer size and power of the Japanese media, and of advertising within the media, make it central to understanding cultural processes in contemporary Japan."[10] But what happens to these cultural processes when technology facilitates the dissemination of competing narratives about nationalism, public safety, and even community? And what if television is tested by a national disaster just as audiences have begun to look elsewhere for news and entertainment?

The Meanings of Interactivity

In Japan, a renewed interest in adapting networked interactivity to television came after 2011, when the Fukushima nuclear disaster triggered a political and media crisis that collided with mounting worries among Japanese television professionals about the loss of audiences to the internet. Consequently, much industry dialog began to revolve around how television content, including news, could be made more responsive to public reaction and input by expanding the capacity of social media–enhanced television. At the same time, a galvanized independent news media sector emerged with several new startups interested in developing alternative televisual news sources by harnessing the interactive and participatory capacity of live streaming video services and websites. What these two bodies had in common was a belief that better TV could be made by interpolating audiences into both the production and output of television content.

In this book, interaction is defined as audiences taking an active role in the development of programming, but it occurs at varying degrees of depth within the featured case studies—from television shows that allow viewers to push a few buttons and play an instrument along with a popular musical group (the *Arashi feat. You* special in chapter 4) to content solely in the hands of audience-authors (Our Planet-TV in chapter 5). Each of these complicates and challenges the categories of mass media producer/consumer by proposing to allow audiences to occupy both categories at the same time, in a way that serves the mainstream media system itself (and social media companies) in inconsistent ways.[11] Contributing an additional layer of complexity is the evolving nature of *interactivity* as a concept and accompanying uncertainty about what it means for audiences in terms of control over process and outcome. Whose needs would it meet? Would interactive programming merely serve to comfort producers that they had made every effort to engage audiences on their terms? Would it check off a box on the technological advancement timeline, if it even was an advance? Or would it allow them to make a meaningful contribution to the public sphere and fulfill some of the iconic fantasies of the internet age?

The relationship between interactivity and publics has been of interest to media producers and theoreticians since the earliest days of television. Experiments with interactivity have taken many different forms, frequently by allowing audiences to participate as contestants in programming like the American game show *Twenty-One* (1956–58), sometimes called the first reality TV contest.[12] Or it has meant subjecting audiences to ostensibly

unwitting participation in pranks as in the Japanese *Nandemo Yarimashō* (1953–59) or the American *Candid Camera* (1948–2014). Additional overtures toward audience participation can be found in the ubiquitous shows that allow audiences to participate by submitting votes (e.g., the international *Got Talent, X-Factor,* and *Idol* franchises, or Japan's *Kōhaku Uta Gassen*), taking part in social media polls, or tweeting at live television (e.g., sports, the news).

In Japan, television producers' grander ambitions for interactivity had long been stymied by technological limitations. Producers for Japan's public television network NHK (Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai) spoke to me of their 1990s vision of participation that could sculpt media content rather than just reacting to it, such as the 1993 *Kinmirai Terebi SIM*, described in chapter 2. Unlike participation that required physical presence in studios or the accompaniment of a roving camera, proposals for a contemporary adaptation of this vision captured the imaginations of Japanese media producers in the 2010s. Therein, producers hoped to marry the simultaneous collective participation made possible by the internet to a broader, more representative national public than was accessible to variety shows or "person on the street" interviews (*gaitō intabyū*, discussed in chapter 5).

This stage of evolution in the Japanese television industry was significant on a few fronts. A common assertion that television companies had, as of 2013, already appropriated social media in productive ways—essentially eliminating the tension between the two mediums—overestimated the transformative effects of program-related websites and tweeting.¹³ Rather, these efforts seemed little different from early efforts to extend television to the internet via home pages providing supplemental content in the form of resources, background information, and merchandise.¹⁴ Indeed, there was only token interactivity to be found in such efforts, as television used the web mainly as a means by which to transmit announcements and maintain its monodirectional format.

The many targeted surveys that circulated among media professionals during my fieldwork seemingly supported the move to interactive television by promoting methods to track internet use habits and formulate marketing strategies around them. One frequently invoked study emphasized several points that have become common industry knowledge since then: 1. Japanese iPhone and Android users accessed YouTube more frequently (measured both daily and weekly) than the official websites of television companies. 2. Social media use among smartphone users was dominated by the circulation of images (photographs or videos), but also the repost-

ing of content via sharing or retweeting. 3. Men continued to represent the largest number of cell phone users, but women, young people (in general), and—most importantly—television viewers were well represented.[15] These data were offered up either in defense of various strategies to increase viewership, or simply pro forma, following any number of NHK Research Institute talks. "Social TV" was born of such studies, which showed that desirable young audiences were spending most of their cell phone time interacting with friends, via SMS, Line, Instagram, MIXI, email, and so forth.[16] If 81 percent of smartphone users did not use their phones to watch television,[17] television would insinuate itself into their established behaviors.

The move toward interactive TV experimentation was therefore significant because it represented the most serious acknowledgment thus far that Japanese television considered its hegemony to be threatened by the internet. As an oligarchical system dominated by five major national broadcast networks, Japanese television was reliant on a share of the national audience that it seemed to be losing (see figure I.1). According to NHK's report, in the funding year 2009, the commercial networks entered into a decline in advertising revenue ranging from 8 to 16 percent (10 percent within five years)—a downward trajectory that has continued since then, with the exception of 2010.[18] Despite the introduction of mobile phone–viewable live TV back in 2006, television consumption outside of the home could not compensate for what was lost during home viewing.[19] These seemingly small shifts were uncomfortable for the industry—particularly as ratings were largely being buoyed up by senior citizens, whose consumer spending was insufficient to maintain comfortable and consistent advertising revenue for the networks.

