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Routledge Handbook of Japanese Media

Edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf

Routledge Handbook of Japanese Media

The *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Media* is a comprehensive study of the key contemporary issues and scholarly discussions around Japanese media. Covering a wide variety of forms and types from newspapers, television and film, to music, manga and social media, this book examines the role of the media in shaping Japanese society from the Meiji era's intense engagement with Western culture to our current period of rapid digital innovation.

Featuring the work of an international team of scholars, the handbook is divided into five thematic sections:

- The historical background of the Japanese media from the Meiji Restoration to the immediate postwar era.
- Japan's national and political identity imagined and negotiated through different aspects of the media, including Japan's 'lost decade' of the 1990s and today's 'post-Fukushima' society.
- The representation of Japanese identities, including race, gender and sexuality, in contemporary media.
- The role of Japanese media in everyday life.
- The Japanese media in a broader global context.

Taking an interdisciplinary approach, this book will be of use to students and scholars of Japanese culture and society, Asian media and Japanese popular culture.

Fabienne Darling-Wolf is Professor of Journalism and Director of the Media and Communication Doctoral Program in the Klein College of Media and Communication at Temple University, USA. Her recent publications include *Imagining the global: Transnational media and popular culture beyond East and West* (2015).



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Introduction

Why the Japanese media?

Fabienne Darling-Wolf

Up until relatively recently, individuals growing up in the United States found themselves somewhat insulated from the global influence of Japanese popular culture. If the mounting transnational reach of Japan's 1980s bubble economy was difficult to ignore, the (omni)presence of Walkmans and Toyotas on American streets was typically interpreted in purely economic terms. Japan was deemed the 'great imitator' (Tatsuno 1990) whose 'culturally odorless' products, while cleverly engineered, had little impact on consumers' sense of self or global consciousness (Iwabuchi 2002). After all, did it really matter that the Walkman was a Sony product if young people around the globe used it to listen to *American* music?

It was not until the late 1990s that scholars in the United States started to point to the emergence of a new kind of Japanese superpower. As Japanese video games and animation gained in popularity – in 1999, CNN reported on the 'Pokemon mania' sweeping the United States ('Pokemon mania' 1999) – discussions shifted from Japan's gross national product to considerations of the country's 'Gross National Cool' (McGray 2002). In what would ironically come to be characterized as 'the lost decade' in Japan, Pikachu and Sailor Moon came to symbolize a new order in millennial capitalism marked by an alleged decline in the global impact of US culture and by the rise of Japanese cultural products as a possible antidote to the perceived negative effects of Hollywood-style Americanization (Allison 2006).

As the first 'non-Western' cultural center to enter the sphere of geopolitical influence typically reserved – at least in recent history – to the United States and Europe, Japan certainly deserves this growing attention. However, the Japan vs. US dichotomy present in much work emanating from both sides of the Pacific, if understandable considering the historically tortured relationship between these two nations, does not fully do justice to the historical realities of Japan's global cultural power.

The fact is that Japan had been globally culturally influential long before talk of 'Japan cool' started to seep into US academic and popular discourse. Some of the most recent evidence, on which I will further elaborate in Chapter 1, includes the works of Kitagawa Utamaro and Katsushika Hokusai whose woodcut prints – published, incidentally, in volumes called *manga* – provided inspiration to many of Europe's most celebrated artists in the second half of the nineteenth century and, more generally, the *Japonism(e)* movement that followed. Even the

contemporary version of manga, along with the related genre of animation, started to spread globally much earlier and on a much wider scale than most US scholars realize.

Indeed, the cultural significance of such popular texts as *Candy* or *Captain Tsubasa* throughout Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America starting in the second half of the 1970s cannot easily be overstated. In early January 1979, *UFO Robot Grendizer* (renamed *Goldorak* for the French market) appeared on the cover of *Paris Match* under the heading *The Goldorak Madness* (Paris Match 1979). By that time *Heidi, Girl of the Alps*, one of Studio Ghibli partners Hayao Miyazaki and Isao Takahata's earliest collaborations, had already started to spread to some 35 countries around the globe. These texts remain highly celebrated today. Heidi (the anime character) was given her own postal stamp by the Japanese postal service in 2013, along with other characters from Nippon Animation's illustrious World Masterpiece Theater series. In the early summer of the same year, the digitally remastered version of the first 12 episodes of *Goldorak* quickly became the number one best-selling DVD in France, despite its pretty hefty price – the entire series was released as a box set for Christmas (Darling-Wolf 2015). In other words, the Japanese media are clearly a force to reckon with in global media studies even if, in many ways, they have long remained in US scholars' blind spot.

This book proposes to broaden the scope of inquiry into Japanese popular culture on two interrelated levels. From a global perspective, it explores the role played by the Japanese media in processes of transnational cultural influence – both historically and in our contemporary era – and the power dynamics inherent in such processes. It also considers how the media intersect with the multiple factors that constitute individuals' sociocultural identities to create 'local' definitions of the nation, culture and of what it means to be 'Japanese'. As will quickly become evident, in Japan as elsewhere, these two levels are deeply interconnected and often mutually constitutive.

Combining the works of scholars working in different cultural contexts – Australia, Europe, Canada, Japan, Mexico, Singapore, Taiwan, the United States – and hailing from different academic disciplines, this book aims at providing a more multifaceted picture of the nature of Japanese media and of their contribution to global cultural flows than it typically found in broad surveys of Japanese texts. The academic affiliations of the different scholars represented here only tell part of the story of the book's global reach, as many of its contributing authors live highly transnational lives. The collection's main objective is not to introduce readers to Japanese popular culture, even though this will be a likely side effect for readers unfamiliar with Japan, but to give them a sense of the kinds of issues currently at the center of scholarly discussions about the Japanese media. Many of the contributors to this volume have long been key figures in these discussions. Others are newer arrivals on the scene.

A number of important running themes quickly emerge here. As in other cultural contexts, the media in Japan play (and have historically played) an integral role in the creation of the imagined communities that, as Benedict Anderson (1983) argues, form the basis of national identity. Hence the running concern throughout the book with (re)definitions of the nation, the politics of national/cultural identity and the politics of nostalgia. In Japan, these (re)definitions have historically intersected – perhaps particularly powerfully so even if the Japanese case is certainly not unique – with definitions of gender and race. The connection of the ideal of 'good wife, wise mother' to nationalism and militaristic state policies from the 1868 Meiji Restoration to the end of World War II (Fujimura-Fanselow 1991), for instance, or the link between nationalism and racial purity (Roebuck 2016) are well established. Thus, discussions of gender and race also run through the book. Finally, the fact that 'no discursively unified notion of the "Japanese"' (Ivy 1995, p. 8) existed before Japan's eighteenth century forced engagement with the West reminds us that the imagination of the nation, or even the 'local', is significantly shaped by global forces.

These global dynamics are the specific focus of the collection's Part V, but are relevant to some extent to all of its chapters.

The book's organization

The complexity of the dynamics outlined above make the organization of a volume on Japanese media quite challenging. The diversity and reach of Japan's involvement in popular cultural production also means that boundaries had to be set and some things were necessarily left out. Most conspicuous in this volume is the absence of works on Japan's long-standing influence on gaming and its global industries. Far from suggesting that gaming is not important, the decision not to include a chapter on the subject came from the fact that gaming studies has developed into its own separate full-fledged field within media studies. Including an essay or two here could not possibly have done justice to the multifarious nature of this fast-evolving area of inquiry. In other words, gaming in Japan deserves its own separate volume – and, as noted, limits had to be set.

To readers in the United States unfamiliar with the Japanese context, the collection may also appear to overly favor the role of 'mass' media – television, film, magazines, newspapers – rendered quasi-obsolete by the digital revolution. Thus, it is important to note that despite the widespread availability of digital technology and satellite communication, the Japanese media audience is far less fragmented than that of the United States. For example, it is not unusual for a TV drama starring a popular idol (e.g. Kimura Takuya¹) to reach a 'live' audience – individuals watching the show as it is first aired, as opposed to using a DVR or digital service provider such as Amazon or Netflix – of 15 to 20 percent throughout its run (Tokyo Hive 2017), while its final episode might reach 40 percent or more (A Koala's Playground 2013). In comparison, the rating for the highest-ranking show in 2016 in the US (*The Walking Dead*) was 8.8 percent, and this statistic included seven days of DVR and on-demand play back in addition to live viewing. The next highest-ranking show was *Big Bang Theory* with a rating of 5.5 percent (Porter 2016). As several of the contributors to this volume point out, print newspapers and magazines in Japan enjoy a much higher circulation than their North American counterparts. In fact, the two largest circulated newspapers in the world, *Yomiuri* and *Asahi*, are Japanese. Online news, manga, and J-pop also reach a particularly broad audience. In highly media-saturated Japan, the mass audience has not yet disappeared.

The highly intertextual nature of Japanese popular culture and the inherent intersectionality of dynamics of gender, race, sexuality, and national/cultural identity means that many of the chapters included here could have found a home in more than one part of the book. Because one must impose some order on this kind of project, however, the collection is divided in five parts, each organized around a broad theme.

Part I, *The rise of Japanese media*, explores some of the central historical dynamics that set the stage for the development of Japanese media as we know it today. In Chapter 1, I elaborate on the global spread of Japanese popular culture that accompanied Japan's opening to the West after the 1868 Meiji Restoration. While the Meiji era is typically characterized as a period of intense *importation* of Western ideas aimed at thwarting the Western colonial threat (which it certainly was), what is less frequently recognized is that the period was also marked by equally strategic efforts on the part of Japanese leaders to *export* Japanese culture abroad. The chapter examines the consequences of this strategy and some of the possible reasons behind the relative lack of recognition of Japan's early cultural influence on the West.

Chapters 2, 3 and 5 trace the role of the Japanese media in shaping gendered identities in Japan from the Meiji period to the 1960s. In Chapter 2, Sarah Frederick examines the early entry of girls' magazines on the Japanese publishing scene at the turn of the twentieth century. Exploring

the range of materials found in these publications, the chapter outlines how they simultaneously reflected a growing sense of Japanese girls as a distinct part of the modern nation of Japan *and* as part of a world culture of ‘girlhood’. Acknowledging the staying power of the concept of *shōjo* (girl) media, Frederick also reflects on these texts’ continuing legacy. In Chapter 3, Barbara Sato focuses on the role women’s magazines played in thrusting average women into wider society in the interwar period. She argues that as young women not previously in the habit of reading became subscribers and were exposed to modern lifestyles unlike their own, the genre became a force in molding new gendered identities and new forms of capitalist consumption. Noting how the actions of women themselves helped shape these media formulations, she challenges their common characterization as mostly conservative and frivolous. Chapter 5 takes the exploration of *shōjo* identities to the postwar period through an examination of *mangaka* Mizuno Hideko’s career and her celebrated manga *Fire!* (1969–1971). Noting that the series introduced readers to the 1960s countercultural ideals of personal liberation, Deborah Shamoan examines its role in allowing girls and young women to form communities and find means of self-expression. Taken together these chapters offer a powerful reflection on the intersection between gender, national identity and capitalism as Japan developed into a modern nation.

Just as World War II interrupted the course of the development of Japanese media, Chapter 4 comes to interrupt this book’s narrative. In it, David Earhart shows how, starting in the late 1930s, the militarized government reconfigured the Japanese media landscape to create an environment favorable to its war goals. Through an examination of wartime print media, film and radio, the chapter explores how the media aggressively promoted a universal program of extreme self-sacrifice for the sake of national greatness and racial destiny that enshrined and inculcated eusocial behavior. It demonstrates how the media ultimately spun this myth into an epic narrative of existential struggle – with dire consequences.

Chapter 6 closes Part I with an examination of a historical moment identified as a symbolic turning point in Japan’s postwar rebirth: the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. Focusing on the Olympics as a media spectacle that provided opportunities to express pride in Japanese technology, Iwona Regina Merklejn demonstrates how this one sporting event became central to Japanese national identity to a degree hardly known in other advanced capitalist nations in the twentieth century.

Part II, *Media, nation, politics and nostalgia*, considers how Japan’s national and political identity is imagined and (re)negotiated in different media both in recent history and in today’s ‘post-Fukushima’ society. Building on Merklejn’s examination of the triangle of sport, media and nationalism, Chapter 7 focuses on national and cultural identity formation in sumo wrestling. Taking the case of Mongolian sumo champion Hakuho as a starting point, Michael Plugh explores traditional markers of Japanese national identity in the sport, discourses of ‘Japaneseness’ in media narratives and the ways in which sports narratives reproduce these ideas for the Japanese public. In Chapter 8, Masaki Taniguchi outlines the unique role of Japanese newspapers and television in political communication. After describing the interrelated structure of the Japanese newspaper and television markets, the chapter examines Japanese politicians’ media strategies and reflects on the growing role of the internet on political communication.

Chapters 9 and 10 both concentrate on the use of popular media idols in the definition and negotiation of national identity. Chapter 9 explores the politics and problematics of how idols come to represent ‘Japan’ through a case study of AKB48 – an idol group consisting of more than 100 women in their teens and twenties often described as ‘national idols’. Noting the controversy surrounding producers’ proposal to have an AKB48 spin-off perform at the Tokyo Olympics in 2020, Patrick Galbraith points to the contested nature of such narratives. In Chapter 10, Yunuen Ysela Mandujano-Salazar uses Foucault’s notion of regime of truth to discuss domestic media discourses circulating in ‘post-3.11’ Japan. She argues that Japanese power

elites have been relying on popular media idols – and their non-political images – to disseminate and naturalize a discourse that emulates the outdated *nihonjinron* discourse (discourse on Japanese uniqueness) with the aim of nurturing patriotic sentiment and easing the social acceptance of otherwise controversial policies.

The chapters in Part III, *Japanese identities – plural: race, gender and sexuality in contemporary media*, explore the role of the Japanese media in shaping and representing different dimensions of individuals' identities. Chapters 11 through 13 center on the representation and negotiation of LGBTQ issues in Japan. Katsuhiko Suganuma starts the section with a critical examination of the performance of Matsuko Deluxe, one of the most popular male-to-female cross-dressing figures in Japan. He demonstrates how Deluxe provides a rare challenge to the mainstream media's handling of gender-queering individuals by exposing and making a mockery of the media's policing tactics. Chapter 12 focuses on the self-published lifestyle magazine *Laph*, produced by and for female-to-male (FTM) transpeople in Japan. Combining textual analysis and fieldwork, Shu Min Yuen examines the production and representation of FTM masculinity in the magazine to illustrate how its strategies can be read as an attempt by a group of individuals who have fallen outside the norm to access and place themselves in (rather than resist) the realm of the 'normal'. In Chapter 13, Claire Maree takes an innovative approach to examine how the term 'LGBT' is inscribed onto the television screen in mainstream news and current affairs programming in Japan. Through an analysis of captioning and flip-cards, Maree illustrates how the term is visualized to augment the hyper-visibility of 'sexual minorities'. She concludes, however, that mediatized hyper-visibility is produced alongside corporate expansion into lucrative 'rainbow markets', while the histories of representations and advocacy for LGBT issues and rights are simultaneously rendered invisible.

Chapters 14 and 15 focus on dynamics of gender construction. Michelle Ho considers the role of morning 'wide shows' (*waido shō*) – a subgenre of *jōhō bangumi* (information programs) filled with stories of sexual assault, murder and violence and targeted at housewives – in shaping female viewers' sense of self. Employing both interviews with viewers and discourse analysis, she argues that representations of women as victims and perpetrators in these shows' crime narratives both transgress and reinforce the housewife's social role as 'good wife, wise mother'. Christie Barber turns to constructions of masculinity through an analysis of representations of parenting men in the Japanese films *Usagi doroppu* (*Bunny drop*, 2011), *Kiseki* (also known as *I wish*, 2011), and *Soshite chichi ni naru* (also known as *Like father, like son*, 2013). She demonstrates how each film employs the absence and presence of fathers as a thematic center in order to explore the complexity of relationships between men and their families and the challenges parenting men face in contemporary Japan.

Finally, Michael Thornton and Atsushi Tajima examine how representations of African Americans in Japan's leading English-language newspaper are employed to symbolically negotiate the country's handling of race relations. They illustrate how the newspaper, relying on a narrow range of racial stereotypes, manages to simultaneously position African Americans as marginalized within the US and Japan as hospitable and embracing of non-Japanese cultures – at the expense of a more honest discussion of Japan's troubled internal racial dynamics.

Part IV, *Japanese media in everyday life*, includes works that examine the intersection between everyday routine media use and the formation of cultural identities and civil society. In Chapter 17, Kaori Hayashi explores the economic, cultural and historical foundations upon which newspapers in Japan have flourished into one of the world's most robust print media industries. Noting a recent decline in print newspapers, the chapter also considers the consequences of rapid changes, spurred in part by the development of digital and mobile technologies, for Japanese newspapers and for contemporary Japanese society at large.

The impact of these relatively recent technological changes is further assessed and contextualized in Chapters 18 through 20. Paying attention to the distinctive nature of Japanese youth's social media '*tomodachi*' (friends) relationships, Kiyoshi Abe opens with an interrogation of how social media generate new modes of sociality in Japan. He argues that while such modalities may, at first glance, seem to provide a liberating participatory alternative to highly vertically integrated traditional mass media, they also function as a tool for peer surveillance in the process of coordinating harmonious relationships between users. Amy Johnson follows, in Chapter 19, with an exploration of the characteristic traits and social expectations associated with (automated) bots that make the category appealing for human use. Drawing on examples of manual bots used for political critique and for carnivalesque play, she argues that the ambiguous accountability, predictability and non-humanness of the bot category help users navigate the challenges of being human in machine-shaped social spaces. Noting Japan's status as one of the earliest adopters of mobile media and wireless internet, Chapter 20 closes with a reflection on the future of mobile societies. Kyoung-hwa Yonnie Kim offers mobile media (*keitai*) communication in Japan as a key to understanding contemporary modes of daily practices. Focusing on Japanese youths as global cultural pathfinders for the adoption of mobile technology, she describes and discusses different cultural forms of mobile practices in Japan and investigates the relationship between mobile technology and its social manifestations.

In Chapter 21, Brian McVeigh explores the sociopolitical and economic projects behind the proliferation of cheerfulness, cute imagery and character goods in Japan. He demonstrates how products of late capitalist mass production, consumerist desires, technologies of simulation and physical and virtual spatialities interact to generate 'consumutopia' and 'simulacra-scapes' – alternatives to ordinary reality where our imaginary and fantasy worlds are enlarged. He also discusses how cheerfulness and cuteness, as everyday esthetics/ethics of 'resistance consumption', are appropriated by individuals for personal use.

Finally, in light of major environmental disruption from climate and pollution crises, Gabriele Hadl looks, in Chapter 22, for 'technologies of survival' in Japanese media culture. She ponders such questions as: How did TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi disaster change people's attitudes toward media sources? How could journalism better respond to, or even prevent, environmental disasters? Does anime culture, with its profusion of animal characters and inherent animism, offer positive alternatives to anthropocentrism? To what degree can environmentalist messages become widely popular without perversely fueling overconsumption? And, how can green media activism help to change course to a sustainable society?

The final part of the handbook, *Japanese media and the global*, explores the role of the Japanese media in a broader global context with a particular focus on Japan as a culturally influential nation. Koichi Iwabuchi starts the conversation with an examination of cultural diplomacy and nation branding. Noting the enhancement of soft power and 'pop culture diplomacy' under the influence of the 'Cool Japan' policy, he argues that the latter is principally a one-way projection of national images in line with the idea of nation branding and notes that its rapid development has come at the cost of promoting cross-border dialogue and fostering cultural diversity within national borders.

In Chapter 24, Suen Noh Kelsey's ethnographic work considers how Korean women negotiate their continuing consumption of both Japanese and Western popular culture – whose introduction to the Korean cultural landscape was, for many years, mediated by Japan – in the post-colonial era. Kelsey demonstrates that while Korean women's childhood memories are illustrative of the three-way post-colonial relationships between these three contexts, female media consumers do not passively accept Japanese culture but actively transform it to make it their own.

Chapter 25 assesses the implications of Japanese individual and institutional authorship in recent inter-Asian adaptations and remakes. Eva Tsai examines two cases from the perspectives of intellectual property negotiations and local remediation – that of a small Japanese company struggling to see three Korean drama remakes come to fruition and that of the recent successful adaptation of a thrice remade Japanese idol drama into a Chinese film – to offer a comparative and complementary perspective on the relative power of independent players and media corporations in the transborder screen trade. The collection closes with Rayna Denison’s analysis of the historical development of anime’s distribution from its domestic market to a growing body of fans in the United States. This final chapter challenges conceptions of anime’s worlds by investigating how shifting distribution technologies and logics have shaped the markets for anime at home and abroad. By arguing that anime’s worlds shift and change as some texts travel and others are left behind, it contends that distribution has much to add to our understanding of anime’s global significance.

Taken together, I believe these chapters make a powerful case for the continuing significance of the Japanese media to our understanding of both ‘internal’ dynamics of national, cultural, gender, sexual and racial identity construction, and ‘global’ dynamics of transnational influence – a subject to which I will briefly return in the conclusion of the book. They also point to the need to continue to interrogate these dynamics from multiple points of entry, including ones that do not necessarily go through the United States as the assumed main global cultural influencer in relationship to which everything else is considered. In sum, I hope that this collection will serve to broaden and further open a continuing discussion about the nature of the Japanese cultural context and its relationship to various parts of the world in an era in which globalization and the reassertion of national/local identity politics are increasingly simultaneously felt.

Note

- 1 References to Japanese names throughout this volume will follow either the traditional Japanese order (family name/given name) or the ‘Western’ order (given name/family name) depending on the context. The traditional Japanese order will be used for individuals most prominently known within Japan and/or other parts of Asia. The ‘Western’ order will be used for individuals who enjoy broad name recognition and/or work and live outside of Japan. Thus, I use the traditional Japanese order here to refer to actor and former SMAP member Kimura Takuya – aka Kimutaku – because that is the more common and ‘natural’ iteration of his name. In the closing chapter, however, I will use the ‘Western’ order to refer to globally celebrated animators Hayao Miyazaki and Isao Takahata (given name/family name). The ‘Western’ order is also used here for the names of Japanese scholars who contributed to the volume (e.g. Masaki Taniguchi, Atsushi Tajima, Kaori Hayashi, Kiyoshi Abe, Koichi Iwabuchi). In a similar vein, Sarah Frederick notes in Chapter 2 that ‘Japanese scholarship by Honda Masuko [Japanese order] has also been translated into English by Tomoko Aoyama [‘Western’ order] and Barbara Hartley’.

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Part I

The rise of Japanese media



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Who's the 'great imitator'?

Critical reflections on Japan's historical transcultural influence

Fabienne Darling-Wolf

Is this Orientalism? Japan's early engagement with 'the West'

In 1867 – about 14 years after Commodore Perry's arrival on Japanese shores forced the country to open up – Japanese art hit the Paris exposition. By the time the Universal Exposition of 1878 (also held in Paris) closed its doors, enthusiasm for all things Japanese had, according to Ernest Chesneau's 1878 article *Le Japon à Paris*, 'swept through the studios [of Paris] like a flame on gunpowder' (cited in Napier 2007, p. 29). Speaking of the growth of all things Japanese in the 11 years between the two expositions Chesneau concludes that 'This is no longer a fashion, this is a passion, this is madness' (p. 34). Artists and intellectuals enthusiastically started to integrate elements of Japanese visual arts into their own work. They also became enamored with all sorts of Japanese cultural practices – they were, in a sense, the first generation of *otaku*. Famous Japonisants like the Goncourt brothers or writer Emile Zola and, of course, artists like Monet, Van Gogh or Rodin, not only collected Japanese woodcut prints, but they also drank Japanese sake, ate Japanese food with chopsticks and composed poems of haiku inspiration.

As art historian Siegfried Wichmann (1981) puts it, while '[i]t is impossible to establish a precise or approximate date when Europe and the Far East can be said to have first encountered one another ... From the very beginning, all European references to the subject show an intense interest' (p. 11). The 'madness' would eventually reach far beyond the studios of French artists and intellectuals to permeate all aspects of society as 'Japonisme soon entered the public domain and was adopted as a favorite style, discernable in such realms as fashion, interior design, and gastronomy' (Genova 2009, p. 453). Even 'the way the fashionable Parisienne stood and moved between 1860 and 1900 was, so to speak, imported from Japan' (Wichmann 1981, p. 19).

The significance of Japanese influence on European arts at the time is well established (see for example, Hokenson 2004; Lambourne 2005; Wichmann 1981) and a detailed analysis of Japonisme's impact on European visual aesthetic is beyond the scope of this chapter. A few of the best-known examples include Vincent Van Gogh's numerous paintings ostensibly based on Japanese prints – which Wichmann characterizes as 'more Japanese than their Japanese models' (p. 42) – and Claude Monet's 1876 *La Japonaise* featuring his wife holding a fan and wearing a red kimono. As Van Gogh himself put it, 'We like Japanese painting, we have felt its influence, all the Impressionists have that in common' (cited in Wichmann 1981, p. 42). Later on, the Art

Nouveau prints of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Pierre Bonnard or Jacques Villon, and the works of the French cubists and surrealists would also be associated with the movement. Describing Japonisme as a 'force that stimulated the development of modern art' (p. 7) Wichmann notes that it 'gave rise to a whole new range of subject matter, new techniques and new artistic devices' (p. 10).

While most often associated with the European – particularly French – context, Japonisme nevertheless quickly spread beyond France's borders. Siegfried Bing's Paris-based Japonist review *Le Japon Artistique* [Artistic Japan] featured French, English and German editions and was read across Europe and the United States by groups of Japanese art aficionados united by 'shared practices of art appreciation and a desire for antique objects that had not been adapted for the Western export market' (Rodman 2013, p. 490). As early as 1876, the Japanese exhibit at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition set off a 'Japan craze' on the American continent and by the 1880s 'Japonisme had become a popular trend that shaped US decor, architecture, and popular culture as much as it did aesthetic debates and the development of fine arts' (Patterson 2015, p. 667). As Tara Rodman (2013) demonstrates in her analysis of the movement's influence on modernist theater, diversely localized strands of Japonisme developed from Boston to Seattle. Japanese influence would eventually permeate virtually all aspects of European and American culture – from fashion and advertising (Wickmann 1981) to literature (Patterson 2015), theater (Rodman 2013), music (Stankis 2015) and architecture (Nute 1993) – resulting in 'a shift of Copernican proportions, marking the end of Eurocentric illusionism and the beginnings of a new, modern way of seeing and recording the world' (Hokenson 2004, p. 17).

Because the practice and study of Japonisme involves the borrowing of Eastern cultural elements by representatives of the West, 'the provocative comparative model of Orientalism has become an obvious referent' (Genova 2009, p. 455) for its academic critique (see, for example, Evett 1982; MacKenzie 1995; Yoshihara 2004). Describing Said's 1978 publication of *Orientalism* as a 'bombshell that even several decades later continues to exert enormous influence on the study of ... the interaction between Western and non-Western cultures', Susan Napier (2007, p. 7) discusses the difficulty of resisting this seductively simple 'theoretical straightjacket' (p. 10). Certainly, European and North American encounters with Japanese culture were, and often continue to be, imbued with 'teeth-grittingly offensive examples' (p. 9) of racism and misrepresentations, and elements of Orientalism can clearly be found in many European Japonist texts – Pierre Loti's *Madame Chrysanthemum*, which Jan Walsh Hokenson (2004, p. 23) rightly characterizes as illustrating 'some of the basest aspects of "orientalist" colonial paternalism, with a contemptuous feminization of the subject' comes to mind. However, the blanket application of Said's concept to *all aspects* of Euro-American engagement with Japanese culture is not particularly productive. A number of features specific to the nature of the movement and to Japan's historical relationship to 'the West'¹ significantly complicate the picture of this multidimensional phenomenon.

First of all, the specifics of Japanese history resulted in a different positioning in relationship to Europe and the United States than that of most of the other nations Said discusses. Unlike India and most of Asia, Japan was never formally colonized by Western powers. Because it was 'encountered so late in the long bloody history of colonialism, Japan did not fit into the established rubrics of the Orientalist enterprise' (Hokenson 2004, p. 25). While the leaders of the 1868 Meiji Restoration were clearly reacting to the menace of Western domination made obvious by the arrival of Perry's 'black ships' in Uraga Harbor, Japan's 'revolution from above' was a strategic effort to thwart the kind of military intervention suffered by other Asian nations (Duus 1998). Their decision to open Japan's borders and actively import Western technology, institutions and philosophies was often fueled by anti-foreign rhetoric – the original slogan of the restoration was 'Revere the Emperor and Expel the Barbarians' (Dower 1993, p. 3) – rather

than admiration. And if Westernization was recognized as a crucial step on the road to modernity, Western influence was merged with Japanese tradition to (re)define the country's modernization process as uniquely Japanese and ultimately justify its own imperialist aggression in other parts of Asia (Boyle 1993; Rado 2015).

Furthermore, Japan's opening to the West was a carefully orchestrated *two-way* process. As essentialized visions of 'the West' penetrated the Japanese cultural imaginary (Ivy 1995) Japan, in turn, entered the imagination of Parisian artists and intellectuals. Thus, as French cultural critic Denise Brahimi (1992) concludes, 'what [Western nations] were looking for, when going to Japan ... was the example of a country capable in every way to resist occidental enterprises, without nevertheless giving up on the advantages that come with being a civilized nation' (p. 21). As a result, the intensity and depth of Europe's engagement with Japan at the time was qualitatively different from its relationship to other Asian nations. Wichmann (1981) notes, for instance, that 'Japonisme penetrated every area of the fine arts in Europe far more thoroughly than *chinoiserie* did in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' (pp. 18–19). Art critic Lionel Lambourne (2005) points to high levels of admiration and respect in 'The West's love affair with Japan' (p. 7). While some forms of engagement remained mired with stereotypes and misconceptions, 'more and more writers endeavored to understand the fundamentals of Japanese aesthetic theory', and by the end of the nineteenth century 'writers of a variety of styles were seeking to integrate essential principles of Japanese art into their work, as they aimed to analyze, modify, and personalize Eastern aesthetics, translating the ideas from painting to the new medium of creative language' (Genova 2009, p. 454).

In other words, Japonisme's multifarious nature and the scale of its influence suggest that it cannot be fully understood through a purely Orientalist lens. If, as 'a style emerging out of Western gestures of imitation' of Eastern cultural elements Japonisme is, as Pamela Genova (2009) reminds us, 'always already an art of the other', it is not 'a single entity or a consistent stance' (p. 455). Rather than a discursive practice, Japonisme represented a much broader aesthetic shift – conditioned, as noted above, by a two-way transcultural exchange – that would ripple through all dimensions of European and North American cultural production. Unfortunately, academic disciplinary boundaries often result in scholars focusing on individual texts when analyzing historical examples of the movement without questioning their alleged positioning within a broadly assumed Euro-American 'Orientalist discourse'.

For example, in her otherwise excellent discussion of the intersection between Japanese (trans)nationalism and gender dynamics, Mori Yoshihara (2004) begins with a description of *Madame Butterfly* as a 'quintessential Orientalist narrative' that 'echoed the numerous existing texts of European Orientalism' (p. 975). However, her own analysis of the opera's trajectory onto the US stage and, in particular, of the performance and reception of Japanese singer Tamaki Miura (1884–1946) challenges, or at least complicates, this characterization. While Yoshihara recognizes this fact, she nevertheless continues to uncritically position the text within a taken-for-granted Orientalist discursive tradition. Her conclusion that 'to see *Madama Butterfly* simply as a cultural product of racialized and sexualized Western fantasies misses the complex layers of its functions for the performers and audiences across the Pacific' (p. 996) and points to the need to at least question the validity of the Orientalist lens when engaging with Japonisme's snarled complexity. The trick, then, is to approach Japonisme as 'a creative endeavor, inflected differently by different writers' and artists 'without imposing "orientalist" standards of measure that the texts themselves may invert or repudiate' (Hokenson 2004, p. 27). As Pamela Genova (2009) concludes, '[T]he exploration of Japonisme finds its most fertile context in the post-Said framework of more recent trends in critical analysis and cultural theory' (p. 456) – a point to which I will shortly return.

Orientalism's problems

The orientalist lens frequently applied to the study of Japonisme has had a number of problematic consequences on scholars' interpretations of the movement and, more generally, on discussions of transcultural exchange between Japan and 'the West'. Perhaps most problematically, the suggestion that European artists' infatuation with Japanese style stemmed from a relatively superficial desire for an exoticized and eroticized 'Other' akin to their engagement with the populations of colonized Islamic and Hindu regions massively downplays the importance of the movement. As noted above, Japonisme revolutionized European art. Without it, impressionism might never have happened – as Van Gogh wrote to his brother Theo in 1886, 'In a way all my work is founded on Japanese art ... Japanese art ... takes root again among the French impressionist artists' (cited in Wichmann 1981, p. 52), or as Monet explained,

We needed the arrival of the Japanese prints in our midst, before anyone dared to sit down on a river bank, and juxtapose on canvas a roof which was bright red, a wall which was white, a green poplar, a yellow road and blue water. Before the example given to us by the Japanese this was impossible.

(Quoted in Lambourne 2007, p. 48)

In other words, as Jason Farago (2015) put it in a BBC story titled *Hokusai and the wave that swept the world*, without Japonisme 'the global art world we today take for granted might look very different indeed'.

Interest in Japanese aesthetics, however, did not stop with the impressionists. Japanese transcultural influence continued far beyond the 30 years or so (in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) most frequently associated with the Japonist movement. Hokenson (2004) traces its impact on French intellectual production from the early days of Japonisme to the dawn of the new millennium. Moving beyond the already clearly established link between Japanese art, impressionism and early modernism (Patterson 2015; Rodman 2013), he teases out the ongoing significance of Japanese thought and aesthetics in the works of such diverse figures as Marguerite Yourcenar, André Malraux, Jean-Paul Sartre, Roland Barthes, Jean-François Lyotard, Julia Kriteva and Hélène Cixous (to name only a few). The often canonic position of these individuals on the global intellectual scene suggests that Japan – even if in translation through the works of French intellectuals (a point I will also return to in a moment) – is still present in the 'mind of the West' (Napier 2007). To put it bluntly, Japanese influence is a pretty big deal. Dismissing European engagement with the Japanese aesthetic as mere Orientalism, however, effectively conceals Japan's crucial role in the development of European artistic and intellectual thought. Consequently, as cultural critic Armando Martins Janeira (1970) notes, 'When we read any book on general literature, or on the theory of literature, very seldom do we find a reference to the literature of Japan. Studies of a general nature about the modern novel or about poetry are written as if Japanese literature did not exist' (p. 14).

Subsuming Japonisme under the broad lens of Euro-American historical relationship to 'all things oriental' also fails to do justice to the specifics of both its contexts of origin and reception, and to the plurality of forms the movement eventually took – Shūji Takashina (1988) speaks of 'Japonismes' (plural). In France, for instance, the early spread of Japanese arts must be understood in relationship to a shift in governmental cultural policy toward greater cultural democratization that took place, not coincidentally, in the late nineteenth century and, more broadly, within '[t]he complex web of Franco-Japanese artistic relations' (Hokenson 2004, p. 27). As

Hokenson reminds us, French Japonisme is ultimately 'primarily about France, about problems in the French practice of occidental arts and letters' (p. 21).

Japonisme, however, is also very much about Japan. Positioning the latter as a passive victim of Euro-American Orientalist discourse only paints (at best) a partial picture. First of all, placing Japan in the same camp as other Asian nations colonized by European powers erases the country's own history of imperialist aggression throughout Asia. Noting that Said treats Japan 'predominantly as a non-Western, quasi-Third World nation which has been a victim of Western (American) cultural domination', Koichi Iwabuchi (2002) wonders about 'the total absence of a consideration of Japanese imperialism/colonialism in his analysis of imperialism and cultural heritage' (p. 3). In fact, Japan justified its colonial violence through the kind of East/West binaries frequently found in theories of Orientalism, resorting to 'an ideology of pan-Asianism to camouflage its imperial ambitions' (p. 8) to oppose itself to 'the West' and secure a dominant position in the region.

Furthermore, if Meiji-era leaders actively imported Western wares, technologies and ideas, they also assertively exported Japanese ones. The fact that Japanese art entered Europe and the United States through international expositions was no accident:

On the international stage, Japan's national image was largely propagandized through its arts and crafts, especially in the universal expositions. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, world's fairs had provided a grand arena where nations showcased their industrial development, military prowess, and cultural achievements. *The Meiji government keenly explored these opportunities, heavily investing in Japanese exhibits as a means to elevate its international prestige.*

(Rado 2015, pp. 604–5, emphasis mine)

In the process, 'various forms of Japanese "tradition" were reconstructed and reinforced both by the state and the intellectuals' for foreign consumption (Yoshihara 2004, p. 976).

As Japan turned capitalist, entrepreneurs quickly understood the potential of a global market. Japanese expatriate art dealers and merchants soon joined European intellectuals and artists in promoting Japonisme. Newly industrialized Japanese companies started to actively produce for the foreign market. Silk retailer Takashimaya – which would transform into one of Japan's first modern department stores in 1910 – sent its executives to Europe and the United States to 'investigate artistic, industrial, and commercial trends' and sold modified versions of kimonos to Western customers (Rado 2015, p. 586).

In a pattern still present in the more contemporary version of Japanese capitalism (Ivy 1995), these commercial endeavors were often bolstered by self-Orientalizing gestures. As art historian Mei Mei Rado (2015) explains in the case of Takashimaya: 'In Western eyes, the kimono represented the opposite of the changing fashion silhouettes and evoked an ancient civilization. This idealized view of an eternal Oriental style *would have been enthusiastically embraced and promoted* by Takashimaya in fashioning its products' (p. 588, emphasis mine). Japanese art dealers in the United States – such as Bunkio Matsuki (1867–1914) and Sadajiro Manayaka (1866–1936), who 'regularly updated Japanese factories on changing American tastes in order to develop new products' (Rodman 2013, p. 496) and sold 'a wide variety of items that included pots and lanterns' (Chen 2010, p. 29) – took advantage of their status as Japanese nationals to establish themselves as trustworthy sources of 'authentic' Japanese art. Capitalizing on their Western customers' anxiety about mass-marketed objects they 'fabricated and sold definitions of race and art to peddle Oriental goods' (p. 22). Through 'self-essentializing strategies' (p. 36) these

entrepreneurs strategically exploited Western desire for Asia, using ‘their catalogues to construct idealized Japanese and Chinese pasts filled with brave warriors and beautiful maidens (p. 29).

In the performing arts, figures such as Tamaki Miura similarly drew on Western audiences’ imagination of Japan to bolster their fame. Describing Miura as ‘remarkably savvy about the creation and performance of her role on stage’, Yoshihara (2004, p. 982) notes that she ‘quite consciously and skillfully enacted the character of Cio-Cio-San to appeal to her Western audiences’ in her performance of *Madame Butterfly*. She, Yoshihara concludes, ‘voluntarily performed the role of the Japanese woman created by Western Orientalism’ (p. 983). Japanese entrepreneurs, artists and government officials strategically tapped into an exoticized version of Japan formed in the Euro-American imagination.

Indeed, charges of Orientalism – particularly those found in the works of Anglo-American cultural critics – typically point to the mix of fantasy, paradox, desire and fear in ‘the West’s’ engagement with the Asian ‘Other’ (see, for example, Goebel 1993; Gordon 1983). In turn, European and North American artists and writers are chided for failing in their efforts to truly understand Japanese culture. Setting aside for a moment the evidence suggesting otherwise (Brahimi 1992; Genova 2009; Lambourne 2005; MacKenzie 1995) – and the difficulty of fully understanding *any* culture – one wonders how this engagement is different from other forms of transcultural exchange. Because few individuals have opportunities for long-term physical entry into other cultures, global flows of culture, as cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1996; 2013) reminds us, always necessarily operate through the work of the imagination. How, then, are the fantasies, paradoxes, desires and fears of French Japonisme different from visions of the United States as both a culturally imperialist invader and a place one dreams about – as illustrated respectively by the quotas limiting the entry of US texts into the French media market and by the French expression ‘c’est l’Amérique’ used to refer to something exceptionally good (Darling-Wolf 2015)? Why, in other words, is the history of Japanese cultural influence in Europe and the United States interpreted as an example of Orientalism rather than as an early instance of cultural globalization?

Japonisme, racism and amnesia

The most obvious answer to the question above is, of course, racism. One significant difference between Europe and the United States’ engagement with each other and their relationship to Japan is that the former is conceptualized as an (albeit inaccurate) meeting of universalized White (male) Westerners as opposed to an encounter with racially (feminized) ‘Others’. The lens of Orientalism – particularly the more nuanced and complex versions of the concept found in contemporary post-colonial theory (see, for example, Hedge 2011; Stam and Shohat 2012) – is certainly useful in assessing this specific dimension of the Japan/‘West’ relationship. Noting that Orientalism ‘provided a call for self-awareness on the part of scholars and commentators on other cultures’, Napier (2007, pp. 8–9) reminds us that ‘racism, condescension, ignorance, and at a certain point, sheer, almost mindless, hatred have eddied among the flow of discourse’ about Japan. Or, as Hokenson (2004) concludes, ‘In japonisme ... the typology of [Said’s] Orientalism is useful, allowing for quick, clear distinctions between such writers as Loti and Claudel’ (p. 23). Thus, cultural exchanges between Japan and ‘the West’ are always necessarily mired in the politics of race. The scale and depth of Japonisme’s reach suggest, however, that we must remain carefully attuned to how these politics took shape in different contexts at different points in time. We must also ‘entertain the possibility of identification with the Other’ (Napier 2007, p. 8) – the possibility, in other words, that racism may occasionally be transcended, or at least put aside for a moment.

Furthermore, if Euro-American racism tinted artists and intellectuals' engagement with Japan throughout the Japonisme movement, it may also explain the later tendency to fail to acknowledge the full extent of the debt European and North American cultural productions owe to Japanese aesthetics – or, ironically, the tendency to interpret it solely through an Orientalist lens. Orientalism, as a theory developed in the wake of decolonization movements, was applied to Japonisme inductively and after the fact. In a more recent historical context, it may be easier to believe that nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European and North American artists and intellectuals were racist than to wrap our head around the fact that Japan was a hugely globally influential nation prior to its World War II defeat and its spectacular recovery. For instance, while the impact of Japonisme on such artists as Degas, Van Gogh, Monet or even Picasso is widely discussed in art history, this influence is rarely acknowledged in museum exhibits in the United States or Europe today.

The broader contemporary conceptualization of 'the West's' relationship to other parts of the world in studies of global cultural flows is indeed also at work here. As globalization theorist Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2009) reminds us, 'The West' is a notion conditioned by and emerging from two historical polarities, the North–South polarity of the colonizing and colonized world, and the East–West polarity of capitalism–communism and the Cold War' (p. 50). This polarity has a number of consequences for the study of Japonisme. First, because the most intense debates about the nature of transcultural influence arose post–World War II in the wake of the United States' growing hegemony, global cultural dynamics are 'predominantly studied in terms of how the Rest resists, imitates, or appropriates the West' (Iwabuchi 2002, p. 50). The concerns about Western cultural imperialism that dominated early discussions of globalization (see for example, Schiller 1976) have made it difficult to envision Europe and the United States as culturally influenced – at least by Japan² – rather than culturally influential. In the case of Japonisme, French and US cultural arrogance might also have something to do with the desire to downplay this influence.

Second, 'the West' came to be most closely associated with the United States at the expense of internal differences and tensions. Today, 'Westernization' and 'Americanization' are frequently treated as synonymous in both North American and Japanese scholarship and the forces of US global cultural hegemony receive most of the attention in discussion of cultural globalization (Darling-Wolf 2015). As a result, relationships outside a US–non-West dyad – where the 'non-West' is the presumed victim of 'the West' – fell to the wayside. Or, as Pieterse (2009) puts it, 'the differences between North American and Europe are papered over. In fact, historical revision may well show that there are much greater historical affinities ... between Europe and Asia than between Europe and North America' (p. 50). Japonisme certainly comes to mind here as an obvious victim of this development.

Furthermore, as noted, Japan does not easily fit the North/West/colonizer–South/East/colonized dichotomy. Not only was Japan (unlike most of its neighbors) never formally colonized by 'the West', but it also engaged in its own *mission civilisatrice* in other parts of Asia. This status as 'non-colonized colonizer' places Japan in a rather unique position in its relationship to both 'Western' and Asian cultures. On the one hand, '[t]he advocacy of a cultural and racial commonality between Japan and other Asian nations naturally conferred upon Japan a mission to rid Asia of Western imperial domination and to itself civilize Asians instead' (Iwabuchi 2002, p. 9). In other words, emphasizing racial and cultural similarities between Japan and other parts of Asia allowed Japan to position itself 'in but above Asia' (p. 8) and justify its imperialist aggression. In order to do this, Japan also had to culturally distance itself from Europe and the United States. Thus, 'Japan is represented and presents itself as a culturally exclusive, homogeneous, and uniquely particularistic through the operation of a strategic binary opposition between two imagined cultural entities, "Japan" and "the West"' (p. 7).

This strategic opposition to ‘the West’ was further accentuated in the postwar era as Japan worked to erase the history of its colonial past, reinterpret itself as a war victim and renegotiate its national identity (Duus 1998; Gluck 1993). Japan’s long history of transcultural exchange did not sit well with the move to construct Japanese culture as unique and impenetrable to outsiders – which takes its strongest contemporary form in the conservative *Nihonjinron* discourse on Japanese purity: ‘To put it bluntly, the idea of a Japan lacking in external cultural power has been collusive with a postwar strategy of constructing an exclusive and unique Japanese national identity’ (Iwabuchi 2002, p. 6). To put it differently, the love affair of Japonisme had to be carefully muffled in order to avoid a political scandal.

Interestingly, the story has not resurfaced yet. In the 1980s, Japan’s spectacular rise to economic superpower was interpreted, both in Japan and in other parts of the world, as a case of economic strength devoid of cultural influence, based on the ‘generalized assumption that Japanese culture would not be accepted or appealing outside the cultural context of Japan’ (Iwabuchi 2002, p. 2). Recalling his surprise when first hearing about the Japanese media’s popularity on Asian markets, Iwabuchi explains, ‘As a Japanese, I had implicitly accepted the idea of Japan as a faceless economic superpower: Japan has money and technology but does not have a cultural influence on the world’ (p. 2). Japonisme, in other words, is the victim of both ‘Western’ and Japanese amnesia.

Who’s the great imitator?

The reasons behind the continuing influence of the Orientalist lens on scholars’ understanding of Japanese transcultural power are multidimensional. They stem from both Euro-American and Japanese racism. They have much to do with identity politics and strategic positioning, with cultural arrogance and willful amnesia. While Orientalism helps us understand some dimensions of ‘the West’s’ relationship to Japan – and while I agree with Napier (2007) that ‘the dark elements that Said discerns in Orientalism must not be ignored’ (p. 8) – it is overall a rather ill-fitted tool to tackle Japan’s unique history. In the end, it hides more than it reveals.

One continuing side effect of the East/West divide implicit in Orientalism and, as we have seen, often embraced by both sides, is the downplaying of Japan’s historical transcultural influence and the consequent concomitant positioning of ‘the West’ as the main generator of globalized popular cultural forms. The Japonisme movement is but one example of Japan’s global cultural influence swept under the carpet of postwar politics. Indeed, one might argue that Japan never stopped being incredibly culturally influential.

Japonisme, for instance, set up the stage for Japanese animation and graphic novels’ later global influence – Hokusai’s woodcut prints were collected in books called ‘manga’. As noted in the introduction to this volume, the second wave of ‘cultural invasion’ (Hermelin 2000, p. 133) from Japan came in the late 1970s when Japanese animation and manga first hit the global market (with the notable exception of the United States where en masse arrival of Japanese animation would happen some ten years later).

While individuals who grew up reading and watching these texts may recognize their significance in shaping their cultural identities (Darling-Wolf 2015), scholars’ interpretations are still frequently haunted by the ghosts of Orientalism (MacWilliams 2008). Positioning anime consumption as a fan activity rather than a broader global phenomenon (Cooper-Chen 2010; Napier 2005, 2007), they often ascribe the genre’s appeal to ‘Western’ audiences to its exotic value – as when Shinobu Price (2001) argues that anime ‘creates a freshly intriguing aroma that lures foreigners into its mist’ (p. 166) – or its quintessentially Japanese qualities (see, for example,

Levi 1998; Schodt 2008). Even when recognizing Japanese animation as both a culturally influenced and globally influential genre, they tend to locate its global spread within the familiar framework of Japan either appropriating or offering an antidote to US cultural influence (see for example, Allison 2006, p. 275; MacWilliams 2008, p. 13; Napier 2005, p. 5).

Again, such positioning does not do justice to the scale and nature of Japanese popular culture's transnational voyage. Most problematically, it fails to recognize the necessarily hybrid character of globalized cultural forms (Kraidy 2005). Indeed, ample evidence suggests that the lens of hybridity provides a much more useful instrument for understanding the history of Japanese transculture than that of Orientalism. Hybridity was a significant subtext of both Japan's early adoption of Western technologies and ideas in the Meiji era and European and North American early encounters with Japanese aesthetics. The woodcut prints that European artists admired were 'the direct result of a fundamental tension in Japan ... due in no small way to the impact of Westernization in that country' (Genova 2009, p. 458). In turn, these artists, and the generations of intellectuals who would follow, integrated what they learned from Japanese aesthetics and literature into their own cultural frames – as when Van Gogh referred to the impressionists as 'the Japanese French' (cited in Butor 1995, p. 90). As Hokenson (2004) concludes, 'What "japonais" meant in France, and French "gaijin" in Japan, was and remains fluid, and always mutually revisive. To watch writers counterposing their motifs of Japan and France is to watch a dynamic process of intertextual creation, in one moment of transnational aesthetic reception' (p. 33).

Approaching Japonisme through a lens of hybridity attuned to power dynamics (Kraidy 2005) allows us to ask a different set of questions. It frees us from the need to establish the authenticity of individuals' engagement with the Other to focus on the work of the imagination. It pushes us to consider why some dimensions of transcultural influence are readily acknowledged while others are erased. It helps us understand how transcultural exchange can be strategically used in definitions of national identity – Iwabuchi (2002) speaks of Japan's 'strategic hybridism' (p. 53). It sheds light on the process through which 'Japan's political quest for national identity dovetailed with the Western cultural undercurrent searching for renewed exoticism', as '[t]he stories on both sides were crystalized on the same hybrid imagery of the Orient' (Genova 2009, p. 609). It helps us recognize that 'In literature, painting, or music, French japonisme is primarily about France, about problems in the French practice of occidental arts and letters, and only secondarily about Japan, imagined source of proposed solutions' (Hokenson 2004, p. 21). It helps us wrap our heads around the fact that Japanese influence can be felt through French texts just as Japanese texts can sell European culture to the French (Darling-Wolf, 2015, 2016). As Said himself recognized 'cultural forms are hybrid mixed, impure, and the time has come in cultural analysis to reconnect their analysis with their actuality' (1994, p. 14). It is time to think about Japonisme as an early example of cultural hybridization in all its complex messiness.

Notes

- 1 The use of quotation marks here points to the constructed nature of the concept of a unified 'West'. 'The West' will be used throughout the chapter to refer to the strategic positioning of the United States and Europe in opposition to 'the East', and sometimes 'the rest', in both theories of Orientalism and in the rhetoric of Japanese leaders.
- 2 There is actually quite a bit of concern in France about US cultural imperialism as illustrated, for instance, by France's protectionist cultural policies (McPhail 2010).

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Girls' magazines and the creation of *shōjo* identities

Sarah Frederick

[M]y older brothers had a subscription to a magazine called *Boys' World*, which I would read surreptitiously whenever they left it sitting on their desks. I remember being so happy when I could finally take the publisher's new magazine for girls and have it all to myself. Whenever *Girls' World* was delivered from the bookstore, I would spread it out in my hands and savor every corner. Taking great care not to dirty the pages, I would add each magazine to the neat pile on my desk and enjoy the stack growing higher and higher. The frontispieces were drawn by illustrators such as Ikeda Shōen, bearing charming titles like 'A Doll's Banquet' and graced with flower images appropriate for each month. I would gaze at them for hours. At that time, there were certainly no movies or revues for a young girl to go to in a rural town, and perhaps it was because I did not have the opportunity to seek such pleasures that one monthly issue of a cheap girls' magazine inspired the passion of this girl and gave her such immense pleasure. Now I publish many stories in girls' magazines ... From my own girlhood memories, I see what an important role I can play.

(Yoshiya 1975, pp. 12: 408–9)

Near the start of the twentieth century, girls' magazines (*shōjo zasshi*) entered on the Japanese publishing scene. Titles such as *Shōjo sekai* (Girls' World, 1902), *Shōjo no tomo* (Girls' Friend, 1908), and *Shōjo gahō* (Girls' Pictorial, 1912) emerged and grew in concert with girls' education and magazine publication over the coming decades. These magazines reflected, in both their content and existence, a growing sense of Japanese girlhood as a distinct community, embedded in a range of intersecting identities. The *shōjo* as a category of gender and age was represented as a group holding places in multiple realms: as young citizens of the modern nation of Japan, of the Japanese empire, and of a perceived international community of young women. The magazines evoked a sense of Japanese girls as national figures and also part of a cosmopolitan world culture of 'girlhood'. The publications cultivated and reflected an increasing awareness of and sensitivity to a sense of place in the world partly defined by cultural capital, national origins, and class background, but expanded or complicated by shifting views of love and sexuality, and the sense of individual subjectivity encouraged by magazines that directly expressed that they were aimed at girls. Of course, such identities would not always be mutually compatible, and

this chapter also focuses on ways in which girls' magazine media negotiated and represented these interactions.

As we see from author Yoshiya Nobuko's childhood experience quoted above, the medium itself was highly important to the girls' magazine's aesthetic and social influence, from their visual and physical qualities to the very act of bringing to new spaces and audiences distant texts and images. From the perspective of media, these magazines provide material to think about the ways print culture was an early window on what has come to be called the 'media mix' of Japanese modernity.¹ While most scholarship has focused on gender identity, we also see in these magazines the interaction among capital, print culture, and the rise of the nationalized perspective articulated by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* (Anderson 1983). Astute scholars have noted the links between the sense of community among Japanese girl magazine readers and this concept of imagined communities, linking the importance of discourses on the status of women to the modern Japanese state and promotion of Japan as part of world civilization (e.g. Watanabe 2007). The illustrators and editors made use of relatively new technologies of photography and cheaper color printing to bring images of Japanese and world lifestyles to a readership of increasingly well-educated girls and also to disseminate many of the readers' own images and words back on the same pages. To explore how media interacted with girl identity in the early twentieth century, this chapter considers the reader communities and the place of girl communities in the world and empire, with attention to media of representation of these various communities. Through these texts we see how the identities of the *shōjo* were partially created by the magazines and their producers and contributors. It is useful to also remember that those contributors' careers were sometimes made by the magazines and that 'contributors' frequently includes the readers themselves.

The central issues in research on girls' magazines in both Japanese and English have mirrored those discussed above. As with much media material, a focus has been the issue of how enabling or how exploitative these materials and venues were for young women of the early twentieth century. To what extent did they support the rising Japanese empire and state institutions? To what extent did they permit different ways of imagining a life course or rethinking gender norms? To what extent were their messages different from those of the more conservative girls' schools of the era? In the Japanese scholarship, there has been interest in considering the different roles of social forces, education, and magazines themselves in creating and shaping the concept of the *shōjo* and her reading material, and some debate over cause and effect has ensued (for an excellent summary of these discussions and controversies, see Imada 2007, p. 9).

An important general statement from the 1980s on the neglect of girls' magazines and the history of girls' culture in Japanese scholarship by Honda Masuko has also been translated into English by Tomoko Aoyama and Barbara Hartley (Honda 1982; English translation, 2010). Citing the 'neglect or even contempt' regarding girls' fiction and manga, she observes, 'Scholars do not wish to be sullied by contact with these works' (Honda 2010, p. 25). Honda's approach is to embrace this outsider position of girls' culture, and to place both girls' culture and her own scholarship itself in a confrontational or critical position in relationship to the mainstream. In her account, the '*hirahira*', a word describing the fluttering of girlish items from ribbons to girlish language, stands against the staid scholarship that has ignored them, and in all their *hirahira*, 'outside the linear advance of time' subverting the mainstream even as it never performs a pointed critique (p. 36). While there has grown up a body of academic and popular scholarship on girl culture in the meantime, this issue of how to place the 'girl' and 'girls' magazines' in relation to politics or social criticism remains at the forefront. The same edited volume in which Honda's translation appears has been important in bringing the topic to light and in providing a range of approaches to the girl as reader, writer, and subject of representation (Aoyama

2010). Some important recent Japanese critics besides Honda who work directly on early *shōjo* magazine culture in Japanese have been Kan Satoko (2008), Kume Yoriko (2013), Imada Erika (2007), and Watanabe Shūko (2007), each providing especially close attention to the interaction between the construction of the category and *shōjo* labeling as a category of periodical publishing. Kan, Watanabe, and Kume have especially strong roots in literary studies but all take a holistic approach that considers materials in cultural history and visual studies as well. Imada takes a sociological and social history approach but deals extensively with literary materials in her book (2007), which provides an argument for the positive aspects of girls' magazines for young women in the 1910s and 1920s, well substantiated with valuable tabular data about the readership and content. In short, this has been an interdisciplinary field but one which generally returns to the richness of the creative work in these publications.

One of the most salient features of these magazines is the prevalence of romantic or erotic relationships among girls that they represent (e.g. Frederick 2016; Shamoon 2012; Kanno 2011). Reviewing materials from the late Meiji period on signs of these themes are present, if not always obvious, early on, and by the time one reaches the 1920s, same-sex relationships among girls are pervasive on their pages, whether among the girls represented in the artwork, the fiction, or among the readers themselves. So an important topic in the analysis of girls' magazines has been their role in creating a space for expression and realization of same-sex relations among young girls, and virtually every secondary source mentioned in this chapter refers to this trend.² In addition, scholars writing specifically about same-sex love among girls in the prewar era use girls' magazines extensively as primary materials (e.g. Suzuki 2006; Pflugfelder 2005; Akaeda 2011). Variation in how same-sex romance is treated by existing scholarship is often linked to what degree these relationships are viewed as utopian, fleeting, 'purely' emotional, or benign, whether in their threat to hetero-normativity or other ideologies of domestic life or femininity. As Kanno (2011, p. 18) rightly points out, the tendency in the scholarship on girls' media of prewar Japan to underplay the political significance and staying power of same-sex relationships among girls often seems surprisingly at odds with the visibility of such relationships in the texts themselves.

Theoretical approaches to *shōjo* magazines tend not to be explicitly displayed in the scholarship, but Michel Foucault and Judith Butler are the most common interlocutors. Behind the work on the origins of girls' culture in girls' magazines is often a sort of genealogical approach that refers to Michel Foucault's conception of 'genealogy', where the method looks at the history of concepts and systems of power to consider and critique where they have ended up. Generally speaking these works do not address the concerns of Foucault, where the imagined inevitability and totalizing discourses of the present would be opened up for question by the method of genealogy, but rather show where girl culture came from to present the *shōjo*'s origins. Among such works in English, Shamoon (2012) is particularly thorough in tracing these trends from Meiji to the present day. Some are less historical but pick up on transporting a conception of girlishness across time and gender as a mode of social critique (e.g. Takahara 2006).

Such genealogical approaches to the *shōjo* most closely draw on the political concerns of the Foucauldian methodology when they use the concept to reconsider universalized notions of sexuality, gender, and maturity, articulating the ways girls' culture called on the ambiguities of the concept of 'not-quite-female' (Robertson 1998, p. 65) to embrace more a status that allowed for a longer-term relationship with the eros and intimacy that had heretofore been associated with a 'phase' of adolescence that should be outgrown through a process of maturity toward heterosexuality. Writers including Yoshiya Nobuko (of the epigraph) and later Mori Mari employed 'girlhood' in order to maintain a form of queer sexuality beyond the age of adolescence. In this mode, *shōjo* genres became important to lesbian identities, while being called by

various historical names such as 'S' and '*dōseiai*' (same-sex love), and later as 'lesbian' when this term became more familiar (for history and of the loan words based on the English 'lesbian' see Welker 2010). More recently, fans of Japanese *shōjo* media culture internationally have found in *shōjo* culture material variously interesting for feminisms, lesbian identities, and queer identities. A reason for this abiding interest is the power of a representative practice that does not require 'growing out of' same-sex love. Nor are they even limited by the more radical, but still limited, conception of 'growing into' same-sex sexuality through a process of liberation. At its best, the purpose of girls' magazines in such narratives is not simply to show the existence of same-sex relationships at some particular historical moment, but to destabilize master narratives of liberation or oppression (discourses of power) that affect people's lives in the present.

Many works on the *shōjo* and their media influence suggest the ways that girls and cultural producers question dominant discourses on the nature of femininity and 'women' through their performance of girlhood. This is true also of the interest in girls' anime and manga, which often provide a space for queer sexuality and identity, and some scholars note this connection with Butler explicitly (for example, Welker 2012). Quite recently, Iida Yūko (2016) has explored in a sustained and powerful way the importance of a sort of performance, in Judith Butler's sense, of gender and sexuality categories in and around the writings of twentieth-century Japanese women, including the ways that *shōjo* and *jōgakusei* (girl students) and their representation develop the contradictions and ambiguities already present in a concept like 'good wife' (*ryōsai*), part of the master narrative of women's education from the late nineteenth-century *ryōsai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother). She shows how the discontinuity and potentially self-contradictory aspects of this phrase are split open and revealed through the performances of reading and writing, including those for and by those with girl-related identities.

What is a '*shōjo*'?

Girls' magazine writer Yoshiya Nobuko's essay 'Loving one another' implies various distinctions among a girl child (*dōjo*), a maiden (*shōjo*), and an adolescent girl (*shōjo*). For her, the last is the oldest of the three and develops strong friendships with other girls her age that are in a continuum with, but different from, the love of the youngest for her doll (Yoshiya 1921). She argues that this sort of sweet affection on the part of girls of various ages before marriage should not be feared as any type of untamed sexuality, but rather valued as an ethical core for behavior when she grows up. This brings us to the useful point made by Jennifer Robertson and repeated and developed by John Whittier Treat that there comes to be an implication in the word *shōjo* of 'heterosexual inexperience and homosexual experience' (Robertson 1998, p. 65; Treat 1996 p. 283). Same-sex relationships in the early 1920s were often seen as benign, even beneficial, for *shōjo* girls who were old enough to experience romantic and erotic inclinations, as an alternative to fraternization with men.

Rather than the common translation of 'girl' for *shōjo* it would be more accurate to use something more prosaic, such as 'adolescent young woman'. In her extensive book on *shōjo* discourses in the prewar, Watanabe Shūko writes that most who use the term are referring to the span of time between puberty and marriage (Watanabe 2007, p. 22). This is the basic concept of the *shōjo*, and is located in adolescence. But the English word 'girl' also has a range of colloquial meanings that is more evocative of the range with which '*shōjo*' has been used, including various qualities that are seen as in some way 'girlish' or playful that might extend into adulthood. Writings by Takahara Eiri and Takemoto Novala have been especially important for considering the possibility of a *shōjo*-inspired stance across gender, sex, and sexual orientation lines, perhaps

because gender and sexual ambiguity have always been a part of this concept (Bergstrom 2011; Takahara 2006; Takemoto 2009).

In addition to girls' magazines themselves, a main factor that lay the groundwork for the emergence of this category of *shōjo* were changes in the education system and the increase in girls' education, including the Upper School Act of 1899, which required high schools for girls all around Japan. In the Japanese scholarship on the early twentieth-century *shōjo* some especially emphasize this educational factor (e.g. Honda 1990) in her creation. Relatedly, what this emerging concept of *shōjo* also reflects is a lengthening of the time between when a young woman was monitored by her parents and when she married, particularly for those who moved from their homes to dormitories to be closer to a school. This extended period meant for some young women a greater mobility, choice, and free time embodied in the overdetermined figure of the *shōjo*. Because this concept's legacy extends to the present, these discussions apply to questions of women's place in society today and their potential to be politically mobile and mobilized. An important detailing in English of the Japanese-language 'girl critics', who take on the writing style of the *shōjo* while also doing academic work, can be found in Aoyama (2010); some of the scholars she covers are Honda Masuko, Kawasaki Kenko, and Saitō Minako.

Finally, an important area of analysis for contemporary *shōjo* studies has been the history of postmodernism and analysis of the ways consumption and commodity fetishism have intertwined with *shōjo* culture in Japan (Treat 1996). Thinking about girls' magazines of an earlier period is important in that they help to define the term *shōjo* in the very context of the capitalist press as a form of marketing, and in that the consumption of reproductions of girls' culture of the Meiji and Taisho eras remains an important aspect of contemporary girls' culture with new inflections particular to late capitalism.

Definitions of *shōjo* have a sense of urgency as they seem to apply to questions of women's place in society today and their potential to be politically mobile and mobilized. The current interest in the *shōjo* is clearly tied to the place of the term in the genres of *manga* and *anime*, and the prevalence of the term among cultural critics and scholars of popular culture. Saitō Tamaki's *Beautiful Fighting Girl* (2011), which focuses more on girls' anime and game characters' meaning for contemporary Japanese psychology and sexuality than on the gender of consumers, is also an important piece in this discussion. A full review of studies of contemporary *shōjo* is outside the scope of this chapter, but citations are found in the historical works mentioned above as well as the discussions found in works on *shōjo manga* (Prough 2011; Welker 2006; Aoyama et al. 2011; Shamoon 2008) and other media (Kotani 2008; McLelland 2010; Napier 2001; Lamarre 2009). *Shōjo* is a category that has remained important in contemporary Japanese publishing, and is now known beyond Japan via the world of *anime* and *manga*. There is a sense that *shōjo* has a conceptual contribution to make and is worth using in its Romanized form, and 'shojo' was entered in the Oxford English Dictionary in 2011. The rest of this chapter will explore the ways in which early *shōjo* magazine media formed and reflected the multiple layers of girlhood identity.

Shōjo magazine media and communities

The origins of *shōjo* magazines lie largely in the popularity of a 'girls' column' launched within the *Boys' World* (*Shōnen sekaī*) magazine in 1895, and leading to a number of girls' magazine publications after the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5). Propped up by Japan's perceived success in that war, magazines addressed the young citizens of Japan as though speaking to an increasingly unified group. They were driven equally by the rise of consumer society and sense of the possibility of middle-class leisure. As Mark Jones has argued, treating childhood as a precious time for education and future social mobility was a hallmark of the Japanese rising bourgeois class

(Jones 2010). Meanwhile, girls' magazines were also moving away from the model of Women's education magazine *Jogaku zasshi* (founded in 1885) and such intellectual enlightenment magazines that were read as much by men as by women (see Brownstein 1980; Copeland 2000). Although editors still thought that providing moral guidance and information were central goals, and sometimes rejected items on the grounds of being age inappropriate, the clear break toward seeking popularity and high circulation as important qualities of these publications came with the *shōjo zasshi*, and the editors addressed what was clearly seen as a new market. It was in the context of the capitalist press in Japan that the 'shōjo' became a marketing category, and this remains a core aspect of its social meaning today. Meanwhile, this media culture created a range of communities for that girl, from her personal connection with the magazine to the larger reader and contributor community, to the Japanese nation, empire, and the world.

Early *shōjo* magazine materials are difficult enough to view in person that some detail of what they were like may be helpful. All of the magazines were in the size typical of magazines of the time, the dimensions of a standard contemporary academic book, and about a centimeter thick. They had color covers and insert pages with artwork, thick photopaper for some reproductions, and cheaper newsprint paper for the inner pages. For an example of one issue we might look at *Shōjo Gahō* (*Girls' pictorial*) from the early Taishō era (January 1913). It has a cover image reproducing a woodblock image by future manga artist Hosokibara Seiki (1885–1958) in colorful blues, greens, and reds, with a young woman wearing a large green ribbon, fashionable especially among schoolgirls at the time. She clutches a ball of string, a common item for posed photographs of girls for the New Year's holiday, and a pine tree is in the foreground. Hosokibara was one of the many commercial artists who were supported by the rising readership of women's magazines, with Takehisa Yumeji being one of the best known. Inside the cover, we see two additional color images, including one of girls playing a traditional card game (also by Hosokibara). There are 18 photographs, almost all featuring girls and young women, from quite young children in velvet lace-collared dresses to those in their late teens. Many are children of well-known figures or society elites, and the author Natsume Sōseki's daughters are posed at their home with large hair ribbons similar to those on the cover. Other photos seem to be chosen to serve as snapshots of daily life of the upper-middle class: girls with their grandmother, girls having their hair fixed, a girl holding a puppy, girls sitting by a fireplace. The photos often have dreamy captions: 'A White Shawl: While waiting for her mother to get ready to go out, she stands in the garden, her black hair like lacquer bound with a white ribbon, and waist tied with an obi – everything here is beautiful, but what stands out is her white shawl!' There are photographs of dogs in the snow, a baby elephant at the zoo, and four pages show formal poses of young women whose names are provided – a feature on society women. These images build a montage of daily life in early twentieth-century Japan and common aspirations held out for girls and women in the early Taishō period. Advertisements are for home remedies, the Mitsukoshi department store, an upper girls' school, and competing magazines and girls' novels. There are biographies and children's stories, and at least half of the hundred pages of text are reader submissions of poetry, personal experiences, and letters.³ There are three pages from the editor, Takami Kyūtarō (Shisui) (1875–1945), an editor working with Kunikida Doppo, later known for his work with the magazine *Children's Land* (*Kodomo no kuni*). This one issue includes most important elements of the girls' magazines and what readers said appealed to them, information we have because of their participation in the publications.

As suggested by my description, one of the keys to the success of these girls' magazines as media was their visual lushness and variety. The early days of girls' magazines correspond with the influx of lithography as a choice for graphic designers, and the originals of the early illustrations for the girls' magazines are a mix of woodblock prints, lithography, painting, and

photography. Lithography was popular early in its introduction around 1890 largely due to its apparent realism, seeming to be ‘just like the real thing’ (*honomono sokkuri*). In some sense, this effect was overwritten by the availability of photography, but the introduction of color to lithography brought out its full potential, and it saw increased use by a group of commercial artists. One outlet was posters, but the primary one was the rising number of magazines (Utagawa 1997, p. 49). The printing of these periodicals was still not micro-specialized, so while mechanical reproduction remained very important, the compositional medium of the original artwork for the various frontispiece illustrations could be diverse, with photos, oil paintings, woodblock, and lithography all reproduced on the same paper. So while previously ‘woodblock prints’ (*hanga*) were slower to reproduce, one image could now be distributed through mass reproduction via photo technology. These trends also gave artists a wide range of venues so that someone like Takehisa Yumeji was able to illustrate periodicals, sheet music, and advertisements, while also producing bestselling books of his prints. Arguably, this added income from commercial art allowed for more complex and detailed original designs, and scholars write that it ‘freed up creativity’ (Utagawa 1997, p. 63). Artists for the magazines were often trained in multiple styles and places, lending to the variety and vibrancy of the period. For example, many *Shōjo no tomo* covers were by Kawabata Ryūshi of the Hakubakai School who trained extensively in Western painting. He was later inspired by the Japanese collection at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and from 1912 began to reinscribe Japanese art methods back into his work just as he began to work in mass-produced materials for girls’ magazines. There were many such examples of artists with cosmopolitan training, and it made this moment a good one for creating the vibrant look of girls’ magazines. In turn, the very success and large readership of these magazines meant that they could make a profession of illustration.

Just as many of the reporters and authors for girls’ magazines were men, so too were most of the famous graphic artists we associate with the girls’ magazine (Takehisa, as well as Fukiya Kōji, Takabatake Kashō, and Nakahara Jun’ichi, all of whom owed much of their success to their work for girls’ fiction book design and girls’ magazine illustrations). There were several women artists as well, however, and the epigraph by Yoshiya specifically mentions Ikeda Shōen (ne. Sakakibara Yuriko, 1886–1917), who was a modern-style ukiyo-e painter and woodblock artist, often choosing as subjects beautiful women in a mix of Western and Japanese dress. She and her students were featured in girls’ magazines (e.g. *Shōjo gahō*, August 1914, unpaginated front matter). The opportunities for women artists extended also to the reader columns, with drawing contests. Early Taishō *Shōjo no tomo* editions generally included eight drawings across two pages drawn from reader submissions. The editors also provided themes for subjects and guidelines, such as ‘not using color or pencil’, because these would not be reproducible (e.g. *Shōjo no tomo*, October 1919, p. 97). Here the medium of the magazine brought the sense of a worldly aesthetic to the lives of younger girls and also suggested that they might have the opportunity to produce art of their own. The extensive backgrounds in Paris of painters like Fukiya and ties to world modernism brought these aesthetics to the lives of the girl and to their own creative repertoire, whether those made their way into their lives through art, fictional work, or household arts from interior to kimono design.

Also important in this medium was the use of print technologies to represent girls and to create extensive opportunities for self-expression. Writings by reader-contributors themselves often tie the visual appeal of the magazines with their own desire to contribute. In the epigraph to this chapter, Yoshiya Nobuko expresses the intense pleasure of her visual experience as a reader of girls’ magazines to her later career as a writer for them. Similar sentiments are seen among less famous reader-contributors. For example, the *Special Spring Supplement*, 1917 issue of *Shōjo no tomo* included a column among the articles (rather than the contributor section) by various

women reflecting on their history of reader submissions. Each of them mentions as a starting point her sensory experiences of finding the colorful magazine covers and frontispieces, and then later contributing her own writing. This typical fan letter written by a Yanase Ayako (April 1917, p. 60) from Kobe links the visual experience of the magazines with the sense of personal connection that they brought after the loss of her parents:

The days went by quickly and here it is nine years after my parents passed away leaving my sister and I in the care of my grandparents near Awaji. Their loving care has allowed us to live here by the sea happily enough, but what has always been lacking are friends to serve as our conversation partners. To soothe our loneliness both of us took to reading ... My older brother from the capital sent something, saying 'Here's a new book for you'. The cover was like burning crimson, two girls encircled by a wreath and smiling. That was the first issue of *Shōjo no tomo*.

Another writes of similar images moving her to submit to the magazine and when successful she writes emotionally, 'Such happiness from being invited amongst all of you illustrious writers. It feels like a dream!' (Tanimoto Sonoko, *Shōjo no tomo*, April 1917, p. 62). That these writers link these visual parts of the magazines and their own desire to submit suggests they wanted to be a part of the aesthetic experience of the magazine and connect themselves to the *shōjo* identities that are represented in those images.

We see here also that an important aspect of this community building was the tie between city and country that these images provided. The magazine clearly brought aspiring girls living outside of the major cities a sense of being part of a larger community through the submissions, and the very content of the images solicited the interest of and interpellated adolescents from the periphery. One of the most popular subjects of covers and inserts was a girl by the seashore or river looking out longingly or a pair of girls doing the same. These called on the associations with melodramatic fiction of the era, such as Tokutomi Rōka's *Hototogisu* (The Cuckoo, 1899) of elite women by the shore, perhaps recovering from tuberculosis or fleeing a family problem. A pastoral scene by Sasaki Rinpū called 'A little break from tending to spring chickens' explicitly depicts a young woman reading a magazine while sitting against a pile of hay in a chicken coop. Meanwhile, such pastoral images come also to be tied with modern poetry and fiction early on, with works by groundbreaking poet Yosano Akiko, but also with translated modern and modernist poetry such as William Butler Yeats. Increasingly in the 1920s, the same artists who graced the covers and drew illustrations for girls' magazine fiction themselves combined lyric poetry with their drawings, and this became part of what came to be labeled as 'lyric pictures' (*jojōga*). Again, these provided the readers with aesthetic links between modernity and their own emotional lives, which might or might not align with the nature of their own life environment, and this seems another reason they are so often mentioned by the readers.

These visual styles arguably contributed to the imaginings and realities of girl-girl intimacy surrounding girls' magazines. As mentioned, these images from very early on tend to contain pairs of girls together and alone in a landscape or bourgeois household setting. While same-sex relationships start to appear in girls' magazines as early as 1910, particularly in the reader letters and indirectly in stories about school and dorm life, I would argue that such relationships reveal themselves first most clearly in the visual spaces of the magazine in such paintings, and readers' reactions to them. For example, in 1919, a reader of *Shōjo no tomo*, Nanri Fusako, writes, 'The girl on the cover: She was truly, truly cute and beautiful. Those eyes, those cheeks, the moon peeking out through the new leaves – unbearably wonderful!' (Nanri Fusako, *Shōjo no tomo*, October 1919, p. 98). In the same issue, an insert by graphic artist Harada Namiji shows two girls on a sofa

with modern print kimono (using large modern graphic patterns). One holds the other's hands, with the caption, 'the two sit silently on the cushion, drawing their bodies close while listening to the "orchestra" from the living room' (Harada 1919). As Barbara Hartley shows in her analysis of Takabatake Kashō, the pairings of girls could simultaneously and often contradictorily represent non-establishment sexualities and nationally positive messages of integrating and subsuming Western culture within Japanese femininity (Hartley 2008).

Entering the 1920s, text, image, and readers' response come into a more symbiotic relationship, with illustrations and story content producing ever greater visibility of the romantic friendships among its readers in the reader letters and in fictional works. It is not that such images or spaces caused such desires, of course, but rather that they provided new ways of expressing existing interests and awakening them in some girls, providing the place for the open-ended and exploratory queer reading by adolescents that Eve Sedgwick describes in her introduction to *Novel Gazing* as reading 'for important news about oneself' (Sedgwick 1997, p. 2). From the more paranoid angle of government control, we look into the future and see a testament to the power of these girls' magazine images in a 1940 article from *Yomiuri Shimbun* (*Yomiuri Newspaper*) stating that the *jojōga* on the covers of girls magazines will face sanctions and oversight from the Home Ministry due to concerns over them being 'unhealthy' (*Yomiuri*, April 27, 1940).

Whatever the readers' passions or their origins, the publishers truly embraced this sense of reader community and participation, providing space in the magazines and opportunities for meeting. The extensive reader contributions were sometimes judged by major male writers of the day (e.g. Tayama Katai, Kawabata Yasunari). The rhetorical implication is that the main editors are replying directly to letters. Readers often address the editor directly 'Shibusawa-sensei' for *Shōjo no tomo's* editor Shibusawa Seika, for example. While a feature of most Japanese periodicals in prewar Japan, reader columns were at their most voluminous and vibrant in the girls' magazines. Not mere fan responses to the works by the publication's paid contributions, these columns were a substantive portion of its entire page length, and a significantly greater proportion than in boys' magazines. For example, Imada (2007, p. 63) shows that in 1935 almost 20 percent of the magazine *Shōjo no tomo* was reader letters or prize fiction submissions, compared to 10 percent (mostly fiction submissions) in the boys' magazine *Nihon shōnen*. While some of the letters, as quoted above, do address the editors or the magazine, many are not so much 'responses' to authoritative texts but rather constitutive of their own original discourse, whether essays, poetry, literature, or expositions.

As I have argued in my discussion of *Shufu no tomo*, women's magazine reader responses were highly curated and placed in a clearly delimited framework of 'friendship' as a master narrative in which the magazine itself was the most helpful 'friend' of all, guiding the reader to particular notions of domestic Japanese life, even while providing some space for self-expression (Frederick 2006). The girls' magazines considered here were also constructed in this way, with their own frameworks for the reader texts, particularly in the mode of 'contests'. But, whatever the intentions of the editors or contest judges, the reader responses appear to construct their own communal structure with values and interests that spill beyond that framework, and more so than in magazines aimed at adults in the same period.

Reader meetings were important for this interaction, and were held by various girls' magazines around Japan, though with a focus on Tokyo. These were elaborate affairs. The schedule for the *Shōjo no tomo* Fourth Annual Reader's Meeting in Tokyo appears in the October edition, and includes a greeting by the editor, several lectures, a youth opera, a 'girl tragedy' play, Chinese magic show, and a moving picture show (*Shōjo no tomo* 1913). Some readers show their enthusiasm for these meetings in lively terms: 'I heard from my friend about the meeting, and jumped for joy. But in the process I jumped right out of my seat, and jumped so high that I hurt my

backside when it hit the chair on the way down!' In response, the editor conveys his condolences for her injury (*Shōjo no tomo*, April 1918, p. 100). On the same page, a woman from Osaka asks why they never have the meetings in her city because she wants so desperately to go to one. Photography served to convey many of these reader meetings to those who could not attend, providing some vague satisfaction, but also a spectacle that promotes the magazine. The coverage of the Tokyo reader event mentioned earlier combines photography and drawn illustrations to show both the stormy weather (*bōfū ame*) in which women waited and the stream of women crowding in while a helpless man tries to stop them. The caption says the women streamed in 'like the colors that fill the rivers of Nishijin when they dye *yūzen* cloth in Kyoto' (Hoshino 1913, p. 17). Another illustration shows that the streetcars in Sukiyabashi were 'fully occupied by *shōjo*' (Hoshino 1913, p. 27). In at least one case, this promotion and enthusiasm backfired, and some could not enter the crowded halls. The *Yomiuri Newspaper* printed a story about an over-packed meeting of *Shōjo sekai* (*Girls' World*) in Kanda, Tokyo, with quotes from attendees such as 'I shouldn't have come! If I hadn't I wouldn't have gotten stepped on, and I wouldn't be crying right now.' 'A lovely madam with five or six children in tow said, "It is supposed to be by invitation only, but they don't have any usher on this side to check that, so even though I said I wanted to come I can't get in. What a debacle.'" The usher 'marked with a red ribbon was overrun by the crowds' (*Yomiuri Newspaper* 1908). They were perhaps a victim of their own success, but the sales of girls' magazines did not likely suffer.

Not insignificant is the potentially exploitative nature of these contributions. Prizes were given to a small number of the contributors (for example, *Shōjo no tomo* gave two commemorative watches each month). But the language of 'space' and 'communication' could underplay the profit motives of the publishers, while the writing by these young women was provided for free. One might think that the assumption of publishers was that women need not be paid for their writing, because it could be interpreted at the time as a sort of hobby in lieu of future careers. But it is worth acknowledging how extensive the women's workforce was at this time, even if concentrated among poorer women. The contributors indeed tended to be those who were of means such that their labor was not being used in the ever expanding workforce in the textile industry, usually performed under harsh conditions and in a state of indentured servitude. Prostitution and work as maids were two other common occupations, along with traditional farm work. Some young women among these occupations did read, and increasingly so over the 1920s. The first issue of *Shōjo sekai* (1906), for example, features an advertisement by the Tokyo Muslin Factory, which would later become famous also for strikes by young women textile workers. The advertisement does not mention any products, but simply provides the address of its factory in the Shitamachi area. The ad is bland and may have been aimed at potential buyers of cloth, as a means of recruiting workers, or in support of its own workers who were potential readers of the magazine.⁴ Whatever its aim, it does provide an important reminder of a growing body of young women workers exploited in this industry that would become both a major force for Japanese economic growth and the potential for new forms of economic exploitation that was enabled by the lengthening of female adolescence in Japan. While literacy was not as high in this group, reader surveys show that they were still a significant group of readers by 1920 and girls' magazines were the most popular genre among so-called 'factory girls' (Nagamine 1997, pp. 174–86). Shared copies of girls' magazines were relatively easy to read and cheaper entertainment than books or movies. By today's standards, these publications are still fairly challenging and text-heavy, though a pronunciation glossary is provided for every word.

But the largest groups reading these girls' magazines and participating in reader clubs were girl students. Increased availability and social support of girls' schools allowed young women to continue their education with increasing frequency, and making them able to read and write

more proficiently than their own mothers. Among girls themselves, we see controversy over 'loyalty' to a particular magazine and between expectations that the fans are virtuous and voluntary. As Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase shows, this erupted in a debate among the readers themselves, with one Kitagawa Chiyo being criticized for submitting with ambitions of becoming a professional writer rather than out of a sense of belonging to a magazine community (Dollase 2010, p. 82). Early reader letters convey a friendly tone, cajoling editor Shibusawa to have a reader meeting in their towns, or with personal requests like, 'my sister is such a mess, please just print her submissions'. The letters also often mention conversations with classmates, dormitory life, and the homosocial environment of school and dorm. As Yoshiya Nobuko becomes more successful and other more emotionally charged writing comes out, many of the letters take on the lyrical imagery and writing style in tandem with mentions of crushes on girls in their school or even on other girls who have submitted pieces to the magazine. Meanwhile, representations of these schools helped to cement the conception of Japan as a national community of girls, often including images of places at the peripheries of 'Japan' such as the 1914 *Shōjo gahō* photographs of girls' dormitories from Nagano to Okinawa (*Shōjo gahō* 1917).

Girls around the world

Cheap reproduction and mailing costs meant that these images of girls would and could be distributed widely, making them influential on readers in a broad range of spaces within Japan's empire and beyond. Girls' magazines also contained many letters from abroad. Most of these were from colonial spaces of Korea and Taiwan, but also from migrant communities in places like Brazil and California, as well as from upper-class daughters of temporary visitors to Europe and North America. Less often remarked upon is the extent to which girls' magazines turned their attention to youth and girls' culture around the world, presenting it through photographs, illustrated translations, and non-fiction stories.

In *Shōjo sekai*, *Shōjo no tomo*, and *Shōjo gahō* around 1910, every issue has stories that feature the lives of young women outside Japan. While many articles focus on Europe and America or nearby countries in East Asia, others feature India, the African continent, and Russia. There is also an accompanying sense of the readership being a part of the Japanese state and empire. This is displayed in an early issue of *Shōjo sekai* where a photo collage features 'Girls' from Various Countries' (*Shōjo sekai* 1906), with a cute girl from each of Britain, Russia, India, and Siam, and then places what is labeled as a Japanese girl in the center. Here the girl is represented in a much more traditional-looking outfit than, for example, the stylish ribbons on the cover of *Shōjo gahō* mentioned earlier, and shows a girl holding a Japanese doll. In such representations there is a sense that the girl's Japaneseness is defined by juxtaposition with others.

We can see this expanding in an issue of *Shōjo no tomo* (*Girls' Friend*) from December 1920. It includes an abridged and illustrated translation and summary of Frances Hodgson Burnett's *A Little Princess* and a non-fiction piece, 'Eskimo Summer'. An important feature, serialized across several months, is the 'Playful World Tour' (Sekai otogi ryokō) by Mizuta Mitsu(ko), an education journalist, children's book writer, and spouse of geographer Yamazaki Naomasa (Mizuta Mitsuko 1920). This multimedia historical fantasy tale uses storytelling, drawings, and ethnographic photography to take the girl reader on a tour of the world, beginning with the South Pacific in this issue, with others taking her to Egypt and Europe. The *shōjo* protagonist wishes to do more than read about other places, and so calls upon a magic crane that she can ride around the world, beginning with Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia. The narrative tone is of genuine curiosity and for a quite short piece provides realistic details of dances, clothing, and greeting styles with some specificity to particular islands and regions. Mizuta's piece uses photography to represent

the people and landscapes of the places her character visits on her bird, combining the playful fantasy with a sense of documentary ethnography.

'Girls of the world' articles sometimes celebrated a worldly cosmopolitanism, but it would be misleading, of course, to suggest this was not immersed in the structures of power. A number of such articles reflect upon and communicate a view of racial hierarchies in the world, and likely introduced the very concept of race to thousands of young women in Japan in early twentieth-century Japan. The humorist and poet Takeda Ōtō (1871–1935), who was also an editor, contributed to the second issue of *Girls' World* (*Shōjo sekai*, January–March 1906) an article 'Customs of Girls around the World' (*Sekai shōjo fūzoku*). It begins rather unexpectedly with a lighthearted list of household items to represent the races of the world: sugar cubes (white like the Europeans), a copper coin borrowed from your mother (the 'natives' of various areas), a bit of soot from the side of the pot ('Indians and people from the southern sunny places like Africa'), and egg soap (the people of Asia). Takeda then takes on an empathetic voice to imagine,

girls might find it especially odd, to think of their skin as yellow and to be called 'the yellow race' or 'the Asian race' ... And it goes without saying that if we are thinking of color, on a world scale as well, there is always a mixing of races and people's color within the same country varies as well.

(January 1906, p. 81)

While fairly neutrally describing the dress of Chinese and brushing aside Russia as 'too varied' to describe at all, Korea is placed in its colonial context:

As you know, Korean girls are ridiculed the world over and have no status to speak of today, but in olden times they brought weaving techniques to Japan and it was this country that brought Chinese learning to our country. But they are lazy people and thanks to our Japan they are finally standing tall again. We can see how lovely the two girls are in the photo

(January 1906, p. 82)

While it is hard to know how girl readers took this sort of article, some reader letters from residents of Korea and China do reflect similar attitudes toward the culture around them.

The beginning years of girls' magazines coincide with the annexation of Korea by Japan. While this explicitly drops out of discussion later, special girls' magazine issues with a focus on Korea came out in October 1910, clearly put together in the month after the August 1910 'annexation'. *Shōjo no tomo* placed the Yi Dynasty 'King', 'Queen', and crown prince in the opening photo series.⁵ In the larger square photos the emperor wears a military uniform and the empress traditional dress, while in the inset photos she wears a Western dress and he Korean dress. The color illustration inset or *sashi-e* that usually depicted an adolescent Japanese girl shows a girl by a riverside in Korean dress marked as 'A Korean Girl in Beautiful Clothing' (*Utsukushii kimono o kita chosen no shōjo*) (unpaginated). A longer article by educator and woman scholar of the philosophy of law Mitani Tamiko is called, 'Our new Korean *shōjo* Sisters' (1910). While not remarkable as an article, its call to sisterhood is of interest, and its attitude is more positive toward young Korean women, marking a difference from Japanese culture in a more nuanced way.

While in general representation of Korea largely drops out of girls' magazines over the coming decades as even a semblance of peaceful sisterhood seems impossible, these modes re-emerge in letters from the settler communities in Manchuria as well as émigrés to Brazil and California where girls' and women's magazines also reached. More generally, these trends remind us of the extent to which discourses of the cosmopolitan were also a part of empire and Japanese

colonialism (Sakai 2000), even as they did not necessitate it. Girls' magazines reflected those dynamics and also helped to build a sense of Japan's colonial community as one element of being a 'girl in the world'. Later this will become important to how choices like settlement in Manchuria are envisioned, with a sense that girls and women who move there are still part of this larger community and that this promise of other spaces might have utopian possibilities. While ultimately such utopian dreams were not realized, such imaginings are an important part of the history of expatriation and 'moving to the frontier' (kaitaku).

Meanwhile, these stories, along with those of a smaller elite who studied in Europe or America, served simultaneously as a space for thinking about new identities, even as they also reinforced Japaneseness. Looking ahead to the later 1910s and 1920s, we see that wide-ranging stories of the world seem to have been an influence on the future 'modern girl' and literary figures who traveled, Japanese who have traveled to various locations, and this ideal of cosmopolitanism remained a source of aspiration for readers. In some cases, interaction with girls from outside of Japan calls on the cultures of sisterhood and intimacy that we see among the girl communities and girl dormitory stories set within Japan and without. For example, a 1921 serialized novel by the half-Russian novelist Ōizumi Kokuseki called *Hidden Green Eyes* (*Midori iro no mekakushi*) depicts a Japanese family in Paris and often shows the Japanese *shōjo* and her Parisian girl friend, with many of the illustrations displaying a hug, looking at a mirror and seeing the other, and each imagining the other (depicted with a vision of the other girl above her head) (Ōizumi 1921, p. 43).⁶ While there is a certain binary element of east meets west, the visual cues are fully legible within the vocabulary of girls' intimacy and appear to be enabled by their foreign locale, a trope often used in the same-sex romance works associated with what comes to be called 'S' culture (S standing for a variety of meanings including 'sister') (Pflugfelder 2005; Suzuki 2006). In places this may occur via reading of foreign spaces and thinkers.⁷ By the late 1920s, we see Yoshiya Nobuko travel across Siberia to Paris and then through the United States as her chosen use of her first major signs of wealth as a writer, and Marxist feminists like Miyamoto Yuriko and Yuasa Yoshiko's stay in Moscow and Paris are also features (Kurosawa 2008). In both cases these are real actions inspired in part by the worldliness of girls' magazines of their childhoods. Some recent scholarship on the travels of women from this period develop this line of thought (Horiguchi 2011; Frederick 2016). Travel and mobility also remain an aspect of the *shōjo* genres of contemporary popular culture (e.g. Suter 2013).

Conclusion

Recent work that touches on early girls' writing promises to speak beyond the specific topic of early twentieth-century girls' culture. In her ambitious analysis of women writers, Iida Yūko coins the concepts of *hidokusei* (being read) and *ōtōsei* (responsiveness) to think about how women writers' writings and responses were gendered and entailed complicating gender categories. Informed by Wolfgang Iser and cultural studies, she explores ways of extending 'reader response' theory to account for how 'women' (*josei*) and related categories were negotiated in writings of twentieth-century Japanese women writers (Iida 2016). These included conceptions of girlhood, and her focus is on the generation of writers who grew up reading and contributing to girls' magazines. I would argue that this is one reason girls' magazines are especially important to thinking about how gender categories in twentieth-century Japan were simultaneously questioned, performed, and reinforced through a changing dynamic of readerliness and writerliness that was encouraged by these publications, and why they are important material for thinking about Japanese inflections of the larger issues of encoding and decoding (Hall 1980) at the core of media studies. Various communities were fostered by

girls' magazines, including the very identity of the girl itself. These identities were negotiated by the media in question, including particularly photographic and other visual representations that were mass produced. This mass reproduction allowed such various identities and realities of 'girlhood' to circulate in new ways, and allowed the voices of girls who identified themselves in this way to circulate as well. I do not mean to suggest that this was entirely empowering, or that some texts were empowering and some were not. This is a non-binary and highly mediated context, where the young women's self-awareness of being represented and representing was heightened. Awareness does not mean overcoming or liberation. As suggested briefly here, the various forms of intersecting identities also meant that a sense of mobility and mastery were tied together with the wishes of the state and empire, even as these girls – or really any citizen – were seldom able to benefit from their attachment to the hegemony of empire. We see in the magazines many cases of girls who are able to rise to the status of self-representation and shaping, tying their lives to others that they choose rather than, for example, marriage partners chosen for them. At the same time, we see from readers' locations by 1930 that more and more were mobilized as part of the effort to settle Manchuria, a move that seldom proved to be empowering to the settlers, to say the least, with many dying or committing suicide near or after the end of the Pacific War. This sense of mobility and self-representation is one take on the broader scholarship that often reflects and tries to complicate binaries of the early twentieth-century positioning of the young woman and her relationship to the state and family institutions. As commercial publications were often written with much participation from educators and other officials whose wishes overlapped with the state more than the young girls, this is important to keep in mind.

This chapter may seem to imply that 'identity' or community is a good thing (or that there are good and bad kinds of identities). But I would also note the concomitant need for compelling criticisms of the minoritizing of sexual or other identities. Probably more powerful here is the recognition of intersecting identities, the multiple 'good wives' category Iida raises, and the performative and mixed aspect of the various identities seen in girls' magazines. One could think of these various girls' magazine communities in concentric circles, from the narcissistic girl seeing herself on the pages of the magazine, which rings out to the magazine readership, Japanese girlhood, imperial girlhood, and cosmopolitan girlhood. But it is likely more useful to consider the ways the cosmopolitan girlhood brought, via the medium of the magazine itself, a different sense of her smaller community. As shown, this worldliness often brought with it stereotypes and complicity with Japanese imperialism that certainly was effectual on the 'home front'. But looking over the two following decades we see lasting influences on Japanese feminism and queer culture on the experience of readers open to a wider world and modes of representing a range of desires and emotions through their own contributions and readings of girls' magazine media. The recent scholarship on girls' magazines has both reflected and fed the growth of gender and sexuality studies as a field within Japanese studies in both Japan and elsewhere, including its synergies with increased attention to histories of Japanese colonialism. It is possible that the 'zatsu' (mixed) nature of magazines has its own potential, if not an inoculation, against singular conceptions of girl identity.

Notes

- 1 This term is generally a post-1980s term used in Japan especially and often associated with postmodern formations. Here I am marking what is also noted by many, including Steinberg (2012, p. viii, 135), that it applies well to earlier transmedia interactions and, I would add, the very literal meaning of *zasshi* (magazine) as 'mixed' material.

- 2 It should also be noted that contact with the opposite sex was generally quite restricted. Heterosexual friendships were increasingly restricted among bourgeois young women as views of 'virginity' as having importance increased in the modern era (Imada 2007, p. 9; Kawamura 1994).
- 3 One way of seeing that a submission is from a reader is the marking of a home city or town. Also common is the use of a given name only, and several stories that otherwise appear to be paid submissions are attributed with only a woman's given name.
- 4 The possibility of the latter two may seem counterintuitive from the perspective of contemporary analysis of advertising and given the extremely bad treatment of factory workers in the coming years. And yet, the plain aesthetics of the advertisement do not suggest that products are being sold and in 1906 this sort of 'support' seems quite possible.
- 5 In the annexation, the Emperor (*Tēi*) and Empress Consort were renamed as 'King' (*Ō*) and 'Queen' (*Ōhi*).
- 6 Ōizumi Kokuseki (1893–1957) was born from a Russian doctor of law living in Nagasaki and a woman scholar of Russian literature, but was adopted due to the father's death. He lived as a child in Moscow near Tolstoy and later in Paris, returning to Nagasaki after the Russian Revolution. His novel *Rōshi* was a bestseller, but he faced discrimination due to his mixed race in the 1930s.
- 7 In Yoshiya Nobuko's 'Yellow Rose' (Kibara) the story refers explicitly to Sappho and develops the loving relationship between two women in their late teens (Frederick 2016).