The threat to TV viewership represented by social media notwithstanding, broadcast professionals working on interactive programming found hope in data from one of Japan's biggest advertising companies, Hakuhodo, which reported that during 2010–2013, consumers in the Tokyo metropolitan region maintained a steady amount of overall media "contact time" (*sesshoku jikan*)—and only 29.4 percent of audience members did not use their cell phones at all while watching TV.[20] In this, broadcast professionals perceived an opening: the potential to redirect the individual already holding their phone to a form of television that used both. Despite the finding by the same survey that in 2013, 69.7 percent of television viewers neither read nor wrote about programs while watching them, and only 50.8 percent had ever talked about TV on social media at all,[21] the basic profile of Japanese

HUT(全日)

1998年度下期, 45.7%

2018年度下期, 40.0%

2017年度上期, 40.3%

2011年度上期, 40.8%

2015年度上期, 40.3%

2017年度下期, 41.3%
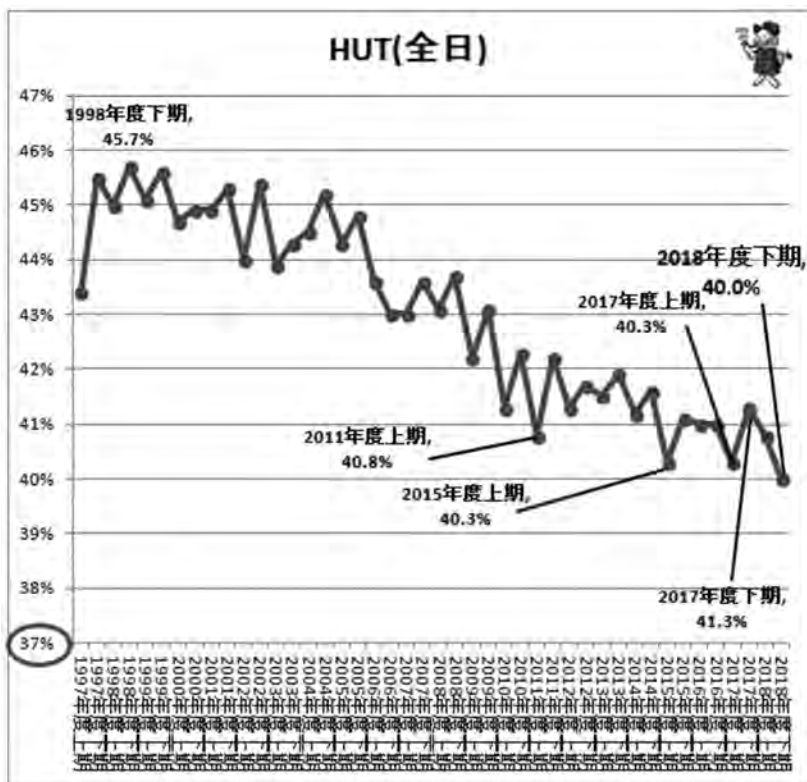
I.1 A chart indicating the decline of daily television viewership in Japan, measured by household.

social TV was conceived: it would involve users directly acting on TV content in real time using a second-screen device (smartphone, tablet, laptop/desktop computer)—or even a remote control due to Japan's data transmission infrastructure (*dēta hōsō*).[22] It would use social media to enable audiences to interact with broadcast content in a way that determined the final qualities of that content.

The new interactivity proposed, in its ideal form, to change the nature of authorship and respond to the most basic critiques of television as invested in audiences as passive and uncritical consumers. With his "100 million idiots" rhetoric, Ōya was in good company among intellectuals critical of television—a medium to which Frankfurt School theorists Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno easily applied their critique of the culture industry.[23] Echoed in recent arguments made by my fieldwork collabora-

tors, theoreticians have blamed both capitalism and a limited number of media conglomerates for the inherent conservatism of mass media content. Essays linking television to social decline (including, famously, Neil Postman's work[24]) have been abundant and frequently described the nature of TV content as inevitable/intrinsic to the medium, while neglecting to explore the professional praxis of media professionals and the agency of audiences. The project of marrying interactivity to live broadcast was promoted by media producers using some of the same arguments as intellectuals who have considered the medium harmful for encouraging passive consumption.[25] Producers framed the notion of involving audiences in coconstituted content as harnessing the pleasure of social media and enhancing it through connection to the single stage of television. As they appropriated the language of early internet development, Japanese TV networks delighted in the idea that the passive viewer could become the active coauthor, rendering television a democratic medium after all. That editorial control remained central to these projects was subsumed by idealistic discourse about a new, progressive kind of media subjectivity and reenergized audiences.

Those who wished to go beyond the limited interactivity of the past by more closely combining internet and TV content found themselves in a new experimental category with the potential to reconcile seemingly divergent modes of interacting with media content and increase ratings accordingly. But the emergent nature of these projects made it difficult to define "interactive television" and necessary to clarify the objectives behind the term "interactive" (usually anglicized as *intarakutibu*). Further ambiguating matters, media professionals also referred to their experiments as "social TV" (*sosharu terebi*), and I have used the terms interchangeably myself at times.[26] Reflecting earlier practices mentioned above, these names formerly either suggested television shows that allow viewers to call in and register votes or news programs that display Twitter comments along the bottom of their screens. But the new 2010s interactive television in Japan was different. New experiments were able to leap forward into allowing audiences to participate in content generation and "play along" with the programs.

Finally, concern about interactivity occurred during a significant moment of tension for both the news and entertainment sectors of the television industry as they fought to retain their role as chief architects of national publics. Compared to the greater capacity of online forums and social media to capture a range of national moods and concerns (and simply to function more democratically), television promoted a manicured,

well-mannered version of nationhood that many media makers outside the big conglomerates found increasingly irrelevant, if not harmful.

Historically, the TV industry had been protected from competition by a national requirement for broadcast licenses, which limited the total number of television channels. Thus, the internet represented a form of competition for audiences that TV was, in a sense, not accustomed to. In Ujiie Natsuhiko's phrasing, the privileged (*tokkenteki*) space of television infantilized it, allowing it to ignore the development of other media until "*terebi no kabe ga hōkaishi hajimete iru noda*" (the wall surrounding television is beginning to collapse).[27] That moment of collapse appeared imminent in the wake of the Fukushima disaster.