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Gender, consumerism and women's magazines in interwar Japan

Barbara Sato

According to a 2013 Japanese National Media Usage Survey, out of a total of 3,801 respondents, 93 percent between the ages of 60 and 69 depend on print media as their major news source and receive morning and evening newspapers delivered directly to their homes. More than 90 percent of young people in their 20s and 30s, however, turn to the internet for information (Nippon.com 2014). This is a far cry from the 1920s when a new broad-based reading public that included women bolstered the publication of mass women's magazines. As key instruments in shaping mass culture, women's magazines not only served as a tool for the mainstay of middle-class readers, but to a lesser extent they also played a role in formulating new identities for lower-middle-class and working-class women. Factory girls probably never visited a department store and goggled at the fancy cakes and foods on display, but magazine images had the power to dictate tastes. Editors and publishers provided the impetus to fuel ideas, but it was the women themselves who shaped these media formulations. The story of how changes in the commodification of everyday life acted as a progressive force in the self-identification of a growing spectrum of women in interwar Japan through the medium of mass women's magazines is the subject of this chapter.

Women's magazines were not the only media diffusing consumer culture. Newspapers, movies, radio, and records were also basic components of Japan's burgeoning consumerism. Both the *Asahi* and *Mainichi*, Osaka-based national newspapers, claimed circulations of over 1 million in January 1924. Tokyo boasted 112 movie theaters in 1922, and all 42 prefectures maintained at least one theater. When Hollywood idols Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks, familiar faces in women's magazines, visited Japan in 1930, pandemonium broke out. Who would have imagined that *Kingu* (King 1925), the earliest general entertainment magazine, would reach its goal of 1 million readers in city and country in less than a year? The sound of radio signaled the debut of JOAK, Japan's first regular broadcasting station in 1925. Six months later, a radio page became a daily feature of the *Yomiuri* newspaper, forging a link between print media and radio. One had only to listen to the intermingling of words like "jazz," "dancer," "department store," "liquor," and "rush hour" in songwriter Saijō Yaso's 1928 hit tune *Tokyo Marching Song* about a love-struck office girl in the Maru (Marunouchi) Building, Tokyo's newest and biggest office building designed by an American architect, to recognize that popular customs, particularly from America, were being incorporated into everyday Japanese vocabulary.

Western culture put its stamp on Japanese institutions, intellectual pursuits, and the elite life-style in the Meiji period (1868–1912). By the early twentieth century, the social consequences of the institutional reforms began to leave a mark on society. Japan's development fell short of the economic expansion in Western countries, but the establishment of the media and the proliferation of an urban-centered and middle-class consumer culture materialized at approximately the same time, or separated at most by a few years. In Tokyo, Berlin, Paris, New York, Shanghai, and other metropolises in Asia, Africa, and Europe in the 1920s, simultaneous changes reflected in technological advances were paving the way for the transformation in morals, dress, and forms of mechanization in daily life that attested to a different esthetic based on speed. Among women, these changes became dramatic after the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923 struck Tokyo and its environs. "Jazz" and "department stores" were aspects of consumer culture throughout the world. Which elements emerged earlier, where, and under whose influence often become moot points.¹

Laying the foundation for mass women's magazines

Mass magazines reflected both the wider growth of the emerging new women's culture and the expansion of women's education. Neither of these elements had matured sufficiently in the late nineteenth century for substantive change to occur. In 1887, 28 percent of all eligible girls had enrolled in elementary school and some 2,363 young women attended the 18 higher schools established by the government. Chronologically, higher school for women was equivalent to men's middle school, which went from grades 7 to 11 (Ōhama and Kumakura 1989, pp. 72–3). Qualitatively, the subject matter differed markedly and the expectations held for women after graduation remained worlds apart from that of men. Although education provided a form of upward mobility for men, access to secondary and higher education was not yet considered a necessary option for women and economic conditions prevented it.

Educator and journalist Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901), a major contributor to *Jogaku zasshi* (*Magazine for Women's Learning*, 1885), one of the earliest magazines to hail the attainment of equal rights and advocate a marriage based on love, lamented women's lack of social awareness. In his treatise *Onna no Nihonjinron* (*On Japanese Women*, 1885), Fukuzawa criticized the differences in the curricula for men and women. He urged husbands and wives to both take responsibility for educating their daughters. For starters, Fukuzawa recommended a school curriculum that placed economics and science above calligraphy and simple math. Key advocates for women's education, Shimoda Utako (1854–1936), Naruse Jinzō (1858–1918), Tsuda Umeko (1864–1929), and Hatoyama Haruko (1861–1938), all rallied on behalf of women after the state exercised control over higher schools in 1899 and clamped down on Christian mission schools, but the measures they advocated did not clash with the ideals of the state.

Two Meiji period (1867–1911) publishing houses, Jitsugyō no Nihonsha (1897) and Kōdansha (1911), paved the way for the circulation of books and magazines that would reach mass proportions in the 1920s. But Hakubunkan (1887), founded by Ōhashi Sahei (1863–1944), was the first to use marketing practices unique at the time and divide potential readers according to age, gender, education, and interests to create a variety of magazines for different segments of society. *Jogaku sekai* (*World of a Woman Student*, 1901), one of the fruits of its labors, amassed the highest circulation of all its publications. Like other late nineteenth-century women's magazines, *Jogaku sekai* included fiction and devoted space to hobbies such as tea ceremony and composing waka poetry. Above all, it proposed to "supplement those areas lacking in women's education today" and cultivate "wise wives and good mothers" (*Jogaku sekai*, January 1901).

In keeping with Ōhashi's philosophy, articles written by educators and intellectuals offered higher school graduates "moral" and "intellectual" guidance. In the first issue Nishimura Shigeki

(1828–1902), a founding member of the *Meirokeisha* (Meiji Six Society, 1872), examined the state of women's education (*Jogaku sekai*, January 1901). Miwata Masako (1843–1927), head of *Miwata jogakkō* (Miwata Women's Higher School, 1903), discussed the ramifications that changes in morality would have on young women in the March 1905 issue. Although a family section that introduced Western recipes became a regular feature, practical articles of the sort published in later mass women's magazines were noticeably missing. With a single issue selling for about 500 yen in today's currency, *Jogaku sekai* was not suited to the average woman's pocketbook. But then neither was it suited to the average woman's tastes.

As early as 1913, the Ministry of Education declared that the increase in women's magazines posed a threat to traditional Confucian morality. The authorities wasted no time in censoring those magazines deemed antithetical to the “good wife, wise mother” (*ryōsai kenbo*) philosophy of education, the moral cornerstone of women's higher education from 1899 until after the Asia Pacific War. Interestingly, one of the first magazines to be targeted was *Jogaku sekai*, even though it intentionally allotted space to uncontroversial topics and pledged “to cover all facets of knowledge a woman needs to become enlightened and knowledgeable in the artful techniques of performing household tasks” (*Jogaku sekai*, January 1901).

Mass women's magazines come of age

By 1912, almost 100 percent of eligible girls, or approximately 75,000, had registered in elementary schools and the over 200 government-sponsored higher schools throughout the country (Ōhama and Kumakura 1989, pp. 72–3). A new generation of literate young women with different capabilities began to emerge. Although enrollment figures and graduation figures differed, the increase in literacy, coupled with a degree of economic security, allowed an increasing number of women to purchase magazines. The publication of *Fujin sekai* (*Woman's World*, 1906) and *Fujokai* (*Woman's Sphere*, 1910), together with *Fujin gahō* (*Woman's Pictorial*, 1905), *Fujin kōron* (*Woman's Review*, 1916), *Shufu no tomo* (*Housewife's Companion*, 1917), and *Fujin kurabu* (*Woman's Club*, 1920), brought to the fore Japan's so-called “Big Four” mass women's magazines of the interwar period. Despite Japanese publishing houses' reluctance to make public circulation figures, by the 1920s the “Big Four” claimed over 1 million of the total sales of Japanese magazines. Gone were the days when women's magazines would be published to satisfy the whims of a small number of upper-class higher school students. Minemura Toshio, a well-known journalist writing at the time, said that with the exception of *Shufu no tomo*, all women's magazines hid their circulation figures rather than risk losses in advertising revenue (1931, p. 26).²

Initially, editors and publishers set out to produce a middle-class version of femininity. Yet the media they created failed to establish a clear relationship between class and gender. The picture that emerged presents a more complex multifaceted readership comprising a larger section of women than those ostensibly targeted. One key strategy lay in successfully wooing housewives. When *Fujin sekai* came out, it seemed like another mainstream woman's magazine. In less than a year, however, Masuda Giichi (1869–1949) had shifted its focus from preparing women for married life to the housewife's world after marriage. For precisely that reason, they incorporated practical family-oriented articles into the regular features. Even the frontispiece photos of a famous Osaka doctor and his adoring family playing croquet (*Fujin sekai*, April 1916) or Countess Hayashi's hygienic white-tiled kitchen (*Fujin sekai*, January 1919) had married women in mind. A smattering of articles covered world events such as World War I, but catering to housewives was indispensable for the magazine's staying power. Generally, *Shufu no tomo* is credited with being the first magazine to embrace housewives. In fact, *Fujin sekai*, the pioneering force behind family articles, deserves the distinction. Journalists writing during the 1910s called

Fujin sekai the leading magazine for ordinary women and a prototype for the next generation of family magazines.

An instrument of consumer capitalism, women's journalism moved from a passive to a competitive profit-making venture. In 1912, the *Yomiuri* published a series of articles on the "new woman" (*atarashii onna*), inspired by Nora, the protagonist in Henrik Ibsen's play *A Doll's House* (1879), who abandoned her husband and children in search of herself. Two years later they included the first one-page woman's section, but it was discontinued the following year. Understandably, magazines that focused their energies on average women elicited a positive response from readers even if the *modus operandi* presumed a fixed role for women in society. Unlike men who used the workplace and after-work socializing as a means to develop contacts with fellow workers and friends, most women were prohibited from forming outside relationships not only by a lack of time, but also by societal restraints against such behavior.

When it became clear that lower-middle-class and working-class women could negotiate articles and advertisements that attached phonetic symbols to the Chinese characters, editors targeted them, too, although the models they advanced endorsed a middle-class culture. Many less-privileged women had only the equivalent of an elementary school education. The hardships that they endured were real. Some worked as domestics in private homes, cleaners in offices, bus girls, ticket takers and ushers in movie theaters, café waitresses, and others made up the more "elite" corps of factory workers. A reader in western Japan, who cleaned her brother's dry cleaning shop, wrote that by living frugally she could save 1 yen from her 15 yen monthly salary for her subscription to *Fujokai*. On a good month she took in a movie on her day off, but she emphasized that reading magazines was what sustained her (*Fujokai*, February 1927). Up to then, these women had not relied on print communication as a major source of information.

The shift to encompass lower-middle-class and working women's needs was not without tensions and contradictions. From the standpoint of education, a chasm separated women readers. On the basis of family incomes, however, less-privileged women and middle-class women readers differed slightly. Most readers who graduated from higher schools identified with the middle class though their status was grounded less on income and more on graduation from a higher school. Because prewar educational policies prevented young women from entering middle schools, higher schools enjoyed some prestige. A poor higher school-educated housewife striving to advance socially boasted about "marrying up," when in reality she toiled long hours at home as a seamstress. Her world differed from the middle-class paradise she yearned for, but she justified her plight by saying that at least she did not have to perform manual labor like working-class women (*Fujokai*, August 1926). Less-privileged women's links with their more fortunate sisters were tenuous, but they were not always a deterrent.

In rural areas, mass women's magazines may have filled an even greater void in women's lives than in the city. Although insecurity marked the conditions of many women's lives, a farm woman who subscribed to *Shufu no tomo* from the time of its inception and suspended her subscription because of financial difficulties, expressed joy at having saved enough money to renew. She said that for someone poor and uneducated like herself *Shufu no tomo* was indispensable for her mental well-being (*Shufu no tomo*, April 1925). According to an article in the *Asahi* newspaper (June 19, 1932), most of the 819 young women who applied for employment at an agency set up for country folks in Tokyo Station were lured to the metropolis after reading about new jobs in mass women's magazines. The Japanese National Income Tax records for 1903 show that only 2.3 percent of the total population fitted the category middle class with an annual income of between 500 and 5,000 yen. In 1918, the percentage climbed to 6.5 percent, and in 1921, it reached 10 percent of Japan's total population (Minami 1965, p. 180). The fact that magazines

and newspapers were among the few affordable consumer products to reach mass proportions during the interwar years attests to consumerism's limited purchase.

Surveying readers

Numerous government and private surveys taken in the 1920s furnish information on women's reading practices and salaries. Among the 2,000 higher school graduates interviewed for a 1924 government survey who fit the rubric of professional working woman (*shokugyō fujin*), over 40 percent received between 26 and 30 yen a month or approximately 60,000 yen today. The second most common salary was between 31 and 35 yen or 70,000 yen today. Of that number, 1,184 women read magazines and 845 read mass women's magazines. That amounts to almost 80 percent of all participants with 71.4 percent under 24 years of age and single (Tokyo-shi shakai kyoku 1982, p. 81). Based on figures compiled in 1921, the average monthly salary for male government employees was 96 yen and 98 yen for office workers or approximately 190,000 yen today.

Lower-middle-class and working-class readers, whose education and jobs situated them on the periphery of consumerism, also found refuge in mass women's magazines, although in smaller numbers. In 1920, the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department conducted four surveys on the reading habits of women factory workers in the Tokyo area. All 2,350 participants listed mass women's magazines as their first choice of reading. Another survey sponsored by the Ministry of Social Affairs (*Shakai kyoku*) in 1924 attached a section on leisure activities. Even the factory women in western Japan, all of whom received daily wages, allotted between 3 to 7 percent of their monthly salaries for amusement. Reading magazines was also their favorite way to spend free time (Tokyo-shi shakai kyoku 1982, p. 39). In 1928, the reading habits of 4,543 women in Miyazaki prefecture, an outpost for factory women in southern Japan, came under review. Of the 2,813 women who read women's magazines, *Fujokai* topped the list. A survey taken the same year in the western Japan city of Kobe reported that out of 330 factory women, 161 chose *Fujokai* and *Shufu no tomo* as their favorite magazines (Nagamine 1997).

Leisure was a hard commodity to come by, and mass women's magazines represented a possibility for release from the tedium of their lives. Readers' letters indicate that less-privileged women waited excitedly for the monthly installments of romantic fiction like Kikuchi Kan's (1888–1948) melodramatic novels *Shinju* (*The Pearl*) (*Fujokai*, June 1924) and *Aijin* (*The Lover*) (*Fujokai*, March 1927). And a young woman from Nagasaki said that she empathized with the protagonist in *Aijin*. A new set of social and cultural patterns were taking root for women from different backgrounds. A housewife and mother of four children, whose husband earned 30 yen a month managing a factory, religiously set aside money each month to cover her subscription to *Fujokai*. In her mind, having one hour a day to read after the family went to sleep was worth being sleep deprived (*Fujokai*, August 1924). Since the price of *Shufu no tomo*, *Fujin sekai*, *Fujokai*, and *Fujin kōron* amounted to approximately 0.3–1 percent of the monthly wages of working-class women with basic literacy, as opposed to 0.5–1 percent of the average monthly salary of middle-class professional working women with higher school degrees, less-privileged women could presumably have purchased a single copy (*Shufu no tomosha no gojyūnen* 1967, p. 53).³ Whether or not these women could have managed two magazines a month is questionable.

Some working-class women, unable to afford a monthly subscription, shared their monthly copies with friends. A factory worker from a spinning mill in western Japan wrote that she had been working in the same factory over ten years. "I'm overjoyed that we've started lending magazines in our dormitory" (*Shufu no tomo*, April 1925). This young woman occasionally read *Fujokai* and *Fujin sekai*, but she praised *Shufu no tomo*, her absolute favorite magazine, for giving a

10 percent discount on subscriptions taken out through the company. She admitted that the issue devoted to marriage preparations set her to dreaming. And she especially liked following fashion trends and learning about different foods and recipes. Much like readers in far-off villages, she, too, could obtain information about modern lifestyles unlike her own, a factor that contributed to the diffusion of new images. Another factory worker from the Sumida area of Tokyo, who took pride in her working conditions, put it this way: “Unlike what you may think, my factory is modern and the pay is good. I’m satisfied. If you want to know my favorite pastime, it’s reading *Shufu no tomo*” (*Shufu no tomo*, April 1925). Much to the disappointment of feminist and socialist Yamakawa Kikue (1890–1980), who located women factory workers, domestics, those employed in small businesses and labored on farms at the heart of the proletarian movement, their concerns were not always rooted in pressing issues like class and politics. Personal more “traditional” matters related to love and marriage taken up in mass women’s magazines occupied their thoughts. Yamakawa, a staunch advocate of gender equality, blamed the magazines for making women “ostentatious” and “hedonistic” (*Keizai ōrai*, November 1930).⁴

New strategies

Acquiring mass circulation meant attracting diversified readers and catering to their popular tastes. Mindful not to alienate conservative subscribers, magazines were forced to include a variety of views from the conservative to the more liberal. Ishikawa Takemi (Takeyoshi) (1887–1961) took his cue from Masuda Giichi when he defied criticism and singled out the housewife as the foundation on which to build *Shufu no tomo*. Two of his techniques for increasing readership involved expanding on family articles (*katei kiji*) and subdividing them into the practical and trendy. Articles ranging from “Managing the Household on a Husband’s Thirty Yen Monthly Salary,” “Benefits of a Nutritious Diet,” and “The Importance of Locking the Front Door” (*Shufu no tomo*, February 1917), intended to impart constructive tips about home and family, filled the pages of the first issue. Within a matter of months other women’s magazines had followed suit. *Fujokai* chose the theme “The Economical Family” (*Fujokai*, July 1917; *Fujokai*, July 1918) for two issues and followed up with informative pieces such as “Newspapers – The Best Teachers for a Better Lifestyle,” (*Fujokai*, May 1918), “The Aims and Benefits of Purchasing Life Insurance,” (*Fujokai*, July 1918), and “Important Information for Using a Postal Savings Account” (*Fujokai*, September 1919).

Considering that the Daily Life Reform Movement (*Seikatsu kaizen undō*), a government-inspired attempt to cut wasteful spending, took off at this time, it is not surprising that the quest for rationalization instilled housewives with values of frugality. Directives issued by the Ministry of Education urged people to use their time wisely, discard costly customs like exchanging senseless year-end gifts, and remember the health dangers of eating too much white rice. An important impetus came from the Western lifestyles that mass women’s magazines helped depict. Of course, not all practical articles met with success, just as not all things Western caught on. Tomatoes were touted as nutritional, but Japanese-style wheat noodles with tomatoes never titillated the Japanese palate (*Shufu no tomo*, December 1932). Nevertheless, editorial boldness that inspired women to try the untried, even in the kitchen cannot be underestimated. For housewives, indirect channels like mass women’s magazines that set the process of reassessing values into motion probably motivated them to act more than an organized movement from above.

Trendy articles whet readers’ imaginations and kept them abreast of the most up-to-date fashions from abroad, hairstyles, sports, and even taught them to dance the tango and the Charleston. “Makeup Becoming a Housewife” (*Shufu no tomo*, March 1917) and “New Fashions for Viewing Cherry Blossoms” (*Shufu no tomo*, April 1918) convinced women that they, too, could do

themselves up to look like the stars and become queen for a day. An advertisement in *Fujin kurabu* depicted a young woman in her 20s with a new contraption guaranteed to erase wrinkles in only a few days (*Fujin kurabu*, May 1934). Whether or not this contributed to sales is not known, but without a doubt photographs were a more convincing medium than illustrations for arousing women's daydreams. A housewife who ordered a small Western oven that she saw advertised in the mail-order section prided herself on making sponge cake and baked apples like they sold in modern department stores in only 30 minutes in her own home (*Fujokai*, January 1922).

Another ingenious technique Ishikawa used to win over readers involved soliciting short pieces and letters known as confessional articles (*kokuhaku kiji*). Ishikawa encouraged his readers to assume an active role in contributing to the magazine and he compensated them for sharing intimate thoughts about their private world with women they knew only by pen names and places of residence. This strategy allowed Ishikawa to bond with his subscribers, but it also helped him to cut down on expenditures. Confessional articles opened up for debate a woman's relationship to her husband, children, and in-laws and infused their lives with a sense of personal importance, unlike family articles, which furnished one-sided information from educators and critics. Forming attachments with other readers through their contributions was emotionally soothing. Some women came to realize that they were not alone in their uncertainty. For women legally forced to remain within the parameters of their roles, the dialogues they exchanged with other readers acted as a catalyst for articulating their wants. That said, confessional articles were not antithetical to the ideals of the good wife and wise mother. Only a small number of women in the interwar years asked themselves how or with whom they were going to spend their lives. For those who did, however, marriage stood out as more than an economic agreement that bound two households (*ie*).

Marxist literary and social critic Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke (1892–1931) was one of the few intellectuals to aptly capture the temper of the time when he wrote: “Among all the housewives and would-be housewives, I can't imagine anyone who hasn't experienced hopeless, tragic situations. Reading articles that express those sentiments easily win the sympathy of other readers. No doubt that's why women's magazines welcome all kinds of confessional articles” (*Kaizō*, February 1927). During the interwar period women's magazines were the first to include confessional articles. Their success prompted Ishikawa to go one step further. Troubled by the plethora of readers' letters about the difficulties negotiating the complicated web of Japanese-style family relations, in 1923 he made the advice column a regular monthly feature. Because options that might effect changes in a woman's status within the patriarchal family system were limited, the advice column did not counsel readers to radically alter the patterns of their lives. Nor could it solve their problems. But for women in a male-dominated society who were grappling with working outside the home, finding a husband, or adjusting to being married, discussions pertaining to “Work or Marriage” (*Shufu no tomo*, April 1925), “Married Life Phobia” (*Shufu no tomo*, November 1927), or “Learning to Cope if Your Husband Takes a Mistress” (*Shufu no tomo*, May 1933) gave them the option of contemplating the direction in which their lives were moving.

Evidence that editors perceived some obligation to less-privileged women, both as consumers and readers, is also apparent in the role that mass women's magazines played in supporting mail-order shopping, a form of consumerism that provided an innovative concept of buying for an unlikely class of consumers. An office clerk from Kyoto, who liked learning about new commodities and often browsed in department stores and marveled at the wide variety of standardized goods sold at uniform prices, emphasized: “Price, quality, and trends govern my choices.” Being on a limited budget, however, she relied on mail-order shopping to satisfy her needs (*Fujokai*, January 1923). Not all women experienced commodification as an external force. Conflating consumerism with the acquisition of goods bought in department stores and thus

only with middle-class consumerism exaggerates the amount of control middle-class women had over the larger process of consumption in Japan. American historian Richard Ohmann put it this way: “To grasp consumption as the same meaning across class lines is to falsify the reality of the time” (Ohmann 1996, p. 172).

Self-cultivation: a key word in women’s magazines

The rise of a consumer society found women turning to those women’s magazines that offered them a chance to achieve their desires and overcome their anxieties through self-cultivation or *shūiyō*. Just as editor-publisher Masuda Giichi had instilled less-educated young men with the vision of a connection between social success and self-cultivation in *Jitsuyō no Nihon* (*Business Japan*, 1895), he envisaged a bond between women and self-cultivation in *Fujin sekai*, its equivalent magazine for women. Unlike the esoteric concept that gained credence in the mid-nineteenth century and was associated with intellectuals like Abe Jirō (1883–1959) and Kurata Hyakuzō (1891–1943), who immersed themselves in religious and philosophical meditation in their search for salvation, Masuda’s popularized version of self-cultivation was an ideal for private fulfillment that afforded women more practical possibilities than the limited educational opportunities available in school. For him, a woman’s mission in life was to satisfy her husband, and self-cultivation would best enhance a woman’s role as wife and mother. That said, the morality that determined a harmonious home under a paternalistic system and celebrated a wife’s subservience to her husband also worked to deposition women in the workplace. In looking for ways that readers could relate to their publications, editors Tsugawa (Ryū) Shigemi (1880–unknown) and Ishikawa Takemi gave new meaning to self-cultivation, which became a keyword in mass women’s magazines from the teens and twenties.

Contrary to Masuda’s more conservative vision of self-cultivation that kept women tethered to the home and found a place in *Fujin sekai*, World War I and expanding Japanese capitalism provided the impetus to employ women as a new source of labor. Salaried occupations like office girls (*gāru*), shop girls, and skilled typists opened up for women. The words professional working woman caught on quickly, due in part to the attention mass women’s magazines accorded her presence in the workplace. From its inception, *Fujin kōron* promised to serve the interests of so-called “intellectual” (*chinōteki*) women and published monthly articles about the challenges that awaited them in the workplace. Over 70 percent of women with higher school degrees interviewed for the Tokyo City Office Survey of 1922 said they subscribed to women’s magazines because of the large proportion of articles on self-cultivation. The majority favored *Fujin kōron* and *Fujokai* (Tokyo-shi shakai kyoku 1982).

Some higher school-educated young women not driven to become professional working women solely for economic reasons spoke of work as a vehicle for self-cultivation. A telephone operator interviewed for the same survey explained: “Reading magazines enriches me spiritually.” A young typist anxious to better herself said: “My job will help me become a whole person.” A sales clerk believed work occupied an integral place in her life plans: “Being employed is really hard, but I want to get an idea of life after marriage.” A growing number of these women came to see work as a stepping stone for improving their future opportunities, but most would not have sacrificed marriage for a career. Nonetheless, they described their aspirations in personal accounts like “How I Landed my Present Job” (*Fujokai*, May 1921) and “Diary of a Professional Working Woman” (*Shufu no tomo*, June–September 1923). One only has to point to articles such as “A Guide to Opportunities for Women’s Employment” (*Fujokai*, May 1921), “Professional Working Women’s Salaries and Experience Required” (*Shufu no tomo*, March 1923), “Professional Working Women and Social Status” (*Fujokai*, January 1926), or “Professional

Working Women in Business – Successes and Failures” (*Fujin kōron*, December 1927) to know that mass women's magazines helped these women carve out a space they could call their own.

Higher education worked to break the pattern that located middle-class women's lives in a domesticated setting, but respect did not come along with most jobs. An analyst for the Office of Labor Statistics who traveled to Italy on a business trip voiced disappointment that in Japan the government did not value professional working women the way they did in Italy. She complained that in spite of their growing numbers only factory women received compensation from the state after giving birth (*Fujokai*, January 1926).

A survey carried out in the April 1925 issue of *Fujin kōron* reported that over 5,400 women nationwide had vied for positions as skilled typists, which along with department store sales girls represented the ultimate in modern jobs for higher school graduates. Even so, an elementary school graduate and devoted reader, who did not fit the label of professional working woman but longed to become a typist, sought advice. She was told to perfect her skills on the Japanese keyboard and not vie for a job that required using the English alphabet. Although her 30 to 40 yen monthly salary would be less than that of a higher school graduate, she could become a “lower-level” typist and still realize her dream. Another elementary school graduate longed to become a shop girl. She was advised to apply for a position behind the scenes that better suited her educational qualifications, perhaps as a waitress in the dining room. Her job would provide some economic independence and a chance to work in a fancy emporium, but from a different perspective. Many women complained, however, that their jobs left them totally exhausted, and they worried that they would be too tired to pursue activities for achieving self-cultivation. While their letters spoke of hope, obviously reality was more complicated than the ideals they embraced. Carl F. Kaestle (1991), an expert on reading and literacy, explained it this way: Readers “develop identities, choose allegiances, form beliefs, and conduct their day-to-day lives, but they [did] so within the constraints of cultural inheritances and economic hardships” (p. 51).

Japan's first woman newspaper reporter, Hani Motoko (1873–1957), a devout Christian and founder of the magazine *Fujin no tomo* and the coeducational school, *Jiyū Gakuen* (Free School, 1921), called for an egalitarian relationship between a husband and wife at home, but she said that working for a salary ran counter to a woman's nature (*Fujin kōron*, January 1919). Yamakawa wasted no time in rebuking Hani for her old-fashioned views that disregarded the economic reality that put women in the workforce, to mention nothing of the sexual discrimination they endured there (*Kokka gakkai zasshi*, February 1919). The question, however, entailed more than altering public perceptions of working women's capabilities and potential. The crux of the problem was that a woman's position in the workplace was an extension of her lowly position in the home. Even selecting a marriage partner was contingent on economics and the enhancement of the family's fortune.

Just as many intellectuals could not accept the social transformation being wrought by the spread of mass culture, which they called a by-product of a tainted middle-class consumerism with American roots, they had difficulty accepting the professional working woman (Kurahara, 1967). Although they recognized that young women entering society represented an unprecedented social development, their acknowledgment of the professional working woman was premised on a short-term social identity to be replaced by the housewife. In spite of factors like economic and spiritual independence that brought about an increase in professional working women or the awareness young women of marriageable age bore the potential burden that mothers and fathers-in-law posed, being married was taken for granted. Sending young women out to work implied a family's financial distress, and higher school graduates from middle-class families generally were not among job seekers before World War I. As the 1922 government

survey substantiated, the chief motivation for women joining the workforce in 1923 was supplementing the family income. Many middle-class parents who disapproved of working women had no option but to rely on their daughters.

Conclusion

For middle-class and some lower-middle-class and working-class women the challenges that resulted from the maturation of the industrialized state after World War I became concrete from following the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923. The rapid growth of mass women's magazines offered an opportunity for women to participate in the creation of this burgeoning culture. The media, which had served as a forum for the assertion of political and social rights for a small group of women at the time of the new woman, became a vehicle for the spread of consumerism and the lifestyle it embodied. Editors and publishers took advantage of the expanding reading public, of whom women constituted a major share, and targeted them as consumers. The culture they produced was a culture of the everyday, the mundane being the core of a woman's existence.

By reading and writing to the magazines, women who were not a part of an organized movement gave voice to the precarious relationship between their dreams and reality. Even some women from conservative families previously too timid to exert themselves in homes where despotic fathers ruled the roost gained the courage to contemplate change. It was in areas such as familial relationships, changes in work patterns, and the everyday details of life that mass women's magazines exhibited their greatest strength. Articles like "Palm Reading Determines Your Fate – Riches or Poverty" (*Shufu no tomo*, November 1927) and "The Sorrowful Life of an Old Miss" (*Shufu no tomo*, November 1927) did not make women any wiser. And pieces like "The Best Way to Improve Your Tennis Game" (*Shufu no tomo*, May 1926) introduced a way of life that bound up many readers in an imagined relation to consumerism. But features like "Contemplating One's Own Marriage Partner" (*Shufu no tomo*, January 1925) or "Designing a Modern Easy to a Use Small Kitchen on a Shoestring Budget" (*Shufu no tomo*, January 1927) introduced perspectives on daily life that women had not conceived to be within their grasp. Readers unable to shop at department stores and purchase what was being written about and photographed in the magazines took advantage of the inclusion of patterns and detailed diagrams that instructed them how to make "old-fashioned" kimono into modern Western frocks (*Fujokai*, January 1924), or sew a fancy chemise at home. Women learned that they could pick and choose forms of consumerism without being privy to it all.

Most intellectuals ignored the significance of the newly emerging alliance between mass women's magazines and women. They were as disenchanted by the magazines' tendency to promote an ideal of domesticity that made household tasks a woman's true work as by readers' willingness to accept the status quo. Family articles came under attack for being "unscientific," and critics complained that the advice offered was specious and filled with generalities. Women's mass magazines earned the reputation of being "feudalistic" and "conservative" by women activists like Yamakawa, Hiratsuka Raichō (1886–1971), and Yosano Akiko (1878–1942), in spite of the different ideological stances they shared (*Keizai ōrai*, November 1930). Novelist and literary critic Uchida Roan (1868–1929) decried women's mass magazines for betraying the hopes of the new woman. He voiced disappointment and anger when mass women's magazines failed to meet his expectations for a deeper engagement with modernity. Intellectual Nii Itaru shared Yamakawa's point of view and questioned why women so horribly repressed tolerated their circumstances. Oftentimes, however, it was the readers themselves who harbored distrust of overly radical change.

In the wake of World War I, Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke, along with Yamakawa, insisted on total gender equality and denounced the patriarchal family system, which, coupled with the private ownership of property, he believed formed the basis for discrimination against women (*Tane maku hito*, August 1922). After the Great Kantō Earthquake, when he re-evaluated his stance on the American influence impacting changes in daily life and perceived the positive effects of consumerism on women, he credited mass women's magazines with helping to thrust the average woman into wider society. Undeniably, the sensational coverage aimed at expanding circulation reduced the quality of mass women's magazines and foretold the media's limitless potential to capitalize on gossip and sex, but rather than castigating the low level of women's mass magazines, Hirabayashi blamed the wretched state of women's education that dictated women's reading choices. In an article he contributed to a popular socialist journal on the state of women's magazines, he wrote: "There probably isn't another country in the world that has achieved Japan's success in marketing women's magazines. Women's and men's work are totally separate. For a woman, things like childrearing, treating illnesses, and proper etiquette are what she needs to know" (*Kaizō*, March 1927). Hirabayashi's treatise on women grew out of the same socialist tradition as that of Yamakawa, but he went beyond the Marxist reform of society and linked women's liberation with technological development known as "mechanization" (*kikaika*).

Mass women's magazines played up those aspects of Japanese life that emphasized one's social standing. The marital difficulties of famous people and love-related scandals aroused the curiosity of readers. Women came into contact with a class of women whose world differed from their own, but whose problems struck a familiar chord. Readers learned that there were already women in society who would not abide by the traditional standards that governed married life. Prompted by such scandalous incidents some women, who lived emotionally repressed lives at the mercy of incorrigible womanizers, were more willing to share their own experiences. Indeed, confessional articles and personal testimonies aired in advice columns dealt with the most basic problems women encountered.

Mass women's magazines had their basis in a patriarchal system, but to label them repositories of established routines and gender conventions downplays the complexities, both ideological and economic, marking their production. Publishing companies were male-dominated. Editors and publishers performed a balancing act in constructing a relationship with their readers. They could use their power to manipulate women readers, but they could not force them to follow their views. Women absorbed the information offered them and they construed the content in their own distinct ways. Gradually, some women came to understand that it was neither shameful nor abnormal to enter the workplace or marry the person of one's choice. The writings of intellectuals did not trigger these admissions. It was the efforts of women themselves, even though the role they played in the construction of mass magazines was secondary to that of editors and publishers. In other words, intellectuals provided the building blocks for these revelations, but the initiative lay with women readers themselves.

Just as magazines were in the process of redefining their readers, women were in the process of redefining themselves. Not all women were victims of ideological precepts they swallowed whole. For most readers of mass women's magazines "awakening" did not mean wanting to change completely how they lived. These women did not form women's clubs and assert their right to property or demand suffrage. The "awakening" they envisioned through self-cultivation was directed more at satisfying their own expectations for a successful marriage or in the workplace than at the hope for total independence. Self-fulfillment had become an ideal for some women, but it was still hard to attain. It would be unreasonable to fabricate women's lives around the contents of mass magazines, but mass women's magazines became sites for a partial redefinition of women's roles – useful sources of information and barometers for testing change. Socially

and psychologically the way was being paved for the broader gender changes that were to affect women's lives and position them in public and private space as a result of postwar reforms and the efforts of feminists.

Notes

- 1 In the aftermath of World War I, the word *taishū* was used synonymously with that of *minshū* to mean "the people." Following the Great Earthquake, *taishū* came to convey the meaning of mass, as in mass society or mass production, and it referred to the cultural shift that involved people at the "mass" level. Discourses on mass society and the controlling influence of the media on the general public became a much debated topic, particularly among Western sociologists in the 1950s and 1960s, when mass culture identified in its most visible forms took off in earnest.
- 2 In 1931, *Shufu no tomo* reported a monthly circulation of 600,000 and a rate of 0.5–1 percent in unsold, returned magazines in accordance with the Japanese system that allowed for returns on unsold issues. *Fujin kurabu* reported 350,000 and a return rate of 25 percent. *Fujin kōron* claimed 200,000 in circulation with a return rate of 15 percent, and *Fujokai* reported 120,000 and a return rate of 45 percent.
- 3 In January 1922, *Shufu no tomo* attempted to become a bi-monthly publication, but it failed after the first issue. Economics along with editorial difficulties probably dictated the company's decision.
- 4 Although Yamakawa praised *Fujin no tomo* (*Woman's Friend*, 1903) for publishing progressive articles on childrearing and hygiene, she chastised the magazine for its overly Christian bias, which ran counter to her socialist ideals.

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Eusociality and the Japanese media machine in the Great East Asia War, 1931–1945¹

David C. Earhart

The Japanese Empire in the final phase of the Great East Asian War (1931–1945)² is perhaps the closest approximation, in the modern history of homo sapiens, of an acid test for what E.O. Wilson calls ‘eusociality’: the heroic behavior of superorganisms ‘prone to perform altruistic acts as part of their division of labor’ (Wilson 2012, p. 16).³ In 1938, the mass media, brought under direct control of Japan’s militarized government, began aggressively promoting a universal program of extreme self-sacrifice for the sake of unattainable ideals of national greatness and racial destiny that would ultimately produce a catastrophic defeat. The mass media conspired with the government and the military to mobilize every aspect of socioeconomic activity for the war effort, wielding an extraordinary influence that can hardly be overstated. The wartime media served as an oracle that masterfully crafted and disseminated a narrative directly linking each citizen’s thoughts and activities to the quasi-religious ideology of Kokutai (literally, ‘National Polity’, the conception of nation–state as an organic existence), which fused together the emperor,⁴ the nation, and the people for all eternity. In this claustrophobic dystopia, all citizen–subjects were compelled to make the greatest sacrifice for the greater good of the sacralized nation–state and its high priest, the emperor. In late 1944, by which time the tide of war had turned irreversibly against Japan, the wartime mass media unleashed its final public relations campaign upon the Japanese home front: kamikazefication, which presented the nihilistic extremism of the Kamikaze Special Attack Forces as normative behavior to be emulated by the entire population of the Japanese Empire.

Japan’s spectacular military failure brought with it wholesale death and destruction to large swaths of China and Southeast Asia and to Japan itself, which suffered a humiliating unconditional surrender that stripped it of its empire and resulted in the dismantling of its wartime superstructure by the occupying Allied forces. That said, from today’s vantage point, Japan’s state-sponsored experiment in eusociality, with its mobilized population and centralized, state-controlled media, succeeded categorically in building a model society, positioning those institutions and prominent persons who survived the war (and postwar purges) to flourish in the postwar period. Just as Japan’s postwar society is a radical reformation of its wartime society, so, too, do its postwar mass media, forged in the cauldron of war, continue to bear the imprint of its wartime media machine.

Establishing state-controlled mass media under the Cabinet Information Bureau

The development of the Japanese media in the first half of the twentieth century is inseparable from the rise of Japanese imperialism and military expansion. It should be noted, of course, that since the time of the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Japan's military played a significant role in the government, with high-ranking officers holding many important cabinet positions. The publishing industry was already highly developed in Japan before the Meiji Restoration, and in the first three decades of the twentieth century, urbanization and a burgeoning middle class fueled a print explosion, most notably in the area of 'graphic' media. By 1920, the marketplace was flooded with illustrated periodicals for every age, every interest, and every political group. From Meiji times, the Home Ministry had taken a keen interest in monitoring the print media, perhaps because the printed word was easily regulated, perhaps because the printing press was a relatively simple and accessible piece of equipment, perhaps because the print media industry had grown too quickly and occupied too large a portion of the economy, and perhaps because the printed word was viewed as authoritative and powerful.

On September 18, 1931, Japan's Kwantung Army stationed in northern China staged an act of sabotage along the Japanese-owned and operated Kwantung Railway. The Japanese military provided photographic 'evidence' of the attack, blaming it on Chinese terrorists. The Japanese media was electrified by this event, calling it the 'Manchurian Incident' (*Manshū jihen*). At this time, there were three large publishing concerns with news agencies that dominated the print media: *Asahi*, *Mainichi*, and *Yomiuri*. All three had begun publishing in the first years of Meiji, and all three issued daily newspapers and periodicals that drew large regional and national readerships. In supporting the actions of the military, in their zeal to get 'scoops' on military movements, they sometimes violated publication bans. This was certainly the case in the months-long military campaign that became the Manchurian Incident, as the Home Ministry, responsible for enforcing press standards and censoring the media, reported multiple infractions (Kasza 1988). This led to the Home Ministry's implementation of a 'consultation' system, whereby publishers were encouraged to submit articles for prepublication approval, rather than be censored for violating press standards. This consultation system laid the foundations for more radical measures to come.

The Manchurian Incident was, from its inception, the Kwantung Army's justification for invading and occupying Manchuria. Within a year, Manchuria was under Japanese control and in 1932 a puppet state, Manchukuo, was established with Henry Pu-yi as its putative leader. The Japanese military presence in Manchuria exacerbated already tense relations between Japan and China, and a series of minor armed skirmishes broke out in the 1930s. Each of these skirmishes was named an 'incident' and sensationalized in the Japanese press. Japanese antagonism in China continued to escalate, and one incident too many, the Marco Polo Bridge Incident of July 7, 1937, precipitated an all-out war. By the end of that year, Japan's overly confident military was perplexed to find itself bogged down in a protracted war in China, one that would require greater resources and greater sacrifices from the Japanese home front. It was at this point that, under pressure from the military, the Japanese government deployed a plan to mobilize all aspects of national life, including the dissemination of information as well as cultural production.

Early the next year, 1938, the Japanese government took unprecedented steps to consolidate, nationalize, and direct the mass media. The primary means of doing so was a government agency created in 1936 at the behest of the Japanese military, the Cabinet Information Bureau (*Jōhōkyoku*, hereafter, CIB),⁵ which quickly came to wield tremendous power over all arenas of

media production. The CIB allowed the private-sector media to remain independent businesses, but maintained strict control over them, stripping them of objectivity and autonomy. Its suppression of the free press was no worse than the preceding 340 years of the Tokugawa Shogunate and the Meiji oligarchs, who took a rather dim view of the publishing industry and print journalism, tolerating them only so far as they did not interfere with or hinder public policy. Indeed, in this historical context, the CIB's press policy might appear enlightened, in so far as it viewed the media as having a necessary and beneficial function in mass society.

The CIB acted both proscriptively and prescriptively. Of course, in Japan, censorship of the print media was already the established norm, and in this sense the CIB was merely a modern reconfiguration of older models of press policing. The CIB did much more, however, to further codify, clarify, and drastically restrict permissible material. It issued content guidelines and enforced publication regulations through censorship. It also forced private-sector company consolidations in the name of wartime 'streamlining' and, finally, suspended publications, even those that were entirely frivolous or apolitical, if they were deemed unnecessary or irrelevant to the war effort.

While the CIB continued to swiftly suppress material it deemed offensive on political or moral grounds, its largest purpose was not to eradicate or supplant existing media but to treat them like the raw material for building a streamlined public relations machine effective and efficient in mobilizing the home front. Depending on the state of development of different media, the CIB took a very different approach in determining which media concerns were already well suited to be directed toward the nation's war aims, and which were superfluous and could be slated for shutdown through forced mergers or wartime 'emergency publication suspensions'. The militarized government further consolidated all news organizations in the weeks leading up to the December 1941 attacks on Pearl Harbor and other Allied strategic positions in the Far East. In less than five years, the Japanese media had undergone a radical transformation from being entirely in private hands (albeit with strict government oversight) to a public relations machine under direct government control, with the single goal of firing up and directing the home front for permanent, total war.

The CIB's proscriptive direction of the mass media probably had greater impact than its policing efforts. Established as the official information branch of the government, the CIB was a revolutionary innovation with a mandate that went far beyond merely monitoring and approving private-sector media products, as it was, from its inception, a media agency in its own right producing its own weekly illustrated news journal, the highly influential *Photographic Weekly Report* (*Shashin shūhō*, 1938–1945; hereafter, *PWR*), among other media products. Of course, the CIB had greater access to vital wartime information and ministerial policy programs than did private-sector media concerns because it served as the official mouthpiece of government ministries as well as branches of the military. The CIB could thereby 'scoop' major news stories (as it did with the attack on Pearl Harbor) or threaten to deny private-sector news agencies access to information. The CIB held regularly scheduled prepublication consultation meetings with the private-sector media agencies, 'suggesting' content generated by the CIB. Very few of these 'suggestions' were ignored, leading to a unified, monolithic message from the media, which spoke with one voice – that of the CIB.

With the newly formed CIB still in its infancy, in 1938 it launched a string of government public relations and policy campaigns in an effort to martial and mobilize the home front. The CIB's products led the private-sector media in trumpeting and reinforcing these programs, most of which fell under the nebulous rubric of the National Spiritual Mobilization campaign, which was designed to call forth the people's 'Kokutai spirit'. These public relations campaigns included national radio calisthenics, the 'Luxury is the Enemy' campaign that sought out donations of

precious metals and the adoption of the drab national wartime civilian uniform, scrap metal drives, war bond drives, 'volunteer service' days, days of 'prayer for victory', and most importantly, the establishment of a nationwide system of Neighborhood Associations that were assigned the responsibility of disseminating government directives to the home front, distributing rationed foodstuffs and necessities, and encouraging self-policing.

In 1940, Prime Minister Fumimaro Konoe announced the New Order (*Shintaisei*), a sweeping series of programs designed to streamline government ministries. The New Order established an overtly nationalistic, militarized system of education, reconfiguring existing educational facilities into 'Citizens' Schools' (*Kokumin gakkō*). Several industries came under governmental or semi-governmental direction, as Japanese society was mobilized for perpetual, total war. Children were instructed in martial arts, volunteer war work, and becoming model citizen-soldiers. Housewives were trained in how to build air raid shelters, fight with bamboo spears, improve their home economics, pray for the success of Japan's military endeavors, and perform volunteer war work. The importance of the mass media to the war effort was underscored by the upgrading of the CIB to a full-fledged government bureau. The establishment of the New Order coincided with a series of international events that Japan would host in 1940 to celebrate the putative 2,600th anniversary of the founding of the nation by its mythological gods. By the time that Japan launched its Pacific blitzkrieg, on December 8, 1941,⁶ the government-controlled mass media was exercising such spectacular and pervasive power that it seems to have insinuated itself into every detail of citizens' daily lives.

During the war, the messaging of the CIB-led media must have seemed monolithic and pervasive, but there did remain significant arenas in which the CIB offered no media products of its own creation, such as daily newspapers and trade, cultural, and special-interest periodicals, which offered some escape until the final round of publication consolidations and shutdowns in late 1944. It is important to note, too, that while open expression of dissent was all but impossible, the private-sector media, in a greatly diminished form, remained a viable force of editorial commentary throughout the war years, even if it only rarely digressed from the official narrative. This was especially true for long-established news concerns (primarily, *Asahi shimbun* and *Asahigraph*) and film companies.

The wartime aesthetic

An important facet of the CIB's message was to give the nation and people of Japan a look and demeanor in keeping with wartime goals. To this end, the CIB tapped deeply into cultural reserves and directed them toward the war effort, producing or coproducing its own films, radio broadcasts, news journals, novels, pamphlets, and posters. The CIB even organized mass media events, cultural programs, and art exhibitions. The cumulative effect of the CIB's direction of cultural production was to reduce the wartime Japanese media's news reportage to a series of public relations campaigns aimed at boosting the morale of the Japanese home front.

The CIB was under the direction of Japan's militarized government, but its rank-and-file were recruited from among Japan's most talented reporters, photographers, graphic designers, and visual artists. The majority of Japanese filmmakers, artists, writers, and public relations gurus who were well known before the war did some form of creative service during the war, with a few notable exceptions. For instance, the Luxury Is the Enemy Campaign was the brainchild of talented adman Miyayama Takashi. Many of them who came to prominence in the decades following the war's end started their careers during the war as part of the government's massive state-run media machine. While government control over all areas of cultural production may sound stifling and antithetical to nurturing creative genius, once the government took an active

interest in promoting those brands of culture that supported its aims, intellectuals and artists alike were often more than willing to collaborate, even when not threatened, coerced, or enticed to do so (High 2003, p. xiv). Some of Japan's most talented twentieth-century filmmakers, visual and graphic artists, photographers, and writers contributed to the media's all-out war effort, collectively arriving at a 'wartime chic' that is immediately recognizable and often cited (wittingly or not) in postwar culture. Manga artists Kondō Hidezō and Yokoyama Ryūichi were quite influential during the war. Quite active in producing war art were Fujita Tsuguharu, Miyamoto Saburō, Nakamura Ken'ichi, Tamura Kōnosuke, Tsuruta Gorō, Yoshioka Kenji, Koiso Ryōhei, Ezaki Kōhei, Fukuda Shinsei, Nakamura Kan'ichi, Satō Kei, Ihara Usaburō, Matsuzoe Ken, as well as the sculptor Naitō Noboru. Some of the best-known photographers contributing to the visualization of the war effort were Domon Ken, Senba Tōru, Umemoto Tadao, Kimura Ihee, Katō Kyōhei, Koishi Kiyoshi, and Yoshida Sakae.