Publics and the News in Post-Fukushima Japan

On March 11, 2011, a magnitude 9.0 earthquake near East Japan triggered a tsunami and subsequently caused a massive nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. The human impact as well as the historical significance of these events was enormous—the earthquake was the strongest ever recorded in Japan, and the nuclear disaster was categorized alongside Chernobyl as the worst to have ever occurred in the world.[28]

In the months after the Fukushima disaster, domestic news coverage highlighted order-in-chaos, focusing on the choice of individuals to reinforce and restore social order as efficiently as possible through mass cooperation, self-restraint (from looting and theft), etc. At the same time, lateral communications allowed individuals to bypass official news, which tended to be both too general and too cautious, in order to exchange information of immediate importance (e.g., open supermarkets and places to bathe).[29] This diversion of normal information flows was significant because Japan's TV news landscape is dominated by five major national networks.[30] The five major broadcasters in Japan (TV Asahi, Fuji TV, NTV, TBS, and public broadcaster NHK) operate "key" stations in Tokyo and provide content to regional channels, with the identity of those stations conventionally determined by the network whose news broadcast they use. Broadcast law prohibits local channels from having an exclusive relationship with any one key station (i.e., establishing affiliates), but partner stations generally source 80 percent of their content from a single Tokyo key station.[31] As Palestinian-Japanese journalist Shigenobu May wrote, "3/11" and the Arab Spring of 2010 contained some basic parallels, insofar as citizens bypassed or supplemented mass media in favor of social media–driven information

exchange. In both cases, the major media outlets largely sought to manage and contain the crises and were accordingly considered untrustworthy—too proximate to a coercive governmental infrastructure.[32]

The disruption that occurred in the early 2010s cannot be properly appreciated without understanding how political journalism, and specifically TV news journalism, functions in Japan. Political scientist Laurie Freeman has noted, "The reality in Japan . . . is that the mass media have frequently worked together with, or on behalf of the political core—capturing, subverting, misleading, or alternately ignoring the political periphery represented by the public sphere."[33] This is endemic to Japan's oft-critiqued *kisha kurabu* (reporter's club) system. As has been well documented, reporters from all the major newspapers and television networks who are assigned to a particular post work within one shared office/room in the government/corporate buildings, are subjected to reductive official sources of information at periodic intervals, often exclude the foreign and independent press, and punish deviation from the official story.[34] In other words, rather than ostensibly serving audiences in the traditionally monodirectional sense, journalism, particularly under the Abe Shinzo administration, strove to meet the needs and expectations politicians had for its platform.[35]

Following 3/11, tensions between political parties and the mass media in Japan heightened, and the Japanese political system increasingly indulged in performances of power over television and newspapers. Among several such incidents, in 2013 the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) announced that it would boycott TBS after one of its programs aired a clean energy activist's critical report on the party's energy policies. While the party claimed to have no issues with the factual content of the report, it commented that the "editorial presentation" was problematic and that the party could not allow TBS to "cunningly highlight a negative image of our party."[36] TV Asahi and NHK have endured similar friction and meddling from the government.[37]

Post-Fukushima, journalistic circles acknowledged that (then) prime minister Abe Shinzo's second administration was determined to foster a hostile relationship with the Japanese media.[38] This relationship only worsened in the years after the disaster, with the administration encouraging reporters to neutralize their work for fear of losing access to sources—or their job.[39] Requests made of television broadcasters—for example, to cover the party fairly—were taken as veiled threats that they must do so, and journalists who critiqued the Abe administration faced institutional repercussions, including transfers and personal blacklisting. As Abe's appointee to the chairmanship of Japan's public broadcaster NHK pronounced

during his first press conference in 2015: "[The media] cannot say left when the government says right."[40]

Thus, when I arrived in the immediate post-Fukushima era to begin preliminary fieldwork, the word "crisis" (*kuraishisu*) was frequently invoked to describe the condition of journalism, which many people told me had finally crossed over from a "system in need of reform" to a "system putting citizens at risk." In parallel, it was of great interest to self-proclaimed "media activist" Tsuda Daisuke that while an estimated one-third to one-half of Japanese computer users engaged with any form of social media, Twitter use had expanded dramatically between 2010 and 2012 as individuals sought alternative means by which to exchange written and visual information.[41] (Japan has remained one of the strongest Twitter markets in the world.[42]) As a result, throughout the 2010s, media activists perceived social media in Japan as entering a period of great potential as a tool for social reform. What media activists considered mass media's unconscionable habit of information withholding inspired them to go beyond their usual punditry to form media watchdog organizations and to provide alternate information channels for others who felt they could no longer trust the mass media.[43] This acted as the rallying cry around which several online news organizations formed and initially generated a pool of sympathetic donors. These independent media startups would try to serve the public with news content more worthy of their attention, and their approach sought to interpolate the public, via internet-based communications technologies, as citizens in a democratic process of political dialog and engagement.

The Interactive Public Will Save Television

Meanwhile, long before the 3/11 disasters, television industry professionals were sounding the death knell for their medium. As early as 2001, former Fuji TV producer Ōta Tōru had identified one of the main tensions surrounding the medium, stating that Fuji TV and networks like NTV and TBS had been repeatedly doing the same thing for ten years—and within his genre ("trendy" dramas), the formula had already been exploited to exhaustion.[44] Television, he argued, is a medium that "sleeps with the times," meaning that it surrenders itself to contemporary trends rather than leading them.[45] During my fieldwork, people in the industry whispered conspiratorially to me that average citizens would never see the collapse coming, and society would carry on until—as in the case of the 2008 global banking crisis—its inevitability exceeded the industry's capacity for containment.

Such theories were born of television's declining advertising revenue, and of an increasing amount of time spent by audiences using social media at the expense of TV time.[46] As previously described, many decided that a solution was to marry the interactivity made possible with social media to the flatness of TV—to reengage internet audiences in television content. But the pursuit of interactivity was also seen as an antidote to another significant transformation of television watching after the 1990s: the disappearance of national publics unified by consuming the same content.

Although Japan is globally known as a leader in the development of broadcast technology, the nuances of how broadcasting works domestically and the historical culture surrounding television are less widely known. The idea of television as something consumed collectively and ritualistically dominated Japan's thinking about the medium during the early days of television technology. A philosophy of television emerged not just from the equipment being too expensive for most consumers but from a related notion of ideal consumption patterns revolving around total numbers of viewers rather than individual TV sets. As such, Shoriki Matsutaro, the president of the *Yomiuri Shinbun* (newspaper) and Japan's first commercial television network (NTV), focused on installing televisions in public places (so-called *gaito terebi*), from street corners to train stations.[47] Bars, restaurants, and barber shops gradually followed suit as spaces of television consumption, and the Japanese press celebrated the public embrace of this mode of viewing when more than twenty thousand people gathered to publicly consume a single sumo match in 1953. It was between 1956 and 1960 that television viewing relocated from the public to the private sphere, largely in response to the fledgling industry's sensationalism about Crown Prince Akihito's engagement and frenetic promotion of his 1959 wedding as a massive broadcast event. Their campaign ultimately succeeded, as two million people hurriedly purchased television sets at newly lowered prices and established an estimated at-home market of fifteen million viewers for the fifty-minute wedding parade.

The 1960s set a rapid pace for ongoing technological experimentation and development, as Japanese television anticipated the 1964 Tokyo Olympics by importing American hardware and then independently developing color and satellite broadcasts.[48] A massively communal home viewing experience, the resultant broadcast was a performance of miraculous postwar recovery and sophisticated technological development, which has ostensibly been sustained in the still-potent connection between Japanese national pride and global performances of technological innovation.

Yet my interlocutors inside and outside of the broadcast corporations found it frustrating that despite this continuing emphasis on technological prowess, the Japanese television industry has remained conservative about content development. For decades, producers created programming to appeal to entire families who gathered around a single TV set in the medium's *cha no ma* heyday (see chapter 1). But individual ownership of mobile devices with fast data transmission and streaming content had broken the family into siloed viewing units with greater choice over what they watched and less dependence on television. And yet, Japanese television remained hesitant to change its formulas. In the area of news programming, one reason was that television networks, which are also newspaper and radio station owners, have been consistently challenged to protect the interests of both their print and broadcast journalism markets. As summarized by behavioral scientist Eleanor Westney, this has meant that the broadcast divisions of these conglomerates are dependent on the journalistic efforts and resources of their print counterparts and deliberately retard their broadcast divisions to avoid competition between the two for audiences.[49] The second source of recalcitrance for the TV industry can be found in its emphasis on broadcasting to a national body, for which it has struggled to translate legacy forms of content to contemporary viewing habits.[50] One might expect the country's experiments with interactive TV to follow reliable patterns, to overlay conventional taxonomies onto new technologies—and indeed, this is what happened.

Besides formal news programs, the oligarchical broadcast system remains dominated by a combination of morning shows (*jōhō bangumi*), variety shows (*waido shō*), dramas, and special events. Given widespread perceptions of repetitive and undesirable content dominating the country's mass media, I was not surprised when a former employee of Hakuhodo (the second-largest advertising firm in Japan and eighth in the world) mused during my interview with him:

> "There is NHK, there is TBS, TV Asahi, there is Fuji TV, there is NTV. Five stations is probably too many . . . too many.[51] And so they all make inane (*kudaranai*) programs, so I'm thinking that maybe two or three will disappear or become specialty channels. Like one for variety, one for sports. Maybe they can change in that way . . . [Japan has] BS channels, cable, and on-demand viewing, and I think people are going to increasingly move to watching those. I admit that I want a news-only channel. It's weird that Japan has five networks, eh?"[52]

Attempts to keep costs down while appealing to the most desirable consumer demographics raised their own set of tensions. During my preliminary fieldwork, long-standing tensions between Japan and Korea and perceptions of Fuji TV's increasing reliance on imported Korean dramas led to protests involving thousands of people outside the network's Odaiba headquarters, which I waded through on my way into the offices.[53] Although content decisions like these were generally made for budget reasons during this era of "TV recession" (*terebi fukyō*), some audiences were unsympathetic to financial arguments.

The methods by which Japanese television and media producers heralded the interactivity of experimental 2010s programming highlighted the recalcitrance of the industry there. The closer that diverse audience voices came to the threshold of gatekeeping, the more marginalized a broadcast was. This meant that the shows featuring the coolest tech and encouraging active participation confined that participation to a very limited number of actions and restricted commenting to a dedicated app or mobile responsive website. However, the ambitions of producers generally exceeded the outcomes of these programs. What they were permitted to accomplish within the context of media conglomerates, or the smaller platforms of independent media groups, was heavily compromised. The most compelling experimentalism was therefore often found less in these outcomes of professional labor than in the conversations held behind the scenes—at networking events, in production meetings, on filming trips, and in studios during a broadcast.

Open and Closed Systems: Independent vs. Mainstream Broadcast

Two very different media sectors—mainstream broadcast television and independent news media agencies—were therefore seeking new publics at the same time, but to serve different ends. For TV, it was to secure the role of the industry (and its financial health) into the future, but for news journalism, it was to generate an engaged political citizenry. Nonetheless, both considered their efforts a radical shift away from a media system intent on prescribing content, to one that engages audiences' participation in customizing and curating their own media experiences. Experiments with interactivity in both sectors had in common their goal of reforming the content and media practices of conventional broadcast TV and reframing the role of audiences. This book ultimately chronicles ad hoc interventions

by my interlocutors rather than a comprehensive policy of change within the industry. Indeed, the resource-intensiveness of interactive programming and limited motivation to normalize it relegated the technology to "special events" and/or alternative media outlets rather than representing a new direction for mass media. Yet its authors remained ambitious, and at the heart of their labor was an idealistic desire to transcend the stifling monodirectionality of the producer-audience relationship.

It is this tension between a willingness to readily experiment with new kinds of television technology and a disinclination to depart from proven formats of programming that makes television in Japan especially interesting. Within the immediate post-3/11 climate, some in Japan feared that theirs was a system that would always favor displays of technical innovation over meaningful reform of problematic institutions like the long-standing *kisha kurabu* system. Yet as the media activists who emerged during this time argued, the transformation of problematic institutions and conventions required rethinking the interaction between mass media producers and publics. In particular, Ujiie Natsuhiko, a frequent contributor to one of the blogs written for and by industry insiders, commented that television companies must evolve from media companies to media *service* companies and update their conceptualization of viewers to the category of users.[54] Although this process was often conceived by media producers in terms of economics or technological affordances, it also could not help but be thoroughly social and cultural—and these competing needs often worked at cross-purposes with what they sought to achieve.