The artists and photographers most closely associated with the CIB were instrumental in defining a wartime chic that praised raw strength, rusticity, lack of adornment, sincerity, and the native, while weakness, selfishness, sophistication, ostentatiousness, affectivity, and the non-Axis foreign were vilified and demonized. This wartime aesthetic privileged representational, mimetic art, particularly through the scientific, modern forms of film and photography, which were disseminated as self-evident realism. The wartime media also made liberal use of illustration, *kamishibai*,⁷ and anime, in particular when targeting home front women and children and peoples in the lands occupied by the Japanese military. The development of these graphic forms predates the war, of course, but their mobilization for the war effort gave them greater importance in the new populist, nativist national identity, and a greater prominence in postwar culture down to the present day. Sculptors, painters, and architects also found no shortage of work during the war, as mass events and large-scale exhibitions of war art were organized and co-sponsored by various government ministries as well as the Ministry of the Army and Ministry of the Navy. Fine artists and novelists were sent to the occupied lands of China Southeast Asia to create glowing depictions of Japan's successes in realizing Pax Nipponica. The wartime media brought a modern Japanese sensibility into sharper focus by giving sharp definition to aesthetic norms, linking them to national identity, and projecting them onto a domestic stage with an international backdrop of imperialist expansion and world war.

Film

The government's gradual involvement in the film industry presents a somewhat different picture from the print media. Films with patriotic, pro-military themes were already very popular during the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) and 'around 1919, the Ministry of Education began to advance the idea of using film as part of its social education program aimed at staving off the domestic "Red Menace", which included the "disloyal sedition of pacifism"' (High 2003, p. 10). The importance of film in informing and directing political ideas and social mores prompted a 1925 Diet resolution to move the responsibility for censoring films from the national police board to the Home Ministry, and within a few years the Diet passed detailed rules and regulations that allowed more vigorous censorship. Samurai and other martial themes dominated Japanese film throughout the 1920s, but there was plenty of modern-day matinee idol romance on screen, and even self-proclaimed 'proletarian' films such as Suzuki Jūkichi's *What Made Her Do It?* (Teikoku Kinema, 1930; High 2003).

As with the print media, the Manchurian Incident brought major changes to the film industry, as additional measures were taken to place it squarely on a war footing. Even so, the film industry was allowed a degree of artistic license seen nowhere else but in the canvases of a

handful of highbrow painters, most notably, Tsuguharu Fujita. The power of film to ‘win the peace’ was recognized quite early on, before the establishment of the CIB. A Japanese-financed and staffed film company was established first in Manchuria in the early 1930s, and with Japanese military expansion, in Shanghai, Canton, and Jakarta (High 2003). The CIB probably lacked the studio space, camera equipment, and expertise to produce films itself, although it coproduced and sponsored feature films made by Japan’s major studios, Tōhō and Shōchiku. It also acted as distributor for the newsreels created by the Ministry of the Army and the Ministry of the Navy. No film could be publicly shown in Japan without the approval of the CIB, but given production costs, most filmmakers had the good sense to make films that would meet with approval. Besides, in the years prior to Pearl Harbor, the CIB was more concerned with banning non-Axis films, in particular the morally corrosive movies streaming out of Hollywood, while encouraging domestic film production.

The CIB might heavily edit a film script, and it did have specific content guidelines that applied to film, such as the prohibition against depictions that would harm morale. Even so, directors could work within the confines of CIB restrictions and still create masterpieces, suggesting that government scrutiny was exercised more forcefully against explicitly linguistic forms of communication and were not sophisticated enough to deal with a medium that could communicate visually. Postwar critical reception suggests that this was the case for some of the major twentieth-century Japanese filmmakers who were active during the war, including Kenji Mizoguchi, Akira Kurosawa, and Keisuke Kinoshita. Mizoguchi was one of the directors of *Victory Song* (Hisshōka, 1945), a coproduction of the CIB and the large private film company Shōchiku. From the perspective of hindsight, that is, following catastrophic defeat, postwar film critics have found antiwar messages even in such overtly nationalistic films as Keisuke Kinoshita’s *Army* (Rikugun, 1943), based on the novel by Hino Ashihei, in particular the film’s final scene, in which the crying mother runs after the train taking away her freshly drafted son. The CIB demanded stoicism from all citizen-subjects and explicitly prohibited all media from portraying sad sendoffs after a 1938 government directive prohibiting lavish public sendoffs of troops, which lends support to this antiwar reading of the film.

As with the print media and radio, the wartime reception of wartime films is nearly impossible to accurately gauge, and to try to find secret messages of resistance to the war effort or even criticism of it within wartime films is a highly questionable practice (High 2003). Indeed, the desire to favorably interpret some deeper motivation in an artistic medium so heavily dependent upon the pregnant ambiguities of visual effect may account for the eagerness of some postwar film critics, whether Japanese or not, to rehabilitate wartime films. This forgiving attitude stands in stark contrast to the blanket condemnation of the wartime print media and wartime radio broadcasts, which continue to be pejoratively labeled ‘propaganda’, and perhaps rightfully so.

Simply stated, there are very few primary sources attesting to whether wartime film audiences perceived anything other than reassuring messages that all of the sacrifices made on the battlefield and the home front would be repaid manifold by victory and the achievement of Japan’s war aims in Asia and the Pacific. From the vantage point of Japan’s military defeat, antiwar messages became apparent in some wartime films, but private journals or letters would be the only contemporary corroboration that such messages were received as such at the time of these films’ release. Perhaps most revealing is a comparison of the fates of *Army* director Kinoshita and *Army* novelist Hino. Kinoshita (1912–1998) enjoyed an illustrious postwar career that stretched well into the 1980s, making many films now considered classics, such as the sentimental antiwar films *Morning for the Ōsone Family* (*Ōsone ka no asa*, 1946) and *Twenty-four Eyes* (*Nijū shi no hitomi*, 1954), both of which focused entirely on the home front. Hino, however, was branded a war criminal and treated as a social pariah, dying a broke and broken man at the age of 45 in 1950.

One peculiar result of the military's involvement in film was the enormous boost it gave to the development of a new form, anime. Some wartime anime, such as the famous 'Momotaro' series of shorts by pioneering animator Seo Mitsuyo (liberally borrowing from Disney), were coproduced by the Ministry of the Navy and Shōchiku. Seo's greatest accomplishment was *Momotaro, the Warrior-God of the Sea* (*Momotaro, umi no shinpei*), the first full-length Japanese anime, which debuted in the spring of 1945. Military coproduction exploited this new form's potential while giving it legitimacy. Indeed, Seo's works are frequently cited as a major influence on post-war animators, including Tezuka Osamu.

Radio

From its introduction in Japan in 1924, radio was understood to be too important to leave in private hands, and as a result, the Diet legislated a series of measures that in 1926 merged three fledgling private stations into a single governmental broadcasting agency, the Japan Broadcasting Corporation (Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai, hereafter, NHK), under the auspices of the Ministry of Communications. NHK's mission was narrowly limited to edifying and informing the public at the expense of entertainment and even commercial advertising. As a result, almost from the inception of radio in Japan, NHK had sole and exclusive control over all radio broadcasting (Kasza 1988). In wartime Japan, radio was synonymous with NHK, and NHK with government programming. By 1940, NHK had three domestic broadcasting networks and one English-language broadcasting station, Radio Japan (officially renamed Radio Tokyo in 1941). Radio Tokyo broadcast the infamous 'Zero Hour' with Tokyo Rose.

Radios were a luxury item, quite expensive in wartime Japan, because the Ministry of Communications modeled NHK on the BBC, that is, a publicly owned, nonprofit organization that accepted no commercial advertising. The cost of broadcasting, as well as of establishing and maintaining a broadcasting network, was passed on to the end user. Therefore, in addition to the cost of a radio set, the owner had to purchase a license to operate a radio, and had to pay a monthly fee to maintain it (Kasza 1988). While radios were common in urban areas, there might only be a handful of functioning radios in a rural village. The radio was influential, however, in organizing the home front through mass programs, such as *Radio Calisthenics* (*Rajio taisō*, initiated in 1925 and still practiced today), and nationwide mass events, such as New Year's and victory celebrations. Such programs were designed to reinforce a sense of unity of purpose and to boost morale.

The radio also gave gripping accounts of the battles that raged in the Pacific, with an unwavering tone of urgency and optimism. This tone would not change, even as the radio broadcast the names of kamikaze pilots who scored 'massive blows' against the Allies' ships in the final year of the war. Radio took on its greatest significance as the medium chosen for Emperor Shōwa's reading of the announcement of the surrender on August 15, 1945. It was the first time he had addressed his people, who had never heard his voice before. Indeed, many of his citizens had difficulty grasping the meaning of his words, which had to be explained to them by local officials who had received advanced notice.

Media public relations campaigns building toward a narrative of dystopic eusociality

Wartime Japan was certainly a totalitarian state, but not in the truest sense a fascist one. Its totalitarianism was informed by the socially binding tribalism deeply rooted in the not-so-distant premodern past, a fertile breeding ground for the eusocial mindset exploited by Japan's military

leaders. In such an environment, anonymous citizens were thrust into the national spotlight and, through the magnifying lens of the mass media, made into larger-than-life heroes prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice for the good of the collective group represented by empire and emperor. In short, whether the schoolgirl working in a munitions factory, the housewife performing volunteer war work while tending to her family, or the soldier shouldering the rifle emblazoned with the chrysanthemum seal of the imperial family, each citizen-subject was assigned her or his own place in a highly organized division of labor and expected to make sacrifices for the sake of advancing national fortunes, in the form of imperial expansion, and preservation and reproduction of *Kokutai*, the quasi-religious philosophy, headed by his Imperial Majesty, that supported this socioeconomic system. *Kokutai* thought clearly labeled wastefulness, laziness, selfishness, and (most tellingly) individuality as its antithesis and, therefore, the markers of 'non-citizens'.

The supreme model of savior-citizen appeared in the final year of the war, in the form of a military creation and media sensation, the Special Attack Force kamikaze pilot. With the Allied invasion of Japan imminent, the CIB-orchestrated media called upon all civilians to emulate the spirit of the Special Attack Forces as the military carved up the Japanese home islands into eight separate regions to be defended by civilian armies in a final effort – an apocalyptic fight to the death. Were it not for the seamless synthesis of military, government, media, and society in wartime Japan, such a wildly desperate, horrifyingly morbid plan could never have been presented to the population as a reasonable measure and the next logical step in an unfolding narrative of racial destiny and national greatness. The Battle of Saipan (June–July 1944) and the Battle of Okinawa (April–June 1945), both of which resulted in staggering civilian casualties, were trumpeted by the press as examples of the extreme heroism of ordinary Japanese citizen-turned-soldiers who fought to the death, rather than suffer the ignominy of defeat. They had died so the National Polity, headed up by their godlike emperor, could survive. Unknown to the Japanese public on the home front was that many of these civilian battlefield deaths were forced suicides at the hands of the retreating Japanese army. Nonetheless, the media continued to present extremism as normative behavior, lavishing praise on civilians who fought to the death or annihilated themselves. Deploying the citizenry as cannon fodder became military strategy in preparation for the defense of the home islands. That this suicidal plan was met with nearly unanimous resignation, not public outcry, only underscores the extraordinary efficiency and efficacy of the wartime media in mobilizing the population and coaxing forth the mindset of eusociality.

All of the nations that fought in World War II promoted, to some extent, self-sacrifice and nationalism on the home front. There are few modern societies, however, that have gone to the lengths of wartime Japan in encouraging its citizens to fight to the death and face annihilation rather than accept defeat, and to give higher priority to the survival of their leader, the Shōwa Emperor, and an abstract concept of the nation-state (that is, *Kokutai*) than to their own lives. This nihilistic dimension of Japanese wartime society is quite difficult to comprehend today, not only for non-Japanese but for postwar generations of Japanese with no firsthand experience of the war. My earlier work examines in considerable detail this ethos of 'certain victory' – winning the war at any cost. The rapid, systematic development of dystopic eusociality is the salient feature of Japan's wartime media and, as such, provides an essential interpretive key to its media products. Here, I will briefly trace the public relations campaigns that the CIB launched on the Japanese home front.

Two early campaigns aimed at mobilizing the home front were launched in the months immediately following the outbreak of war in China. First came the Citizens' Total Spiritual Mobilization movement (*Kokumin Seishin Sōdōin*), in September 1937.⁸ A closely related program was unveiled the following year, National Total Mobilization (*Kokka Sōdōin*). These

programs were part of the sweeping social reorganization called the New Order, promulgated on November 3, 1938, by Prime Minister Konoe. In terms of the daily lives of citizens, a vast array of smaller programs was designed to help them answer the call to 'serve the nation' and 'support the war'. All of these programs chipped away at the private realm of civilian life. One particularly pernicious program was the 'Day of Service to the Nation', which effectively put an end to what most people today would call 'free time' or 'a day of rest'. On these days, every citizen was expected to make some public show of doing volunteer service of one form or another, depending on what government directives might be issued. The CIB led the media in actively promoting these public relations campaigns, and then reported on them in the pages of news journals.

The so-called 'ordinary citizen' received his or her fifteen minutes of fame by appearing larger than life in the pages of splashy photodigests like the CIB's *Photographic Weekly Report* or *Asahi's Asahigraph*. In today's world of reality television and social media, it is not difficult to imagine the immensely persuasive power of Japan's wartime press, which could make an ordinary life extraordinary by placing it on a national stage and enjoining a unified, national audience to applaud. Three years of these programs, often under the watchful eyes of the Neighborhood Associations, did much to promote the government's war aims and stifle any resistance to them, psychologically preparing the population for greater sacrifices to come.

The Japanese Empire marked a turning point in 1940, the year of the putative 2,600th anniversary of the nation's founding, which was marked with massive choreographed national celebrations, culminating in Japan's hosting of a scaled-down World's Fair and Pan-Asian Games (in lieu of the 1940 Olympics, which Tokyo had been tentatively scheduled to host). Once again, the CIB led the media in reporting on these grandiose, yet refined, spectacles. This was also the year that the Japanese military created a puppet state in China and announced that its three-year military campaign there was mostly over. The Japanese government concluded the Tripartite Pact, a military alliance with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, on September 27, 1940, forming the Axis. Japanese troops quickly began occupying French Indochina (Vietnam) in the name of the Axis powers. This southern push was, of course, vital to Japan's maintaining its tenuous hold on its gains in China, and would also prove advantageous in future military exploits.

Having ascended to the international stage as a regional power, the time had arrived for the rebirth of the Japanese Empire as an international power. This new ambition took the form of the Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere (Dai Tō A Kyōeiken), which the media rolled out with splashy illustrated stories of a new order in Asia, one of 'Asia for Asiatics', free from Western colonization and economic and military domination. The Japanese people were constantly reminded that they must set an example, as 'the leader race in Asia', and be twice as diligent, and make twice the sacrifices, for the sake of propelling Japan's leadership position to greater glory. The chance for the Japanese people to fulfill their racial destiny would come quite soon.

On December 7, 1941 (December 8 in Japan) the Japanese blitzkrieg was launched, without warning, against Allied military bases throughout the Asia Pacific region: Pearl Harbor, Singapore, Hong Kong, and the Philippines. In the short space of six months, Allied positions fell one after another and were occupied: Hong Kong, Singapore, Wake Island, the Dutch East Indies (today's Indonesia and Malaysia), Burma, the Philippines, Dutch and British Guinea, and the Solomon Islands. These massive territorial gains enlarged the Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere. Military victories were also public relations victories, with media accounts of Japanese troops marching into the capital cities of Western colonies, of Western warships and airfields shattered by Japan's military might, and of hundreds of thousands of Allied prisoners-of-war offering incontrovertible proof of Japanese military and racial superiority.

Amidst these glowing, giddy press reports of numerous victories was a darker story, however: one of ultimate sacrifice. The first Special Attack Forces were deployed at Pearl Harbor

on December 7, 1941, a group of ten seamen in experimental miniature submarines. All were reported to have willingly gone to their deaths by ramming their submarines into the sides of US Navy vessels anchored at Pearl Harbor.⁹ These sacrificial sailors were the first ‘human bullets’ (nikudan)¹⁰ of the Great East Asian War, and were championed in the press as ‘warrior gods’ (gunshin), that is, men who had gladly given their lives in service to emperor and nation, enshrined alongside the imperial ancestors at Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, and who now watched over the Japanese nation as protective deities to be worshiped and revered by Japan’s citizen-subjects. They are the embodiment of a government-sponsored, militarily trained eusociality, ‘perform[ing] altruistic’ – albeit, self-annihilating – ‘acts as part of their division of labor’. Worth noting is that the first report of these suicide attacks appeared in the press in March 1942, at the point of greatest optimism about Japan’s military endeavors in the Asia Pacific region. In a series of articles, the CIB invoked the warrior-gods as the very conscience of the nation and the exemplars of racial identity that goaded the home front to make greater sacrifices for the war effort.

Military historians usually pinpoint the June 1942 Battle of Midway as the beginning of the defeat of Japan, after which the Japanese military was no longer capable of advancing on the offensive. Even so, there was no sense outside of Japan’s Imperial High Command that the tide of war had turned, and the mass media continued to produce colorful reports of the exotic occupied lands and the success of building the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere in 1942 and well into 1943. The war was far from over, of course, and to keep the Japanese home front from becoming complacent, the single largest public relations campaign of the war was rolled out in early 1943, around the time of the annual observance of Army Day (March 10). This was called Uchiteshi Yamamu, which literally translates to ‘continue to shoot, do not desist’, but more colloquially means ‘keep up the fight’ (Earhart 2008, p. 309).¹¹ The epicenter of this campaign was a massive eight-story-high Uchiteshi Yamamu poster erected on one of the tallest buildings in downtown Tokyo. A parade and a bond drive took place in front of this colossal poster. Some 50,000 copies of the same poster were reproduced, in usual size, and distributed across the land. Many events were scheduled to take place nearly simultaneously in every city and town, so that all loyal citizens could express their unity in supporting the war. To this day, the Uchiteshi Yamamu Campaign is cited as the epitome of Japanese wartime public relations campaigns.

By the spring of 1943, Japanese forces began to suffer reverses in the Pacific and lose territory. The first significant setback reported to the Japanese home front was the loss of Attu and Kiska, the two westernmost islands in the Aleutian chain, and US possessions, that Japanese troops occupied in June 1942. The Allied recapture of these two islands was a very grim affair. The terrain was extremely remote and unforgiving, and the two Japanese garrisons stationed there received word from Tokyo that they would receive no support whatsoever and were to ‘stand their ground’. With no possibility of retreat or escape, the commander of the Japanese forces on Attu, Colonel Yasuyo Yamazaki, had his men fight for as long as they could, then gathered together his remaining forces for a final, all-out suicidal charge directly into the Allied encampment. The end result was 2,351 Japanese troops killed, with only 28 being captured alive.

Almost completely forgotten today, Yamazaki’s decision to lead a suicide charge was reported widely in the Japanese press, and in death he became a celebrity and a hero, celebrated in song and in artwork.

In the case of Yamazaki and his men, as well as the *gunshin* who manned the suicide submarines at Pearl Harbor, we see the extreme example of eusociality. Yamazaki’s actions were anointed by the Japanese press with a new word, *gyokusai* (literally, ‘a jewel crushed’; a contemporary Japanese translation is ‘death for honor’ (Earhart 2008, p. 380),¹² that is, choosing to die honorably rather than suffer the shame of capture). Yamazaki provided the template for numerous ‘banzai’ charges that took place in the final two years of the war, as Allied forces fought bitterly

to reclaim lost territory, island by island. The official Japanese strategy became one of *fukkaku* (literally, 'digging in', that is, endurance warfare) (Earhart 2008, p. 398). Small units of Japanese defenders were sent deep into the jungle or caves, where they waited for enemy forces they could pick off, one by one, until they were either weakened by fighting and bombardment or ran out of supplies, at which point a small-scale suicidal 'banzai' attack would be launched. This strategy was repeated at Guadalcanal, Tinian, Peleliu, Iwo Jima, the Philippines, and Okinawa. Entire garrisons were dispatched with no exit strategy and no means of returning to Japan as anything other than deities offering protection from beyond the grave. The press provided sensationalized, glorified reports of these pathetic, harrowing events, exploiting their tragic nature to compel the home front to redouble their efforts to do more, and sacrifice more, for the war.

Despite the tremendous strain under which people went about their daily lives, with dwindling rations and increased work hours, the home front did rally behind the troops and there was very little, if any resistance to the war effort. Yet more was to be required of ordinary citizens as the first of Japan's pre-1941 possessions, the island of Saipan, came under attack in June 1944. The month-long battle for control of the island was brutal, with heavy casualties on both sides. For the Japanese, Saipan marked a new phase of the war, as this was the first battle on Japanese territory that had a significant population of Japanese civilians, numbering about 30,000 when the battle commenced.

The exact number of civilian deaths on Saipan is unknown – some 10,000 to 20,000 people – with as many as 90 percent of these deaths being coerced by the Japanese military, who insisted that civilians adopt the same code of 'death for honor' and either fight alongside the troops, albeit with no real weapons, or kill themselves and their family members with whatever crude methods were on hand (Earhart 2008, pp. 398–9). The civilian-soldiers of Saipan were lionized in the mass media, upheld as heroes on a par with 'warrior gods'. The horrific deaths of civilians, even young mothers with infants, throwing themselves off the steep cliff at Marpi Point, was commemorated in one of the most important works of wartime art, a monumental painting by Tsuguharu Fujita, 'Our Compatriots on Saipan Remain Loyal to the End', which was exhibited publicly and reproduced in the major illustrated news journals. The effect on the home front must have been chilling.

In July 1944, when Saipan fell into Allied hands, the war entered its final phase. US air power was now within striking distance of Japan's main islands and began launching punishing air raids on Japanese cities. In the final nine months of the war, carpet-bombing decimated 60 percent of all urban areas. The Japanese High Command had to determine a strategy to preserve Kokutai and emperor while ceding as little Japanese territory as possible. The Battle of Saipan offered a model for the new strategy, one in which the distinction between soldiers and citizens was blurred. This new strategy was promoted through a large-scale public relations campaign that the mass media began deploying in the fall of 1944, one that emphasized training civilians for combat roles and preparing them to fight to the death in the event of an Allied invasion of Japan's home islands.

In October 1944, as Allied forces began the battle to retake the Philippines, the first aerial Special Attack Forces, the kamikaze pilots, made daring, devastating suicidal raids. Of course, the first missions of the Special Attack Forces were squadrons of miniature submarines launched against US warships anchored at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Similar stealth attacks using miniature submarines were launched over the next two years against Diego Suarez, Madagascar, and Sydney, Australia. The sailors who died in these attacks were lifted out of anonymity into posthumous fame, celebrated in the media, and described as warrior-gods to be revered and worshipped by all citizens. It was possible that the midget submariners could carry out their orders and return to base alive, and at least three men did so, but for all practical purposes, theirs

was a suicide mission (Earhart 2008). While the military success of the midget submarines may be negligible, their value in motivating the public was exploited to the greatest degree possible. Indeed, the midget submariners set the stage for the kamikaze pilots.

The first kamikaze attack took place during the Battle of Leyte Gulf on October 25, 1944. For the nine months that followed, the media had an endless fascination with the kamikaze, as wave after wave of pilots were sent on suicide missions. Initially, the kamikaze tactics did score remarkable results, in part because the guns on Allied ships were not designed for close-range firing. Once this oversight was corrected, the kamikaze had less success, although this was never reported in the Japanese press. The kamikaze, who seemed to be the miracle Japan needed to bring the war to a satisfactory conclusion, provided an endless source of public relations material. The pilots' names were broadcast over the radio, and their families were shown great deference. The personal effects left behind by dead kamikaze were treated like sacred relics. If the sensationalism surrounding the kamikaze was the product of a desperate wartime public relations machine, neither their heroism nor their patriotism was manufactured, and they continue to capture the imagination of people around the world today, no doubt because they are a prime example of the human capacity for eusocial behavior.

The Japanese government and its media machine were quick to exploit the actions of the kamikaze, coopting their voices to call upon the people of Japan to embrace the 'Special Attack Force spirit' and 'become kamikazes'. The press may have been coy about reporting setbacks and completely silent about reporting major losses of materiel, but it did not shy away from reporting, in precise detail, the actions of the kamikaze. Now it was up to the home front to prove that they were worthy of their selfless heroes who so willingly died for them. According to the Japanese press, the civilians of Saipan demonstrated their willingness to fight to the death and die honorably, rather than be taken prisoner. Very soon, the first real test of the newly kamikazefied people would come, when the Battle of Okinawa commenced in April 1945.

The Battle of Okinawa raged on for nearly three months, during which approximately 100,000 civilians, representing between one-fourth and one-third of the civilian population, perished. Military deaths tell an equally gruesome story. Some 20,000 US troops died on Okinawa, while only 7,000 of a total force of about 100,000 Japanese defenders were captured alive. For those three months, the press exhorted and harangued the Japanese population with accounts of the valiant, noble deaths of the 'home front warriors' of Okinawa. With Okinawa falling entirely into enemy hands by the end of June 1945, the Japanese High Command drew up its harrowing plan for the Decisive Battle for the Home Islands, the defense of Japan's four main islands divided into eight regions. Each of these regions was to emulate the ethos of honorable death seen on Saipan and Okinawa, with its Voluntary Army Corps – many of them women and children – fighting as an independent unit in the event of an Allied invasion. Japan's leaders engaged in a morbid actuarial enterprise, declaring the Battle of Okinawa a 'success' because of the heavy casualties inflicted upon the enemy. While exact casualty figures are still unknown, as a rule of thumb, for every dead Allied soldier, there were five dead Japanese soldiers and five dead Japanese civilians. The Imperial High Command was counting on the spiritual superiority of the Japanese race, for years bombarded with messages promoting extreme self-sacrifice as eusocial behavior, as well as the inferior fighting spirit of the 'soft' American troops, to allow Japan to negotiate a favorable peace with the Allies. Japan's rulers were willing to pay a hefty price, in blood, for Japanese autonomy, couched in terms of emperor and Kokutai. The media's role was to sell this self-annihilating plan to the people and sadly, where the military failed on the battlefield, the media (and the system enforcing its messages) succeeded on the home front, leading to hundreds of thousands of deaths in the final months of the war, at a point after which a Japanese victory was unattainable.

By the end of the Battle of Okinawa in June 1945, Japan's war situation had reached a crisis point that threatened the very existence of the nation and the survival of the Japanese people. Japan's Axis partners had been defeated and were now occupied by the Allies. All of Japan's early territorial gains in the war were gone, and Japan had already lost some of its pre-1941 possessions. Air raids were a regular occurrence, reducing to rubble 60 percent of Japan's urban areas. More than 100,000 citizens of Tokyo died in a single night of incendiary bombing on March 9–10, 1945, which made a moonscape of a vast swath of its thriving downtown. So obvious were the loss of Axis partners, of territory, of urban mass, and of life itself, that the media no longer tried to hide these facts from the public. The press did not report, though, that the Japanese Imperial Navy, a source of national pride since Meiji times, no longer had enough ships or airplanes to continue defending Japan. To make matters even worse, adverse weather caused the domestic rice crop to fail.

Despite these seemingly insurmountable odds, the press continued to report that the fighting spirit of the troops and the home front was undiminished and that Japan would emerge victorious. Whether or not people in the street actually believed that Japan would win the war, very few Japanese were capable of envisioning defeat, judging from their reactions at the time of the surrender. Indeed, the Japanese government gave no indication that surrender was even a remote possibility. Instead of preparing the people for such an eventuality, the mass media gave instructions to the entire population in hand-to-hand combat with bayonets and bamboo spears and the proper way to pull the pin and throw a hand grenade.

In July 1945, Japan marked the eighth year of constant warfare. For more than seven years, the CIB had been at the helm of a state-run media machine that ceaselessly bombarded the people with admonitions to make greater and greater sacrifices, finally exhorting them to emulate the 'Special Attack Force spirit' of the kamikaze pilots. This induction of eusocial behavior was grounded in Kokutai ideology, which was still being invoked at this late phase of the war. As one newspaper editorial, titled 'Why Japan Will Win the War', darkly stated:

A battle fought on the main island[s of Japan] will be the final battle. It is impossible to conceive of the battle so far as the present war is concerned. Ours is a race which is possible only in relation to the structure on which the State [e.g., Kokutai] rests. The day when the [sic] 3,000 year history of our country, a history of oneness between the Sovereign and the people, ends, is the day when our race goes out of existence.

(Earhart 2008, p. 410)¹³

During eight years of total warfare, Kokutai ideology had insisted upon the supreme, sacred existence of the emperor and the organic concept of the state, without which the people themselves had no identity and no real worth. This equation was balanced by making the people an easily replenished, expendable resource. However, the demand that the people become one with their suicidal heroes, the kamikaze pilots, upset this balance. To wit, with Okinawa lost to the Allies in late June and with the Axis partners defeated, Japan's exceedingly grim situation begged the existential question posed by its wartime experiment in promoting eusociality: If, for the sake of preserving emperor and Kokutai, every kamikazefied 'home front warrior' – whether elderly or infirm, housewife or schoolchild – were to join every sailor, soldier, and pilot in fighting to the finish and choosing 'noble death' over the ignominy of capture, then would Japan continue to exist?

The answer to this morbid existential question came in mid-August 1945. On August 6, 1945, the US dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. The earliest media reports from Hiroshima, appearing three days later, described a 'cruel' 'new type bomb' that instantly killed large numbers

of people and destroyed much of the city. On August 9, an atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki and on the same day, the USSR declared war on the Japanese Empire, as Soviet troops poured into Manchuria. Such devastating events, in a country already brought to its knees, finally forced the Imperial High Command to reconsider its calculus of death and to ultimately conclude that as the complete annihilation of the Japanese race was now a very real possibility, the survival of the institutions of emperor and Kokutai were rendered meaningless without the people who constituted subjects and citizens. The parallels between the social organization of wartime Japan and E.O. Wilson's colonies of superorganisms of the insect world are quite striking, particularly the self-sacrificing altruistic actions of the kamikaze and the highly organized, centralized division of labor among the entire population. Indeed, the Japanese media put forth the industrious ant as a positive meme in Japanese war art. There are limits, however, in comparing wartime Japan to a highly successful insect colony, in so far as neither the organic notion of nation-state nor the emperor could ensure their own survival and reproduction without the people, yet the people could surely survive, reproduce, and perhaps flourish without Kokutai or emperor. Simply put, even with gods for ancestors and replete in regal splendor, Hirohito was no queen bee. Furthermore, his people were not purely the product of the group selection that allowed insects to evolve, even if, during the war, they seemed to be defined by its products of 'honor, virtue, and duty', and locked into battle with the Allies, who the Japanese media characterized as the embodiment of individual selection and its products of 'selfishness, cowardice, and hypocrisy' (Wilson 2012, p. 56). The Imperial High Command, however, continued to negotiate the terms of peace until they had assurance that the emperor and the imperial institution would be spared, even if it meant the dissolution of Kokutai ideology.

The first signs of capitulation appeared in the Japanese press on August 9, 10, and 11: increasingly gruesome, detailed eye-witness reports of the nuclear devastation wreaked upon Hiroshima by the 'inhuman' 'new type bomb'. While these reports did not discuss the possibility of surrender, the mere fact that the Japanese press would admit that the enemy was deploying a new type of weapon, a very effective and deadly one, was a radical departure from the CIB's default narrative that Japan would overcome all obstacles and emerge victorious due to the spiritual superiority and persistence of the Japanese race. Finally, on August 14, CIB President Shimomura Hiroshi printed an editorial in the major newspapers that mentioned the unmentionable: 'At a period of the extension of national futures the Japanese people maintained unity well and why not tighten the unity if they enter into a period of reverses? Man must have time for reflection either as [an] individual or as a race. Development without reflection leads to stumbling' (Earhart 2008, p. 464). In other words, the people had made great sacrifices when Japan's military was on the offensive and made vast territorial gains from 1937 onwards. Now, however, that Japan was about to 'enter into a period of reverses', the people should remain in unity (with the emperor and Kokutai) in the new period of 'reflection' that was about to begin.

The following day, August 15, the voice of the Shōwa Emperor, Hirohito, was broadcast for the first time on live radio. He read aloud a curious document, the Imperial Rescript to Restore Peace, by which Japan's acceptance of the terms of the Potsdam Declaration – unconditional surrender – was announced to the people. The rescript, reprinted in full in the daily newspapers, names the 'new and most cruel bomb' (the atom bomb) as the reason for ending the war, because were Japan to continue to fight, the atom bomb 'would not only result in an ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation, but also it would lead to the total extinction of human civilization' (Earhart 2008, p. 465). The wartime experiment in eusociality may have met its logical conclusion when the population was faced with 'obliteration' and 'extinction', but the unity of purpose, nationalism, and altruism fostered during the war remained powerful forces as Japan switched from prosecuting war to waging peace.

Assessing the legacy of the wartime media

The complicity and culpability of the wartime media in Japan's catastrophic defeat pose profound, thorny questions about media ethics. At present, the reportage of the wartime media continues to cast a long shadow over major controversies domestically and throughout the Asia Pacific region. For starters, media complicity is often cited as a major contributing factor in assessments of the disastrous end to the war. The domestic ramifications of the wartime media are partly systemic, in so far as the media's utter failure to inform the population of colossal defeats on the battlefield and to give the people advance warning of the air raids raining down death and destruction has sowed the seeds of healthy skepticism of government and media. This distrust is evidenced in the public's linkage of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the '3.11.11' meltdown of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in the aftermath of the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake of March 11, 2011.

In enumerating the ethical concerns dogging Japan's wartime media, the first is surely this failure of omission. Only in the final months of the war, when the fighting had reached Japan's main islands, did the press indicate that the war situation might be less than favorable, but even then, the press did not report major military defeats and setbacks. It is no wonder that the home front felt crushed and betrayed by the media when the surrender was announced. The media's glowing reports from occupied territories left the Japanese home front ill-prepared for the horrific accounts of war crimes that were made public in the first years of the Allied Occupation. The wartime media's major omissions of heinous atrocities and widespread abuses against peoples in the occupied lands, as well as against prisoners-of-war and forced laborers brought to Japan, have created historical quagmires and foreign policy dilemmas for the Japanese that only seem to worsen with the passing of time. These include the use of chemical weapons and biological experimentation by the infamous Unit 731, the military's abduction of primarily Korean women to serve as 'comfort women' in makeshift camp brothels, the Rape of Nanjing and other genocidal massacres of civilians, atrocities committed against noncombatants and prisoners-of-war, and the use of civilian and prisoner-of-war slave labor. There are also cases of atrocities that Japanese troops committed against Japanese civilians, such as forced suicides, especially on Saipan and Okinawa. And Japanese air raid victims have also mounted class actions suits against the Japanese government in the postwar period.

Each of these lingering issues revive the question of the war responsibility of the Shōwa Emperor, the military, and the people, and whether apologies and reparations should be made, and by whom. This question cannot be reasonably answered without first determining who had the power to make decisions during the war, and to what degree information was accurately disseminated. In short, the media's complicity in the war effort continues to obfuscate these issues. Media complicity also insinuates itself into the current debate about the status of Japan's Self Defense Forces and Japan's postwar Peace Constitution ('Article 9').

The postwar Japanese media also has been confronted with a second ethical problem, the stain of having conceded objectivity and autonomy. This is particularly true of those media concerns that existed during and after the war, which include nearly all of the major news consortia – *Asahi*, *Mainichi*, and *Yomiuri* – whose newspaper and publishing empires grew during the war, thanks to consolidations, and who have since only grown and further branched out into radio and television broadcasting. More than any other Japanese media concern, NHK, the postwar reincarnation of wartime Radio Tokyo, has a particularly dubious company history to contend with.

The wartime media's lack of objectivity, its blind optimism that twisted facts and perpetuated a narrative of national greatness and racial destiny, is a major contributing factor in some Japanese people's ambiguity about the meaning of the war. Nearly 75 years after the war's end, a heated controversy surrounds the very name by which the war is referred to today in Japan, which belies one's personal political reading of the war and its stated objectives. The related issue of historicity is evident in the ambiguity and uneasiness that clouds those national symbols that the wartime media treated as sacrosanct, including the imperial throne, Yasukuni Shrine, the Rising Sun (the national flag), *Kimi Ga Yo* (the national anthem), and even territorial boundaries (Okinawa, the northern islands, Takejima).

Private testimonials and personal memories of those who experienced the war firsthand are often pitted against the media's historical amnesia and ambiguity, nostalgia, and rehabilitation. So potent was the wartime media's narrative of national greatness and racial superiority that it is an endless source of inspiration for latter-day revisionists and revanchists, whose conspiracy theories posit Japan as the victim of American aggression prior to the war and the liberator of the Great East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere. Indeed, the entire corpus of 'history' manga that has cropped up around the fantasy that Japan was not defeated in the war owe their existence to the complicity and mendacity of the wartime media.

A third ethical problem is the threat represented by state control of the media and the state's assumption of an active role in creating and reporting on events designed to further its interests at the expense of individual citizens. To wit, should government ever encourage the population to a nihilistic extreme of eusocial behavior, even in the direst circumstances? The wartime media provided such a clear iteration of national identity, codifying what is 'Japanese', that it has left an indelible imprint on postwar Japanese culture. This is certainly true of the nearly mobilized, authoritarian organization of a Japanese workplace or classroom, and of the insistence upon homogeneity in gender and race as unambiguous absolutes in a repressively patriarchal society, and the stereotypic, simplistic portrayal of minorities that persist, even as twenty-first-century Japan is taking steps, even small steps, toward acknowledging diversity among its population.

A fourth area of concern is whether the Japanese wartime media should be judged by the same ethical standards as peacetime media or by ethical standards applied to the wartime media of other countries, or if it should be dismissed outright as propaganda. Wartime Japan presents the extreme case of media in a totalitarian, centralized state essaying to control all information and harmonize all media products to meet a single goal.

Dispassionate examination of the wartime media may be difficult, but only by doing so can its enduring influence be properly assessed. Simply stated, the wartime media was as great a success in indoctrinating and mobilizing the people as the military was an abysmal failure in bringing the war to a successful conclusion. From an ethical standpoint, there may be nothing to applaud in the CIB's creation and direction of the wartime media machine, but from a historical standpoint, its importance is undeniable. For the first time in Japan's history, the life of each citizen was directly linked to an epic struggle for national destiny, a struggle that played out in texts and images created and consumed with breathtaking speed. In this sense, and rather ironically, the wartime media fulfilled one dimension of modernity that endures to this day by positing a solution to the empty anonymity of mass society, foreshadowing reality television programming and social media. One legacy of the Japanese wartime media is this acute awareness of the pervasive power of mass media to orient citizens in modern mass society and direct them toward larger national goals, whether the construction of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere in the Asia Pacific region in the 1940s, or the industrial development that achieved the postwar 'economic miracle' a few decades later. In this sense, the eusociality so vigorously, and disastrously, promoted during the war may have paid dividends in the postwar.

Researchers face a particularly difficult task in trying to measure the contemporary reception of every arena of wartime media production. First, we must ask if any form of published or broadcast dissent – even well-intentioned, patriotic deviation from the official version of events, to say nothing of anti-military sentiments or criticism of government policy – was possible in such an airtight system of media control. I have argued elsewhere (Earhart 2008) that, at the very least, the possibility should not be dismissed out of hand, but that establishing the evidence for dissent would rely upon CIB records of identifying and suppressing dissent, or of contemporary, private writings (i.e., letters or diaries) commenting upon a dissenting message perceived in a film, radio broadcast, or print media. From the perfect hindsight of postwar Japan, it is too facile to pore over wartime media products with an eye for antiwar messages. A related, and perhaps more fruitful area of research is the form that dissent takes in such a rigidly controlled system with elaborate rules governing what could be published or broadcast.

Finally, we must ask, objectively and dispassionately, whether the Japanese wartime media warrants derisive labeling as ‘propaganda’, and whether such a label leads to a more nuanced understanding of what transpired in Japan during the war. Certainly, the Japanese wartime media was unapologetically nationalistic and militaristic, and willfully printed distortions and outright falsifications in the name of the war effort. And certainly, it is worthy of condemnation for having misled its people about the course of the war and inculcating the government’s program of nihilistic, dystopic eusociality. The Japanese wartime media warrants much criticism and condemnation, to be sure, but only in the context of the wartime media of other nations – in particular, the victor nations – that engaged in brutal warfare, or in comparison to the dizzying ‘spin’ produced ad nauseum by modern-day political campaigns in this era of social media, in which every form of electronic device is equipped with all of the tools required to mediate an entirely self-serving, self-deceiving, myopic version of (virtual) reality.

Notes

- 1 This chapter draws extensively from and expands upon my earlier work, *Certain Victory: Images of World War II in the Japanese Media* (2008).
- 2 The very name by which scholars, journalists, and the general public refer to the war is complicated. In this chapter, I follow a broad interpretation of the war as a closely connected series of Japanese military skirmishes and campaigns beginning in Manchuria in 1931, precipitating an all-out war with nationalist China in 1937, spreading further to French Indochina (Vietnam) in 1940, and reaching its greatest expansion with the attacks on Pearl Harbor, Hong Kong, and other Allied possessions in 1941.
- 3 In *The Social Conquest of Earth*, E.O. Wilson posits that human beings are ‘eusocial apes’ and one of the earth’s ‘superorganisms’. ‘*Homo sapiens* is what biologists call “eusocial”, meaning group members containing multiple generations and prone to perform altruistic acts as part of their division of labor. In this respect, they are technically comparable to ants, termites, and other eusocial insects’ (Wilson 2012, p. 16).
- 4 Emperor Showa, commonly known in the West by his princely name, Hirohito (1901–1989; reigned 1926–1989).
- 5 Upon its foundation in 1936, this agency was called the Cabinet Information Committee. It was upgraded to a Division in 1937 and to a Bureau in 1940 (for further details on the rationale and establishment of the CIB, see Kasza 1988, pp. 152–3, 157, 174–87, and 219–24).
- 6 December 7 in the Western hemisphere. Throughout the Japanese Empire, December 8 was made a day of national thanksgiving and celebration, and observed annually for the duration of the war.
- 7 Literally, ‘paper theater’, a form of entertainment that became wildly popular in the early 1930s. A storyteller, usually a self-employed entrepreneur, would transport a wooden shadowbox that served as a ‘theater’. This shadowbox, about 2 feet high and 3 feet wide, held sturdy cards with colorful illustrations printed on the front side and text on the back. The storyteller would give a dramatic reading while revealing one illustration after another. A complete kamishibai story generally contained about 20 illustrated cards and would take about 10 to 15 minutes to perform. This medium, which required virtually

no outlay of capital, was extremely effective in reaching children in areas without ready access to film or radio, and remained quite popular until well into the 1960s, when it was superseded by television.

- 8 See Earhart (2008, pp. 107–45) for an in-depth discussion of these programs.
- 9 In fact, one of the ten midget submariners, Ensign Sakamaki Kazuo, survived and was captured, unconscious, in his beached vessel. He became Japan's prisoner-of-war number one. He died in 1999 at the age of 81.
- 10 The term 'nikudan' was coined during the Russo-Japanese War, becoming the title of a famous first-person narrative by Sakurai Tadayoshi, a soldier who wanted to die on the battlefield but survived. The term was revived in 1932 during the Shanghai Incident, when three soldiers shouldered a warhead, carried it into a Chinese stronghold, and blew themselves up along with the bomb. The Army described their actions as heroic and voluntary, although this account has been called into question by postwar research.
- 11 The Uchitashi Yamamu Campaign is discussed in greater detail in the chapter of the same name in Earhart (2008), pp. 309–31.
- 12 For further discussion of *gyokusai*, see Earhart (2008), pp. 380–98.
- 13 The original article, titled 'Why Japan Will Win', was translated into English and published in the English-language *Nippon Times*.

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Mizuno Hideko and the development of 1960s *shōjo* manga

Deborah Shamoon

Shōjo manga, or romance comics for teenage girls, is a major genre of manga, and a long-standing, influential and highly productive site in Japanese popular culture. Aimed at a readership of roughly 9–16-year-old girls, *shōjo* manga magazines serialize ten to twelve stories per issue, with popular stories reprinted later as books.¹ Using black and white line art, sometimes enhanced with screen tone, *shōjo* manga is typified by a decorative aesthetic style, including exaggerated eyes, emotive backgrounds, and layered or otherwise abstracted panels. Crucially, the majority of artists/writers are women, most making their professional debut as teenagers, which creates a sense of intimacy or camaraderie with readers. Thematically, stories may include elements of fantasy, science fiction, horror, adventure or sports, but most are essentially stories of adolescent development, with romance as a major theme. *Shōjo* manga is a source of fictional narratives for other media, such as TV drama, film and theater, as well as driving trends in fashion and pop music. Professional *shōjo mangaka*² is a coveted career goal for many creatively inclined girls. *Shōjo* manga magazines actively recruit new talent from existing readers; at the same time, many girls get their start in *dōjinshi* (amateur comics). *Shōjo* manga also provides a space for communities of girls to develop, through the close relationship between fans and artists, through letters and other contributions to magazines, through fan circles, and through networks of *dōjinshi* artists and fans. In terms of cultural impact, *shōjo* manga has few equivalents in other countries; even in the United States and Britain, romance comics for girls were popular from the 1950s to the 1970s but have disappeared since then.³

The popularity of *shōjo* manga from the 1950s to the present day, and its social significance, not only as a form of entertainment, but also its role in allowing girls and young women to form communities and find self-expression, indicates its importance to scholarly discourse on Japan and on pop culture in general. In particular, a closer examination of how the genre developed its contemporary form can help us to better understand its significance both historically and for readers. The standard narrative of *shōjo* manga development is that the genre changed in the early 1970s with the appearance of the Year 24 Group, young women mangaka who introduced thematic and aesthetic sophistication to a genre formerly created by men for children, and shifted the target demographic to teenage girls.⁴ However, this narrative ignores the work of young women a decade earlier, such as Mizuno Hideko, Maki Miyako, Nishitani Yoshiko and

Watanabe Masako. Looking more closely at *shōjo* manga published through the 1960s reveals a gradual shift rather than a sudden rupture. The shifts in *shōjo* manga in the late 1960s – more young women mangaka, development of decorative aesthetic style, increasing complexity and seriousness of long-form storytelling – laid the foundations of the genre and helped ensure its long-term success, unlike US and UK romance comics. A significant turning point for *shōjo* manga was Mizuno's series *Fire!* (1969–1971), which introduced 1960s counterculture ideals of personal liberation, as well as eroticized male characters. This chapter discusses Mizuno's early career, and *Fire!* in particular, in comparison with American and British romance comics of the same era, to show how the genre developed.

Origins of *shōjo* manga

While long-form narrative fiction for girls in comic books and magazines began to appear in the 1950s, the genre evolved from illustrated literary magazines for high school girls in the 1910s through the 1930s. This print culture helped foster the self-identity of the *shōjo*. More specific than the English word 'girl', *shōjo* implies a liminal resting point between childhood and adulthood, characterized by whimsy, self-indulgence and daydreaming. Protected temporarily from the pressures of a patriarchal society, girls attending single-sex secondary schools quietly created their own culture, favoring a dreamy, lyrical sensibility, and an emphasis on spiritual love, that is, love on a purely emotional, intellectual level, separated from physical desire. The culture at girls' schools allowed and even encouraged exclusive love relationships between girls, called *s kankei* (s or sister relationships), modeled on heterosexual dating, and seen as an innocent practice run for the arranged marriage that awaited them upon graduation (Pflugfelder 2005, pp. 133–90). Many of the stories in girls' magazines are about this kind of girl–girl romance. As the relationship is fated to end after graduation and marriage, the stories and their illustrations are infused with a strong sense of wistfulness and nostalgia.

One of the first literary magazines for girls, *Shōjo no tomo* (*The Girl's Friend*) was published from 1908 to 1955 by Jitsugyō no Nihonsha, followed by many more. Girls' magazines reached peak popularity in the 1920s and early 1930s. *Shōjo no tomo* had a significant cultural impact because the content emphasized girls' creative expression, networking and active participation. Large sections in each issue were devoted to reader contributions (fiction, poetry and illustration) as well as letters addressed not only to editors but also to fellow readers. The magazine offered generous prizes for contributions, and held monthly meetings in major cities where girls listened to lectures and met fellow readers. Many of the features of postwar *shōjo* manga (reader contributions, encouraging readers to become artists/writers, prizes, pull-out posters, a chatty, intimate editorial tone) came from *Shōjo no tomo*. The magazine also published some of the most influential writers, including Yoshiya Nobuko, and artists, such as Takabatake Kashō and Nakahara Jun'ichi, who developed the flowery, ornate *bibun* writing style and the *jojōga* aesthetic style featuring exaggerated eyes, frail bodies and an emphasis on clothing, that would come to characterize *shōjo* manga.