If studying the production processes taught me anything, it was that experiments in interactive broadcast rarely fell into neatly defined theoretical or aspirational categories. Japan, like other countries that have attempted to bring TV into the internet age, has experienced incongruent development of technological, economic, political, and creative infrastructures and ideologies, leading to projects that were low-tech but conceptually ambitious and vice versa. Fieldwork also taught me that perceptions of Japanese mass media were remarkably consistent among those holding positions of power in TV companies, contractors working for them, and self-labeled "independent" journalists. Apart from cynicism, there was a combination of giddy exhilaration and anxiety among interactive TV advocates and media reformers alike, with the Fukushima disaster reviving sentiments that something should change. Although Henry Jenkins once wrote that, "despite the rhetoric about 'democratizing television,' [the shift toward participatory media] is being driven by economic calculations and
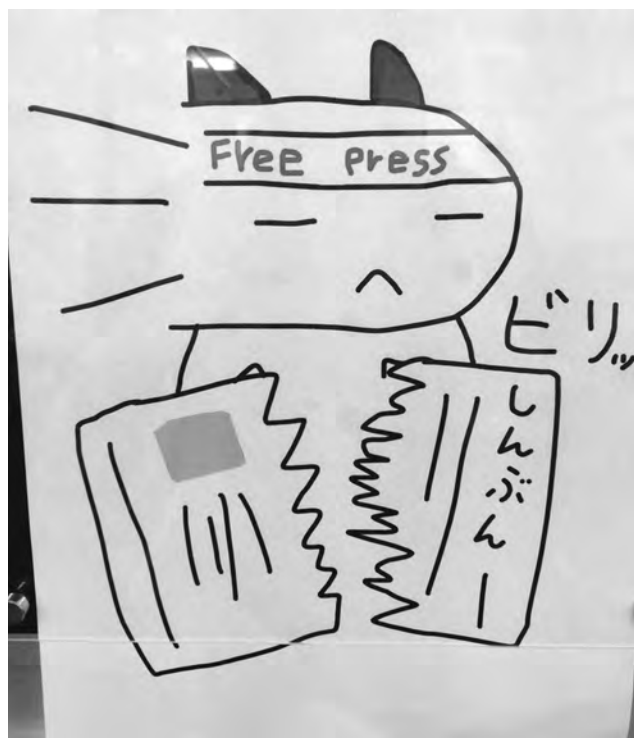
1.2 A doodle posted on a wall in the Free Press Association of Japan's office, showing a cat ripping up a newspaper. Photo by author.

not by some broad mission to empower the public,"[55] this was not necessarily how individual Japanese TV producers and journalists saw it.

This book is an attempt to understand the stakes of work within Japanese mass media (television and journalism) during a critical time in its development, by exploring how idealistic stakeholders attempted to force fundamental changes in the way their news and entertainment divisions produced content and engaged audiences. Some of these stakeholders are the industry insiders—a cross section of business and creative players who are working to construct and introduce provocative new television technology within the mainstream TV industry, to fulfill the promise of interactivity suggested by early experiments in symbiotic content and inspired by the rise of internet use in the 1990s. Their projects, which frequently draw on traditional Japanese programmatic themes and formats, are using cutting-edge technology to "turn viewers into users," to allow audiences to cocreate

content and narratives as this new genre of television unfolds live. The other stakeholders are the independent media activists and media startups composed predominantly of disaffected former industry employees, as well as some media industry hopefuls who could not (for reasons that frequently amount to insufficient educational credentials in status-conscious Japan) gain employment by the companies and corporations represented by the technologically minded first category. For this group, technological transformation is an issue of lesser concern than their project of comprehensive ethical reform, and their efforts are largely based on a strategy of creating alternate media spaces in which audiences are encouraged to become content creators—or at least participants in nonmainstream production spaces—to increase the diversity of voices represented in the public sphere(s). What emerges from these two overlapping spaces of media practice is a portrait of interactivity in television as less of a breakthrough of technology than one of social and cultural connection, latently centered on the relationship between media creator and audience.

The Fieldwork That Made This Book

Push the Button is the outcome of eighteen months of fieldwork conducted within several categories of Tokyo-based sites (with some detours to Aomori, Nagoya, and Osaka) and using a full arsenal of ethnographic tools to track media makers across their many sites of professional activity. My field sites included all the major broadcast networks (although I spent the most time at two of them), one radio station, two affiliated television production companies, and the offices of five independent media startups (the Free Press Association of Japan aka *Jiyū Hōdō Kyōkai*, No Border, Independent Web Journal [IWJ], Our Planet-TV, and GoHoo aka *Masukomi Gohō Kenshō*).⁵⁶ I also held an internship at the company responsible for most of the interactive and social television programming that aired during my fieldwork (Bascule) and visited the offices of the other for interviews. Further, I made myself a regular at as many media research presentations as I could attend and at many independent media events that were supported by those at my startup field sites or involved members of these. Indeed, to echo a fellow anthropologist of Japan, Ian Condry, "the number of potential field sites was daunting."⁵⁷ To follow the activities of freelance journalists and TV insiders pushing for experimentation with interactive broadcast, I attempted to spend an equivalent amount of time each week embedded in

the offices and production sites of both categories of media, dividing my time in half whenever events schedules and interviews allowed it. I also had to engage in digital ethnography, following the communications of media stakeholders and the contributions of anonymous web users on 2chan and NicoNico,[58] but I viewed this process as secondary to understanding the production culture of different kinds of interactive media authors through participation in their work-worlds.

This project, therefore, represents "polymorphous engagement" of the type envisioned by anthropologist Hugh Gusterson, who understood through experience how creative researchers must be when approaching fieldwork in restricted corporate environments.[59] Competition between networks meant that management at each tended to be extremely sensitive to the idea that I was doing fieldwork with their competitors, and they consistently asked me to refrain from directly comparing institutional climates and resources. In other words, a scarcity mindset informed the way networks appraised one another. And mass media is always a moving target; as Mark Deuze notes, "The key challenge of communication and media studies in the 21st century is, or will be, the disappearance of media."[60] Indeed, this book chronicles attempts to push back against the extinction of media forms by coaxing them into a new hybrid form that conventional, monodirectional television has since outlived.

I focus on media producers to examine how the communities responsible for broadcast content experience their work as a social process, part of an ongoing conversation with and about audiences and themselves.[61] While textual analysis of media products and audience surveys/reception studies are relatively commonplace, there remains even now a paucity of lengthy workplace studies involving the media makers themselves—particularly in East Asian countries. Criticism by parties not privy to internal media industry dialog has rendered TV professionals either caricatures lacking the sophistication to understand the ramifications of formulaic programming, or sinister actors plotting the obfuscation of politically sensitive information. While early media research focused on consumption and circulation, the practices of institutions themselves remained black boxes that "menace[d] democracy and local individual autonomy."[62] It is easier, when one excludes the voices of broadcast professionals, to assess television as a coherent body with a uniform set of values and messages—to write about it as a sophisticated and even Orwellian behemoth slyly coaxing citizens into desired political positions or lulling them into indifference. The reality

is, of course, much messier. If media scholarship allows audiences to act as opinion-having bodies for whom dis/pleasure is a viable response, it must also allow broadcasters to engage emotionally with their work and recognize the institutional limitations compromising their vision. Just as reception studies have granted us access to the worlds of audiences and permitted us to understand them as active decoders of media messages, ethnographic accounts of media workplaces have taught us that the world of production is no less negotiated.[63] An accurate and three-dimensional theory of mass media must account for the messiness of being a viewer, as well as what it means to be a producer under similar circumstances, *and* acknowledge that audiences are shaped both by producers' conceptualizations of them and their self-perception relative to interactive technologies.