Following World War II, girls' literary magazines were gradually replaced by manga and fashion magazines. After 1945, as coeducational secondary schools became more common and the prohibition on teen dating was lifted, the private world of the *shōjo* waned, and *s kankei* disappeared. Moreover, the target demographic for girls' magazines shifted from high school age to elementary school age in the 1950s. As a result, the content became much less narratively and aesthetically complex, and the themes centered on parent–child relationships. Just as literary magazines for girls (and boys) were disappearing, story manga (as opposed to four-panel gag strips) were becoming massively popular, led by Tezuka Osamu. His series for girls, *Ribbon no*

kishi (*Princess Knight*) was not the first *shōjo* manga, but it did introduce long-form narrative to *shōjo* manga (Takahashi 2008, p. 127).⁵ New magazines such as *Nakayoshi* (*Pals*, 1954) and *Ribbon* (1955) at first carried a mix of illustrated fiction and manga, but soon shifted to an all-manga format. In addition to magazines, *shōjo* manga were also published in hardcover book format, both as *akahon* (red books) and as *kashihon* (rental books), although these disappeared as magazines became more affordable.

By the early 1960s, *shōjo* manga magazines were again starting to shift their demographic upward to middle school and high school-age girls, and move away from parent-child stories to boy-girl romance. Fairy tales or fantasy stories also gave way to teenage romance (Yonezawa 1980, p. 130). One of the first *shōjo* manga stories set in a high school was *Mary Lou* by Nishitani Yoshiko (*Margaret*, 1965). Although *Mary Lou* is set in the United States with fabulously wealthy characters, the idea of an ‘ordinary’ high school girl falling in love has been a staple of the *shōjo* manga genre ever since (Yonezawa 1980, p. 111).

In terms of production, the manga industry began to coalesce into its current form in the 1960s. Manga were (and still are) first published in a magazine anthology. As had prewar girls’ magazines, most *shōjo* manga magazines in the 1950s and 1960s attempted to entice readers with varied content, including articles on fashion and pop music, illustrated fiction or photo stories (that is, manga-like panels and word balloons, but using posed photos rather than drawings). But the number of girls and young women eager to become professional mangaka made manga content both affordable and profitable for publishers, and by the early 1970s, most magazines had jettisoned all other content, apart from the ever popular letters and reader contribution pages.

Although by the 1960s many *shōjo* mangaka were young women, the genre was never purposely designed as a feminist space or tool of female empowerment, nor should it be read as such. The primary motivation for the publishers was profit. Although the artists were women, nearly all the editors were men, a condition that persists in the industry.⁶ The ideology of many *shōjo* manga stories tends to be rather heteronormative and conservative, emphasizing the ‘power of love’ to bring happiness, although there are exceptions (Fujimoto 1998, p. 114). Many editors in the 1960s and 1970s seem to have taken a hands-off approach, while others, such as Maruyama Akira, actively encouraged experimentation and creativity (Maruyama 1999, pp. 6–7). The *shōjo* manga genre developed as it did not through conscious planning, but in response to what girl readers wanted, and because it was a neglected corner of pop culture media.

Overview of *shōjo* manga studies

Popular culture aimed at or enjoyed by girls tends to be marginalized and derided both in casual and academic discourse, and *shōjo* manga is no exception. It is easy to forget now, with the Cool Japan initiative giving the government stamp of approval to manga as a cultural product, that until quite recently manga was considered at best trash and at worst actively harmful. Even while male critics attempted to improve manga’s image, many still heaped scorn on *shōjo* manga, calling it ‘childish’ (Takahashi 2008, p. 131). The first to take *shōjo* manga seriously was Yonezawa Yoshihiro (one of the founders of Comic Market), whose *Sengō Shōjo Mangashi* (*History of Postwar Girls’ Comics*) appeared in 1980. His work was followed by several other male critics whose approach was largely genre-based (Takeuchi 2010, pp. 83–7).

While Yonezawa wrote from the position of a manga fan and critic, another foundational scholar, Honda Masuko, began with the study of prewar *shōjo* culture, and made the link between prewar girls’ magazines and postwar *shōjo* manga. In her seminal essay, ‘The Genealogy of Hirahira: Liminality and the Girl’ (2012, pp. 19–20), first published in 1980, she draws direct

aesthetic connections between artists such as Nakahara Jun'ichi and Ikeda Riyoko, emphasizing the fluttering (*hirahira*) both literal and symbolic, of ribbons and other decorative accessories as well as lyricism and transience. Honda's writing mirrors the flowery language of *bibun*, and she includes references to her own prewar girlhood, when she was a reader of girls' magazines. She is also painfully aware of the dismissive attitude in academia towards *shōjo* culture. Honda (2012, pp. 36–7) writes,

When I was a girl, there was nothing more important than the infinitely rich 'world of our own'. So those of us who cherished this world joined together and built a small enclosure to protect our secret garden. What did our enclosure protect?

Girls today guard their paradise known as the girls' comic. What flowers bloom therein?

Once I became an adult, it became clear to me that labels such as 'vulgar, sentimental, lacking social awareness, stylistically superficial, and having the immature taste of a girl' had been used to condemn the garden of my youth. Accordingly, I pushed this garden into the darkness of the past. It seems that girls today are subject to the same negative scrutiny.

I have therefore decided to speak out – about girls' values and the stance of those who deride them. Our gardens have surely been measured by invalid criteria and our happiness positioned in the wrong plane. I am determined to point out this unfairness.

Honda's remarks on the criticism of *shōjo* manga as childish, poorly written and poorly drawn reflect the attitude of many male critics in the 1980s. Only exceptional mangaka such as Hagio Moto, who were seen as 'transcending' the genre, were worthy of praise (Takahashi 2008, p. 132).

Honda's somewhat defensive stance, writing from a place of personal experience and using one's own emotional reactions to the text to inform analysis, was characteristic of feminist writing on *shōjo* manga through the 1990s and 2000s. Fujimoto Yukari's *Watashi no ibasho was doko ni aru* (*Where Is My Place?*, 1998) and Yokomori Rika's *Ai wa shōjo manga de osowatta* (*I Learned about Love from Shōjo Manga*, 1995) are written in this way. It is an interesting strategy to respond to criticism of *shōjo* manga by invoking the primacy of emotions celebrated in the text itself and in the fan culture. As the stigma against *shōjo* manga has lifted somewhat in academic writing, the trend has moved away from the personal, toward a more neutral authorial voice. The focus in recent years has been on boys' love and themes of gender nonconformity (Takeuchi 2010, p. 91). For instance, *Shōjo manga jendā hyōshōron* (*Semiotics of Gender in Shōjo Manga*, 2007) by Oshiyama Michiko, offers a genealogy of girls' cross-dressing.

Academic writing on *shōjo* manga in English developed very differently. Scholars did not have the same kind of emotional attachment to the texts as Honda or Fujimoto because they first encountered them as adults. Academic writing on manga of any kind has lagged far behind the study of anime, and until recently tended to focus on outliers, taken out of genre or publication context. Some of the first writing on manga for a female readership – such as, for instance, 'Penguin in Bondage' by Sandra Buckley (1991) and *Permitted and Prohibited Desires* by Anne Allison (2000) – was on pornographic ladies' comics, because it seemed unusual to American feminists that graphic porn for women even existed. Likewise, interest in *shōjo* manga was largely driven by curiosity about the idea of comics 'by and for girls', based on the assumption that such texts must contain subversive or oppositional ideology. Where *shōjo* manga texts reflect a conservative, heteronormative ideology, they are condemned by scholars such as Allison and Buckley. It is only recently that writing on *shōjo* manga in English has attempted to place the genre in its larger cultural context, and began by asking why it appeals to girls, rather than searching for subversive or patriarchal ideology.

The majority of writing on *shōjo* manga in English, however, is on boys' love, even though in terms of circulation and number of titles it is a smaller subgenre, at least in professional manga, excluding *dōjinshi*.⁷ The attention given to boys' love is another example of scholars singling out trends that seem unusual, surprising or subversive, although, as slash fiction enters the mainstream in the United States, the idea of women enjoying male–male erotica might seem less surprising lately. There is less writing in English that deals with the *shōjo* manga genre as a whole, or that focuses on heterosexual romance. In *Straight from the Heart*, Jennifer Prough (2011) provides ethnographic study of the production process, examining how the predominantly male editors interact with the predominantly female writers/artists. In *Passionate Friendship* (2012), I examined the roots of *shōjo* culture in the Meiji era discourse on spiritual love, and in prewar girls' magazines, then discussed how the *shōjo* manga genre developed through the 1970s.

There is still ample room for more research on *shōjo* manga. Interest in boys' love has reinvigorated the study of *shōjo* manga in English, and helped to bring a much needed critical stance that assumes agency on the part of readers. While boys' love is a particularly rich topic, it does not represent the whole of *shōjo* manga; other types of studies are also needed. This chapter looks more closely at the development of the genre in the 1960s, a moment that tends to be overlooked in both English and Japanese studies, in favor of the work of the Year 24 Group. This chapter also seeks to put *shōjo* manga in the context of romance comics from the US and UK in the same period. Perhaps because of the way area studies is structured within academia, *shōjo* manga is rarely discussed alongside American or British romance comics, but a comparative look at the genre across cultures can be instructive.⁸ *Shōjo* manga today is in many ways a unique genre, but this was not always the case. Why did romance comics in the US and UK disappear, while *shōjo* manga, equally popular in the same time period, flourish and grow? While this brief chapter cannot provide a comprehensive study, it will suggest some possible answers.

British and American romance comics

In the United States, the comic book, with its capacity for long-form fictional narrative (as opposed to comic strips), has in recent decades been stereotyped as a medium for males only, but this was not always the case. As Danzinger-Russell points out, girls have always read comics, even if the title was not aimed exclusively at a female readership (2013, p. 12). Danzinger-Russell credits *Archie* (1941) with popularizing the teen comics genre, focusing on regular teenagers with romance subplots, although *Archie* was not marketed only to girls (2013, p. 13). The genre of romance comics specifically for teen girls launched in 1947 with the anthology magazine *Young Romance*, created by writer Joe Simon and artist Jack Kirby (co-creators of *Captain America* and many other superhero titles). The immediate popularity of *Young Romance* inspired a second title, *Young Love*, and a host of imitators from other publishers (Duncan and Smith 2009, p. 204). The combined circulation of *Young Romance* and *Young Love* in the early 1950s was 2 million copies a month (Simon and Simon 2003, p. 123).

Young Romance set the model for the romance genre in English. Unlike superhero titles, but like other genre comics, it was an anthology magazine, featuring several short, self-contained stories per issue, all in color. Although there were a few women in the industry, the editors, writers and artists were overwhelmingly men (Nolan 2008, p. 195). Many artists, both credited and uncredited, worked on *Young Romance* and *Young Love*, but much of the artwork is typical of Kirby's distinctive style. Division into panels is rigid; while panel size may increase for dramatic effect, strong rectangular and square shapes predominate. Each panel is densely

filled with text, and the artwork is detailed, encouraging slow reading, which in turn provides justification for the relatively high price compared to the short number of pages. Composition more or less follows that of continuity editing in film. Unlike Kirby's more dynamic work on superhero titles, the art in *Young Romance* and *Young Love* is stiff, seldom varying from medium close-up and close-up, as the stories tend to be propelled by dialog rather than action. Nolan describes the tone as intentionally bland, to encourage reader identification (2008, p. 195). *Young Romance* distinguished itself from teen titles like *Archie* by taking a serious rather than comedic tone, and emphasizing realism in a confessional mode (Gardner 2011, p. 119). Other romance comics magazines through the 1950s and 1960s followed this pattern of short stories in a realist style.

Threat of government censorship caused the demise of most US comics genres, including romance. In the early 1950s, a moral panic about juvenile delinquency placed the blame on comic books, led in large part by crusading psychiatrist Fredric Wertham and his book, *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954).⁹ The Comics Code Authority formed in 1954 to self-regulate the industry in lieu of outside censorship, similar to the Hays Code regulation of the film industry in 1930. The Comics Code is a draconian set of guidelines designed to specifically target horror, crime and erotic content. Among the forbidden topics are 'lust', 'sadism', 'masochism', 'vampires and vampirism', 'violent love scenes', 'sexual abnormalities', 'seduction and rape' and 'sex perversion' (Lent 1999, pp. 270–1). While manga were also subject to periodic public protest and regional censorship through the 1950s and 1960s, there was never an equivalent of the Comics Code in Japan to enact consolidated, nationwide censorship of all publishers and all genres (Lent 1999, pp. 202–6). Lack of censorship is a major reason why manga flourished in Japan while comics cultures in other countries languished.

The Comics Code severely limited the content of stories, yet romance comics remained popular long after 1954. *Young Romance* continued publication until 1975, and *Young Love* until 1977. In *Love on the Racks*, Michelle Nolan offers several theories for the demise of American romance comics. While the Code-mandated bland wholesomeness and moral rectitude helped provide safe fantasies through the 1950s, romance comics died in the 1970s because they remained too conservative, failing to keep up with the changes of the sexual revolution and counterculture (Nolan 2008, p. 195). The all-male staff also proved to be a detriment. For instance, publishers regularly recycled old content in the 1960s and 1970s even though fashions and dialog were dated (Nolan 2008, p. 193), showing a lack of sensitivity to the interests of girl readers. What finally killed off the last romance titles in the late 1970s, however, was when comics distribution shifted from newsstands and drug stores to comic book shops, that is, specialty stores where staff and customers were almost exclusively male, and only interested in superhero titles (Nolan 2008, p. 209). While the effects were not fully felt for decades, the Comics Code was still responsible for the demise of romance comics, by limiting content even as society as a whole became more permissive, and by creating a market in which only superhero titles aimed at a young male audience could flourish. The resulting reorganization of comics production and distribution effectively locked out girls as readers and creators. While underground and alternative comics have provided some space for women artists and writers since the 1970s, the scene never became as large or organized as the Comic Market in Japan.

Romance comics were also popular in Britain from the 1950s through the 1970s, but similarly suffered from lack of female authorship and content that was too conservative to keep up with societal shifts. Postwar comics publishing in Britain was dominated by D.C. Thomson, which published comics anthology magazines on a weekly basis. *Bunty* (1958–2001) was for girls under 14 while *Jackie* (1964–1993) for teen girls had a circulation of 1 million. For girls over

16, there were titles such as *Marilyn* (1955–1964) (Gibson 2010, p. 123). *Jackie* serialized short, self-contained comics stories, and like Japanese girls' magazines of the same era, featured a mix of comics, articles, fashion and letters columns. Teen magazines like *Jackie* were at first aimed at married women, until publishers realized younger girls were the primary readers (Barker 1989, p. 195). Despite this haphazard approach by publishers, girls' magazines were very popular for a time, and while the moral panic around comics also reached Britain in the 1950s, and comics engaged in self-censorship, the results were not as devastating to the industry as in the United States.

Jackie in particular has received a great deal of scholarly attention, beginning with Angela McRobbie's influential study, *Jackie: An Ideology of Adolescent Femininity* in 1978, as well as many subsequent publications by her and others. While McRobbie is widely cited, Martin Barker rightly criticizes her work for being too fixated on ideology, at the expense of seeing how the stories actually make meaning, and ignoring how production features dictate content (Barker 1989, pp. 147–8, 155). Barker also calls out McRobbie and other critics for failing to cite the primary texts they use as evidence, and for sampling stories seemingly at random, rather than looking in a methodical way for what is typical across decades (1989, pp. 134–5). This heavy-handed approach to girls' comics is also a problem with some English-language scholarship on *shōjo* manga, as discussed above. It is possible, however, to take a feminist approach to this material while still taking the primary texts seriously.

It may seem overly obvious to state that the conditions of production profoundly affected the nature of the comics in *Jackie* and similar magazines, yet apart from Barker and Gibson, most scholars do not consider this aspect. The editorial focus in *Jackie* was never exclusively on comics, and the production became increasingly cavalier over the decades. In the early years, the comics were a more prominent (although not exclusive) feature of the magazine, and care was taken with storytelling, but by the 1970s, the focus shifted to articles, photo spreads and pull-outs on pop music stars, while comics storytelling declined with the use of photo stories (Barker 1989, p. 194). This is the era in which McRobbie drew her samples, when the stories were of poorer quality.

Like *Young Romance*, the art in British romance comics was realistic, and the artists and writers were predominantly men. However, the magazines were mostly published weekly, in black and white, compared to American comics which were monthly and in color. Perhaps because of this fast pace, the editors usually developed an outline of a story then sent it to an artist, rather than the writers and artists working together, as in the United States, or a single author/artist being responsible for the entire product, as in Japan. By the 1960s, most British romance comics were using artists in Spain, such as Enrique Badía Romero, increasing the literal and creative distance between conception and execution. As Barker writes, 'This had effects on how the characters looked. They tended to be highly idealized, postdated copies of images from other British media. Long after Twiggy and Jean Shrimpton had left the advertising scene, their lookalikes graced the pages of *Jackie*' (1989, p. 157). In addition to outdated fashions, the artwork also telegraphs a decidedly male gaze. Romero in particular drew women in the same overtly sexualized poses he used in his work for comics aimed at a male readership, such as *Modesty Blaise*, with breasts and buttocks emphasized. Contrast this style with the dominant aesthetic of *shōjo* manga, in which fashion is prominent, and the characters' eyes are exaggerated to show emotion, but the bodies are thin and stick-like. Rather than using contracted artists with no connection to the story and no variation in aesthetic style, *shōjo* manga features highly personal creative effort and the distinct aesthetic called *jojoga* (lyrical pictures) derived from prewar girls' magazines, which marks it as specifically for girls.

In the panel arrangement, at least, British romance comics tended to be more inventive than the blocky, Kirby-influenced American comics. As McRobbie (2000, pp. 81–2) describes them,

Jackie stories do not conform to the convention of neatly mounted images set uniformly across the page. Instead, a whole range of loose frames indicating different kinds of situations or emotions are used. These produce a greater continuity between ‘form’ and ‘content’, so that the pace of the story accelerates, the visuals erupt with the breathless emotional feelings, spilling out over the page ... The central and most dramatic incident in each story is specified by the spilling-out of one visual image over the page. This image sums up graphically the fraught nature of the moment.

What the Spanish artists of *Jackie* and *shōjo* manga artists in Japan both discovered is that in stories with very little physical action, a realistic art style quickly becomes boring and repetitive; to create visual interest and to externalize the emotions of the characters, a more symbolic or open-frame style is preferable. Narratively, however, the *Jackie* stories often lack motivation. While McRobbie sees this as ideologically suspect, luring girls to abandon themselves to love, Barker is more critical. In analyzing a story from *Jackie* in 1966, he notes that it does not show a logical progression of events, as if the story were written in reverse, with the moment the heroine is able to give up her old love and move on to the new the single motivating event (Barker 1989, p. 137). Barker sees this a problem with McRobbie’s analysis, but there is an additional factor, which is that in a very short story, there is no room to develop complex emotions or motivations. Although *shōjo* manga stories of the 1960s were relatively short compared to today, most stories were at least 100 pages, some spanning two or four volumes in reprints, which allows for much more sophisticated storytelling.

In short, then, both American and British comics tapped into a market of teen girls who were eager for stories that addressed them directly, but as the artwork became increasingly dated and the stories seemed too conservative, readership declined. The cheap production values, and lack of a specifically girl-friendly aesthetic, or some indication that the comics were speaking directly and authentically to readers, girls gravitated to other media instead. In Japan, on the other hand, the same motivation for cheap labor drove publishers to use teenage girl artists, who were able to speak more directly to readers, and who drew on an older aesthetic tradition to evoke a sense of community.

Tezuka Osamu and the creation of the *shōjo* manga genre

While postwar comics in the US and UK were the creation of adult men who were World War II veterans, in Japan manga was largely created by teenagers. The first was Tezuka Osamu, who had his professional debut at age 17 in 1946 with *Mā-chan no nikkichō* (*Ma-chan’s Diary*), a four-panel strip. In 1947, Tezuka published *Shintakarajima* (*New Treasure Island*), a 200-page story manga, sold as an *akabon* (cheap hardcover book). This publication galvanized manga artists and readers with its cinematic visual storytelling. Over the next two decades, most mangaka, both men and women, began their professional careers as teenagers, many mentored by Tezuka. As in prewar magazine publishing, postwar manga magazine editors used contests to identify and recruit new talent, mostly junior high school- or high school-age boys and girls.

While Tezuka often gets credit for inventing the genre of *shōjo* manga with his series *Ribbon no kishi* (*Princess Knight*, 1953–1956), that is an overstatement. Girls’ magazines since the 1920s had included some short comic strips, and when publishing resumed after World War II, manga

content increased. Akabon for girls were also popular. Takahashi Makoto began publishing *shōjo* manga as akabon in 1953 at the age of 19. Takahashi, who admired the work of illustrator Nakahara Jun'ichi, brought a jojoga sensibility to manga, and popularized many of the hall-mark traits of *shōjo* manga, including exaggerated eyes with expressive highlights, layered panels and decorative backgrounds, as well as stories focused on emotion (Shamoon 2012, pp. 90–9). On the other hand, Tezuka's connection to *shōjo* culture came not through illustration but the Takarazuka Revue. *Ribbon no kishi* is an homage to Takarazuka, in that the main character, Princess Sapphire, is a girl who sometimes dresses as a boy (Yamanashi 2013, pp. 146–7).

Ribbon no kishi lacks many of the generic features of *shōjo* manga (Takahashi 2008, p. 128). As an adventure story, the plot and the artwork are straightforward, with little reflection on psychological interiority. The characters' eyes, though exaggerated, are flat black, without the expressive highlights of jojoga, which is fitting considering how little attention is paid to Sapphire's inner life. The panel arrangement is blocky and not layered or decorative. However, *Ribbon no kishi* popularized long-form serialized narrative (as opposed to gag strips or self-contained short stories) for girls, and a Western fairy tale setting, heavily influenced by Disney cartoons such as *Snow White*. The *hirahira* (fluttering) aesthetic described by Honda is in evidence in the titular ribbons – Sapphire always wears an oversized bow on her head, either as a hair band when dressed as a girl, or on a hat when dressed as a boy.

Many *shōjo* manga titles in the 1950s and 1960s were, like *Ribbon no kishi*, fairy tale-influenced fantasies; horror and ghost stories were also popular (Dollase 2010, pp. 60–1). Ballet was another major theme that allowed for a fairy tale-like atmosphere (Monden 2014, p. 252). Unlike British and American romance comics, *shōjo* manga developed from manga for young readers, and with a large percentage of very young and self-taught artists, the aesthetic style grew wildly experimental, exaggerating the features girls wanted to see. In the 1950s and 1960s, *shōjo* manga was not exclusively created by women; many male artists who are now better known in other genres also wrote *shōjo* manga, including Umezu Kazuo, Yokoyama Mitsuteru and Chiba Tetsuya. Also unlike US and UK romance comics, male *shōjo* mangaka remained sensitive to the tastes of girl readers. But it would be an exaggeration to say that the Year 24 Group were the first women to write *shōjo* manga. Many women mangaka were active in the 1960s, when the 'secret garden' of *shōjo* manga was being formed.

Mizuno Hideko, *shōjo* mangaka

The career of Mizuno Hideko, one of the first *shōjo* mangaka to achieve long-term popularity, mirrors some of the key moments in the development of the genre. Like most mangaka, she began her career very young. Born in 1939 in Yamaguchi prefecture, Mizuno decided to become a mangaka when she was in the third grade, after reading Tezuka's *Manga daigaku* (*Manga University*), at a time when manga was considered trash and students were forbidden to bring it to school (Toku 2015, pp. 162, 166). At age 12, she entered a readers' contest and although she did not win, her work was noticed by Tezuka, who recommended her to editor Maruyama Akira at *Shōjo Club* (Maruyama and Mizuno 2013, p. 12). She made her professional debut at age 16 in 1955 with *Akkake ponii* (*Red-haired Pony*). Both Maruyama and Tezuka acted as mentors to Mizuno, and in 1958, on Maruyama's introduction, she moved to the Tokiwa-sō apartment in Tokyo.

Tokiwa-sō functioned as a kind of atelier or collaborative creative space for aspiring manga artists under Tezuka's mentorship. Tezuka moved to Tokiwa-sō in 1953, and although he only stayed two years, many other younger artists soon moved in; the average age was around 19 or 20. The cheap rent and communal experience living provided an attractive way for young artists

to be near the publishing industry in Tokyo and to develop their technique by working together. Other Tokiwa-sō residents include Fujimoto Hiroshi and Abiko Motō (who published jointly under the pseudonym Fujiko Fujio), Akatsuka Fujio and Ishinomori Shōtarō, all of whom lived there until 1961. Other artists such as Tsuge Yoshiharu visited regularly. The communal experience at Tokiwa-sō was a major formative moment for some of manga's most influential artists, and one that is nearly universally remembered with fondness and nostalgia in the many memoirs and biographies published later.¹⁰

Mizuno was the only woman to live in Tokiwa-sō. Like the other inhabitants, she later published memoirs about the experience, which she compiled into a volume titled *Tokiwa-sō nikki* (*Tokiwa-sō Diary*, 2013). Although she characterizes it as a lively and fun place to live, from her description in *Tokiwa-sō nikki*, living there seems to have required some fortitude. The tiny rooms were infested with bedbugs, roaches and rats (Mizuno 2013, p. 27), and the building lacked not only showers but also flush toilets; she had to use the shared outhouse (p. 68). She describes with comic exaggeration the shocked reaction of Ishinomori and Akatsuka to her arrival (p. 24), although her presence did not deter them from cracking dirty jokes or looking at pornography (p. 28). However, she became close with them, writing and drawing *shōjo* manga stories collaboratively which they published under the pen name U. Mia (pronounced Yuu Maia), such as *Akai hi to kuro kami* (*Red Fire and Black Hair, Shōjo Club*, 1958), based on Samson and Delilah. Mizuno drew the two main characters, while Ishinomori drew the lion and Akatsuka drew the backgrounds (pp. 48–50). The influence of Tezuka in the character design is unmistakable, but Mizuno shows her own style in the careful rendering of the highlights in the characters' large eyes and draping of the heroine's long dress, a trait she became known for.

From her earliest works, Mizuno favored fantasy or fairy tale-inspired settings rather than stories set in Japan, as well as stories adapted from other sources. Her first major series was *Gin no hanabira* (*Silver Petals, Shōjo Club*, 1957–1959), based on a story by Midorikawa Keiko. Like *Ribbon no kishi*, the setting is faux-medieval by way of Disney, including many fairy tale tropes such as castles, towers, evil witches and magic.

The character design, panel arrangement and tone in *Gin no hanabira* is very similar to *Ribbon no kishi*'s sequel *Futago no kishi* (*Twin Knights, Nakayoshi*, 1958), down to the oversized ribbon the heroine Lily wears in her hair, her occasional cross-dressing, and the brother and sister main characters. While the obvious conclusion might be that Mizuno was emulating her mentor, the influence may have gone the other way. Tezuka's style in the original version of *Ribbon no kishi* in 1953 is very different; characters rarely appear in close-up, and clothing and eyes are rendered simply. Mizuno began *Gin no hanabira* in 1957, one year before *Futago no kishi*. Tezuka may have borrowed the *shōjo*-friendly character design, with elaborate clothing, hair and eyes from Mizuno.

Mizuno continued her use of myth and fairy tale settings in *Hoshi no tategoto* (*Harp of the Stars, Shōjo Club*, 1960–1962). Running to over 600 pages in reprints, the story was quite long compared to other manga at the time (and vast compared to the short-story format of US and UK romance). The story begins as a star-crossed romance between lovers from two warring kingdoms. Linda, the daughter of Count Shallotte, advisor to the king of Degurus, has a chance encounter with Julius, a prince of the enemy kingdom of Zaromon. As they endure various treasonous plots, betrayals and misunderstandings in their attempt to be together, it is revealed that Linda is actually a goddess, the youngest of the Pleiades, although they are portrayed more like Valkyries, who convey the spirits of warriors to the land of the dead. When she sees the slain Julius, she falls in love and gives him her ring, allowing him to return to life. In punishment, an unseen God sends her to be reborn as a human girl. This dichotomy between goddess and princess in Linda's character persists throughout the story and is never fully reconciled. She does

not remember her divine nature until almost halfway through the story, and except for a few brief moments, such as when she picks up a sword to defend a friend (Mizuno 2002a, vol. 2, p. 182), she acts like a damsel in distress, even when she is captured in Zaromon and enslaved. Her divine nature only becomes more significant when she and Julius at last have the opportunity to marry, and she realizes that God will never forgive her for bringing Julius back to life. In order to save Julius, Linda flees from him, and at the end of the story, kills herself in the hope that he might live. However, Julius is immediately killed by a political rival, and the final page shows Julius and Linda sailing towards the stars together. As mythology, the story is jumbled, to say the least. Mizuno claims she was inspired by *The Ring of the Nibelung*, which she encountered as a child (Mizuno 2002a, vol. 2, p. 308). The relationship is tenuous at best, with only the faintest echo of Brunnhilde's defiance of Wotan in protecting Siegmund, her exchange of rings in marrying Siegfried, and her self-sacrifice at the end of the cycle. The costumes are not Teutonic, apart from Linda's long braids; in Degurus, the setting is a Disney-inflected version of fantasy medieval Europe, while the Pleiades and Zaromon outfits are reminiscent of Ancient Greece. Clearly Mizuno is telling her own story, not an homage or retelling.

The ideology of *Hoshi no tategoto*, like many *shōjo* manga stories, is conservative. Despite being a goddess of war, Linda's bravery and agency is mostly passive. Her motivations are all determined by the men in her life – her love for Julius and for her father. Her relationship with her father is oddly incestuous; symbolically in the art, if not in the diegesis. Her mother is conspicuously absent, even in flashbacks, and in their scenes together, Linda and Shallotte are drawn to look like lovers rather than father and daughter (Mizuno 2002a, vol. 1, pp. 96–101). Conflating romantic and familial love was common in many *shōjo* manga stories of this era, as the genre transitioned from younger to older teen readers (Shamoon 2012, p. 109). If we attempt to analyze *Hoshi no tategoto* in the way that McRobbie analyzes *Jackie*, we must conclude that the message is not very subtly telling girls to be passive and pretty, to sacrifice everything for the men in her life. Indeed, this is the message of many (hetero) *shōjo* manga romances (Fujimoto 1998, p. 114).

But reading only in this way does not explain why this story or *shōjo* manga in general has been embraced by readers. The answer, it seems, is not so much in the ideology as in the mood created by the artwork and character design. Unlike *Ribbon no kishi*, which is mostly about moving the narrative from one cliffhanger to the next, and unlike the careless, outdated and sexualized artwork of US and UK romance comics, *Hoshi no tategoto* spoke directly to readers by fully embracing the *hirahira* sensibility of *shōjo* culture. Linda's oversized eyes sparkle with high-lights, her long hair and long dresses flutter, and she is surrounded by symbolic backgrounds of flower petals and flashes of light. The Kodansha *bunko* (pocket-size) reprints of *Hoshi no tategoto* include at the back pages 'fan letters' written by well-known *shōjo* manga artists, reflecting on their love for Mizuno's work, and recalling how meaningful it was to them as girls. For instance, Tarasawa Michi draws a caricature of herself with comically exaggerated stars in her eyes indicating swooning admiration, while the text above says, 'The drape lines were so beautiful ... the girls all adored it' (Mizuno 2002a, vol. 1, p. 321, ellipses in original). Shiga Kimie calls it a 'classic of *shōjo shumi* (girls' taste)' (vol. 1, p. 322) and Igarashi Yumiko writes, 'even now in my memory it shines brightly' (vol. 1, p. 318). The aesthetic sensibility is what creates the 'secret garden' of girls that Honda describes.

Through the 1960s, Mizuno continued to create some of the most popular *shōjo* manga series. Some, such as *Honey Honey no suteki na bōken* (*Honey Honey's Wonderful Adventures*, *Ribbon*, 1966), like *Gin no hanabira*, recycled fairy tale elements combined with borrowed plots from other stories. *Honey Honey*, set in Vienna in 1907, begins with Princess Flora promising to marry whichever suitor will return her ring to her. The ring is swallowed by a cat belonging to Honey Honey, who is Flora's long-lost sister. With Honey Honey fleeing through many countries to

escape Flora's suitors, the story is inspired by *Around the World in 80 Days*. Mizuno also turned to Hollywood films, creating her own unofficial adaptations or retellings: *Sutekina Kōra* (*Lovely Cola*, Margaret, 1963), based on *Sabrina* (dir. Billy Wilder, 1954); *Konnichiwa Sensei* (*Hello Doc*, 1964) based on *The Quiet Man* (dir. John Ford, 1952); *Cecelia* (Margaret, 1964), based on *Portrait of Jenny* (dir. William Dieterle, 1948); *Broadway no hoshi* (*Stars of Broadway*, Margaret, 1967) based on *A Star Is Born* (dir. William A. Wellman, 1937), and *Roman Holiday* (*Ribbon*, 1963), based on the film of the same name (dir. William Wyler, 1953). These are not straight adaptations, but very loose retellings, which alter the stories to include *shōjo* manga genre elements.

For instance, *Sutekina Kōra*, like *Sabrina*, is about a love triangle between a poor girl and two wealthy brothers, but rather than a 25-year-old Audrey Hepburn in love with a weathered-looking William Holden and later romanced by 55-year-old Humphrey Bogart, the characters all look much younger and cuter. The names are changed as well: instead of David and Linus Larrabee, the brothers are Johnny and Narcissus Zombie, and Sabrina is renamed Cola Cocaline. This way of signaling a light-hearted tone with silly English names comes from Tezuka; in *Ribbon no kishi*, the main antagonists are Baron Nylon, Duke Duralumin and his son Plastic. Also borrowed from *Ribbon no kishi* is a mischievous Cupid who acts as narrator and motivates the plot by causing Johnny and Narcissus to fall in love with Cola. Instead of Audrey Hepburn as a short-haired brunette Sabrina, Cola has long, flowing *hirahira* pigtails. Of course the manga does retain the stunning costumes worn by Hepburn (which won an Oscar for designer Edith Head) particularly the iconic black and white ball gown. Mizuno expands on the *shōjo* elements, emphasizing the gorgeous clothing and cuteness of the main characters. While the panel arrangement is mostly blocky squares and rectangles, at a few key moments, for instance when Cola dances with Narcissus, symbolic roses and shining lights appear in the background (Mizuno 2000, pp. 64–8). As Yonezawa writes, Mizuno's movie-based plots were rote, but the appeal for girls was the artwork (1980, p. 98).

While recycling Hollywood films to produce romantic comedies, Mizuno was also developing original stories, some in a more serious vein. Her next long-running series after *Hoshi no tategoto* was *Shiroi Troika* (*White Troika*, Margaret, 1965), a historical romance set in nineteenth-century Russia. The story of the Rosalinda, the lost daughter of a nobleman and raised as a peasant, *Shiroi Troika* was a significant departure from fairy tale-based *shōjo* manga in that it used a real historical setting. Although the motif of a noble girl raised as a peasant has some fairy tale overtones, for the most part the story proceeds realistically, without magic, witches, angels or goddesses. Another theme running throughout the series is love for one's country, a gesture toward serious political content complementary to the romance plot.

Mizuno achieved a new level of more mature storytelling with her series *Fire!*, published in *Seventeen* from 1969 to 1971. A fashion magazine which also included a few manga stories, *Seventeen* was launched just one year previously by publisher Shūeisha, as a companion to *Margaret*, to attract older readers (Yonezawa 1980, p. 127). Although not exclusively a manga magazine, in its early years, *Seventeen* was crucial to developing an older teen readership for *shōjo* manga, and allowing for more sophisticated storytelling. In 1968, it serialized *Hanabira nikki* (*Flower Petal Diary*) by Nishitani Yoshiko, a romance about an ordinary Japanese high school girl, one of the first to use a realistic contemporary setting (Yonezawa 1980, p. 128). While *Fire!* is set in the United States and thus represents a kind of fantasy, its engagement with counterculture ideology elevates the story to a level of sophistication not seen previously in *shōjo* manga.

Fire! is the story of a young rock star, Aaron Browning, and his rise from an impoverished childhood to brief fame, before sinking into madness. The character of Aaron is loosely based on American singer Scott Walker, who had toured Japan in 1968. Like Walker, Aaron is born in Ohio, partners with a singer/guitarist named John, and has a difficult relationship with

fame, turning reclusive in an attempt to get closer to the music. Aaron's character design borrows Walker's boyish good looks and blond mop-top hairstyle. But beyond that, Aaron's story is wholly original. The only child of a single mother, at age 14 Aaron gets accidentally mixed up in a biker brawl and sent to a juvenile reformatory. There he befriends the biker responsible for his arrest, the charismatic Fire Wolf. Aaron and Wolf share a love of music, and Aaron learns from Wolf about the 1960s counterculture, about personal expression through music and personal freedom at all costs. Wolf bequeaths his guitar to Aaron before a suicidal encounter with the police to protest receiving his draft notice. This guitar becomes Aaron's inspiration after his release, as he drifts to Detroit and falls in with John and other like-minded musicians. Aaron and John form a band called Fire and struggle to make a career in the music business, contending with unscrupulous producers and promoters, and unreliable band mates. Throughout the series, the melodrama remains at a high pitch as the story lurches from one crisis to the next: Aaron's on again off again girlfriend Jewel is kidnapped and drugged by a wealthy rival, Fire's bassist Leif gets into a bar fight and is injured just before their big break at a concert in Chicago, Aaron falls in love with a terminally ill 15-year-old singer named Diana, Leif's sister (and John's wife) Marina is accidentally shot and blinded and Leif is killed trying to attack a rival band he thinks is responsible. This high intensity narrative is partly a result of the weekly pace of publication and partly perhaps the lingering influence of Tezuka, who valued an exciting story with constant high points.

Although Aaron goes through many love interests, romance takes a back seat to his spiritual journey. His first love is Marge, an older, Janis Joplin-type singer who puts music above profit and, along with Fire Wolf, serves as an inspiration of pure artistic expression. When asked why she refuses to put out a record, she replies,

I don't want to create a monument ... I live in the moment. This voice is the only reality. When I die the songs will also die. Because life isn't forever. If someone wants to hear my songs I'll sing even for just one person. But I don't want to be owned.

(Mizuno 1976, vol. 1, p. 118)

Aaron continually aspires to the same ideals, using songwriting as a means to express his soul and commune with others. When Fire's fame threatens his artistic integrity, Aaron suffers a psychotic break, hallucinating a gypsy woman who wants to make pure music with him. He leaves Fire to create his own free roving concert, like a nomadic version of Woodstock. But his ideals are quickly crushed by the pettiness and neediness of his followers. In an attempt to protect them, Aaron picks a fight with the Hell's Angels and is badly beaten, his right hand injured so he can never play guitar again. Jewel and John step in to rescue him, as they have continually throughout the story, but realize he has sunk too far into mental illness and return him to his mother's home. John, who has served as the narrator throughout the story, also has a tragic end, sacrificing his family in order to continue his music career.

Buckley suggests a possible reading of the ending of *Fire!* as a 'morality tale' in that Aaron is punished for his rebellious behavior with a career-ending injury and descent into madness (1991, p. 171). The overall tone and plot of the story, however, celebrates personal freedom even while acknowledging the impossibility of being truly free. *Fire!* is informed throughout by references to 1960s counterculture in the United States, in the clothing the characters wear and other touchstones. Fire Wolf's suicide is precipitated by his receiving a draft notice to fight in the Vietnam War. Jewel goes to college at Berkeley. Aaron befriends the lead singer of an African American band called Black Brad, who opens his eyes to the civil rights struggle and tells him that the most important thing is for his music to have soul, to express what's inside him (Mizuno

1976, vol. 2, p. 168). When *Fire* plays a huge rock festival, the narrative stops for a double-page spread to explain the significance of Woodstock and Altamont, not just as cultural moments but as spiritual awakening, a kind of 'utopia' (Mizuno 1976, vol. 4, pp. 48–9).

While *Fire!* celebrates the counterculture, it is not uncritical. All of the characters Aaron idolizes – Fire Wolf, Marge and Black Brad – are iconoclasts, free spirits using music to escape the strictures of society and to connect with like-minded young people. But by the time Mizuno was writing the final chapters in 1971, the promise and idealism of the student movement and the hippie lifestyle had soured in Japan as in the United States, descending into factionalism, violence and drug overdoses. It is clear from the beginning of the story with Fire Wolf's dramatic suicide that the kind of radical freedom he believes in is not possible in the real world. Aaron and his friends are constantly at odds with authority figures, pursued by police and several times arrested. But it is the failure of his traveling free festival, which he calls 'Freedom' (*furiidomu*) that causes Aaron's greatest moment of disillusionment. With over 300 people following him, he struggles to provide them with food, shelter and gas. After the group resorts to stealing food, they disband in disgust. Literally choking with frustration, Aaron shouts, 'Why do humans have to eat to live? Why do I need this body to sing and to speak? Why?' (Mizuno 1976, vol. 4, p. 132). He has come up against the ultimate barrier to the complete freedom he seeks, the basic bodily necessities, and all the social structures that flow from that. Unable to lead the group and unable to transcend his own embodiment, Aaron gives up and retreats into his fantasies of joining Fire Wolf and the gypsy woman. Rather than punishment for rule breaking, his madness seems a bleak acknowledgment of the impossibility of achieving his ideals, or the ideals of the counterculture. On the other hand, John continues his music career, even though it means losing his wife and child.

In terms of the art, Mizuno's style in *Fire!* is much closer to the layered, emotive standard of the *shōjo* manga genre than her earlier, Tezuka-inflected work. The challenge of representing music visually on the printed page pushes the art in a more symbolic direction. Whenever Aaron or any of the other musicians perform, Mizuno uses large open and layered panels, with the song lyrics outside word balloons and symbolic backgrounds, usually wavy lines, but occasionally the *shōjo* manga standby of flowers (Mizuno 1976, vol. 2, pp. 68, 83, for example). The panel arrangement becomes increasingly loose as the story progresses, going from many small rectangles and squares to irregularly shaped or partially open frames laid over backgrounds, with small panel close-ups placed over long shot backgrounds. This is the style that signals to readers that the story is specifically for girls, regardless of the contents of the plot.

Fire! was groundbreaking in the *shōjo* manga genre for the use of a teenage boy rather than a girl as the main character. The assumption in the *shōjo* manga genre seemed to be that girls were only interested in reading stories about girl characters, preferably aspirational stories about wealthy, beautiful girls in fantasy settings. Much of Mizuno's earlier work uses fantasy settings as in *Hoshi no tategoto*, or historical settings, such as *Honey Honey* and *Shiroi Troika*. Even though *Cola* seems to use a contemporary setting, the Hollywood-derived depiction of fabulously wealthy American characters would have been just as fantastic to Japanese girl readers in the 1960s as the fictional lands of *Hoshi no tategoto*. *Cola*, a manga version of Audrey Hepburn, is not an average girl, despite her character's humble origins. Aaron, with his aggressive personality and working-class roots, is a completely different sort of character. The America depicted in *Fire!* is still a distant fantasy space, but one that is more gritty, dangerous and troubled than the impossible wealth of *Mary Lou* or *Cola*.

Furthermore, the use of a male character allowed for far more dynamism and sexuality than in stories of girls. Mizuno has complained that she hated the passive girl characters common in *shōjo* manga (Toku 2015, p. 163), but in *Hoshi no tategoto*, there is tension between Linda's status

as a war goddess and her stereotypically feminine character – she tends to react more than take direct action. In Aaron, readers enjoyed a character with full agency in a way that was difficult to show with female characters. Indeed, the female characters in *Fire!* tend to be sidelined as helpers, such as Jewel. On the other hand, using a male main character allows for explicit sex scenes. Aaron and John are eroticized, but in the distinctly androgynous way peculiar to *shōjo* manga. John's character design in particular is markedly feminine, with long flowing hair, billowing blouses and dress-like overcoats. While *Fire!* predates the invention of boys' love, the friendship between Aaron and John is the sort that would be rewritten as romantic by later generations of *dōjinshi* fan fiction writers.

In terms of its cultural references, *Fire!* is very much of the late 1960s. But just as John's glam-rock appearance taps into the *hirahira* aesthetic, the themes of self-expression, self-actualization, yearning for freedom and exploration of sexual desire all transcended that cultural moment, to become central themes in the *shōjo* manga genre. Contrast this with Barker's description of *Jackie* in 1971: 'delicately like a bud that never opened, is there this sense of hope and social yearning' (1989, p. 176). Rather than avoiding social changes or political content, *shōjo* manga flourished by embracing it.

Notes

- 1 Readership ages vary by magazine; some target young teens and some older teens. Today magazines are published monthly, although in the 1960s and 1970s some were published weekly.
- 2 Mangaka indicates a person who both writes the script and draws the comics. This is in distinction to the English language usage of comics artist, which indicates a person who draws the art only, with the implication that someone else writes the text. In the United States, comics produced by the 'big two' publishers, Marvel and DC, are usually written and drawn by different people, while in Japan most artists write their own stories. To avoid confusion, I will use the term mangaka, meaning that unless noted the person is both artist and writer.
- 3 Of course, the United States and Britain are not the only comics cultures outside Japan; Franco-Belgian *bandes dessinées* (BD) enjoy a larger market and more diverse genres. However, BD do not have a distinct genre for or by girls or women, and female artists have been marginalized, with some exceptions (McLeod 2011). For discussion of the connection between manga and BD, see Darling-Wolf (2015) pp. 111–15.
- 4 The Year 24 Group (*nijū yonen gumi*) refers to Shōwa 24 or 1949, the year many of these mangaka were born. This narrative was first promoted by Yonezawa, who refers to the first wave of the hit series by the Year 24 Group as the 'golden age' of *shōjo* manga (1980, pp. 144–73). For criticism of this narrative, see Takahashi (2008), pp. 130–2.
- 5 *Ribbon no kishi* was first serialized in *Shōjo Club* 1953–1956. Tezuka redrew and revised the story for serialization in *Nakayoshi* 1963–1966, and again for *Shōjo Friend* 1967–1968.
- 6 For a field study of the relationship between *shōjo* manga artists and editors, see Prough (2011), *Straight from the Heart*.
- 7 For example, see McLelland et al. 2015; Levi et al. 2008; Galbraith 2011; Okabe and Ishida 2012; Matsui 1993.
- 8 One exception is *Girls and Their Comics* by Jacqueline Danzinger-Russell (2013), who compares American comics and Japanese manga, although she does not mention British comics.
- 9 For more on Wertham and the ensuing censorship, which spread worldwide, see Lent (1999).
- 10 Some examples include Tezuka et al. 2012; Maruyama 1999; Ishinomori 1986.

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Sport, media and technonationalism in the history of the Tokyo Olympics

Iwona Regina Merklejn

The triangle of sport, mass media and nationalism was a part of modernization processes in many countries from the nineteenth century on, and Japan was no exception. In the case of Japan, however, one particular sporting event, the Tokyo Olympics, became central to a national identity rooted in media discourses of technonationalism to a degree hardly known in other advanced capitalist nations in the twentieth century.

The 1964 Tokyo Olympics was an event to be remembered for a number of reasons: 1) They were the first Olympics to be held in Asia; 2) In the political sense, these Games ‘marked the reentry of a rehabilitated Japan into the international community’ (Ruoff 2010, p. 186); 3) They came to symbolize the nation’s economic revival and the peak of the high-growth era (1955–1973); 4) The preparations for the event changed Tokyo’s landscape and its transportation network, resulting in the construction of the city as we know it today; and 5) Transportation outside Tokyo also developed, with the superfast ‘bullet’ train – the Shinkansen – commencing service just before the Games. To this day, the 1964 Tokyo Olympics remains in the collective memory of the Japanese nation as a media spectacle and celebration of success in many fields: sports, architecture, economy and technology. Tokyo and Japan (or rather its political elites and business establishment) hope to repeat that success in 2020 when the Japanese capital joins the elite club of cities that have hosted the Olympic Games twice.

The reasons for the special status of this one event have been studied and explained by historians and sociologists of sport in numerous publications both in English and in Japanese. Plenty of attention has been paid to the continuity between the preparations for the so-called ‘missing Olympics’ that were to be held in Tokyo in 1940 but got canceled due to the Japanese military engagement in China, and the Tokyo Olympics that actually took place in 1964 (see for instance Low 1999, Collins 2008). In the comprehensive *Orimpikku sutadiizu* volume, edited by Shimizu (2004), four chapters focus on the Tokyo Olympics, discussing how preparations for the Games transformed the capital of Japan and its image, from the city’s sewage system to its futuristic representations in foreign films. The volume on the socio-economic significance of the Olympics edited by Oikawa (2009) also deals with diverse themes, from music written for the event to housing conditions in Tokyo at the time. The political circumstances of the Tokyo Games were discussed by Tagsold (2009) and Droubie (2011), among others. The majority of chapters in a volume about mapping sports memory and nationhood in Japan (Niehaus and Tagsold 2013) are

devoted to the Tokyo Olympics. The Beijing Olympics in 2008 seems to have spurred a series of publications offering a comparative perspective on the three Asian Olympics: Tokyo 1964, Seoul 1988 and Beijing 2008 (see for instance Tsutsui and Baskett 2011, Horne and Manzenreiter 2012, Mangan et al. 2013). The *International Journal of the History of Sport* published three special issues on the Olympics in Asia where the Tokyo Olympics was widely discussed (vol. 24, issue 8, 2007; vol. 28, issue 16, 2011; vol. 29, issue 9, 2012).