Fieldwork for this project has generally been a collaborative endeavor involving interlocutors with educational backgrounds that resembled my own and who periodically invoked canonical media theory to explain their decision-making. (Favorites included the Frankfurt School theorists and Marshall McLuhan, whom some deployed self-deprecatingly to illustrate the compromises inherent to their work.) Following Laura Nader's canonical treatise on "studying up," through which she illuminated the tensions inherent in conducting fieldwork among those with greater social power, Ulf Hannerz characterized research on media professionals as "studying sideways." Under such conditions, the ethnographer is among subjects who often possess similar credentials and (sometimes greater) cultural capital than the anthropologist and are accustomed to critically assessing and reproducing culture themselves.[64] Studying educated elites introduces particular anxiety; by anthropologist Maureen Mahon's account, such subjects are complicated targets, not easily fixed spatiotemporally or theoretically due to their self-awareness, mobility, and mediation.[65] As such, I have sometimes engaged in subsequent chapters with the arguments of classic theorists invoked by my interlocutors, as a way of thinking with them as collaborators and to better represent their perspectives on what they may have been trying to achieve. References to Western models (infrastructural, or of content) as ideals of media practice also came up often in my conversations with Japanese interactive TV and news media producers, although it was not always clear the extent to which my presence elicited these references or to what extent such references were a part of everyday praxis.

A tendency for Japanese TV producers to invoke the US industry as a foil for their systems has therefore informed my juxtaposition of the two markets, though there are many countries whose infrastructure more

closely approximates Japan's. The American broadcast model was held up as an ideal by my collaborators, as the United States moved toward high-budget cinematic shows in the *Game of Thrones* era and embraced smart TVs with on-demand streaming apps. Differences in broadcast infrastructure have contributed to the divergence between the US and Japanese industries. For one, an American cable TV model that never gained traction in Japan prompted the US industry to segment audiences into niches early on and target them accordingly.[66] While networks in Japan may not have to compete with as many rivals, they also lack the budgets of their American counterparts or the expectation that their shows are destined for global consumption. Japanese television was also engaged in ongoing collaboration with its American counterpart that surpassed its relationships with the media of any other country and contributed to a transnational negotiation about versions of interactivity that could appropriate and integrate American social media platforms. Thus, when I do bring the United States into the conversation, it is an attempt to connect to a dialog I began during my fieldwork and have maintained from afar since then.

Matters of theory and structure, therefore, motivate my engagement with the 1980s–90s debates in anthropology regarding the benefits of reconstituting ethnography as more "discourse" than "text"—as "postmodern" ethnography meant to function as a dialog rather than a monolog and as a product of collaboration with the individuals whose lifeworlds we visit[67]—were especially salient in my work with critical theory–savvy media professionals. Approached in this way, the resultant project is cooperative, with the anthropologist's impressions of another culture complicated by those of its most mediated representatives.

How to Use This Book

This is ultimately a book about the meaning of interactivity and the ways that different Japanese business/cultural sites of production and television/journalistic modes of practice informed the ways that interactive content fulfilled its potential (positive and negative) or laid the groundwork for a more participatory, inclusive mass media in the future. It is also a book about the catalysts for such efforts, ranging from anxiety over young audiences' lack of engagement with TV content in Japan to a feeling that television would never choose audience interests over those of sponsors when curating the news. What each of the projects and organizations in this book sought, even more than opportunities for technological innovation,

was a chance to build spaces of social and cultural connection for audiences (and latently, between audiences and media producers).

Push the Button as a title refers to a few different concepts. Chiefly, it is the mediated moment between the media author, user, and platform captured within each of the projects described here. These broadcasts employed mobile responsive user interfaces that solicited repeat touch in different ways: to keep time to a beat, race a spaceship, vote in a game, or tap a Like button. Indeed, interaction design revolves around such "button moments," to the extent that they are a topic of significant user experience–related commentary.[68] Buttons as a component of technology occupy a particular space in our imaginations, as the final catalysts allowing a tool to carry out its function. Buttons sit at a crossroads between kinetic and potential energy for those who will use them and act as a point of intersection between the authors and users of tools. They are the locus of the connection sought by media creators and are subject to as many negotiations as the programs themselves. While this book places media makers at the forefront of its examination, the imperative "push the button" represents hope as much as a command. The semiotic power of buttons is such that they serve as conduits for users' needs and expressions of their behavior within systems.

The projects described here represent a metaphorical "pushing of buttons" for those who saw only risk in allowing greater participation in the flow of broadcast. Further, the phrase "push the button" points to the convergence of media users, mediating technology, and media makers and evokes the feelings of apprehension and instability introduced by such buttons. All the interactive broadcast events described in this book were indeed anxiously unpredictable in their unfolding and represented attempts to strike a balance between intimacy and collective effervescence, to harness the different kinds of affective experiences possible for members of a virtual crowd. Several underlying questions seemed to drive these anxieties: Would new kinds of publics emerge from these experiments? Would these publics save television from its financial difficulties or rescue democracy from a stifling journalistic environment? Or would they produce other kinds of publics entirely?

The experiments addressed here account for the ways that participation is negotiated by audiences and producers of mass media—as creators and cocreators alike. Each chapter tracks the development and execution of a specific interactive project, locates it within the context of Japan's mass media history, and examines the outcomes of its production and

its implication for the future of participatory, community media. Chapter 1 discusses the media industry reception of one famously ambitious interactive TV experiment, a joint NHK-NTV special titled *60 Ban Shōbu* (60-year battle), held in honor of Japanese TV broadcast's sixtieth anniversary. Based on my participation in trade events around Tokyo, the conversations I document show how the Japanese TV industry continues to contend with issues of ratings and profitability, even as media producers seek to align with audiences' current media practices in ways that could revolutionize the television industry. Chapter 2 follows by examining an experimental interactive news talk show on Fuji TV called *The Compass*, which allowed audiences to make live contributions to its discussions. Despite the idealistic orientation of many TV producers about the benefits of introducing more diverse voices into news commentary, the show's potential was handicapped by traditional forms of gatekeeping, even as the informality facilitated by some of its information channels promised to create intimacy between media maker and audience, and between audience members themselves.