This chapter is a study of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics highlighting it as a media event that provided opportunities to express pride in Japanese technology. In popular histories of modern Japan (see for example, Noji 2011, Yoshikawa 2006 and countless documentaries featuring the high-growth era on Japanese television), the Tokyo Games is narrated as a turning point in the crucial fields of broadcasting technology, computer technology and transportation. I investigate the developments in these three industries related to media and communication, trying to answer the following questions: How big was the technological breakthrough made by the Tokyo Olympics? What was its significance in the context of the era? Was it an ‘indigenous’ Japanese phenomenon, a product of resourceful Japanese engineers and TV producers supported by their pro-developmental state, or a more international enterprise? Did it do more to promote technonationalistic pride within the nation, or to forge connections with the outside world?

Some innovations in the field of communication had already been planned in prewar years as a part of the preparations for the 1940 Games (about prewar experiments with television, see Mizukoshi 1996; about ‘prehistory’ of the Shinkansen see Hood 2006, Low 1999). Building on Low’s argument that the Tokyo Olympics should be seen as part of modernizing efforts dating back to the Meiji era, I intend to explore the tension between the international aspects of the event and the technonationalistic narratives surrounding it. My perspective comes from the observation that technonationalism was pervasive in Japanese media discourses throughout the twentieth century and well into the twenty-first, and technological progress became one of the key concepts through which modern Japanese society has been explained by researchers and commentators (see for instance Low 1999, 2003, Morris-Suzuki 1994, Partner 1999). As the *Time Asia* journalist Tim Lartimer once stated: ‘More than any other country on earth, Japan has put its faith – and future – in the hands of technology’ (quoted in Ito 2006, p. 3). The trend seems to continue, even though emphases on particular fields of technological expertise have shifted with time; according to the data from the first decade of the twenty-first century, achievements in science and technology were a major source of national pride for 78.4 percent of the Japanese, more than successes in any other field (Tanabe 2010, pp. 86–7). Memories of the Tokyo Olympics form a significant part of these discourses. I first examine the event as a turning point in the history of broadcasting technology, and then as a breakthrough in computer technology and transportation.

Tokyo Olympics and broadcasting

The first Games held in Asia were as important for Japan’s national public broadcaster – the Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai (Japan Broadcasting Corporation, generally known as NHK) – as for the Japanese athletes. Due to an agreement with the Tokyo Olympic Games Organizing Committee (Orimpikku Tōkyō Taikai Soshiki linkai) signed in September 1963, NHK became the official broadcaster of the event and the distributor of the coverage to other networks, both domestic and international. The Olympics dominated national television in Japan: during the two weeks of the Games NHK broadcast 113 hours and 25 minutes of Olympic contests, 10 hours per day on average. Major commercial networks based in Tokyo broadcast from 6 to 11 hours daily.¹ Extensive coverage of the Games was possible due to considerable investment in media

technology made through the Broadcasting Technology Institute (Hōsō Gijutsu Kenkyūjo), an in-house research institution of NHK. Major innovations introduced into sports reporting during the Tokyo Olympics included new types of cameras and microphones, both miniaturized to sizes convenient in the crowded press sections of the stands – praise for those new devices by foreign sports journalists is quoted on display in the NHK Museum of Broadcasting (NHK Hōsō Hakubutsukan). Slow motion video was another important technique introduced to record exact results of the Olympic contests. The Tokyo Olympics also became the first Games to have the entire route of the marathon covered by television, thanks to camera crews transported by helicopters.

The advancement mentioned most often, however, both in the chronicles of NHK and of sports reporting in general, is the first satellite broadcast in the history of the Olympic Games. It certainly transformed them into the truly global event that it is today. Let us have a closer look at the preparations for the Olympic broadcast, as they throw a light onto the broader political and international background of this innovation.

The 1960s was an era of rapid development of both broadcasting and space technology, and high hopes held in both. Although Japan had not yet developed a space program at that time, the Japanese public watched international advances in the field with great interest. Histories of television in Japan mention the Apollo mission – which resulted in the successful landing of men on the moon in 1969 – among the most memorable news of the decade, in the same category as the Tokyo Olympics (Hayakawa 1988). Investments in satellite communications, like in all space technology, were made in the political context of the Cold War, and became an important field of competition between the Soviet Union and the United States.

The Soviet Union managed to put its first satellite, ‘Sputnik’, into orbit in 1957² and the signals from that satellite were registered by the NHK’s Division of International Reception (Gaikoku Hōsō Jūshinjo) in Chiba. This event made Japanese TV researchers and producers aware that intercontinental communication via satellite was now possible. In the US, the ‘Sputnik shock’ spurred the efforts that resulted in the launch of NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) in 1958, meaning serious state-sponsored engagement in space technology. The first successful satellite broadcast from the United States successfully reached Europe (France and Great Britain) in 1962. In a series of experiments (some of which ended in failure), three American satellites were eventually put into orbit by 1963. The third satellite was used in 1964 to connect Japan and the United States during the Tokyo Olympics (NHK Hōsō Bunka Kenkyūjo 2001, p. 549).

The first public experiment in satellite broadcasting connecting the two countries planned on November 23, 1963 became a media event in its own right, partly for unexpected reasons. On the Japanese side, it was arranged in cooperation between NHK and KDD, the national telephone monopoly for international calls. Satellite technology was as vital for telephone communications as for broadcasting, and one of the big challenges of the experiment was how to synchronize the transmission of image and sound. The chairman of KDD explained the enterprise on the NHK evening news on November 19, and all of Japan’s major newspapers ran front-page stories on the event the next day, stressing that it was part of the preparations for the Tokyo Olympics telecast.

The first satellite broadcast from the United States to Japan was meant to include images of Mojave, California (a small town, but an important space industry center), and speeches by the American president John Fitzgerald Kennedy and by the top officials of NASA. Less than two hours before the planned start, NHK received a message that the president had been assassinated. This caused understandable chaos in the studio. Eventually, after a short news announcement telling Japanese viewers about Kennedy’s death, the broadcast went through. The Japanese

audience was treated to scenes of landscapes on the west coast of the USA, and commentators drew attention to the high quality of the images, which enabled viewers to distinguish individual blades of grass (NHK Hōsō Bunka Kenkyūjo 2001, p. 550). The second round of the experimental broadcast was performed by *Mainichi Hōsō* reporter Maeda Jirō in New York, courtesy of ABC in cooperation with the Japanese newspaper. He informed the Japanese public that the dead president's body had been transported to the White House and that Lyndon Johnson had been sworn in as the new president on board a plane.

The first satellite broadcast from Japan to the United States occurred on March 25, 1964. Its content was also influenced by an unexpected occurrence: the US ambassador in Japan, Edwin O. Reischauer, had been assaulted by a thug the day before, and the opportunity was taken to convey a message of 'deep regret' directly from the Japanese prime minister Ikeda Hayato to the American public. The term 'television diplomacy' (*terebi gaikō*) was soon coined to describe this kind of mediated political communication.

The first satellite broadcast connecting Japan and Europe was performed via Pakistan on April 17, 1964 and received in Brussels, where the European Broadcasting Union transmitted the feed further to 24 countries including in Eastern Europe. The program featured a test drive of the Shinkansen, the square in front of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo and several morning scenes from around Japan. The NHK chronicles note that the BBC announced those images as 'tomorrow's events to be seen tonight', playing on the time-difference theme. While communication technology was celebrated as a means to overcome space and time, and hence make the world a closely interconnected place, the contents of the broadcast promoted Japan as a nation and Japanese technological expertise, as symbolized by the Shinkansen.

The official history of the NHK states that 'fervent engagement with satellite broadcasting on the Japanese side favorably impressed Americans' (NHK Hōsō Bunka Kenkyūjo 2001, p. 551; all translations from Japanese by the author unless stated otherwise). On July 7, 1964, NHK signed an appropriate contract with ComSat, the company providing satellite communication services, and joined American, Canadian and European broadcasters as an established user of the new technology. In September of the same year, another series of satellite broadcasting tests between Japan and the United States was performed, featuring contents such as messages from the American president and the Japanese foreign minister, and the US swimming team training in the Yoyogi Gymnasium (Yoyogi Taikukan) – one of the most impressive sport facilities built for the Tokyo Olympics.

When the Games officially opened on October 10, 1964, the day was trumpeted as the beginning of the 'television Olympics' as well as the start of the color television era in Japan. Colorful images were emphasized by announcers during live coverage and recorded in the official chronicles: 'It is a beautiful autumn day! It looks as if we've brought the blue skies of the whole world to Tokyo' (NHK Hōsō Bunka Kenkyūjo 2001, p. 552). In reality, the majority of Japanese viewers watched the event in black and white because even though TV set ownership in the nation at the time had reached 80 percent, color sets were still an expensive novelty (NHK Hōsō Bunka Kenkyūjo 2001, p. 552). Still, the very fact that color television was possible caused a lot of excitement, as recorded in Japanese media histories. To this day, the color version of these events tends to be used whenever the most memorable scenes, such as the opening ceremony, are replayed on Japanese television, and the same images prevail in the official report, photo albums and other publications commemorating the Olympics. Also, the official documentary of the Olympics directed by Ichikawa Kōn (*The Tokyo Olympiad*, Tōhō Film Company, 1965), a highly artistic full-feature film meant originally for cinema, was shot with remarkably skillful use of color, which added to its aesthetic appeal. This monumental work of film art might be one more reason why the Tokyo Olympics is remembered as 'the first Olympics in color'.

A lot of attention was paid to the quality of the feed distributed worldwide. Official historians of the NHK proudly quote the *New York Times*' praise of the clear video content practically undistinguishable from domestic production (NHK Hōsō Bunka Kenkyūjo 2001, p. 552). The Olympic content was transmitted to the United States and from there distributed to Canada and European countries (21 countries in total) as video recordings. The sound was transmitted by cable connection laid at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean, with the cooperation of ATT to avoid possible deterioration of the images due to satellite communication of both sound and vision. The practice of distributing 'international picture' (video feed only) by the national broadcaster to international networks so they could synchronize it with their own commentary was established at the Tokyo Olympics. This practice requires covering all the athletes without national bias. For nations not able to purchase television rights, the NHK and commercial networks – members of Minkan Hōsō Renmei – compiled and provided 15 minute daily summaries of the Olympic tournaments. These summaries were distributed to 38 (mostly developing) countries worldwide.

The Tokyo Olympics in 1964 certainly fit the classical definition of a media event as introduced by Dayan and Katz (1992), who wrote about the 'high holidays of mass communication' typical of broadcasting-centered media systems. The opening ceremony (October 10) and women's volleyball finals (October 23) achieved record audience ratings in Japan, and entered the history of broadcasting as moments when 'the whole nation was glued to the TV' (about 85 percent, combined figures for the NHK and commercial broadcasters; NHK Hōsō Bunka Kenkyūjo 2001, pp. 552, 554). The timing of the volleyball finals was carefully planned on the last day before the closing ceremony, and on the exact anniversary of the Japanese team's victory in the world championships in Moscow two years earlier. The Japanese women's team did not fail its fans, winning the gold medal in the final game with the Soviet Union once again (on women's volleyball at the Tokyo Olympics in more detail, see Merklejn 2013, 2014). Other popular disciplines included gymnastics (nearly 80 percent viewership for six days in a row) and judo, which, like volleyball, was for the first time introduced as an Olympics discipline. Those were sports in which Japanese athletes had decent chances of winning medals, although in gymnastics, Vera Chaslavskaja of Czechoslovakia often got mentioned as the reason for high viewership (not only because of her performance, but also because of her attractive looks). In the case of judo, high interest was undoubtedly due to its being a Japanese invention; the Japanese fans had to swallow the fact that the gold medal went to Dutch athlete Anthony Geesink – even though the NHK narratives tend to emphasize his training in Japan and close relationship with his Japanese *sensei* (teacher or master).

At the end of the Games, it was estimated that 97.3 percent of Japanese viewers had watched the Olympics at some point (NHK Hōsō Bunka Kenkyūjo 2001, p. 555). Comprehensive international data are not easily available, but a fragmentary insight I had into American and Polish sources (partial recordings of the NBC coverage stored in the NHK Archives – *Giken eizō: Tōkyō Orimpikku NBC Hōsō*, parts 1 and 2, 1964.10, and from a survey of articles published in 1964 in *Przegląd Sportowy: Sports Review*, a major Polish sports daily) revealed highly enthusiastic reception and suggested that the Tokyo Olympics also became a media event to be remembered abroad.

The 'electronic computing system'

The introduction of a comprehensive computer system into sports recording, although crucial for media coverage, is a less-known part of the Tokyo Olympics narrative of technological breakthrough. It does not fit neatly into technonationalist discourses because this development

was largely due to the sponsorship of American giant IBM, working through its Japanese entity, with some support from its global headquarters. The core software, however, was developed by a team of Japanese programmers and hailed as their achievement (Noji 2011, pp. 80–98; most information in this section comes from this source and the Organizing Committee for the Games of the XVIII Olympiad 1964). The amount of data to be managed grew considerably throughout the history of the modern Olympics: at the first Games in Athens in 1896, the press had to cover the endeavors of 280 athletes from 14 countries. At the eighteenth Games in Tokyo in 1964, 5,152 athletes represented 93 nations and territories, and competed in 163 disciplines. As a form of sponsoring and corporate public relations, IBM Japan promised to deliver a system that would allow real-time communication of all the results and fast compilation of the final comprehensive set of data (master record book), which after all the previous Games had taken years to be prepared.

In the 1960s, computer technology migrated from the academia and military into a variety of businesses, changing in a revolutionary way the speed with which complicated calculations could be made. The success of IBM's 1964 System/360 'family of upgradable computers' was a key development in the history of information technologies worldwide (Merrin 2014, p. 21). Noji (2011, p. 82) argues that the success of the system developed for the Olympics contributed to the diffusion of IT technologies in Japan in fields other than sports, such as banking. At the Tokyo Games, IBM Japan introduced a system that enabled the overall management of the sports recording, the production of national and individual entry statements, the immediate reporting of results, and editing of the Olympic Games records. Data from the 32 Olympic venues were managed by the system and immediately transmitted to the international press and national major newspaper offices (Organizing Committee for the Games of the XVIII Olympiad 1964, pp. 372, 374).

The system was designed by a team of programmers led by then 32-year-old engineer Takeshita Tōru, who majored in mathematics at the elite University of Kyoto before joining IBM. The job started by him and three other employees grew into a major project that at the peak of Olympic preparations involved 263 people. This caused some tension as the company did not expect to delegate 200 or more specialists to this 'pro bono' work. A popular history of the Tokyo Olympics by Noji (2011, p. 81) contains fragments of an extensive interview with Takeshita in which he explained the trajectory of introducing computers into Olympic reporting.

Until the seventeenth Olympic Games in Rome (1960), the results of tournaments were typed and either transported to the news center on paper or communicated by phone. Actually, computers were first used during the Winter Olympics (Squaw Valley 1960; Innsbrück 1964), but not for real-time communication of results. Also, as the scale of the Winter Games was considerably smaller, few helpful hints could be taken from there. These were pre-internet times when the only phone lines available in Japan were provided by NTT and could not serve the purpose of connecting computers for real-time communication. Although NTT was willing to cooperate with the project, the hardware for building the necessary network had to be imported from the United States.

Takeshita did not volunteer for the task. He was entrusted with the Olympic project by his superiors roughly two years before the event, in June 1962 (Jōhō Shori Gakkai 2000). Obviously a brilliant mathematician but not much of a sports fan, his recollection of his initial doubts is worth quoting at length:

I did not understand the significance of introducing a real-time computer system into sports reporting at all. This was because computers were machines meant for calculations. The only Olympic disciplines that required some counting I could think of were gymnastics,

horse-riding and shooting, and not very complicated counting for that matter. If you watch field-and-track or swimming competitions, it soon becomes clear who is the first to finish, doesn't it? ... But once I started working on the project, I realized it was an exciting job. If you combine computers and communication, you get to know the results of the tournaments at once. And no matter at which venue you are, you get to know the scores from other places. Small countries have very few reporters on the spot. It is hard for them to cover all the venues ... Besides, if we use computers we can store the data of world records forever, and refer to them quickly whenever necessary ... As developers, we tried hard to design a multiuse system applicable for commercial machines. If we used such machines, we could sell the system after the Olympics in various fields. The success of the real-time system became a big business opportunity for IBM.

(Quoted in Noji 2011, pp. 82–3)

The first step towards the development of the new system was to contact the respective sports organizations to secure their cooperation. Takeshita recollects the unexpectedly cold reactions of potential users who basically saw no need for computer application in sports. The only ones who seemed interested were the representatives of shooting and horse-riding associations. The managers of track-and-field and swimming competitions were particularly dismissive of the whole enterprise. A typical attitude seemed to be: 'We are fine here with a clock and a human referee; we don't need a computer' (Noji 2011, p. 83).

But as Takeshita listened to those discouraging responses, some of them provided him with precious information about his 'clients'. He began to realize the differences between respective sports, and the roles humans and clocks played in setting scores. He and his team studied the rules of 163 Olympic disciplines, went to local sports events and made charts of the referee decision-making process. As they showed up at the games and races on a regular basis, the athletes and referees also began to look at them differently. Once more familiar with the game itself, the programmers would ask more precise and well-pointed questions, and the sportspeople would be more eager to speak about their needs and formulate requests. Then it became easier to explain the advantages of computer-mediated communication such as storing large sets of scores or covering multiple venues. As a result of these negotiations, several practices that are taken for granted in media coverage of contemporary Olympics, such as daily information about the number of medals scored by each country, were first introduced at the Tokyo Games. Takeshita also proudly spoke about their practices of networking computers for dispersed data storage or securing back-ups – again, common-sense procedures in the twenty-first century, but not so much in the early 1960s (Noji 2011, p. 86).

Takeshita and his team had the purpose of developing a system that would be understandable for a wide range of users, not only top IT professionals such as themselves. He recognized the importance of this approach while training in the United States, three years after joining IBM. Takeshita spent some time in the research and development section of the global headquarters and recollected having learned a lot from a young woman who was his supervisor there (her name is not mentioned in Noji's book).

In the process of his training in America, Takeshita felt as if he 'had gone back to kindergarten', often being scolded for using excessively difficult expressions or making the system too complicated. His female boss constantly reminded him that he was not working alone, but as a part of a group, and that he was not creating the software for himself, but for 'everybody' to use. She undermined his 'lonely artist' approach to programming, which interestingly, according to his account, seemed to have worked just fine in Japan. Takeshita explains that before his American experience, he worked within a paradigm in which an ancient master who would

pursue his art or craft without giving much thought to passing it on, and would jealously protect professional secrets rather than share them. Finally, he came to the conclusion that ‘a system is really about communication between people’ (Noji 2011, pp. 87–8).

Despite all the striving for simplicity, or rather, due to the efforts to explain everything in such detail so as to leave no doubt, the instructions for use of the entire system grew to the size of an encyclopedia. At the point when the team working on the Olympics project grew from 3 to 12 members, an audit was dispatched from global headquarters to estimate whether the deadline for delivery of the complete system could be met. They concluded that to meet the deadline, IBM Japan needed to deploy 50 more people for the task. This was met with resistance from Takeshita who felt his local employer could not possibly spare so much manpower on a project not bringing immediate profit. He proudly declared:

The Americans take breaks while working. The Japanese don't take breaks. Because we, the Japanese, have the Japanese spirit (*Yamato damashii*), we will give up our rest, all of us, and even if we have to work all night, we will show you and deliver the complete system by the opening of the Olympics.

(Quoted in Noji 2011, p. 89)

This line of argument, however, did not persuade the American auditors. It was finally decided that the project did require 50 more people. As IBM Japan could not spare so many highly qualified professionals, Takeshita ended up with 50 freshly employed junior staffers who still needed to be trained. This was another challenge he did not expect. At that point, the detailed instructions previously compiled proved very useful. To provide enough guidance for inexperienced employees, the whole system-building procedure was kept under ‘process control’ (*kōtei kanri*), which later on became a routine practice in industrial Japan. Also, according to directives from the global headquarters, IBM Japan deployed a different group of employees to test the system than the team who designed it. Takeshita recollected with deep satisfaction that no mistakes were found (Noji 2011, p. 92).

The system did not fail expectations during the event. The data were sent from terminals located at the national stadium, the Yoyogi Gymnasium and other Olympic venues to the central computer in Nihon Seinenkan building which also hosted the press center. The initial motivation behind the introduction of the computer system into Olympic reporting was to build the image of Japan as a country of advanced technology. Eventually, the most appealing part of the innovation noted abroad turned out to be its cost-cutting potential. This became the decisive factor in applying the system in all the Olympic Games ever since, and in its diffusion across industries.

Transportation: the Shinkansen

As mentioned, the first satellite broadcast from Japan to Europe realized in April 1964, about half a year before the Olympics, featured a test drive of the Shinkansen – the superfast ‘bullet’ train that has become a symbol of Japan ever since. The launch of the Shinkansen became an indispensable part of media imagery associated with the Tokyo Olympics. Many investments in transportation infrastructure were made in anticipation of the Games in Tokyo and duly documented by the media: the highway connecting the capital and Nagoya, the monorail between Haneda Airport and the city and the Tokyo subway (Hibiya line; NHK Software 2003). No other

development in transportation, however, was more memorable or more symbolic of the era than the launch of the Shinkansen – a super-express connecting Tokyo and Osaka.

Plans to build a ‘bullet train’ (*dangan ressha*), just like plans to host the Olympics in Japan, dated back to the prewar years, but had to wait for full realization until the era of high economic growth: the 1950s and 1960s. With a quickly expanding economy and massive migration to urban centers, the need for development of overloaded railway infrastructure became more and more urgent. The Tōkaidō route connecting Tokyo with Osaka and western Japan was among the most traveled tracks in Japan from pre-modern times, and industrialization only contributed to its more intense exploitation.

Fast railways might have come into being in Japan without the Tokyo Olympics, but the event provided a convenient occasion to get financing for a courageous project that otherwise might have been undermined by skeptics – there were quite a few of them when the idea of a ‘bullet’ train resurfaced in the 1950s. To strengthen the link between the Shinkansen and the Olympics, some events were staged in Osaka, over 500 km from Tokyo, so that competitors – and, perhaps more significantly, the world’s media – could marvel at Japan’s technology (Hood 2006, p. 2). The Shinkansen project was partly (15 percent) financed by a loan from the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank). With an 80 million dollar loan in place, the Japanese government could not withdraw from the commitment even though doubts were still expressed as late as 1963 (Hood 2006, pp. 23–4).

Two men often credited with making the Shinkansen a reality were Shima Hideo, an engineer who continued his father’s work on bullet train design from before the war, and Sogō Shinji, the president of Japan National Railways. It was the latter who persuaded politicians to back the plan. The team responsible for the technical development of the Shinkansen based at the Railway Technology Research Institute (Tetsudō Gijutsu Kenkyūjo) was led by Miki Tadanao, Matsudaira Tadashi and Kawanabe Hajime. Their dramatized story became an episode of NHK’s popular *Project X* television series (NHK 2001). The NHK narrative tells us how their experience with aircraft design during the war contributed to the aerodynamic features of the train, and how a project started by three ex-military engineers grew into one engaging 800 people at its peak. The budget was approved and construction work began in 1959, the year when Tokyo was selected to host the Olympics. The first test drive was successfully completed on March 30, 1963. The train broke world records of the era running at the speed of 250 kilometers per hour, and making a day trip between two main Japanese cities possible. In August 1964, another test train from Tokyo was followed all the way to Osaka in a live four-hour television broadcast on NHK. Apparently, it overtook some of the helicopters covering the event for the Japanese media (Hood 2006, p. 27).

The first Shinkansen in regular service to Osaka (Shin–Osaka Station was built especially for the new line) left Tokyo on October 1, 1964, after a short opening ceremony. At the same time, another left Osaka for Tokyo. As this was ten days before the opening of the Olympics, most of the reporters dispatched by foreign media to cover the event had already arrived in Japan and could experience the ride themselves. Geoffrey Bownas working for the BBC at the time recollected ‘looking around for a seatbelt’ while the train gained speed (quoted in Hood 2006, p. 27). Japanese newspapers emphasized the modern esthetics of the Shinkansen with its sleek aerodynamic silhouette and featured it as a centerpiece of stories covering the preparations for the Tokyo Olympics (see for instance *Asahi Shimbun* 1964).

The Tōkaidō Shinkansen became a great success and the beginning of a network of fast railways connecting Japan’s main cities. Between 1964 and the early twenty-first century, the main lines carried more than 7.6 billion passengers. The total distance traveled by the Tōkaidō Shinkansen alone was compared to a round trip between Jupiter and Earth or 37,500 laps of

Earth (Hood 2006, p. 1). The superfast train has become legendary for its punctuality, and also for being a remarkably safe means of transportation – throughout the decades no passengers were fatally injured due to collision, derailment or infrastructural failure. A Shinkansen derailed for the first time 40 years after the Tokyo Olympics – on October 23, 2004, due to a strong earthquake (magnitude 6.8) in Niigata. No passengers aboard were injured, but some doubts about the ‘Shinkansen safety myth’ were raised in media reports of the accident – one of the experts characteristically commented: ‘operating the Shinkansen is much more than just a business for JR ... The Shinkansen system is the property of Japan’s citizens. It has supported the nation’s economy and society’ (Saeki Hiroshi, director of the engineering planning division at the Railway Bureau of the Transport Ministry, quoted in Shimizu 2004). This powerfully illustrates the symbolic meaning of the Shinkansen, which has lasted well beyond the Tokyo Olympics era. Some even argue that the Shinkansen filled the symbolic vacuum left in Japan by the war, which tainted national symbols with militarist and imperialist connotations (Hood 2006, p. 67). The following statement by Low (1999, p. 41) sums up the Shinkansen’s significance:

The coming of the second bullet train heralded a period of renewed Japanese confidence and was, in many respects, a manifestation of postwar Japanese techno-nationalism ... The view from a *Shinkansen* window became a central visual experience for travellers, an impressive reminder of Japan’s modernity, especially its technological prowess. The train facilitated national cohesion, bringing even isolated regions and communities into contact with each other.

The Shinkansen remains central to the Japanese media landscape while the nation struggles with planning and preparations for the second Tokyo Olympics in 2020. While working on the final version of this chapter and living in Japan, I was incidentally informed by daytime television about a relatively recent, and apparently very popular, picture book for children featuring the Shinkansen (Nobumi 2007). A quick online search of Japanese children’s literature revealed many similar titles. Stories about trains are a typical topic of such books everywhere, but in Japan the Shinkansen seems to be ‘the’ train to tell stories about. The Japanese media duly noted the new connection between Tokyo and Kanazawa – the Hokuriku Shinkansen, opened on March 14, 2015 (see for instance *Sankei Shimbun* 2015) and a year later marveled at its impact on tourism and the economy (see for instance Nakamura 2016).³

Conclusion

The Tokyo Olympics was undoubtedly a major technological breakthrough in several fields related to media and communication. However, closer scrutiny of the context of these technological innovations, especially in the fields of broadcasting and computer technology, reveals that they would have been impossible without Japan–US cooperation, which provided the unseen political framework for Japan’s national spectacle. While the Olympics was sold to the public as an enterprise promoting peaceful communication, it also provided an excuse for investment in technologies vital for security and military purposes – satellite communication and space technology in general. In the Cold War era, Japan’s role in these developments was largely determined by its position as an ally of the US.

Popular histories of the Tokyo Olympics published in Japan tend to fall into a pattern of technonationalistic narratives about the united efforts of the whole nation, from athletes to politicians to engineers. As demonstrated above, these discourses are hard to defend when seen in a broader perspective. Even in the case of the Shinkansen, certainly an original product of

Japanese technological expertise, the rarely mentioned loan from the World Bank played a significant role. International cooperation was indispensable for the success of the event; popular narratives of the Olympics as a 'show' staged by Japanese hosts and enjoyed by foreign guests tell only part of the truth. Nevertheless, stories of brave Japanese engineers who defended their brilliant ideas against all odds and thus became national heroes are no less popular in Japan than stories of athletes overcoming numerous obstacles on their way to medals. These narratives seem to powerfully resonate with the Japanese public to this day, and are unlikely to disappear from the Japanese media any time soon.

Notes

- 1 According to the information on display in the NHK Museum of Broadcasting (NHK Hōsō Hakubutsukan and NHK Hōsō Bunka Kenkyūjo 2001, p. 554). Most data in this section come from these two sources.
- 2 The possibility of satellite broadcasting was first discussed in 1945 by British scientist Asa Clark, but it wasn't put into practice until more than a decade later.
- 3 As Kanazawa is an attractive tourist destination, with many buildings dating back to the Edo period, the connection between this city and the capital once again boosts the popular image of Japan as a nation that has successfully combined tradition with modernity.

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Part II

Media, nation, politics and nostalgia



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Born again *yokozuna*

Sports and national identity

Michael Plugh

In the early 2000s, a popular Japanese television program subjected a rotating cast of guests to a silly experiment. Each celebrity guest was asked to phone a relative in his or her hometown to hold a brief conversation. A panel of Japanese-language educators would observe the phone call and ring a bell for each time the guest used their local dialect, rather than the standard Japanese taught in schools. The humor of the situation was the impossibility of the task. Inevitably, the powerful linguistic roots would exert themselves and the bell would ring and ring and ring. Japanese television programs frequently highlight and celebrate the great cultural diversity of the nation. There are programs that celebrate local cuisine, programs that poke fun at the oddities of local dialects, and programs that showcase the *meibutsu*, or local specialties, of particular corners of Japan. Frequently, these programs use a host, or hosts, to navigate the terrain of specific locations, acting as proxies for the general public in the quest for the particular. The programs send the message, 'although we are diverse, we are one'. Of course, this sentiment is not unique to Japan. The Latin expression *e pluribus unum* has expressed the same idea on behalf of the United States since its inception.

Media play a key role in this construction of Japanese national identity, and sports media, specifically, remind audiences of their place in the world as members of a collective. This study discusses traditional markers of Japanese national identity, discourses of 'Japaneseness' found in media narratives, and the ways in which sports narratives reproduce these ideas for the Japanese public. It focuses, in particular, on narratives surrounding the Mongolian sumo champion Hakuho.

Japanese national identity

How do the Japanese understand themselves? Chiba et al. (2001), citing Fukuoka, map a spectrum of identification, following the concepts of blood, culture, and nationality. The strongest indicator of belonging is, unsurprisingly, the presence of all three components. The combination of birth to Japanese parents, socialization in the Japanese culture, and Japanese citizenship is the strongest indicator of belonging. The second strongest indicator is the combination of blood and culture, even in the absence of citizenship. Overall, blood indicates

strongest on the spectrum, while citizenship factors weakest of the three. The relative strength of blood in Japanese self-definition suggests some conception of race in the understanding of national identity.

Although the common wisdom about Japan, from within and without, is that Japan is a homogeneous society, it is important to recognize that people of various ethnic origins call Japan home. In recent years, a great deal of research has been conducted to dispute the homogeneity of Japan, and to promote a more complex understanding of Japan as a multiethnic society. Lie (2001) offers one of the most well-devised and convincing arguments to this end. Despite the rhetoric of homogeneity, and the common perception of blood as a determiner of belonging, Japan's ethnic and racial origins are far from certain. Lie relies on Durkheim's classic distinction of mechanical and organic solidarity to frame the discussion of Japanese national identity, noting that preindustrial social solidarity, or mechanical solidarity, was rooted in homology. Complex societies base solidarity on interdependence, rather than the perceived connection of ethnic origin. Despite Japan's relative complexity and the diversity of lifestyle, gender differences, regional identities, and other important dimensions of social life, 'discourses of Japaneseness' construct a sense of homogeneity across a population of more than 125 million people (p. 50). He further argues that these discourses equate class, nation, and ethnicity producing a mechanical solidarity of the sort described by Durkheim. Equating nation and ethnicity with the state, discourses of Japaneseness set the boundaries between insiders (*uchi*) and outsiders (*soto*) as coinciding political and ethnic terms. Despite the fact that the internal discourse of Japanese identity has long reflected an awareness of diversity across many dimensions, the belief in homogeneity persists. Three particular elements found in discourses of Japaneseness are of concern in this study: bushido, *nihonjinron*, and hybridity.

Bushido

Benesch (2014) places the philosophical roots of bushido in the mid-Meiji period, around the late 1870s, arguing that the young intellectual Ozaki Yukio established himself as a central figure in Meiji nationalist discourse during that time. Ozaki rose to prominence thanks to a series of editorials called *On Militarism*, which argued that Japan's historical schisms could be attributed to an imbalance in the civil-martial relationship. He argued that feudal Japan had suffered from an excessively martial mode of governing, while his contemporaries had overemphasized the civil aspects of public life. Ozaki characterized Japanese society in terms of 'civil weakness', an attitude that he suggested came to Japan from Chinese Confucianism (Benesch 2014, p. 47). His perspective on Japanese power in the international community was one of distress. He feared that Japan's ability to stake a strong position in the world order was compromised by the lack of nurturing afforded the martial character of the people, and advocated for martial virtues to be included in primary school education. These virtues, as described by Ozaki, were 'frankness, bold thriftiness, courage, quick-mindedness, generosity, and liveliness' (Benesch 2014, p. 47).

Benesch (2014) further notes that Ozaki's travels to China and Korea convinced him of Japan's cultural superiority to its Asian neighbors, and that Japan had to take a prominent role in the affairs of the region in order to raise it to the stature of the Western powers. His travels to Europe and the United States had a profound effect on his bushido treatises. His editorializing about Japanese character and the virtues of the martial life were reinforced in his encounters with English chivalry, and Ozaki spent a great deal of time reading English treatises on the development of gentlemanship as a public project. The English literature of the time rooted such notions in a fictional medieval chivalry, much of which employed stories of knights in shining armor as metaphors for contemporary moral struggles. Ozaki is said to have been particularly

impressed with the sense of fair play present in the depiction of martial life. The respect and even admiration that combatants shared for one another was the fabric of honor that defined chivalry.

In search of a proper idiom for Japanese gentlemanship, Ozaki found the culture lacking. It was only when he turned to Japan's own feudal past that the proper metaphor was revealed to him. The historical characters best able to capture and represent the English chivalry to the Japanese people were the *bushi*, the warrior class of Japan's feudal past. Although Ozaki clearly understood and reviled the brutality of Japan's feudal history, the code of the warrior, or *bushido*, was an appropriate standard of strength and virtue for the people of Meiji Japan. He began to write on the subject of bushido with greater purpose, arguing that Japan's past offered a model for vigorously participating in the international community as leaders. Bushido, thus, is an invented tradition (see also Inoue 1998; Barshay 1998; Gluck 1998; Darling-Wolf and Mendelson 2008; Frost 2010).

Bushido, in the years following Ozaki's initial explorations, became something of a favorite topic for prominent nationalist thinkers. A range of individuals published on the subject of bushido and its role in defining Japanese character. Benesch (2014) describes this period as a 'bushido boom', which ultimately led the ideas away from Japan and into the outside world. Perhaps the most widely recognized of the intellectuals dedicated to exploring Japanese national identity was Inazo Nitobe, a man of the new Japan, born at the start of the Meiji era and educated abroad. Nitobe was a highly educated Japanese Christian born in the north of Japan, multilingual and successful in his graduate work in both the United States and Germany.

The most famous of Nitobe's contributions to the new Japan was his treatise, *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*, written in English in Malvern, Pennsylvania with the editorial help of his American wife, and published in 1900. The book was intended to explain bushido to the broader international community. A great deal had already been published on the subject of bushido within Japan, and by the time Nitobe's book was published, the concept was considered a primary source for national identification. Bushido was the brand associated with national identity at the turn of the twentieth century. In his book, Nitobe focused on the lessons of the samurai that reflected the virtues of benevolence, courtesy, truthfulness, honor, and loyalty. This notion of chivalry, however, is said to owe as much to the English public school traditions as the warrior class of his native Japan (Blackwood 2008). Like Ozaki and others before him, Nitobe looked to the so-called 'civilized nations of the world' for his inspiration, elevating Japan in the process and distinguishing it from China and other 'backward' Asian peoples. Such was the prevailing attitude of the time in Japan.

Bushido also figured prominently in the rise of nationalism in the post-Meiji period. The fealty to the Emperor created by Meiji nationalists, and promoted in conservative newspapers, characterized the public mood of the time. A revival of bushido ethics blurred the line between the civilian and military life of the nation during the period leading up to World War II, and martial character was infused into the arts and culture of the period. Japan's ultimate defeat in World War II brought to an end the chapter of Japanese national identity born in the fires of modernity, internationalization, and imperial ambitions. Just as decades before, however, a Japan forced to readjust itself to the international community sought guidance in the past. As the Allied Occupation of Japan introduced democratic reforms to the nation, Japan was forced to deal with the adoption of democratic principles born outside its borders via the integration of shared myths, memories, symbols, values, and traditions. Once again, old sensibilities would be made to serve a new reality and the long arc of the past provided equilibrium in a time of profound social and cultural change. It was at this time that Japan began to frame itself as a victim of war, which allowed it to erase the memory of its colonial past (Dower 1999; Duus 1998), a change characterized by a sort of 'public amnesia' (Gluck 1998).

A third wave of bushido followed the end of the war, mainly through renewed interest in Nitobe's writing. Contemporary Japan has repositioned itself among the powerful nations of the world, primarily through the exertion of soft power. Japan has built a competitive international profile in the areas of economics, art, and sports. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s it was common to see American businesspeople reading English translations of the samurai Miyamoto Musashi's *Book of Five Rings* as a way to unlock the psychology behind Japan's newfound economic strength. Much of the interest was driven by a Japanese revival of bushido in business circles of the time (Gluck 1998). Some conservative nationalists have adopted traditional modes of thought about bushido as a way to reclaim something they perceive to be lost in Japan's postwar victimhood. Barshay (1998) argues that the revival of bushido rhetoric, and its emphasis on 'group competitiveness, individual self-sacrifice, and loyalty', has resulted in a sense of 'non-capitalist capitalism', where many Japanese people fail to consider Japan a capitalist nation. The aspects of capitalism that appear contradictory to the story the Japanese tell about themselves can be resolved by allying economics with invented tradition.

More common is the association of bushido with sport, as Benesch (2014) notes in his description of the 'fair play' ethic made popular in the postwar period. He mentions that the men's national baseball team was nicknamed 'Samurai Japan' as it took part in the recent Olympic Games and the World Baseball Classic. Likewise, the men's national soccer team was nicknamed 'Samurai Blue'. As Darling-Wolf and Mendelson (2008) point out, contemporary Japanese have a complicated relationship with the topic of the samurai and bushido. Many Japanese feel little connection to either, despite the frequent use of samurai symbols in popular culture texts and corporate sloganeering. Japan's relationship to the samurai is often reflected back through foreign media. Between the glorified rhetoric of bushido promoted in some contemporary literature, and the constant feedback of samurai imagery from foreign admirers of Japan, a connection between modern Japan and its invented traditions is reproduced.

Nihonjinron

Nihonjinron is a concept with historical roots that overlap with the articulation of bushido as a national philosophy. Benesch (2014) explains that contemporaries of Ozaki and Nitobe alike took a keen interest in establishing a sense of Japanese superiority over other Asian 'races', often legitimating these claims in arguments about national character and cultural progress. *Nihonjinron* narratives have typically emerged at times when Japan has found its position in the international community most precarious, and therefore different historical contexts reflect a stronger or weaker presence of the theme. Sugimoto (1999) explains that *nihonjinron* is a concept that blurs the lines between Japanese ethnic, cultural, and national identity. It deals with the uniqueness of the Japanese people, based on blood, culture, and citizenship in their totality. One depends necessarily on the other. *Nihonjinron* and its proponents share a conviction that non-Japanese can never fully understand Japan, giving a special exclusivity to the people of Japan.

Befu (2001) offers a description of the factors at play in the assimilation of *nihonjinron* into mainstream Japanese life. Much of the public knowledge about *nihonjinron* comes from some complex mix of 'folk knowledge' and popular discourse about *nihonjinron* promoted in literature between 1946 and 1978, in particular, with additional works continually produced in the following years. Nakane (1967) further legitimized the idea of Japan's uniqueness in her anthropological treatments of Japanese social order, and Dale (2011) argues that the psychological writings of Takeo Doi performed the same function. Befu (2001) argues that the range of exposure to *nihonjinron*, and the degree to which individuals accept or reject the premise, are impossible to know with any degree of certainty. He argues, however, that the

prescriptive tone of *nihonjinron* discourse has a powerful effect on its audience. Much of the discourse is articulated through the description of the Japanese as essentialized in one way or another. The guise of descriptive work masks the power of each proposition. The Japanese *are* this, or Japanese language *is* that, for instance. The volume of literature produced in this particular tone, argues Befu, results in a wide diffusion of essentialized perceptions of the Japanese as a unique race.

In the final decades of the twentieth century, the private sector began to endorse some of the central tenets of *nihonjinron* in the organization culture of the business establishment. The Japanese characteristics most associated with group orientation and harmonious relations played an especially prominent role. In 1980, Prime Minister Ohira Masayoshi formed a committee to build public policy around Japanese culture, appointing a group of prominent *nihonjinron* authors and scholars to study the issue. Befu notes that the report produced by the committee ‘hails Japanese culture for its emphasis on harmonious human relations – contrasting such relations with the self-centered individualism of the West – on members of society knowing their station in life, and on Japanese tradition in general’ (2001, p. 81). As *nihonjinron* discourse was promoted from the cultural sphere to the economic, professional, and political spheres it took on an entirely different level of significance. *Nihonjinron*, under these conditions, constitutes a hegemonic ideology, acting as an instrument to shape and organize public policy. Befu argues that the state has used *nihonjinron* discourse in building monuments, bestowing awards of various types, and funding museums of Japanese cultural heritage.

One of the most powerful arguments found in Befu’s writing is the notion that *nihonjinron* took a particularly important place in Japanese society in the years following the Second World War due to the symbolic vacuum that emerged as a result of the country’s defeat. The national flag, national anthem, and many prominent symbols fell into a state of disuse after the war, either as matters of public policy or as a result of public shame. Much of the symbolic work related to Japanese national identity centered on the Emperor prior to the war, and in defeat the status of the Emperor had been diminished, including legally in terms of the surrender. These ideas mirror the description of postwar myths of Japaneseness established by Lie (2001).

Morris (2002) notes, ‘As identity is most commonly and accessibly expressed through symbols that are felt to represent a group, some fear that exposure to the foreign symbols carried by imported media will weaken allegiance to and eventually replace existing symbols’ (p. 280). The Japanese reliance on *nihonjinron* can be understood in this light as a symbolic environment in which Japaneseness can be protected. *Nihonjinron*, as a definition of essential Japaneseness, is a symbolic boundary within which Japanese people can assert their uniqueness. It’s the symbolic importance of blood in this scenario that’s significant, and therefore a matter of culture. The strength of blood as a signifier of belonging has little or nothing to do with chemistry. A transfusion of ‘non-Japanese’ blood would hardly make a person less Japanese when it comes to identity. Blood, then, stands alongside language, art, and custom as a cultural symbol. Blood becomes an unassailable marker of belonging, and of difference, especially when set as a boundary between the conqueror and the conquered. The conquered can learn to speak the language and mime the customs, but blood is essential. It’s a boundary that perpetuates the necessary distance required to subjugate. When conquered, and forced to assimilate culture from outside, blood holds the promise of integrity. No matter what changes are forced upon a people, their blood will remain true. *Nihonjinron* was useful in this way during Japan’s colonial period at the start of the twentieth century, and once again during the postwar occupation. As Japan confronts increasingly intense exchange with outside cultures during the early twenty-first century, *nihonjinron* remains a contemporary mechanism for group solidarity.

Hybridity

Hybridity is a concept associated with globalization, particularly as the social realities of individuals around the world are found in overlapping flows of information and experiences characterized by deterritorialization. Appadurai (1996) articulates this idea through the concept of disjuncture, where the geographic basis for cultural identity is altered by the intensification of transnational migration and tourism, financial relations, technology of mass communication, and the diffusion of cultural products and ideologies. Relying on Anderson's (1991) notion of imagined community, Appadurai argues that these contemporary flows influence the nature of our imagined worlds. Appadurai and Breckenridge (1988) argue that a widening of travel experience, a broader menu of culinary choices, greater exposure to news from around the world, and global media events, like the Olympic Games and the World Cup, impact the way we understand the world and our place in it. As individuals gain access to transnational flows of culture, they sample from a range of 'outside' experiences, reimagining the world in the process.

García-Canclini (2005) defines hybridization as 'socio-cultural processes in which discreet structures or practices, previously existing in separate form, are combined to generate new structures, objects, and practices' (p. xxv). Werbner (2004) uses the phrase 'border crossing connections' to emphasize the quality of hybridity that evokes Appadurai's notion of locality. The experience of locality is the experience of boundaries. It's a contextual phenomenon subject to change as boundaries are crossed and contexts are redefined. Kraidy (2005) argues that this social reality is defined by the tendency of individuals to experience the convergence of local and global forces through a process of mixture or blending. He calls this phenomenon *hybridity*, arguing that it is the cultural logic of globalization. Hybridity theory suggests that when different cultures come into contact with one another an exchange takes place. The interaction of cultures results in a mixture in which similarities and differences are negotiated and a broad transformation occurs. In the realm of globalization studies, hybridity theory stands in contrast to traditional concepts of cultural imperialism, which suggest that powerful global forces homogenize everything with which they come into contact. Kraidy (2005) makes the case that individuals experience the interaction of culture at the local level, and as such the effects of cultural blending are uneven and vary from place to place. Rather than the potent effects suggested in the cultural imperialism model, hybridity theory proposes a more nuanced approach.

An active process of selection and rejection marks cultural hybridity, although it would be a mistake to suggest that imbalanced power relations have no effect on the process. Kraidy (2002) writes, 'I believe that hybridity needs to be understood as a communicative practice constitutive of, and constituted by, sociopolitical and economic arrangements. Understanding hybridity as a practice marks the recognition that transcultural relations are complex, processual, and dynamic' (p. 317). He goes on to cite Werber (1997), who makes the case that 'the transgressive power of symbolic hybrids to subvert categorical oppositions and hence to create the conditions for cultural reflexivity and change' (p. 1).

These ideas account for the way the Japanese have adopted foreign language, clothing, and food while continuing to promote the value of 'native' culture as well. The grey business suit is a staple of menswear in Japan, but trips to the public bath or the local festival find the *yukata* robe and wooden *geta* sandals as appropriate attire. Pasta restaurants have gained widespread popularity in all parts of Japan, but diners will find *wafu*, or Japanese-style recipes alongside marinara on their menus. *Wafu* pasta may include a butter-soy sauce mix poured over a plate of pasta, topped with enoki mushrooms and shredded seaweed. Cafes across Japan emphasize a European feel, but serve traditional Japanese sweets alongside espresso. It's tempting to imagine this as

a contemporary phenomenon, however, any close examination of Japanese culture over time suggests such blending is the rule rather than the exception. Much of the art and architecture favored by tourists to Japan was influenced by Chinese culture. The early Heian court (794–1185 CE) demonstrated a nearly insatiable appetite for all things Chinese, including Chinese Buddhism and Taoism, poetry, literature, architecture, and calligraphy. During the second half of that period, however, court administrators began to turn inward, and away from China. The influence of Chinese culture on Japan persisted, and continues to persist even today, but it became the invisible ground for Japanese culture, largely unrecognized as time moved forward.

Kraidy's (2002) warning against applying hybridity theory at the descriptive level demands that the researcher dig deeper to uncover and analyze the social, political, and economic forces that shape the interactions at the heart of hybridization. All of the examples noted in the previous paragraph have roots in some form of exchange. Local values and translocal relationships both play a role in the way cultures mutually influence one another. Hybridity theory offers a way to describe historical processes to demonstrate Pieterse's (2009) point that not only are things 'no longer the way they used to be but were never really the way they used to be, or used to be viewed' (p. 97). In a more virile way, hybridity theory helps us recognize the process of hybridization as it occurs in our own day-to-day lives. Deconstructing history is certainly a useful enterprise and informs a great deal of the way we think about our own origins and the path to the present. Observing our own culture as participants, hybridity theory helps us put a finger on what we believe, why we believe it, and the degree to which we're willing to accept influences from the 'outside'.

Morris (2002) presents a model to explain the process of hybridization, writing, 'Innovation and cultural borrowing, overlaid on a foundation of tradition, are integral parts of cultural creativity. Robust traditions assimilate new elements and adapt to new circumstances, while remaining recognizably linked to their communities. Key to this process is the maintenance of a link to existing traditions' (p. 282). She adapts the linguistic model of transformational-generative grammar to suggest, 'traditional culture could be considered to constitute a society's "deep structure", which through innovation and the assimilation of external cultural elements is transformed into – or generates – varying "surface structures"' (p. 282). The deep structure acts as a ground for communication, a cultural context from which assumptions are made. In the generative model this corresponds to the concept of prefiguration. Configuration is the process by which audiences interact with new information, interpreting it through the lens of traditional culture. The third part of this process is called refiguration, when audience interpretations enter the larger cultural context, eventually becoming part of the deep structure. Morris (2002) argues that this feedback loop enables cultures to remain relatively stable, while assimilating cultural elements from outside. She writes, 'Tomatoes in Italian cooking, African elements in US popular music, and European Jewish cultural elements in Hollywood productions are all examples of external elements that have cycled back into the prefigurative – into the deep structures of their cultures' (p. 283).

When it comes to identity, however, Morris is careful to note that the changes in the surface structure of our culture do not necessarily alter the sentiment itself. The Japanese have broadly adopted so-called Western clothing styles, but the sentiment of Japaneseness remains the same. Strategies of assimilation, as suggested by the generative model, facilitate change in the surface structure of culture, while preserving the deep structure from which identity is derived. As Meiji intellectuals, for instance, strategically adopted cultural symbols from outside Japan, they undertook to judge their suitability for the deep structure of their culture and edited them when they saw fit. Bushido can be understood as a hybrid element of Japanese culture, as the ethics of the British school system were adopted and then rooted in something symbolically Japanese. In this

case, the invented tradition of samurai ethics served the purpose. Today, bushido has become part of the deep structure, particularly through its reproduction in sports rituals. Japan offers an important context for the study of hybridity and assimilation, thanks to its particular experience with assimilation. As mentioned previously, the essentialist view of Japanese culture, represented in *nihonjinron*, sets the ground for a particular type of hybridity.

Iwabuchi (2002) is careful to note that Japan's strategic application of *nihonjinron* allows it to balance its position as victim of Western dominance and aggressor of Asian colonial power. The so-called West offers a model for Japanese modernization, while Asia is the stage for the performance of Japan's past. Japan has been able to join the powerful Western nations as a full member of the elite international community, while holding itself above Asia as something more than Asian. This position has proven useful to Japan in positioning itself between the East and West, as a mediating entity in the age of globalization. Iwabuchi notes that the well-known sociologist Imada Takatoshi has argued that Japan ought to play the role of negotiator of difference between societies, aiming to avoid negation or suppression in the process. Japan's experience in 'editing' its own culture during periods of national turmoil gives Japan the experience to assist in this process broadly (pp. 12–13). This process might also be known as *strategic hybridism*.

Iwabuchi contends that hybridity represents a destabilization of national identity, in which a liminal space is created where fixed national and cultural boundaries can be blurred (p. 54). Hybridism, on the other hand, describes a form of essentialism in which the assimilation of foreign cultures does not change the core. In the case of Japan, the assimilation of foreign cultures through the process of cultural indigenization alleviates the anxiety of contaminating native culture with something from outside. At the same time, the assurance that Japan's essentialized national identity will not be radically transformed in the assimilation of foreign culture means 'impurity sustains purity' (Iwabuchi 2002, p. 54). Japan's experience with hybridism can be attributed to the urge to preserve the monoethnic discourse of Japaneseness represented in *nihonjinron*. Following other scholars presented in this research, Iwabuchi traces the Japanese reaction to assimilation through several historical periods.

In the colonial period of the early twentieth century, as Japan was experiencing modernization and exerting an imperialist foreign policy in Asia, it was the assertion of Japaneseness that protected the culture from the powerful effects of Western-style modernity and simultaneously legitimized the subjugation of other Asian 'races'. Japan was able to assimilate the other races of Asia because Japan was uniquely endowed with the capacity to harmoniously integrate, or so the story goes. In the postwar period, discourses of Japaneseness turned away from the assimilation narratives of the early twentieth century and towards an essentialized national identity, which has been established in this research as *nihonjinron*. The essential 'Japan' and the essential 'West' were established as principal players in the discourse of national identity. Much of this discourse centered on the contrast between Japan and other Asian countries in the depth of Western cultural adoption. Japan, according to the narratives, was able to indigenize Western culture, where other Asian peoples had succumbed to a form of cultural blurring. Beginning in the 1980s, according to Iwabuchi (2002), Japan's powerful economic position afforded the people a new environment of abundance in which the consumption of foreign goods and culture became a symbol of status. It was the prevailing notion of Japan's capacity for assimilation without cultural blurring that spurred such enthusiastic appetites. Iwabuchi notes that the prevailing belief that Japan indigenizes foreign culture has spread beyond Japan. He asserts that discourse regarding Japanese strategic hybridism has spread through the Western academy, legitimizing the idea as an object of Japanese essentialism.

This is not to say that Japan runs fearlessly into the era of globalization, confident in its ability to indigenize the foreign. Since the 1980s, and the growth of Japan's enthusiasm for

internationalization, a movement to improve the competency of the Japanese public's English language skill has emerged. Educational policy has embraced the introduction of native English speakers to Japanese junior and senior high schools, and in recent years a movement to introduce English at the elementary level has begun. Parallel to this public policy runs the fear that Japan will lose something of its national character with the introduction of widespread English education. The view that Japan is unique is as much a matter of language as it is of blood. *Nihonjinron* discourse links blood and culture, and there is nothing more indicative of Japanese culture than its language (Moeran 1988). It is popular opinion in Japan that Japanese is nearly impossible for foreigners to master (Ivy 1995, p. 2). Manabe and Befu (1992) noted that this aspect of *nihonjinron* was among the most popularly reproduced in their study. Popular discourse reflects the idea that children learning English will lose the capacity to develop their native language as deeply, resulting in a loss of 'Japaneseness'. I encountered this view in my day-to-day conversations with Japanese neighbors and friends over the course of a decade, but also in conversations with my colleagues in academia.

Hybridity, in the Japanese context, is understood through the lens of strategic hybridism. As transnational flows of culture result in a 'plurality of imagined worlds' (Appadurai 1996, p. 5), Japan has taken on a protectionist project aimed at preserving its national identity. In fact, *nihonjinron* discourse has long been a tool for this sort of national reproduction. The overlap between cultural and national identity is important in the study of Japan. Smith (1996) argues that nationalist projects evoke a sense of cultural distinctiveness, emphasizing the necessity of cultural purity. The Japanese have long imagined themselves a race, bound by blood, and language, and culture. As the global becomes new ground for the imagination of nation, Japan must struggle with the desire to protect its national and cultural heritage, and the reality of its own hybridity.

Ivy (1995, p. 9) describes the Japanese situation, saying:

The hybrid realities of Japan today – of multiple border crossings and transnational interchanges in the worlds of trade, aesthetics, science – are contained within dominant discourses on cultural purity and nondifference, and in nostalgic appeals to premodernity: what makes the Japanese so different from everyone else makes them identical to each other; what threatens that self-sameness is often marked temporally as the intrusively modern, spatially as the foreign.

This study addresses the manner in which Japanese sports narratives thematically reproduce the boundaries between the Japanese and others. This is particularly important when considering 'the hybrid realities of Japan today', as Ivy (1995) puts it. Studying sports as invented tradition, and the vehicle for other invented traditions, the emphasis on hybridity theory can illustrate Pieterse's (2009) assertion that not only are things 'no longer the way they used to be but were never really the way they used to be, or used to be viewed' (p. 97).

Method

The research was conducted using narrative analysis, in the mode of thematic analysis, as described by both Riessman (2008) and Braun and Clarke (2006). Riessman notes that all narrative analysis is concerned with "'what" is said, written, or visually shown', but that thematic analysis is primarily concerned with content, where other methods may focus on structure, or various other characteristics (p. 53). Thematic analysis is often applied to the study of qualitative interviews and archival documents. It can take either an inductive or deductive approach to data, and even both in many cases.

Braun and Clarke (2006) note that ‘thematic analysis at the latent level goes beyond the semantic content of the data, and starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations – and ideologies – that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data’ (p. 13). In contrast to analysis at the semantic level, which describes and interprets only patterns found at the surface, the latent-level approach is aimed at the underlying ideological assumptions and meanings of the data. As the data set examined in this research is principally about sports, sporting events, and athletes, it is only through a latent approach that nationalist themes may be identified and interpreted.

Data set

The data set used in this study came from the coverage of sumo wrestling in Japan’s two highest circulation newspapers, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* and the *Asahi Shimbun*. Japan boasts one of the highest newspaper readerships in the world, and continues to defy the global downturn in newspaper consumption. The two newspapers used in this study are among the top five most read daily newspapers in the world.

The *Yomiuri Shimbun* was founded in 1874 and quickly became one of the most successful newspapers in Japan. It continues to be the world’s highest circulation newspaper with a daily readership of 9,240,000 as of September 2014, according to the Japan Audit Bureau of Circulations (www.nippon.com/en/features/h00084/). The newspaper is considered to be a center-right publication, typically supporting the majority Liberal Democratic Party, and emphasizing conservative fiscal policies and cultural interpretations. In addition to the morning and evening editions, the company also publishes Japan’s most popular daily sports tabloid, the *Sports Hochi*. It has numerous publishing, broadcast, and internet interests, in addition to its most visible property, the Tokyo Yomiuri Giants baseball franchise.

Over the years, the newspaper has participated in the sponsoring and ownership of various sporting events and professional sports franchises. The first such endeavor was the establishment of the Tokyo Ekiden in 1917, a foot race through the streets of Tokyo that has run continuously since its founding. The ekiden is a phenomenon repeated in several Japanese cities today, and features prominently in the New Year’s activities throughout the nation. The most famous of *Yomiuri*’s sporting pursuits has been the ownership of the Tokyo Yomiuri Giants, Japan’s most famous and popular baseball club. The ‘Dainippon Tokyo Baseball Club’ was established by *Yomiuri* in 1934 and was later renamed for the company. The Giants have won more titles over the years than any Japanese baseball franchise, including nine consecutive years spanning the late 1960s and early 1970s. In 2002 the newspaper underwent a reorganization to manage the various television, publishing, and internet properties under a single management system, creating the Yomiuri Group. That same year saw *Yomiuri* join the Japan Olympic Committee as the only media company in the organization (<http://info.yomiuri.co.jp/company/history.html>).

The *Asahi Shimbun* was founded in 1879 as a small publication, but quickly rose in prominence as a source of news and literature. Initially, the company produced two newspapers under separate urban corporate structures, one in Osaka and the other in Tokyo. In 1908 the two companies merged to form a single entity. Today, the newspaper is typically considered a left-leaning publication, although that characterization hasn’t always been the case. The daily circulation as of September 2014, according to the aforementioned Japan Audit Board of Circulations, was 7,210,000.

Asahi was instrumental in the formation of the Koshien National High School Baseball tournaments, held annually in the spring and summer, and in the building of Koshien Stadium in the early twentieth century. This aspect of their history is particularly relevant to the first case

study in this research. *Asahi* produces one of Japan's most successful daily sports tabloids, *Nikkan Sports*, a strong competitor of *Yomiuri's Sports Hochi* publication. In addition to the newspaper, *Asahi's* parent corporation has significant interest in the broadcasting business. Among its most prominent holdings are *TV Asahi*, the *Asahi Broadcasting Corporation*, and the *All Nippon News Network*, not to mention a number of internet endeavors (www.asahi.com/shimbun/company/outline/history.html).

This study examined the coverage of the November 2014 *Kyushu Basho* (tournament) and the January 2015 *Hatsu Basho*, or 'First Tournament'. Coverage was reviewed between the dates of November 1, 2014 and January 31, 2015, spanning the coverage leading up to the *Kyushu Basho* and the review of the *Hatsu Basho* a week beyond its conclusion. In all, 242 articles were reviewed, 107 in *Yomiuri Shimbun* and 135 in *Asahi Shimbun*. The most colorful and in-depth coverage of Hakuho's quest was identified in the lead up to each tournament, and in the closing review of his performance.

Sumo: Japan's national sport

To the outsider, sumo wrestling looks like the quintessential Japanese sport. It is a sporting culture steeped in Japanese tradition, linked to a symbolic Japanese past in both appearance and ritual. The wrestlers are muscular, to be sure, but obese. Their hair is carefully coiffed into a formal topknot, and they grapple in a small dirt ring, nearly nude, under the careful inspection of a traditionally garbed official. Prior to wrestling, the combatants perform an elaborate ritual of stretching and 'facing off'. They toss salt high into the air to purify the ring, always serious, always focused. The pre-match rituals frequently occupy much more time than the match itself. One might assume that Japan's 'national sport' could be traced back hundreds of years to the era of samurai and feudal lords, but that assumption would be incorrect, as sumo is as invented a tradition as one can find in the world of sport.

Thompson (1998) illustrates the self-serving narratives that some historians of sumo have produced in order to tie the sport to a time as far back as the eighth century in Japan. These narratives perform a delicate dance through history, attempting to recognize the practice known as sumo in various descriptions of centuries-old ceremonies. In fact, many of the historical examples frequently identified as early sumo bouts bore little resemblance to the sport practiced today. Guttman and Thompson (2001) argue that the roots of sumo may be found in the eighth-century Heian period, when sumo contests were staged at the largest shrines during the celebration of agricultural rites. While there has been a temptation to assign these contests a religious character, the authors point out that most evidence suggests an ancillary function, a simple form of entertainment for festivalgoers. The wrestling bouts held during the Heian period involved rituals, rules, and techniques that only superficially resemble modern sumo. The authors argue that many bouts were held at Heian court as a way to break the tedium, and to make a political statement. Wrestlers were invited from various parts of the territory to which the Heian court claimed authority. The authority of the imperial court was codified in the Taiho Code, but many local areas retained a degree of autonomy. By forcing these local communities to send representatives to the wrestling contest, the court was forcing them to recognize its ultimate authority (pp. 16–17).

Over time, the legitimacy of the court was challenged and the politics of the Heian period (794–1195 CE) were replaced by the militarism of the Kamakura period. Japan shifted from its so-called Classical period to its Medieval period, and the significance of wrestling shifted as well. Guttman and Thompson (2001) note that close combat required a familiarity with grappling techniques, and that several of the prominent figures who unified Japan under military rule

enjoyed the sport a great deal. Sumo underwent an important series of changes around the seventeenth century, when the practice became standardized. They write:

It is characteristic of modern sports that athletes are segregated from spectators and that fields of play are spatially differentiated from one another as well as from workspace. In the development of sumo as in the revolution of modern soccer and rugby from the medieval European sport of folk-football, roles became as specialized as the space in which the sport occurred.

(p. 20)

With the specialization of the sport came a greater sense of its official stature, and many shrines maintained a regular relationship with local wrestlers to hold benefits. As the Medieval period came to an end around the turn of the eighteenth century, a central bureaucracy was established at Edo, modern-day Tokyo, and the Tokugawa Shogunate presided over a period of civil order more than 250 years in duration. Their codes of public conduct were rigid, enforced by the samurai class, and sumo was eventually bureaucratized as a way to take control over the gaudy spectacle that dominated much of the Medieval period's later years. The authors note that the first organization charged with the administration of official sumo wrestling was called the *sumo kaisho*, established in 1751 in stable form. The contemporary Japan Sumo Association can trace its roots back to this early institution, formed in the same year that the English established their Jockey Club as the first national sports organization (Guttmann and Thompson 2001, p. 23).

Bolitho (2003) writes that the rigid administration of Tokugawa-era sumo wrestling included a typical set of requirements based in moral character. The Tokugawa administration applied strict moral requirements on various trades, mandating any professional endeavor be scrutinized for its participants' credentials as responsible people. As it would be especially difficult for younger individuals to establish credentials as 'responsible people', most of the controlling figures of Tokugawa-era sumo were elders with strong connections to the privileged class. A hierarchy was established in the administration and control of professionalized sumo, and the sport took off in popularity soon after. Bolitho goes on to describe the privileged position afforded sumo in the court life of the time. It was not uncommon to use bribery as a means to privilege during the eighteenth century, which enabled a family with strong Shinto heredity to gain a foothold in the commercial arena of the sport. The Yoshida family bought their way into the sport, but managed to associate their own heritage with the legitimacy of sumo as a religious rite. It was under their direction that the myth of sumo's religious heritage was born and flourished. The family's flair for religious ritual infused the sport with legitimacy, and tied it to practices dating back to the Heian period.

Thompson (1998) writes that the Yoshida family was the force behind the establishment of the tournament system, as well as the distinct ranking system used in the hierarchy of competitors. Yoshida Zenzaemon, who was instrumental in many of the invented links to the Classical period, also began to influence the ritual aspects of the sport's pageantry. At the end of the eighteenth century, Yoshida began to license wrestlers to perform an elaborate ring-entrance ceremony wearing a white rope around their waists called *yokozuna*. The *yokozuna* resembled the ropes on the gables of Shinto shrines, and therefore the license was a formal religious certification, legitimizing the Yoshida family authority over such matters. Very few such licenses were issued, even through the Edo period when a total of nine were awarded. Thompson points out that more than 50 have been awarded since the beginning of the Meiji period.

Despite the Yoshida family's tight hold on matters of administration and ritual in the sumo world, times began to change as the Meiji period brought an end to the Tokugawa system. By

1909 the Sumo Association established *yokozuna* as the rank of Grand Champion, awarded according to merit as much as through the privilege of license. The Yoshida family resisted this change throughout the first half of the twentieth century, to no avail. The sport began to take on a distinct Shinto character, but also took on the characteristics of modern competition, familiar in the international community. On the one hand, referees began to dress in formal Shinto costume, wrestlers walked the streets in traditional *hakama*, rather than civilian clothing, and the wrestling ring, or *dohyo*, was covered by an enormous roof structure built in the *shinmeizukuri* style of many prominent Shinto shrines. On the other hand, the championship system was established, which formalized the criteria for crowning tournament champions, and the rewards they would receive for their achievements. This process was largely the function of the newspaper media, who profited in covering the competitions; speculating on contenders, covering the daily bouts, and legitimizing their place in modern Japanese society by underwriting the trophies and awards bestowed upon the champions (Guttman and Thompson 2001, pp. 177–80).

The importance of the *yokozuna* title in this context is paramount. As newspapers began to report on the official results of the regular tournaments, an official record came into being. In earlier times, winners of bouts would collect money and gifts thrown into the ring after their victories, and the winners of tournaments received various forms of patronage. In the tournament era, as an official record became available to the reading public, the *yokozuna* title was awarded to those wrestlers who established a pattern of championship performance. Winning a single tournament was no longer the ultimate goal, but rather to establish a record worthy of historical account. The mythical status of the *yokozuna*, as constructed in the religious accounts of the Yoshida family, meant a strict adherence to ritual, and tradition, and persistent excellence. One must prove oneself worthy of such a title before being allowed to associate with the spiritual roots of the sport and the nation. By the 1950s, an official set of criteria was set up by the Yokozuna Review Board to recommend wrestlers' promotion according to both character and merit. Any wrestler to win consecutive tournament championships, while holding the rank of *ozeki*, the sport's second most prestigious rank, would qualify for consideration. This system, however, would prove challenging to the nature of the sporting tradition, as wrestlers from outside Japan were permitted to compete.

The first foreign wrestlers appeared in Japan in the 1930s. Among the individuals allowed to participate were the American Harley Ozaki and the Korean Kim Sin-nak. In order to maintain the promotion of sumo as Japan's national sport, the wrestlers were given the names Toyonishiki Kishiro and Rikidozan, respectively. After the Second World War, another wave of foreign wrestlers competed in the ranks, and were given Japanese names. Often their foreign roots were hidden from Japanese audiences. In the 1960s, Cal Martin, a Caucasian wrestler from the United States, joined Hawaii's Jesse Kuhaulua as the first wrestlers whose ethnic origins could not be disguised as Japanese. Both men assumed Japanese names, and the ritual dress and style of the sumo wrestler, but there was no hiding the fact that the men were not Japanese. The matter became more complicated when Kuhaulua won a major tournament championship in July 1972, becoming the first foreigner to achieve the feat (Gilbert and Watts 2014). The Sumo Association began to fear that Japanese fans would no longer support sumo if they were forced to watch foreign wrestlers defeating their native Japanese heroes, and established a quota system, limiting the number of foreign members of any training stable. Guttman and Thompson (2001) note that the retirement of several Japanese *yokozuna* in the late 1980s opened the door for foreign wrestlers who had established a record of success in the sport. The Hawaiian-born wrestler Konishiki was in a favorable position to receive promotion during that time, but was passed over. Despite his popularity in Japan, the rank of *yokozuna* was not awarded by the officials of

the Sumo Association. A void at the *yokozuna* rank persisted for a number of years, until the Sumo Association recognized another Hawaiian, Akebono, as the sport's first foreign-born Grand Champion. In the period between the early 1990s and the second decade of the twenty-first century, a handful of Japanese have achieved the rank of *yokozuna*, although the greatest number of wrestlers awarded the title have been foreign-born.

By far the most successful wrestlers of the contemporary period have come from Mongolia, a nation with a long, rich wrestling tradition of its own. The two most dominant wrestlers of the recent past are the Mongolians Asashoryu and Hakuho. A wave of Eastern European, Caucasian wrestlers have joined the Mongolians to dominate the sport at the upper division, raising new fears about the Japanese character of the sport. These wrestlers, in particular, have presented some problems for the sumo establishment, as their fair skin and light hair make disguising their foreignness problematic. Some debate has arisen about the practice of blackening the wrestlers' hair, as a way to make them appear more Japanese, although there is no rule mandating the practice. The Sumo Association brushed off concerns about the issue, noting that the oil used to treat wrestlers' hair has a natural blackening agent that would color any wrestler's hair, regardless of its original tone (*Nikkan Sports* 2005). Foreign wrestlers must master the Japanese language, dress in *hakama*, wear their hair according to the tradition of the sport, adhere to a strict code of conduct, and be as 'Japanese' as possible. The historical continuity of sumo as a Japanese national sport, cloaked in Shinto religious ritual and presentation, demands that the 'outsiders' be made to appear as much like 'insiders' as possible, in both appearance and attitude. This is even more important for *yokozuna* due to the historical and spiritual air surrounding that honor.

A number of foreign wrestlers have struggled to adhere to sumo's strict code of conduct and have been forced out of the sport altogether. The example of Asashoryu stands out as the most prominent of these cases, as he was poised to break every major record in sumo's modern history before leaving the country. Two of Asashoryu's fellow countrymen, Haramafuji and Hakuho, however, have maintained a certain type of quiet dignity required of the *yokozuna*. In early 2015, Hakuho broke the record for most upper-division championships, winning his thirty-third career tournament, surpassing 'Father of Sumo' and the 'Great Yokozuna of the Showa Period' Taiho. The coverage of Hakuho's quest to tie, and then pass, Taiho's record is of interest in this case study.

Themes

The coverage of the November 2014 Kyushu Tournament and the 2015 New Year Tournament was reviewed in this study. *Yokozuna* Hakuho tied the all-time career record for tournament championships in the Kyushu Tournament, and broke the record months later in the New Year Tournament. Coverage during the two tournaments examined was typically thin, as sumo wrestlers are known to be brief and cliché with their in-tournament remarks. The brevity of these remarks is considered a virtue, as focus and seriousness are signs of high character. Likewise, the newspaper reporting on the daily tournament results typically mentioned the number of days remaining in Hakuho's quest for history, only highlighting the historical connection between Hakuho and the man he was chasing, Taiho. The in-tournament coverage was extremely uniform across both newspapers, with a similar range of details and quotes presented along the way. Common themes and emphases were identified in the more substantial pre-tournament and post-tournament coverage.

Three key themes were identified in the narratives related to Hakuho's record-breaking quest. The first, 'Yokozuna continuity', deals with the link between Hakuho's current success

and the *yokozuna* tradition to which he belongs. This theme illustrates the importance of continuity in that tradition and the way newspaper coverage contextualizes Hakuho's legacy in the legacy of the *yokozuna*. The second theme, 'The soul of Japan and the gods of sumo', emphasizes the spiritual nature of Hakuho's efforts and the recognition of the *yokozuna* as symbolic of a higher power in Japan. The final theme, 'The same but different', characterizes the coverage according to its balance between continuity of Japaneseness and the recognition of Hakuho as a non-Japanese.

Yokozuna continuity

It seems natural that the pursuit of a record held by one of the nation's most beloved figures would produce a strong sense of history. As Hakuho chased down Taiho's tournament championship record, the link between the two men became firmer. The newspaper coverage of this event reflects a very personal tone, as Taiho was frequently associated with Hakuho as a mentor, father figure, and spiritual guide. Nearly half of the articles reviewed made mention of the link between the legacy of Hakuho and Taiho in this way. The actual closeness of the two men seems somewhat in doubt, although one would never get that impression from the articles published during Hakuho's pursuit of the record. One article quoted Hakuho as saying, 'I want to live up to the example of Taiho. I want to chase youthfully after [the record]' (Hirayama 2014). The article concluded by noting that Hakuho had visited Taiho two days before he passed away, and was told, 'It's no good to simply win', implying that *yokozuna* have a higher responsibility than wins. Hakuho is reported as saying, 'I'm glad to be associated with the master. The [*yokozuna*] line is very important.' This impression is found throughout the coverage of the Kyushu Basho, in particular.

Another article established that Hakuho had met with Taiho four years earlier, as his success gave an early inkling of things to come. Taiho reportedly told Hakuho that records are made to be broken and to 'go for it'. The article concludes with a contemporary quote from Hakuho, saying, 'Taiho is saying from heaven, "Do it."' (*Yomiuri Shimbun* 2014c). Upon tying Taiho's record on the final day of the Kyushu Basho, Hakuho addressed the fans, fighting through tears, remarking, 'I stand side-by-side with the Father of Sumo' (*Yomiuri Shimbun* 2014d). The article describing his tearful words also characterized the relationship between Taiho and Hakuho as mentor/student, attributing several more remarks to Taiho. 'Don't forget the lessons of your early days. Be an example to all of sumo', the article goes on, noting that the words had planted a feeling in Hakuho's chest as he ascended the stairs to become a 'Great Yokozuna'. Tadashi (2014) explains that Hakuho's name bears the same character 'ho' used by Taiho in honor of the 'Great Yokozuna of Showa'. An opinion piece, written by an educator in Nagoya, argues that in passing the 'Great Yokozuna of Showa', Hakuho should be considered the 'Great Yokozuna of Heisei', the contemporary era in Japan, and that he hopes he will win up to 40 championships to reign as the 'Yokozuna of the Century' (Yasuda 2014).

The type of flourish found in articles like these is also echoed in the half dozen editorial and opinion pieces printed in the newspapers during the Kyushu Basho. Miki Shuji of the *Yomiuri Shimbun* editorial board published a particularly rich and colorful piece in the days after Hakuho tied Taiho's record. Miki (2014) explains that *yokozuna* is the symbol of sumo and that 71 people from the Edo period's Akashi Shiganosuke to the contemporary Kakuru have been honored with the title. He wrote, 'If there is a gene in the sand of the sumo ring, Hakuho has absorbed the sweat passed down from our ancestors across time on this final day.' Across the many examples found linking Taiho and Hakuho in this way, Miki's is the most colorful, and also hints at the other two important themes identified.

The soul of Japan and the gods of sumo

The spiritual nature of the *yokozuna* tradition comes out in vibrant, religious expressions throughout the coverage. As Hakuho addressed the crowd in Kyushu, he remarked, 'Because this nation's soul and the Gods of sumo recognized me, I was able to have this outcome' (*Yomiuri Shimbun* 2014b). Miki (2014) follows his description of *yokozuna* genetics with a characterization of Hakuho's winning remarks to the fans in Kyushu, and across the nation. He writes, 'The tears streaming down his face showed gratitude to his home country's parents and the Gods of sumo, recognizing the history of sumo in the topknot he wears. I could not help but think he'd moved the hearts of the Japanese people.' Another article describes the scene by noting that during the playing of the national anthem, Hakuho's lips quivered as tears streamed down his cheeks, recognizing that he'd inherited sumo tradition and history, and that he promised to give everything he's got to keep working hard (*Yomiuri Shimbun* 2014d).

Similar sentiments are repeated across 26 separate articles, published in connection to Hakuho's pair of tournament wins, giving a sense of the traditional link between sumo and Shinto, and the broader link between Shinto and *nihonjinron*. As *yokozuna* represent a lineage of Japanese spirituality, it becomes essential that the most successful *yokozuna* embody what it means to be Japanese. The matter is complicated when the majority of *yokozuna* over the last 35–40 years have been foreigners. That fact becomes more problematic when the greatest champion of all time comes from amongst this group of foreigners, necessitating a direct link between the contemporary champion, a Mongolian, and the most revered champion, whose record he has broken. There is never mention of Taiho's mixed Ukrainian and Japanese heritage in all the articles proclaiming him the 'Father of Sumo', or the 'Great Yokozuna of Showa'. It is enough that the public sees him as Japanese and that the *yokozuna* line can continue unpolluted because Taiho taught Hakuho the depth of the Japanese soul. Being a *yokozuna*, as Taiho reportedly told Hakuho, is not about winning. It's about representing the essential spiritual character of the Japanese. As these two themes overlap and inform one another, the problem of Hakuho's foreignness comes into light.

The same but different

A quarter of the articles covering Hakuho made note of his Mongolian heritage. Many of the articles made reference to his Mongol roots in passing biographical reference. Just as common, however, was the assertion that despite his essential difference, Hakuho had learned to know the Japanese soul, and in doing so learned to embody the *yokozuna* spirit. This aspect of Hakuho's story is particularly important given the story of Asashoryu, who preceded Hakuho in the chase for Taiho's record. Asashoryu, a fellow Mongolian wrestler, was one of the sport's most devastating champions. Where Hakuho's sumo has been characterized by its muscular versatility, and its cerebral character, Asashoryu's style simply inspired terror. He was lightning fast and devastatingly powerful, something akin to a knockout heavyweight fighter. Asashoryu not only dispatched his opponents, he did so with terrifying ease. Upon throwing opponents from the ring, he would stare deep into the stands, chin raised in triumph, and turn back into the ring with a cocky flourish. In the sumo world, such behavior is considered unnecessarily showy, particularly for a *yokozuna*. Outside the ring, Asashoryu was also trouble for the Sumo Association. He constantly walked the fine line between excellence in the ring and embarrassment outside it. Asashoryu was a rock star. He made pithy quips to reporters, laughed robustly in public, drank openly, and paraded around wearing sunglasses. He frequently rubbed

the Japanese traditionalists the wrong way with his public persona, an attitude that frequently leaked out in the ring as well.

Asashoryu was building an historic career when Hakuho arrived on the scene. There was no legitimate competition to Asashoryu for years and his tournament victories were piling up one after the other, until Taiho was right in his sights. Hakuho blunted his momentum towards the all-time tournament record by standing as an equal in the ring, but the difference in demeanor was notable. The celebration of Hakuho's achievement was made easier by his reserved personality. It is not to say that Hakuho embodies the Japanese ideal when it comes to the *yokozuna*, but rather that in comparison to his countryman Asashoryu, he plays the part very well. Asashoryu was eventually drummed out of the sport for his behavior outside the ring, just shy of Taiho's mark. Asashoryu is linked to Hakuho in 17 of the articles reviewed. The timing of the articles is significant as each was published in direct connection with Hakuho's two tournament wins.

One article in *Yomiuri Shimbun* makes note of the distinction between the two *yokozuna*, saying, 'Compared to his fellow Mongolian, Asashoryu, Hakuho has not caused big problems' (*Yomiuri Shimbun* 2014a). The article makes reference to this aspect of Hakuho's story to excuse an indiscretion committed in the ring on the eighth day of the Kyushu Basho, when Hakuho pushed the wrestler Teru no Fuji out of the ring, into the crowd, after defeating him. The late push is called *dameoshi* in sumo parlance, and is especially unbecoming of a *yokozuna*. The article further quotes Sumo Association chairman, Uchiyama Hitoshi, as saying, 'A *yokozuna* must look within himself. It's his character problem', noting that the Association would take a 'wait-and-see' attitude towards discipline. Another sumo official, Kitanoumi, is quoted as saying, 'Whether or not Hakuho shows the dignity of the top rank ... he has unquestionably risen to the best sumo of the year' (Maeda 2014).

This pattern can be found repeatedly in the coverage of Hakuho's achievement, in ways both overt and subtle. The pairing of Hakuho and Asashoryu establishes a dialectic about foreignness and the *yokozuna* spirit. It acknowledges that foreign wrestlers have exhibited athletic superiority in the ring, but that not all foreigners are capable of truly understanding the Japanese spirit as symbolized in *yokozuna*. In their opposition, Asashoryu stands as a failed *yokozuna*, a person capable of honing the flesh, but not the soul. Hakuho, particularly through his direct link to Taiho, has completed the circle. Yasuda (2014) wrote that despite Hakuho's *dameoshi*, he spoke words more Japanese than the Japanese might muster. This remark asserts Hakuho's foreignness in praising his understanding of the Japanese spirit. If the essential character of the Japanese people is difficult to penetrate, Hakuho's triumph is all the more satisfying and remarkable for his ability to know what lies deep beneath the surface. The washing of Hakuho in pseudo-spiritual symbolism staves off the potential challenge to *nihonjinron*, represented in the domination of foreign wrestlers. He can be seen as different, an honorary Japanese, suggesting the power of Iwabuchi's (2002) strategic hybridism.

Another article makes a similar case in recalling the match-fixing scandals that plagued the sport several years earlier. The scandals revived an old accusation that sumo matches were frequently bought and sold by shady underworld figures that ran in circles close to the sport. Most of the running speculation about this dark aspect of sumo focused on Japanese wrestlers, until the summer of 2008 when Russian wrestler Wakanoho was arrested for possession of marijuana, a very serious crime in Japan. In his expulsion from sumo, at his deportation proceedings, Wakanoho asserted that rampant match-fixing was taking place around sumo, and named several wrestlers, both foreign and Japanese. In 2011, more than 20 wrestlers were expelled from the sport after a lengthy investigation. Many of the wrestlers were Mongolian, although at least half were Japanese. The article in question notes that Hakuho has kept 'the history, tradition, culture, and pride of sumo', and recalls his comments at the height of the investigation in which he

remarked, 'I guess foreigners are no good again' (Tadashi 2015). Hakuho's foreignness is set as the backdrop for his refinement. He is further quoted in the piece in his remembrance of wise words from *yokozuna* past. Hakuho relates the account of *yokozuna* Futabayama's 69 match-winning streak, broken at last by the wrestler Akinoumi. Futabayama's manager is said to have told his wrestler, 'Don't be a wrestler who earns publicity when he wins. Be a wrestler who earns publicity when he loses.' Tadashi asserts that Hakuho knew Taiho was such a wrestler, which sets up, again, the lineage of the *yokozuna* as a critical factor in Hakuho's success as a keeper of tradition.

One article noted that the Sumo Association assigned a special 'lifestyle advisor' to Hakuho when he first began training in Japan. Hakuho was charged with facing his weakness during that time, including finding the gentleman within. The term *shinshi*, translated as 'gentleman', is the very essence of bushido described by Ozaki in his Meiji-era writings. Hakuho's trainer, Naito Katsushi, is quoted in the piece as saying, 'To come across cultures and stand at the peak [of sumo] took a lot of difficult effort. You must have the appropriate attitude atop the ring to give the fans the correct impression of *yokozuna*' (*Yomiuri Shimbun* 2014a). Another article explains Hakuho's early days in Japan, when he wore a blue and white athletic jacket and bought food at a local restaurant. The restaurant owner became close to the young Mongolian and explained to the newspaper that Hakuho had a tender heart, which is a trait valued in the Japanese spirit. Hakuho's promise to return to the restaurant to sing Japan's national anthem when he finally won was evidence of his worthiness of the *yokozuna* title (*Yomiuri Shimbun* 2015). An important aspect of the coverage of Hakuho's November victory, tying Taiho for career tournament championships, was his choice to deliver remarks in Mongolian to his parents, who were in attendance. One writer admits to being deeply moved by his decision to speak directly to his parents in their native language, even as he addressed the crowd in Japanese to evoke the soul of Japan and the gods of sumo (Uchida 2014). Another article recounts Hakuho's struggle to fit in, initially, and his reliance on an old Mongolian proverb for encouragement. The article quotes Hakuho as saying, 'Do not retreat from a tall mountain. If you keep going you will overcome' (Takaoka 2014). The remark demonstrates a fitting attitude for a *yokozuna*.

Conclusion

The *yokozuna* title, as a Japanese spiritual symbol, can only truly be earned by deeply knowing the Japanese soul. The Shinto marriage to the sumo tradition, and its link to the birth of *yokozuna* status, assures this dimension to the sport. Japan has been forced to confront the reality that foreign wrestlers dominate the athletic achievements in its national sport. Narratives surrounding foreign *yokozuna* struggle with the symbolic importance of the title and the differences presented by the foreigners who hold it. Perhaps a stroke of luck has given the world of sumo a *yokozuna* who can play the part plausibly, both in the ring and as a larger representative of the spiritual essence sumo lends to Japanese identity. The news narratives thematically link Hakuho to sumo's revered champion Taiho, both in terms of achievement and in the spiritual bond of the sport's greatest representatives. These narratives, however, suggest something larger about the assimilation of foreigners into Japanese culture.

The emphasis of *nihonjinron* in the coverage of *yokozuna* is unmistakable. If Japan has a soul, and that soul is most profoundly represented through the gods of sumo, via the *yokozuna*, a foreign wrestler must do more than simply excel athletically to sway the hearts of the Japanese. One must become more Japanese than the Japanese themselves to assimilate. Even so, it is blood that ultimately creates separation, as noted by Miki (2014), who praises Hakuho by noting, 'Hakuho, with Mongol blood, has shown as great a sumo as we've seen across these two eras.' There's nothing to be done about blood, and so the best a foreigner can do is convert. The process of

conversion requires long, difficult mentoring and may only be possible for the most exceptional gentlemen to arrive in Japan. Spiritual conversion, unlike blood transfusions, offers the possibility of assimilation. Hakuho has been made to look the part with his topknot, his Japanese name, and his mastery of the Japanese language. He adheres to the strict etiquette of his professional and cultural status. He speaks in the spiritual idiom of Japan, invoking the gods of sumo and the soul of the Japanese people in claiming his place in history, and yet he is foreign. Iwabuchi (2002) argues that Japan's historic ability to edit its own culture, to assimilate the foreign, while maintaining an essential 'Japaneseness', is strategic hybridism. The case of Hakuho is a perfect example of this process, manifest in the traditional culture of sumo wrestling. In the end, the national hero Taiho is the surrogate father to Hakuho. Taiho cleanses Hakuho's foreign blood by symbolically bringing him into his family line. The ultimate irony in this narrative arc, of course, is that Taiho's blood comes from his Japanese mother, and also his Ukrainian father, a point never addressed in any of the coverage. Why ruin a good story, after all?

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Changing political communication in Japan

Masaki Taniguchi

Japanese newspapers and television have unique characteristics, even from a global perspective. While the relationship between politics and mass media in Japan shares some features with the situation in the United States, some of its dimensions are unique to the Japanese context. This chapter will first discuss the structure of the market for newspapers and television, which are at the backbone of mass communication in Japan, then point out the unique features of Japanese political broadcasting. Next, its focus will shift to politicians to critically consider their media strategies. Finally, it will consider political communication using the internet, which has experienced growing popularity in recent years.¹

Japan's political media

Newspapers

The most striking feature of Japanese newspapers is their circulation numbers. Table 8.1 shows WAN-IFRA's world newspaper rankings by average daily circulation. Japanese newspapers hold five of the positions on the top 10 list. In contrast, American major newspapers such as the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, and *USA Today* only rank in twelfth, eighteenth, and twenty-ninth place, respectively, in the same global rankings – all with circulation numbers under 2,400,000.

Several facts help explain this high circulation of newspapers in Japan. First, Japanese literacy rates have historically been high. Since the Edo period (from 1603 to 1868), the custom has been to send children to school. Those in the samurai class would attend clan school – schools that each *daimyo* [feudal lord] established – while the townspeople sent their children to private elementary schools called *terakoya*. Then in the Meiji period (1868–1912), elementary education was made free and enrollment rates improved significantly, reaching 96 percent by 1905.

Yet other developed countries also have high literacy rates, so literacy alone cannot explain Japan's impressive circulation numbers. An additional reason may be Japan's particularly efficient newspaper delivery system. The majority of copies of Japan's quality papers (not sports papers or tabloids) are delivered individually to households holding a subscription. Individuals who buy a subscription and live in a metropolitan area get both the morning and evening papers

Table 8.1 Top 10 paid-for dailies

	<i>Title</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Circulation (000)</i>
1	Yomiuri Shimbun	Japan	9690
2	Asahi Shimbun	Japan	7450
3	Mainichi Shimbun	Japan	3322
4	Times of India	India	3322
5	Dainik Jagran	India	3113
6	Cankao Xiaoxi	China	3073
7	Nikkei	Japan	2769
8	BILD-Zeitung/BZ	Germany	2658
9	People's Daily	China	2603
10	Chūnichi Shimbun	Japan	2533

Source: WAN-IFRA, World Press Trends 2014

delivered to their doorstep. It is easier for people to get in the habit of reading the paper than, say, in the UK, where you need to go to the store to buy a newspaper. Furthermore, it is not the central office publishing the paper that carries out customer management of subscribers in Japan, but rather some 17,000 newsgagents across the country. These dealers can carry out finely tuned solicitation for subscription renewals and new subscribers, thus supporting Japan's high newspaper subscription rate.

Note that the fact that many Japanese people read the paper and the fact that many Japanese people read the *same* newspaper – in other words, that certain newspaper companies have a huge market share – are two different things. A major reason why Japanese newspaper companies are so big is a legacy of World War II. The wartime government, as part of its censorship measures, consolidated Japan's newspaper companies. As a result, only three national papers – the *Asahi Shimbun*, the *Mainichi Shimbun*, and the *Yomiuri Hochi Shimbun* (today's *Yomiuri Shimbun*) – plus one to two regional papers per prefecture, were allowed to print. Of course, this censorship was abolished at the end of the war. Today, freedom of speech and the press are protected by Article 21 of the Japanese Constitution and censorship is prohibited. Yet the structure of the market still holds vestiges of this wartime system. Even today, when people talk about 'The Big 3', they are referring to *Yomiuri*, *Asahi*, and *Mainichi* – when including the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, which developed as a business paper, and the *Sankei Shimbun* (formerly the *Sangyo Keizai Shimbun*) the term used is 'The Big 5'. Further, in most of Japan's prefectures, only one regional paper typically dominates the market. For example, in Hokkaido, the *Hokkaido Shimbun* holds close to a 40 percent share of the market, and in Aichi prefecture the *Chunichi Shimbun*'s share is over 50 percent. The *Tokushima Shimbun* in Tokushima prefecture and the *Fukui Shimbun* in Fukushima prefecture each have 70 percent of the market.

Another feature of the newspaper market described above is its impact on political coverage in Japan. First, because Japanese newspapers have a large market share, they do not support a specific political party. Of course, in reality, editorials in the *Asahi Shimbun* tend to be more liberal, while ones in the *Sankei Shimbun* and *Yomiuri Shimbun* are more conservative. As can be seen in Figure 8.1, the ideology of each newspaper's readers reflects the leanings of the editorials. Yet a newspaper editorial would never expressly state a political position along the lines of 'this paper supports the LDP/DPJ [Liberal Democratic Party and Democratic Party of Japan]'. The *Yomiuri Shimbun*'s 9 million readers certainly include some DPJ supporters, just as the *Asahi Shimbun* counts individuals leaning toward the LDP among its 7 million. In addition, the number of unaffiliated voters in Japan is not negligible. Japanese newspapers do not enjoy a regional

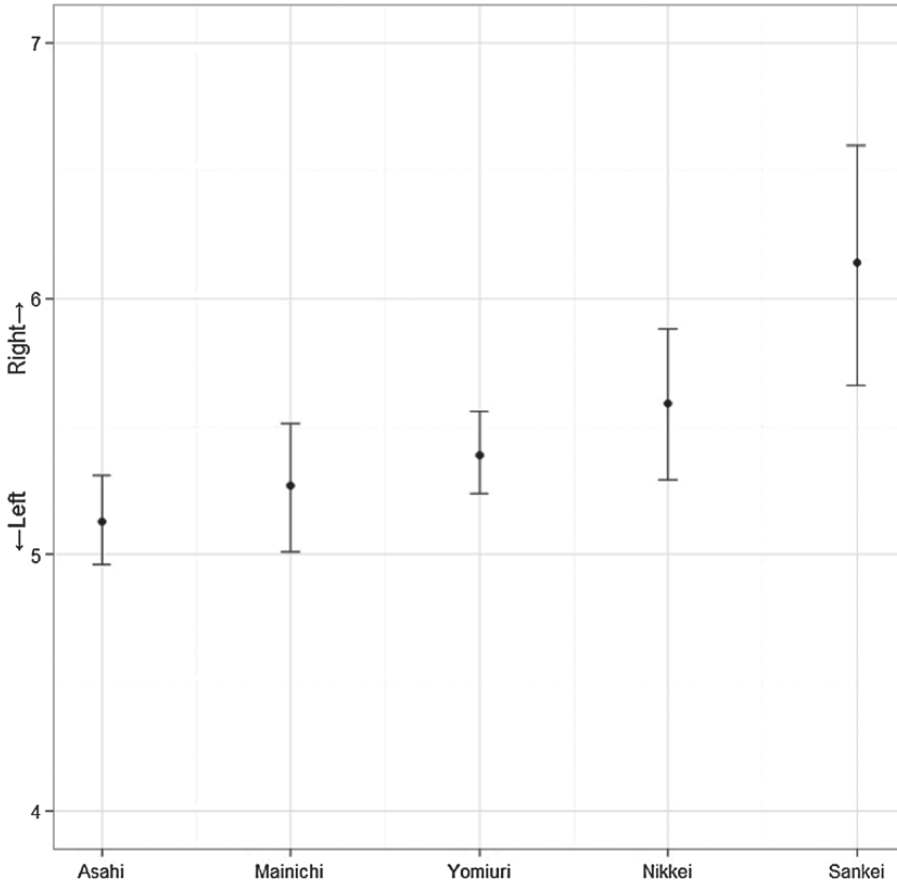


Figure 8.1 Ideologies of readers of the five major papers

Source: 2012 UTokyo/Asahi Shimbun Voter Survey.¹ The error bars show the 95 percent bootstrap confidence interval

1 In cooperation with *Asahi Shimbun*, the author has carried out a survey of voters and candidates in every election of both houses of the Diet since 2003. By linking with the election coverage of the national newspaper with the world’s largest readership, we often achieve a response rate from politicians that exceeds 90 percent. The data are available at www.masaki.j.u-tokyo.ac.jp/utas/utasindex.html

monopoly or oligopoly like American ones do. Because they are in fierce market competition with each other, if the papers were to overtly endorse the LDP or the DPJ, people who support the opposite party or unaffiliated voters might cancel their subscriptions. Thus, Japanese newspapers, rather than offering analysis or a critical assessment of political issues, give more priority to conveying straight news ever more quickly and accurately.

To at least appear as though they give priority to conveying the objective truth, there is a strong tendency for Japanese newspaper companies to try to avoid getting ‘scooped’ – when another newspaper writes an article on some fact before your newspaper gets a chance to cover it. To avoid such situations, each newspaper company has established a collective coverage system. First of all, the prime minister and the chief cabinet secretary, the head of the opposition

party and of each faction, other important individuals, and major organizations (including each ministry and agency) are assigned a 'beat reporter' – a correspondent who sticks to this person or organization all day long. For example, the 'ruling party secretary general reporter' closely follows the ruling party's secretary general from the time when he leaves his house in the morning until his return home at night and summarizes his activities in his (or, less frequently, her) coverage notes. Because reporter and politician literally stay in contact from morning to night, most beat reporters are cub reporters who lack experience but have stamina. Based on all of the beat reporters' notes on each politician and organization, a veteran reporter will draft an article, which will then be revised by a 'cap', the person responsible for the press center. So there is, for example, a prime minister's office cap, a ruling party cap, and an opposition party cap. After this, the political section deputy editor (commonly known as the 'Desk') will check the article, which finally gets passed to the review department. As a result of this process, political articles – in contrast the common practice in Europe and the United States – are often unsigned. This is not to conceal the author of the article, however, but the result of the unique collective production process described above where for any given article, many hands do the work.

Continuing with the example of the 'ruling party secretary general reporter', each newspaper, including the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, the *Asahi Shimbun*, and the *Mainichi Shimbun*, has its own secretary general beat reporter. So, for example, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* beat reporter tries to obtain exclusive information that liberal reporters would not be able to get and turn it into an article before his or her *Asahi Shimbun* counterpart. For this reason, collusion sometimes develops between the reporter and the subject of coverage (in this case, the secretary general). To get in the subject's good graces, and so that information will be leaked only to them, beat reporters will share information on other parties or politicians obtained by the newspaper company, and will avoid writing articles that paint the subject in a bad light. The degree to which a beat reporter can become committed to a subject is evidenced by an episode in the 1970s, when the LDP's Tanaka faction² and Fukuda faction³ were in an intensifying power struggle. Despite being colleagues at the same newspaper company, the Tanaka faction beat reporters and the Fukuda faction beat reporters became hostile to the point that they would not talk to each other.