In chapter 3, I move to a discussion of independent news startups to examine the ways that interactivity as an ideal extended beyond the television studios to a form of self-described "media activism" deployed to revitalize the body politic. In this chapter we see what happens when media producers' gatekeeping is restrained on public platforms that strive to be truly interactive, the consequences of which included the migration of an aggressive internet right-wing (*netto uyoku*) presence to these participatory channels. Independent journalists using interactivity to promote more equitable journalism are shown in this chapter to occupy a liminal position between media maker, audience, and technology. Chapter 4 traces some of the most ambitious interactive TV experiences in the major broadcast networks: interactive game shows. Focused on using interactivity to create community around a sense of national belonging, these experiments were surprisingly successful at introducing familiar concepts of national homogeneity into innovative contexts, but in so doing they treated audiences reductively and deprived them of meaningful intimacy within interactive spaces.

Finally, in chapter 5 I follow Our Planet-TV, an organization devoted to citizen journalism, as a participant in one of its training workshops. Based on my experiences with our group documentary project, I explore the perspectives held by both producers and audience members about media production and the shared vocabulary they use to communicate their goals.

I also evaluate Our Planet-TV's efforts to teach authorship to media audiences and describe how participants in its workshops draw substantially on their own past media exposure to create content that feels authentic. As the final body chapter of the book, this chapter shows that interactivity is ultimately a dialectic between media makers as creators and audiences as receivers. In the practice of citizen journalism, media maker and audience member engage as parts of a single self.

NOTES

Introduction

1 Information about Bascule, Inc. can be found at "Play with Future," Bascule, https://bascule.co.jp.

2 TVMANUNION, "Kigyō Rinen." Also, see chapter 2, where I discuss this subcontracting relationship from the perspective of the subcontractors.

3 Hagimoto, Muraki, and Konno, *Tada no Genzai ni Suginai*. This manifesto's title is also translated in English as "You Are Nothing but the Present"; Gerow, "Film to Television."

4 Sas, "Culture Industries" 237.

5 Konno, "Kanōsei no Teiji ni Mukatte," 91.

6 Chun, *Hundred Million*, 6.

7 Uesugi, *Kokka no Haji*. The full title is *Kokka no haji: Ichioku sō Sen'nō-ka no Shinjitsu Tankō* (National shame: The truth about the brainwashing of 100 million people). Uesugi-san was a big part of my fieldwork, as seen especially in chapter 3.

8 I am referring here to the 2003 Sofia Coppola film, which portrays fading celebrity Bob Harris (played by Bill Murray) visiting Tokyo to appear in Suntory whisky commercials and make appearances on Japanese television. One of the themes of this movie is essentially that Japanese television is incomprehensible to non-Japanese.

9 *Los Angeles Times*, "Japanese Journalist."

10 Clammer, "Consuming Bodies," 197.

11 Carpentier, "Concept of Participation."

12 McKenna, *Real People*, xxxiv.

13 Nishida, "Terebi to Sōsharumedia."

14 Hartley, "Republic of Letters."

15 NHK Hōsō Bunka Kenkyūjo, "2013-Nen Kenkyū."

16 Hakuhodo-DYMedia-Partners, *Sumātofon no Fukyū*. Also, this has continued to be true according to more recent studies like the one cited in the next endnote. Korean parent company Naver's messaging software Line exploded in popularity during my fieldwork (2012–13), largely because it was ahead of other communication tools in allowing users to send "sticker" reaction images to one another and to easily send messages internationally.

17 Video Research Co. Ltd., "Media Teiten Chōsa."

18 Morofuji and Watanabe, *Changes and Trends*.

19 This remains true despite mobile viewing ventures like TVer, which was launched in 2015.

20 Hakuhodo-Co. Ltd., *Seikatsu-Sha*.

21 Hakuhodo-Co. Ltd., *Seikatsu-Sha*, 5.

22 *Dēta hōsō* (data broadcast) provides a separate "layer" to Japanese broadcast which, without requiring an internet connection, allows viewers to access specific information on demand, such as the weather, natural disaster information, or one's horoscope. Individual programs, like QB47, also use *dēta hōsō* for quizzes and other bonus program-related content, and such content may be engaged via remote control. For more information on the technology, see NHK's What Is *Dēta hōsō*? website, https://www.nhk.or.jp/data/about/.

23 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 97. A useful summary of the relationship between the Frankfurt School and television can be found in Kellner, "Critical Perspectives."

24 Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*.

25 For a thorough discussion of these positions, see Schultz, "Concept of Interactivity," 206.

26 Rodwell, "Machine without the Ghost."

27 Ujiie, "Terebi no Mirai."

28 McCurry, "Japan."

29 Tsuda, *Dōin no Kakumei*, 168.

30 For comprehensive histories of the Japanese television industry see Chun, *Hundred Million*; Ivy, "Formations of Mass Culture"; Moeran, *Advertising*.

31 Cooper-Chen, *Mass Communication*, 5.

32 Shigenobu, *Arabu no Haru*.

33 Freeman, "Mobilizing and Demobilizing," 236.

34 Borowiec, "Writers of Wrongs"; Freeman, "Mobilizing and Demobilizing"; Kingston, "Watchdog Journalism"; Krauss, "Portraying the State"; Snow, "NHK, Abe and the World."

35 Kingston, "Watchdog Journalism"; Mulgan, "Media Muzzling."

36 Sekiguchi, "Japanese Politicians," paras. 5, 6.

37 Mulgan, "Media Muzzling"; Nakano, "Right-Wing Media."

38 Kingston, *Press Freedom*; Mulgan, "Media Muzzling." During the editing process for this chapter in 2022, Abe Shinzo was assassinated by a man named Tetsuya Yamagami using a homemade gun. That this could happen during a media event is of little surprise to those who have participated in them. The security at outdoor events especially was generally minimal.

39 Borowiec, "Writers of Wrongs," 49; Fackler, "Silencing."

40 Sieg, "Japanese Media Self-Censorship," para. 7.

41 Tsuda, *Dōin no Kakumei.*

42 eMarketer, "Strongest Markets."

43 This process foreshadowed the media climate in the contemporary United States.

44 Ōta, "Producing."

45 Ōta, "Producing," 79.

46 Ujiie, "Terebi o Minai."

47 NTV began broadcasting on August 28, 1953, months after public broadcaster NTV went on air on February 1, 1953. At the time only 866 television sets existed in Tokyo. Thus, as I describe in chapter 1, the two networks banded together to celebrate their sixtieth anniversary on February 1, 2013. Yoshimi, "Japanese Television," 540; Chun, *Hundred Million*, 109.

48 Stronach, "Japanese Television."

49 In the 1970s Kanai Nobutaka, the chairman of Fuji TV, criticized Japan's newspapers for the ramifications of this setup and claimed that the newspapers had prevented Japanese television from modernizing by protecting their own interests (see Westney, "Mass Media.") In solidarity with Kanai's assessment, industry insiders overwhelmingly gestured to the example of TBS (Tokyo Broadcasting System), whose capacity to aggressively engage new media trends was seen to be a result of comparatively weak ties to its parent company's newspaper, *Mainichi Shinbun*—which suffered from systemic financial problems that made it undesirable for its parent company to privilege it to the detriment of TBS. Indeed, by 1990 TBS's news department, TNS (Tokyo News Service), was the largest among the commercial broadcasters, able to pay the equivalent of US$12 million to send one of its TV news reporters, Akiyama Toyohiro, aboard a Russian spacecraft as Japan's first citizen in space. The resultant broadcast netted ratings of around 36 percent (Times Wire Service).

50 At the same time, Japanese television was reliably risk averse even when it came to areas less concerned with nationalistic pride. It endures what anthropologists Dominic Boyer and Cymene Howe have referred to, quoting Alexi Yurchak, as "hypernormalization" ("Portable Analytics," 12), preferring to recirculate texts that have at one point proven themselves effective and to engage in experimentation only within designated zones (such as the predictably unpredictable stunts seen on variety shows). Professionalization of TV content creators demands integration of the status quo and competent performance of representational habitus and rewards

those who best perform relative originality within accepted framing by elevating them in a rigid system of institutional rank. In other words, something of the autopoietic nature of television can be found in the production process itself. In John Caldwell's assessment, television is engaged in a constant self-referential process of metacritique, with each new product in conversation with those of the past. The insularity of Japanese television made this especially true (*Production Culture*, 1).

51 These are the national stations. In Tokyo there is also TV Tokyo, for example. An enduring impression that Fuji TV is anti-Japanese, driven by online disinformation campaigns about its relationship with Korean content, has affected perceptions of the network and resulted in it being ranked least favorably in public opinion polls (Yoshino, "Fuji wa Naze," para. 5). If this was Fuji TV's reputation despite its ownership of the conversative newspaper *Sankei Shinbun*, the other networks responsible for what has been sardonically labeled "*masugomi*"—a play on the words for mass communication (*masukomi*) and trash (*gomi*)—haven't fared much better. Although characterization of each network naturally depends on who you ask, public broadcaster NHK typically performs the best in public sentiment for its ambitious documentaries, despite recognition of its institutional conservatism (Yahoo.jp, "Geneki Terebi"; Onecareer.jp, "Gyōkai Kenkyū"). Of the others, NTV is identified in audience surveys for wide-ranging programming and for its investment in new technologies (e.g., it bought Hulu Japan). TV Asahi in turn is identified with sports and a tendency to follow rather than lead, and TBS is known for its drama series.

52 Interview, November 1, 2012.

53 Yoshino, *Fujiterebi wa Naze*.

54 Ujiie, "Terebi no Mirai."

55 Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 243.

56 In the interest of protecting my hosts at each of these networks, who have asked me not to identify their workplaces by name, I am obscuring locations in this text as much as possible when referring to conversations with individuals.

57 Condry, *Hip-Hop*, 6.

58 I discuss NicoNico in depth in chapter 2, and 2chan in chapter 3.

59 Gusterson, "Studying Up Revisited," 116.

60 Deuze, "Media Life," 137.

61 For more on some of the theory that informed this approach, see Postill, "Introduction."

62 Stocker, "Yoshimoto Kogyo and Manzai," 247.

63 Pharr, "Media," 37; Postill, "Introduction."

64 Hannerz, "Transnationals."

65 Mahon, "Cultural Producers."

66 For a comprehensive look at market segmentation in Japan, see Lukács, *Scripted Affects*.

67 Behar and Gordon, *Women Writing Culture*; Clifford and Marcus, *Writing Culture*.

68 User experience professionals talk about buttons a lot, including reflections on best practices for default states, appearance, placement, and so forth.

1. The Interactive Consumer-Viewer

1 Chun, *Hundred Million*; Stronach, "Japanese Television."

2 Sakai Osamu explains why this button is not the "*ii ne*" (いいね) of Facebook, but a katana "*ii*" (イイ), using the syllabary that is traditionally reserved for foreign loan words in Japanese. He writes: "It's not '*ii ne*' [in hiragana], it's '*ii*' in katakana, because Japan's Kenjiro Takayanagi, the developer of the cathode-ray tube television system, first used it to transmit a katakana '*i*'" (Sakai, Terebi wa Terebi, para. 9).

3 Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai, "Sōsharumedia."

4 Buschow, Schneider, and Ueberheide, "Tweeting Television"; Giglietto and Selva, "Second Screen and Participation"; Harrington, Highfield, and Bruns, "Backchannel."

5 Chun, *Hundred Million*, 44.

6 The STSK has since changed its name. I am declining to mention the new name here, as the group is private on social media. The ways that the STSK talked about television's potential and its future echoed the ideas of the pioneering collective TV (*Terebi*) Man Union in the 1970s. This group of former TBS network producers also authored an influential 1969 book of broadcast theory: *Omae wa tada no Genzai ni Suginai: Terebi ni Nani ga Kanō ka?* (You Are Just the Present: What Is Possible for Television?). The book was reissued in 2008 for its fortieth anniversary. Current TV Man Union members are still active in television thought leadership and attend STSK meetings.

7 These were the figures circulating around Tokyo in 2013. Also see Citation Japan Co., Ltd., "Terebi to Sōsharumedia."

8 "*Terebi shichouritsu to sosharu media (SNS to ka) o tsukainagara, terebi o miru koto no percento wa kankei ga arimasen ka?*"

9 Yamamoto, "Shibaitai."

10 NHK, "Terebi Hōsō."

11 See Allison, *Precarious Japan*.

12 Gaia Co. Ltd., "2020-Nen 5 Tsuki Kōshin."

13 Sakai, *Ikinokoreru*.

14 Sakai, *Ikinokoreru*.

15 The Gyao website can still be found at https://gyao.yahoo.co.jp/, but the page that announces the service has been terminated as of March 2023.

16 Sakai, *Ikinokoreru*.

17 Chun, *Hundred Million*; Yoshimi, "Japanese Television."