An iconic beat reporter is the *Yomiuri Shimbun* Group's leader, Tsuneo Watanabe.⁴ From the 1950s to 1960s, Watanabe worked as a beat reporter for the faction of LDP's Banboku Ohno.⁵ Watanabe gained Ohno's favor and would ghostwrite for politicians or negotiate with LDP personnel on behalf of Ohno, making Watanabe more of a behind-the-scenes politician or 'fixer' than a journalist. Even after becoming head of *Yomiuri Shimbun*, he has exercised influence over politics, including encouraging the formation of a grand coalition between prime minister Yasuo Fukuda, from the LDP, and DPJ leader Ozawa Ichiro, in 2007.⁶ Today, reporters are not as openly cozy with a particular politician as Watanabe was, but at least on the point of pundits playing a major role in political broadcasting, there is little difference between Washington and Tokyo.

Another system that is unique to Japan is the Kisha Club (Press Club)⁷ system. Every organization that is a target of coverage – including political parties such as the LDP or the DPJ, and government agencies such as the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – develops a 'press club' focused on the major newspapers and television stations. For example, the office of the prime minister has the Nagata Club and the LDP has the Hirakawa Club – these names come from the fact that the office of the prime minister is in Nagata-cho while the LDP headquarters are in Hirakawa-cho in Chiyoda Ward, while the Ministry of Finance has the Financial Research Group and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has the Kasumi Club. These clubs receive office space in the party headquarters or government office buildings. A reporter from each newspaper resides in this press club office space and carries out coverage from there. Conversely, if a politician or bureaucrat wants to announce something, he or she brings a press

release to the press club. If you are a member of the press club, you are thus ensured that at the very least, you will not miss out on the most basic information. The press club also holds frequent press conferences.

While they are not completely excluded, it has been difficult for foreign media and freelance reporters to join these press clubs. Further, while the number of open press conferences has increased in recent years, it is frequently the case that all but the beat reporters at the press clubs are excluded from the background briefings called *kondankai*, or informal gatherings. Consider the text of the following article:

Concerning the ‘Three Non-Nuclear Principles’ that include the non-possession of nuclear weapons, on the 31st, a *government official* stated, “The principles were like the Constitution, but since there have been recent calls to amend the Constitution, if there is a change in the international situation, the public may start thinking, ‘we should have nuclear weapons’”. This statement suggests the possibility of future review. In connection with this, at a press conference held on the same day, *Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda* commented regarding the possession of small self-defense nuclear weapons: ‘in terms of constitutional theory, logic does not dictate that they cannot be possessed’.

*(Yomiuri Shimbun, June 1, 2002, emphasis mine)*⁸

In fact, the ‘government official’ alluded to in the first section is also chief cabinet secretary Yasuo Fukuda.⁹ While the statement that the possession of nuclear weapons is not prohibited as a *logical legal possibility* was made during a press conference, the statement with higher news value – that the Three Non-Nuclear Principles might be revised in the future – was made off the record at a *kondankai* informal gathering. Thus, even though the same person is making the statement in the same article, the language is odd, using different subjects for the two sentences.¹⁰ In short, at gatherings to which only press club member reporters have access, more important information is sometimes collected. This is why the press club system is often called a mass media-led information cartel (Freeman 2000).

Television

Let us move on to address the special features of Japanese television. Unless otherwise noted, the discussion refers to terrestrial television. While in the United States 80 percent of all households watch non-terrestrial television, in Japan, most households watch terrestrial television and the audience share of cable TV and satellite broadcasting is not very high.¹¹

Japanese people watch a lot of television. A survey conducted by NHK in 2014 found that Japanese people watch an average of 3 hours and 42 minutes of TV a day (Yoshifuji et al. 2015). Moreover, the majority of Japanese people use TV as their main source of information about politics. According to a survey carried out by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications in 2013, for current affairs, the top media source of information was TV at 64 percent, well ahead of internet news sites (15 percent) and newspapers (12 percent) (Institute for Information and Communications Policy 2015).

An interesting feature of Japanese television stations is their strong ties to newspaper companies. The largest shareholder of *Yomiuri Shimbun* is Nippon Television, the largest shareholder of *Asahi Shimbun* is TV Asahi, and of *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, TV Tokyo. Conversely, Fuji TV is under the *Sankei Shimbun* umbrella. *Mainichi Shimbun* and the Tokyo Broadcasting System (TBS) group have a weak capital relationship, but they have friendly relations and the president of *Mainichi Shimbun* serves as an outside director of TBS. Similarly, numerous

regional TV stations were formed by regional newspapers. Using the power to issue broadcast licenses to these TV station groups, the government can exert influence on newspaper companies.

Unlike newspapers, for which subscription fees are a major source of revenue,¹² the main source of revenue for television – excluding the public NHK, which collects mandatory viewing fees from individuals – comes from advertisements. Since the television viewing rate is aggregated in one-minute increments, the relationship between the show's content and the viewing rate is clear. Television stations want to get every individual possible watching and thereby increase advertising revenue, so they have no choice but to be sensitive to people's demands.

According to a survey of the top ten TV program ratings in 2014 by Video Research Ltd., live sports held four of the top spots, music shows two, charity shows two, and entertainment and drama one spot each.

On the other hand, news programs have a hard time getting a lot of viewership, except at times when major events, such as the dramatic 2005 House of Representatives election or the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, occur. In the 2014 rankings, the 7pm NHK news only comes in fifteenth place.¹³ Since it is hard for news programs to gain viewership, television stations do not have an incentive to spend a great deal of resources on them. This point is obvious if you visit a television station's website. The most prominent section of the site is filled with promotions for upcoming sports games or entertainment shows, while the news section is relegated to a smaller, less visible corner. While most television stations in Tokyo have a political section, their resources (both in terms of number of reporters and budget) are poor compared to newspapers, with the exception of NHK. Most regional television stations do not even have a political section, and most lump it together with the news section.

In addition to the fact that news gets low priority in television programming, in Japan (as elsewhere) news programs themselves have undergone what is called 'softening', meaning that they incorporate many of the production techniques of entertainment programs (Taniguchi 2007). Like in the United States or Europe, local incidents and accidents are covered in Japan's early evening news. However, news programs in Japan also provide a great deal of information about daily life, including food, shopping, travel, and entertainment. Television stations target the core viewers of early evening news: housewives. To attract these women they present hard political and economic news interspersed with 'softer' topics.

In addition, each story that deals with politics uses techniques to increase viewership. One such technique is to convey difficult topics in easier-to-digest chunks. If you watch Japanese news programs, even the 'hardest' of them all – NHK news – makes heavy use of flip charts, models, and computer graphics as the news has to be even more visual than in other places to compete with entertainment.

Putting this kind of effort into presentation is a good thing, but the issue is the tendency to choose topics that will catch the viewer's eye, right up to the framing of each news story. A comparison of the degree to which public television (NHK) and private commercial broadcasting (such as TV Asahi) framed election news in this manner – that is by focusing on the race rather than the issues – in the 2000 House of Representatives election, reveals that the frame was much more frequently found in the commercial News Station (in 76 percent of cases) than in NHK (56 percent of cases) (Taniguchi 2002).

However, it is not necessarily the case that public broadcaster NHK provides ideal political coverage.¹⁴ The members of NHK's executive committee, its supreme decision-making body, are appointed by the prime minister with the approval of the Diet. Its medium-term management plan and annual working budget also have to be approved by the Diet. For this reason, it is said that NHK is vulnerable to politicians, especially those in the ruling party. For example, in the

year 2000, Prime Minister Mori said that ‘Japan is a divine country centered on the Emperor’, inviting criticism that his statement went against popular sovereignty and the separation of religion and state as written in the Constitution. Mori held a press conference to explain his statement. At this time, the NHK reporter, who should have pursued the real meaning of the original remark, advised the prime minister: ‘Don’t say anything unnecessary, and dodge the questions’; and, ‘end it assertively as soon as the prescribed time is up’ (NHK denies this, but it has become a well-known fact). Further, in 2013, Shinzo Abe appointed multiple conservative individuals who shared his political stance to the management committee. As a result, before long, a new NHK president was elected by the Executive Committee, who said things such as: ‘the government is saying “right” so we can’t say “left”’; and that broadcast content ‘shouldn’t be too far distanced from the Japanese government’.¹⁵

Politicians’ media strategy

Keeping in mind the features of Japanese newspapers and TV political coverage discussed above, I now turn to the politicians’ standpoint and their relationship to mass media.

Newspapers

First, politicians and beat reporters are in a relationship neither too close nor too distant from each other. The mission of the beat reporter is to gather information on the politician for which they are responsible. This information is not simply information that will benefit the concerned politician, but also unfavorable information. When the politician is about to lose a policy debate or power struggle, or when a scandal breaks out, it is unpleasant for the politician to be followed by the beat reporter and receive negative coverage.

Meanwhile, as mentioned earlier, beat reporters want to outdo their rival companies and obtain important information that is theirs alone. Politicians take advantage of these incentives. In exchange for leaking information to a specific reporter, they will get information from the reporter or stifle unfavorable information, thus benefitting their political activities.

The explanation above has dealt primarily with Japanese national newspapers (*Yomiuri*, *Asahi*, *Mainichi*, *Nikkei*, and *Sankei*), but local newspapers are also an important part of politicians’ media strategy. Figure 8.2 shows House of Representatives members who said they have appeared in each type of media from 2007 to 2008.¹⁶ The type of media they find most valuable is local newspapers, which hold an overwhelming share in each electoral district.

In the 2000s, when Ichiro Ozawa¹⁷ was DPJ president and secretary general, he often made visits to provinces far from Tokyo to which other party leaders did not venture. At press conferences during these visits, he normally gave preference to local newspapers and TV stations over reporters from the national papers. While visiting different localities is a way to formulate election strategies for each area, it is also a regional media strategy. Even if you make speeches in the Diet or on the streets of Tokyo, or hold a press conference, unless you make a highly newsworthy statement, it will not be widely covered in national newspapers or on television news. However, in the regional areas, the very fact that a big-name politician is coming to the prefecture is a rare thing, so regional papers and television stations offer both broad and favorable coverage.

The same logic applies to former prime minister Junichiro Koizumi’s use of sports papers and weekly magazines. Normally, only media outlets that are members of the Nagata Club are allowed access to the prime minister – and even within that group, practically speaking, only the major newspapers, wire services, and television stations. However, after Koizumi took office, he proactively created opportunities for coverage for sports newspapers and weekly magazines

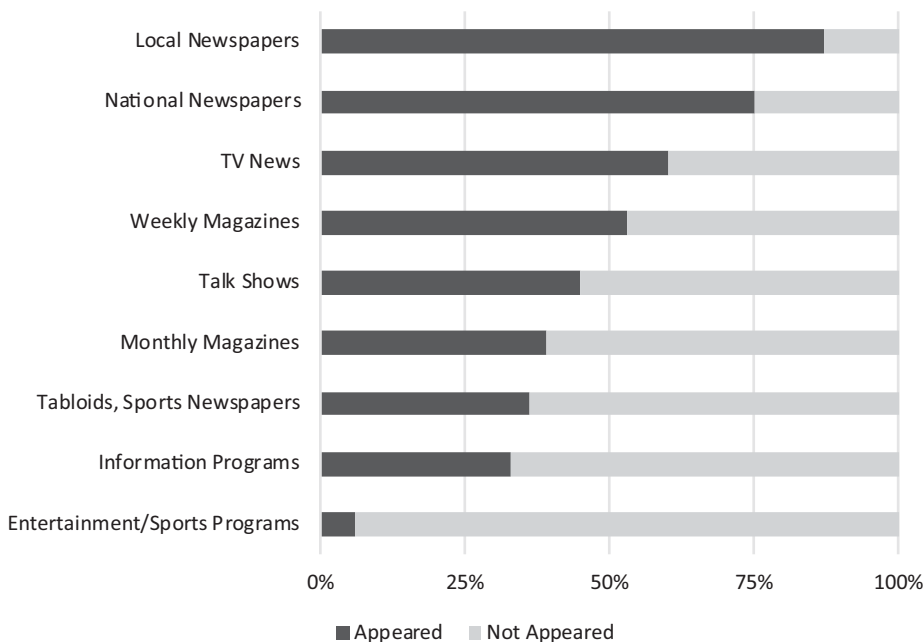


Figure 8.2 House of Representatives mass media exposure

Source: 2007 UTokyo/Asahi Shimbun Elite Survey

normally excluded from covering the prime minister. The sports newspapers and magazine journalists offered this rare opportunity naturally felt favorably toward the prime minister and tended to craft more positive portrayals of Koizumi. This was Koizumi’s media strategy.

Politicians on television

Since the 1990s, more and more politicians have started to appear on all sorts of television programs. As seen in Figure 8.2, they not only appear on traditional news programs, but also on talk shows, informational variety shows, and even in entertainment.

As in Europe or the United States, in Japan, a politician appearing on TV is an advertisement for him or her and the political party, and can be beneficial in the election. For example, according to House of Councillors member Ichita Yamamoto (LDP),¹⁸ appearing on TV once for 30 minutes has more impact than appearing in a newspaper 100 times. Such televised appearances offer multiple benefits: 1) TV appearances increase politicians’ public profile; 2) they create a personable image; and 3) they deepen viewers’ understanding of political views or policy (Taniguchi 2011). Despite Japan’s position as a world leader in newspaper readership, there are still numerous Japanese who do not read the newspaper. In addition, some people do not watch traditional hard news programs. By appearing on soft news programs, politicians can get these viewers to remember their name. Also, traditional news programs offer detailed information on policy matters. In contrast, soft news programs are good at conveying the *personality* of the politician. Figure 8.3 illustrates the results of a survey on politicians’ increasing appearance in entertainment-heavy TV programs. Voters were asked whether they felt that: A) ‘It is good because politicians explain politics in an easy-to-understand way and they feel approachable’ or that B) ‘It is not good

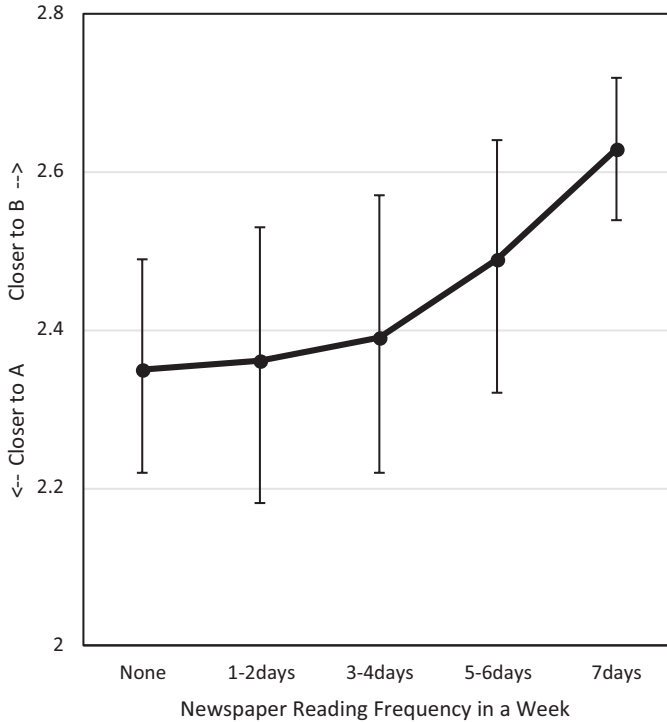


Figure 8.3 Voter evaluation of politicians appearing on soft news
 Source: 2009 UTokyo/Asahi Shimbun Voter Survey. The error bars show the 95 percent bootstrap confidence interval

because politicians appearing on entertainment-heavy programs degrades politics'. Compared to respondents who read the newspaper every day, those not in the habit of doing so tended to more positively evaluate soft news (closer to A). Thus, for politicians, it is important to effectively use both traditional and soft news programs.

The fact that politicians' television appearances have increased has also affected the nature of political party organization. Traditionally, party executives have been selected on the basis of their leadership and expertise on internal party coordination. Since opportunities to appear on political talk shows have increased, however, an increased number of party executives – who officially represent the party and must occasionally comment on political events – have been appointed because they are telegenic and project a favorable external image (Taniguchi 2007). As for the current (2016) LDP executives, prime minister Shinzo Abe and policy research council chairman Tomomi Inada are telegenic leaders.

Paid media, especially TV campaign advertising, has been carried out since the 1960s in Japan, but the role of election advertising rose in importance starting in the 1990s due to several factors. In 1994, the House of Representatives electoral system shifted to a mixed member system combining plurality voting in single-member districts with regional, closed-list proportional representation. As a result, elections became more party-centric. Competition between candidates from the same party seen in the multiple-seat constituency system disappeared and it became a competition of party versus party, and the number of independent voters increased. The decision of the Ministry of Home Affairs (now the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications) that

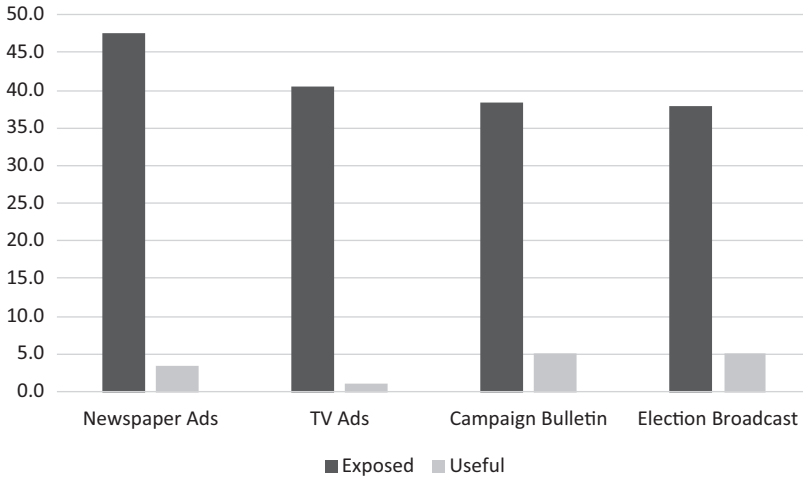


Figure 8.4 Media come into contact with/useful in House of Councillors election 2013 (in %)

Source: 2013 UTokyo/Asahi Shimbun Voter Survey

parties could advertise even during the election campaign period as a routine political activity was another reason behind the increase in political advertising (Kawakami 1998).

Yet unlike in the United States, Japan's Public Offices Election Law prohibits individual politicians or their support groups from placing paid advertising in the media. Instead, candidates are able to broadcast their political views and biography/experience for free on television in the space, time, and number of times determined by law. Thus, election advertisements in Japan are mostly sponsored by political parties as a whole. Furthermore, according to the 2013 UTokyo/Asahi Shimbun Voter Survey, while as many as 41 percent of viewers saw party television ads for the House of Councillors election that year, only 1 percent of the total responded that these ads were helpful in considering candidates or parties. Despite the significant funds required, TV ads have less appeal than free media (official election gazettes/campaign broadcasts) (Figure 8.4). While people sometimes discuss parties' election ads, it seems it will still be some time before these ads have a major influence on election results.

Internet and politics

While this chapter has, so far, mainly focused on newspapers and television, it is also important to note the growing importance of the relationship between the internet and politics. The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (Communications Usage Trend Survey) estimates that in Japan, the penetration rate of the internet stands at about 80 percent. In addition, the Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association (National Media Contact and Evaluation Survey) found that the number of people who use the internet every day has soared from 21 percent in 2001 to 49 percent in 2013. In contrast, the percentage of people who read the newspaper every day has fallen over the same period from 70 percent to 56 percent. Particularly significant is the fact that fewer than half of those in their 20s and 30s are regular newspaper readers – 19 percent and 32 percent, respectively.

The way political communication is carried out has significantly evolved in response to these changes in the media environment. Much discussed examples of this evolution include

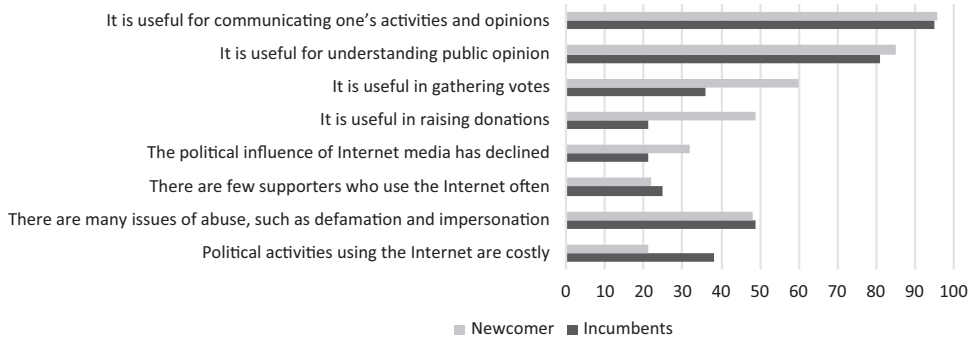


Figure 8.5 Candidate opinions of the internet

Source: 2013 UTokyo/Asahi Shimbun Elite Survey. Total of 'Agree' and 'Somewhat agree'. Units: %

the Koizumi Cabinet's email newsletter, Tōru Hashimoto's¹⁹ Twitter feed, and Prime Minister Abe's Facebook page. The Cabinet email newsletter was launched in June 2001 when Koizumi became prime minister. The 'foreword' of each issue bore the prime minister's name, and he candidly shared his opinion not only on current affairs, but also on various topics such as books he had read and music he liked. Significant features of Hashimoto's Twitter feed and of Abe's Facebook page include the fact that they often criticize mass media. Hashimoto and Abe's supporters retweet or share politicians' posts. By criticizing mass media unfavorable to them on social media and inviting unity among their supporters, they have created a new configuration in which they pressure mass media from both the politician and citizen (supporter) sides (Ōsaka 2014).

Today, it is not only leaders such as prime ministers, party heads, governors, or mayors who have websites and use social media, but also the majority of lawmakers. As illustrated in Figure 8.5, politicians believe the merits of taking advantage of the internet outweigh its negatives, such as defamation, fake messages, and the financial, time, and psychological cost of newly equipping oneself to share information over the internet. Furthermore, in addition to the direct benefit of increasing votes or gathering election funds, politicians emphasize the benefits of interactive communication through which they can communicate their activities or opinions while also grasping people's thoughts. Rookie candidates see more advantages than incumbents in using the internet and fewer disadvantages. Compared to incumbents, small-to-mid-size parties with fewer resources and many rookies and first-time candidates evaluate using the internet for political activities more positively.

To prevent soaring election expenses, Japan's Public Offices Election Law strictly limits candidates' distribution of documents. Prior to 2013, sending messages via the internet was treated in the same way as sending pamphlets by mail or putting up posters, and was prohibited during the election campaign period. However, the ban on using the internet for such purposes during election campaigns was eventually lifted. The Public Offices Election Law was amended and candidates began using homepages, blogs, SNS, and email for campaign activities. Along with this change, Japan's different political parties enhanced their communication strategies using the internet. For example, the LDP gives each candidate detailed instructions on how to use social media. As a result, the number of people who view the LDP website through an internet search is much larger when compared to other parties. Furthermore, the LDP uses an internet

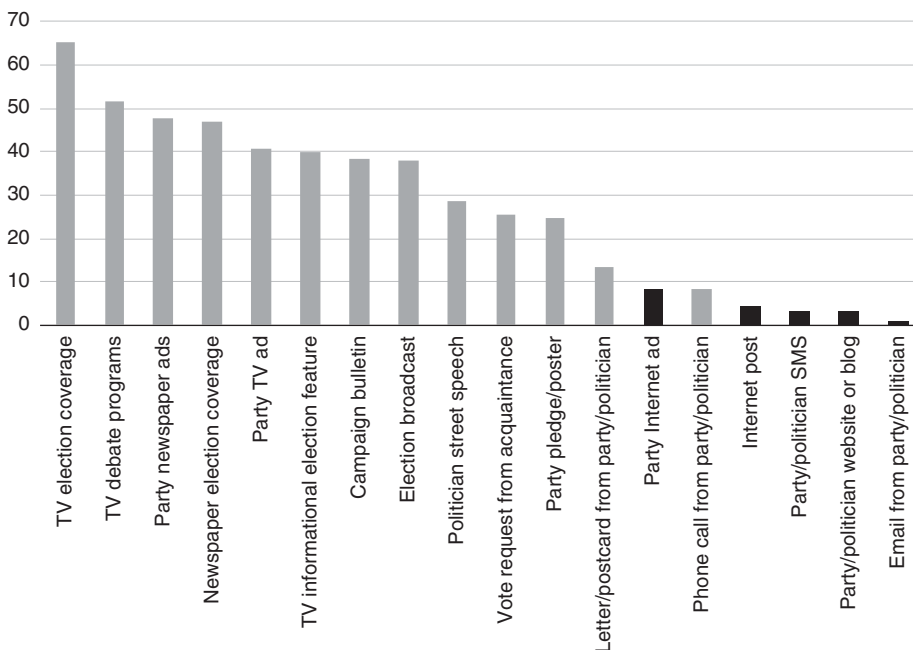


Figure 8.6 Media come into contact with in 2013 House of Councillors election

Source: 2013 UTokyo/Asahi Shimbun Voter Survey. The black bars are internet-related media. Units: %

advertising market, called ad exchanges or ad networks, and effectively posts the party's internet ads on many websites.

Yet, as can be seen in Figure 8.6, the number of people who came into contact with election-related information through the internet during the 2013 House of Councillors election remained a minority compared to those who got their information from newspapers, television, or through direct contact with the party or candidate. For those Japanese people who did come into contact with election-related information through the internet or social media, however, analysis reveals that the kind of influence they received was comparable to findings in the United States context. For instance, experimental results show that following a politician's Twitter feed protects against image deterioration, even if that politician blunders or makes a faux pas (Kobayashi and Ichifuji 2014). Survey results show that while selective exposure exists, selective avoidance does not occur (Kobayashi and Ikeda 2009). Therefore, it seems that for the time being, the question is whether gathering information about politics through the internet will become the norm.

Media system in Japan?

As for the relationship between politics and mass media in Japan, what kind of characteristics does it have when compared to other countries? Borrowing the Hallin and Mancini (2004) framework of four dimensions to classify each country's media system – the structure of media markets, political parallelism, professionalization of journalism, and the role of the state – let us consider the Japanese media system.

First, as for the dimension of the newspaper industry, Japan's newspaper circulation per 1,000 adults is much greater than that of major Western countries. Second, on party and media links – in other words, the political parallelism dimension – it is difficult to assess the strength of links in Japan. On the one hand, many Japanese newspapers advocate impartiality and fair coverage, and do not endorse a particular party in their editorials. On the other hand, many people recognize that each newspaper's editorials have a liberal or conservative slant, and the editorials' political leanings also influence the tone of the articles. As far as broadcasting is concerned, while TV is not as autonomous from the government as in the United States, it is not controlled by the government or certain political parties, as is sometimes the case in Europe (in Italy, for instance). Third, regarding the professionalization of journalism, opinions are probably divided. In Japan, people are aware of journalism's distinct professional norms, and of the fact that correspondents' behavioral rules are codified. Yet, especially when it comes to politics, it is also true that reporters give advice to influential politicians and refrain from reporting information that is damaging to them, thereby gaining their trust and being privy to information leaks, and there is still a tendency to view such political reporters as talented. Fourth, on the role of the state, while there is a broadcast license system, TV ownership regulation, and strong public broadcasting (NHK), these are not direct press subsidies or censorship. State intervention is thus relatively less strongly felt than in some of the European nations Hallin and Mancini (2004) describe.

Taken together, the relationship between Japan's politics and its media does not fit perfectly into any of Hallin and Mancini's models. If forced to choose one, Japan is relatively closer to the North Atlantic or Liberal model. In any case, it is not a productive exercise to question the value on the four dimensions, or to forcibly apply an ill-fitting model. Nor is it appropriate to suggest that different countries' media systems are Americanizing and then assume that the elements not fitting the model demonstrate that these countries' media are backward. The more important issue is the dynamism of why each country came to have the values it does on each dimension. In the case of Japan, the high score on the press market dimension has roots from before the end of World War II – in other words, it is not simply the product of US postwar influence. The low scores on political parallelism and professionalization of journalism in Japan are in part the result of the long-standing LDP one-party dominant system – the LDP was the dominant party as a result of free and fair elections, and whether this was good or bad compared to a two-party or multi-party system is not self-evident.

While the mass media of different countries in the world share some functions – such as political information transmission, power monitoring, and profit maximization – each country has its own historical or institutional constraints. Developing a comparative institutional theory of political communication is a crucial step in understanding these differences in an increasingly globalized media context. In addition, an important area of focus for future research will be the extent to which the spread of the internet affects the relationship between each country's politics and mass media. The case of Japan provides a unique opportunity to expand the comparison beyond Europe and the United States.

Notes

- 1 For a more detailed analysis of politics and mass media in Japan, see Taniguchi (2015).
- 2 Former prime minister (served 1972–1974) Kakuei Tanaka's faction.
- 3 Former prime minister (served 1976–1978) Takeo Fukuda's faction.
- 4 For Watanabe's own memoir, see Watanabe (2000); for a critical biography, see Uozumi (2000).
- 5 He was a leading politician in the LDP's early days and led the Ohno faction. He served as speaker of the House of Representatives and LDP vice-president.

- 6 At the time, because the LDP had the majority of seats in the House of Representatives and the DPJ the majority in the House of Councillors, there were concerns that Diet would be deadlocked.
- 7 Iwase (1998) has detailed data on the press clubs.
- 8 ‘The principles are just like the Constitution,’ he said. ‘But in the face of calls to amend the Constitution, the amendment of the principles is also likely.’ www.nytimes.com/2002/06/04/world/koizumi-aide-hints-at-change-to-no-nuclear-policy.html (accessed July 13, 2015).
- 9 Later served as prime minister (2007–2008). Son of the aforementioned Takeo Fukuda.
- 10 At a later date, Fukuda said in the Diet, ‘there will be no change in our position of continuing to adhere to the three non-nuclear principles’, effectively rescinding his previous statement.
- 11 In Japan, BS broadcasting, CS broadcasting, and CATV viewership is also measured, but as viewership is low, it is aggregated with ‘other stations’ (besides terrestrial NHK and the four large private stations).
- 12 According to a Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association survey (2013), if total revenue were 100, sales revenue comprises 59.0 and advertising revenue 23.4. Incidentally, in the United States, according to a Newspaper Association of America survey (2013), if total revenue were 100, sales revenue comprises 28.9 and advertising 62.7.
- 13 This was the day heavy snow fell in Tokyo.
- 14 See Krauss (2000) for details on the relationship between NHK and politics.
- 15 Remarks by NHK chairman Katsuhito Momii at a January 25, 2014 press conference.
- 16 Since they may be taken up in mass media independent of their own intentions, the question clarifies that this is ‘limited to acting on one’s own accord, such as going to a studio, accepting coverage, or contributing to a newspaper, etc.’.
- 17 An influential politician from the 1990s to the 2000s. He left the LDP in 1993 and subsequent positions included party head of the New Frontier Party (1995–1997) and DPJ (2006–2009).
- 18 Former minister of state for Okinawa and northern territories affairs, science and technology policy, and space policy. He is one of the most frequently appearing Diet members on TV. From an interview with my research assistants.
- 19 He gained visibility by appearing on TV as a lawyer, then moved into politics, serving as governor of Osaka, mayor of Osaka, and Japan Restoration Party head.

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'National idols'

The case of AKB48 in Japan

Patrick W. Galbraith

When examining contemporary Japan, one cannot help but be struck by the prevalence of 'idols' (*aidoru*) (Galbraith and Karlin 2012). Idols are men and women, typically in their teens and twenties, who appeal directly to fans for support. They are often presented as inexperienced, flawed and trying hard to improve, which endears them to audiences; this also makes them more relatable and approachable (Aoyagi 2005, pp. 67–78). Idols make themselves accessible to fans through live performances, small venues and special events where contact and communication are possible. Compared to other performers, idols are more known to and cared about by their fans; the relationship between idols and fans is characterized by intimacy. Idols have been described as 'pseudo friends' (Ōgawa 1988, pp. 122–3), but the relationship can also be experienced as something like being in 'love'. Personality and social skills are key to the success of idols, which has led to their reputation as pretty faces without much talent (Schilling 1997, pp. 230–1). This is not entirely accurate, however, because idols work hard to develop and perfect their personalities and social skills, and must be consummate professionals to reach the top of their field. An idol's talent is not singing, dancing, acting or modeling, but rather 'idoling', or being an idol for fans. Fans are activated by the movement of idols and encouraged to tune in, show up and make purchases.

The number of idols in Japan today is said to be 'the greatest in the history of Japanese entertainment' (*Yomiuri Shimbun* 2012). The 2010s have been dubbed the 'idol warring states period' (*aidoru sengoku jidai*) (Okajima and Okada 2011), which brings to mind the bloody battles between warlords that raged in Japan from the mid-1400s until 1603, when the nation was unified. 'Idol warring states' is a provocative turn of phrase that not only suggests many idols in fierce competition, but also a struggle for control of Japan, which is largely a domestic affair. According to the Oricon sales charts, in 2014, seven of the top 10 bestselling albums and all of the top 10 bestselling singles were from idol groups; the only foreign offering in those two rankings was the soundtrack to Disney's *Frozen*.¹ Increased deployment of idols in the Japanese media market since the 1990s has strengthened fan audiences drawn to domestically produced content and largely shut out content from abroad (Lukács 2010, pp. 4, 23–4). The reconstituted market centered on idols appeals primarily to fans in Japan, and idol media does not necessarily circulate beyond national borders. Recent years have seen the emergence of a critical discourse about 'Galapagos Japan' (Yamaguchi 2013), or islands in the Pacific where things have evolved

in ways that diverge from the rest of the world. Japanese idols are often taken to be one such divergent evolution – a Japanese thing.

Whether celebratory or critical, there is a tendency in popular and academic discussions toward national(izing) discourse, which makes idols representative of Japan. This chapter aims to show how such discussions are as problematic as they are political.² As a case study, the chapter considers AKB48, a female idol group that dominates the Oricon charts in Japan. Members of AKB48 – over 130 as of December 2015 – have been called 'national idols' (*kokumin-teki aidoru*). Not all Japanese support AKB48, however; rather, the idols are supported by their fans, and both are not without critics at home and abroad. By tracing recent discussions of AKB48, the chapter demonstrates how idol performances are understood in terms of the nation. Although there are many male idols in Japan – including groups such as Arashi, whose members are also called national idols (see Chapter 10, this volume) – they are not as criticized when made to represent 'Japan'. The idols of AKB48 are young women and their core fans are men, which raises suspicions about the 'Lolita complex', or 'fascination with sexual interaction with young girls' (Adelstein and Kubo 2014). For decades, critics have written of the Lolita complex as a national sickness in Japan (Schoenberger 1989; Schodt 1996, pp. 54–5; Naitō 2010, pp. 326–9; Norma 2015, p. 85), or simply of the 'Japanese Lolita complex' (Saitō 2011, p. 6), and female idols and their male fans are often taken as representative of the problem. Like the female idols of AKB48, male idols are also sexualized and often start their careers young (Nagaike 2012, pp. 103–6), but their predominantly female fans are not treated as perverted, pathological and predatory in ways comparable to AKB48 fans. Instead, male idols and female fans are routinely ignored in essentializing discussions of idols appealing to socially and sexually dysfunctional men and Japan as a socially and sexually dysfunctional nation. By examining AKB48 as idols made to represent 'Japan', this chapter argues that national(izing) discourse obscures more than it reveals. Ultimately, we must go beyond celebration or criticism of 'Japan' to develop a more nuanced approach to the cultural politics of idols, who are, after all, part of the global phenomenon of celebrity and power (Marshall 2014).

Background on AKB48

Given their extraordinary success – most singles sold by a Japanese female artist or group, highest sales for a single, most million-selling singles – it may come as a surprise that AKB48 started out small. When AKB48 – short for 'Akihabara 48', with Akihabara being a neighborhood in Tokyo and 48 referring to the number of young women in the group – was founded in 2005, producer Akimoto Yasushi did not have enough talent to select from and settled for 24 members; their debut performance attracted an audience of only seven people (Coren 2012). AKB48 did eventually reach 48 members, who were divided into three teams and put on a rotating schedule so that one team would perform live at the AKB48 Theater in Akihabara almost every day year round. AKB48's slogan – 'idols that you can meet' (*ai ni ikeru aidoru*) – speaks to the core dynamic of appealing to an audience that sees idols in person and interacts with them regularly. Performances at the AKB48 Theater, a small space seating only 145, are intimate. Fans report their experiences of these performances in terms of religious rapture and falling in love (Hamano 2012, pp. 89, 132). The core fans are primarily men from their late teens to forties, which means that they tend to be older than their idols, who are on average between 17 and 18 years old (AKB Fan 2013). Each core fan has a member that he supports, which is the basis for fan organization. These core fans not only buy photographs of their idols and merchandise featuring them, but also make a point of shouting their names when they appear on stage and sing solo. Talk sessions, in which idols chat with one another on stage, are chances for the fans to

get to know them and shout out responses in semi-personal, public conversations. Idols on stage and others in the audience see fans and recognize them for their efforts, which encourages ever more performative displays of affection. This core dynamic of AKB48 translates from the theater to the media to the marketplace.

From niche to national

When AKB48 began to receive more media exposure in 2009, the fan base expanded and CD sales skyrocketed, which led to them being known as ‘national idols’. The truth is a little more complicated, and involves techniques for capitalizing on the relationship between idols and fans. AKB48’s massive sales are linked to the phenomenon of idols appealing directly to fans for support and fans consuming in order to provide that support, display their affection and/or get closer to their idols. When AKB48 releases a new song, CDs come packaged with premiums, which might be posters or photographs, perhaps signed, or tickets to events where fans can interact with idols in smaller numbers and more intimately. For example, early on, AKB48 began to include tickets to ‘handshake events’ (*akushukai*) as premiums. Given that seeing the idols – and being seen by them – is so important to AKB48 fans, it should come as no surprise that these handshake events proved to be extremely popular. Not only does the fan get to meet his idol face-to-face and one-on-one, but also to touch her hand, exchange a personal greeting and entertain the fantasy that she recognizes him from multiple encounters (Hamano 2012, pp. 79–88). Even if fans do not want a copy of AKB48’s new CD, they still buy it for the premium, if not also to show support. In fact, core fans of AKB48 often buy multiple copies of the same CD.

The place of the premium in AKB48’s success is best exemplified by the practice of the ‘General Election’ (*senbatsu sōsenkyo*), which was established in 2009 in response to criticism of Akimoto for not promoting the members that fans supported. The shrewd producer told fans to step up and decide for themselves who is AKB48’s ‘center’ (*sentā*), or the most prominent and promoted member, as well as the ‘select members’ (*senbatsu membā*) around her. Since then, fans vote in the General Election to determine this hierarchy, or simply vote for the member that they support. The members of AKB48 voted into the center position and select group then sing the next single and appear in its promotional video. This enfranchisement encourages fans to participate in the General Election and have an impact on the careers of their idols and the overall composition of the group. While the General Election sounds very democratic, the caveat is that fans who want to vote need to buy a copy of a designated CD single that comes with a code, which allows for a vote to be cast online. That is, the opportunity to cast a vote is the premium. There is no limit to how many votes an individual can cast, because each new CD has a new code that allows for a new vote. The premium spurs AKB48 fans to buy multiple new copies of the same CD single, which leads to record-breaking sales.

When the General Election was first held in 2009, AKB48 was not in the top 10 of the Oricon yearly singles chart. Instead, the chart was dominated by male idols such as Arashi, KAT-TUN and Kanjani 8. However, in 2010, with the General Election established and AKB48 gaining more media exposure, they earned the top two spots on the chart. The growth in sales correlates with greater participation in the General Election. In addition to more people buying more CDs to cast more votes for more members (a distributed increase), a major factor in AKB48’s growing sales was a rivalry between members Maeda Atsuko and Ōshima Yūko, which moved fans to vote for one or the other (a focused increase). In 2009, Maeda earned 4,630 votes to become the center of AKB48, but, in 2010, Ōshima became the center with 31,448 votes, which reflects fans mobilizing for an upset victory.³ This was at least in part inspired by Ōshima’s

statement that 'votes are love', which encouraged fans to express how much they loved her by voting (Galbraith and Karlin 2012, p. 22). Then, in 2011, when her fans rallied for a comeback, Maeda overtook Ōshima to again become the center with 139,892 votes out of a total 1,081,392 cast for members in the top 40 spots. The results in terms of sales speak for themselves: In 2011, AKB48 had all top five spots on the Oricon yearly singles chart, a record-breaking achievement that they repeated the following year. In 2012, each of their top five singles sold over a million copies.

There can be no doubt that increased sales of AKB48's CD singles are driven by fan activity, which has intensified year by year. For example, angered by a scandal that saw their idol banished from Tokyo to a sister group in 2012, fans rallied to elect Sashihara Rino to AKB48's center position in the General Election in 2013. Famous for her rapport with fans and use of social media to interact with them, Sashihara received a record 150,570 votes, with one fan claiming to have spent approximately 14 million yen to buy 9,108 votes for her (Artefact 2013). In the General Election in 2014, a 42-year-old strawberry farmer, who claims to spend between 8 and 9 million yen a year to support Sashihara, bought 4,600 CDs to vote for her (Anahori 2014). That same year, a fan of Takahashi Juri, who for two years had failed to break into the select group, decided to change her fortunes and spent 31,502,400 yen to buy CDs and vote for her (Baseel 2014). Although the supporter chose to remain anonymous, he took pictures and posted them online to prove the enormity of his achievement. As anthropologist Ian Condry rightly points out, such actions are a gambit for recognition of one's support and affection for, and one's relationship with, the idol (Condry 2013, pp. 200–2).

While it may appear to be Japan's mega group, AKB48 is ultimately something else. Rather than a single group, AKB48 is multiple groups comprised of multiple members – as of December 2015, there are over 130 members in its four main teams, in addition to more members in sister groups in four Japanese cities, five cities in Asia and at least a dozen other spinoff groups – each with her own small number of fans and with all these members and fans competing with one another. As we have seen, this competition drives sales. AKB48's success points to the value of fan affection, attachment and activity, which are part of what has been called 'affective economics' (Jenkins 2006, pp. 61–2). Fan audiences are attractive to media producers and advertisers, who anticipate that fans will tune in to see their idols and watch commercials for information on and images of their idols (Karlin 2012, pp. 82–4), if not also buy products associated with them. While some in Japan claim that AKB48 will 'save the nation' (Galbraith and Karlin 2012, p. 3), they are in fact saving the traditional music and media market, which is in decline (Galbraith and Karlin 2016, pp. 6–7). Regular exposure of AKB48 in the mass media does not, then, reflect the interests of all Japanese people, but rather the convergence of fan and corporate interests. Despite prescriptive labels such as 'national idols', the story of AKB48 is not about the Japanese people coming to like the same things as the fanboys who hang out in Akihabara, or so-called 'otaku'. These men and their interests have historically been seen as somewhat repugnant in Japan, and this has not necessarily changed (Kam 2013, pp. 163–5). Rather, the phenomenon of AKB48 fans driving sales and being courted by media producers and advertisers has brought niche interests into the national spotlight, where they are criticized as often as they are celebrated.

Critiques of AKB48 idols and fans

In his pioneering fieldwork exploring the culture of idols in Japan, anthropologist Aoyagi Hiroshi encountered strong negative opinions about adult male fans of female idols, especially

passionate fans of cutesy, young-looking idols. In one particularly striking exchange, a Japanese female informant, herself an idol fan, says the following:

Those people [i.e., cute-idol fans] have weird ideas about love affairs, and they are out of touch with reality. Don't you think? ... Yeah. I think those lunatics who can be senseless enough to adore [cute-looking] idols who are much younger than they are have a serious Lolita complex. They live in their own indecent fantasies.

(Aoyagi 1999, p. 137; bracketed qualifications in original)

From such comments, Aoyagi concludes that adult male idol fans are seen as 'lunatics (otaku), or psychopaths who behave awkwardly due to their inability to control sexual desires' (Aoyagi 1999, p. 137). While much has changed since Aoyagi's fieldwork, much has stayed the same, as can be seen in critiques of AKB48 fans.

Consider, for example, how Matsuko Deluxe, a Japanese columnist and media personality known for his cross-dressing and sharp tongue, describes AKB48 fans as 'disgusting male virgins' (Livedoor 2015). While Matsuko Deluxe admits to following other idol groups, AKB48 fans strike him as repulsive. By his estimation, AKB48 cannot appeal to women and adults, which suggests that their core audience is adolescent boys, as well as adult men who are socially awkward and sexually immature like adolescent boys. Some see such AKB48 fans as a social problem. Sociologist and media personality Miyadai Shinji calls AKB48 fans 'mama's boys' who 'objectify girls' and 'make them into convenient tools for themselves', especially as 'a source of self-recognition' (Miyadai 2013, pp. 178–81). After listing the traits of men that women should avoid at all cost, Miyadai sums up: 'Most of them are AKB48 fans.' Among the social problems facing contemporary Japan, from declining marriage and birth rates to a breakdown in relations between the sexes and a shrinking population, Miyadai draws attention to what he calls the 'AKB fan problem' (*AKB ota mondai*).

Others, however, find fault in the way that AKB48 does business, which seems to be taking advantage of fans. During the General Election in 2011, comedian Okamura Takashi was shocked by the sight of fans buying multiple copies of the same CD single to cast votes in support of their idols, and slammed AKB48 as a 'reverse host club' (Rocket News 2011). In this thought-provoking critique, Okamura compares the idols of AKB48 to 'hosts', or men who are paid to lure women into clubs and maintain fantasy relationships with them; like AKB48 idols with their fans, hosts encourage clients to spend money on orders, which effects their ranking as hosts (Takeyama 2005, pp. 207–8). Okamura's analogy makes AKB48 idols into sleazy con artists at best and possibly even sex workers, and AKB48 fans into victims of manipulation, who pay for nothing more than a handshake and a smile. Although the fans are sympathetic to a certain degree, they are nonetheless paying for a relationship, which Okamura finds frankly disgusting. This suggests something that observers find generally offensive about AKB48: the intimacy of the idol–fan relationship. While the relationship is glossed as 'love' by those involved, it appears to Okamura and others to be sexual fantasy or even a form of sex work. In this way, the definition of sex work is stretched to include paid interactions between men and women, selling intimacy and affective economics. It is not far from here to imagine that selling fans a ticket to a handshake event is actually selling access to the bodies of their idols, if not also marketing the flesh of young women.

Critiques of AKB48 idols and fans are becoming more common and open in Japan and around the world. The idols are regularly berated for being inferior singers and dancers compared to globally successful artists, which fuels suspicion that fans must be seeking something else from them. The relationship between idol and fan is more important than the music or

anything else, and this relationship is suspect because the fan pays for it, buys into it, seems almost to purchase fantasy romance and affection from the idol. Fans are fiercely loyal to their idols, but also seem to think that they are owed something, or even that they own their idols. This came to a head in January 2013, when a Japanese news magazine revealed that Minegishi Minami, a 20-year-old woman who had been a member of AKB48 since it began in 2005, had spent an unsupervised night at the home of Shirahama Alan, a male idol. Fans responded to this 'scandal' with fierce criticism of Minegishi for 'betraying' them. While it is not uncommon for production agencies in Japan to 'punish' idols when they damage their marketable image (West 2006, pp. 188–92) – for example, pulling them from media appearances for a time of 'exile', or kicking them out of their group or agency – Minegishi took the extraordinary step of punishing herself in a more direct and physical way by shaving her head. In a video released on AKB48's official online channel, a roughly shorn Minegishi tearfully apologized to fans and begged for forgiveness (Gekiura 2013). The video, dismissed by many in Japan as another AKB48 pseudo-event and a publicity stunt, caused significant outrage in the global media. CNN, BBC, Spiegel Online, Al Jazeera English, the Young Turks and many others reported on it, but it was the *Japan Times*, the largest English-language newspaper in Japan, that exemplifies how the issue was framed:

What is happening here is that the protection of fans' fragile fantasies automatically trumps the basic human right to a life outside that fantasy framework. Though as lawyer Hifumi Okunuki [sic] pointed out in a *Japan Times* article on January 22, such an arrangement is probably illegal under Japanese labor laws.

(Martin 2013)

In such criticism, idols appear as slaves bound by the unreasonable demands of men with power over them. The negative press quickly filtered back into Japan. On the television show 'Sunday Japon', Dave Spector, an American media personality in Japan, held up a British newspaper featuring a photograph of Minegishi and explained to a panel of Japanese celebrities that this incident had been taken up widely in media overseas (Sunday Japon 2013). According to Spector, some wondered if 'Japan did not have its own Taliban', or powerful male patriarchy that terrorizes girls and women with its conservative politics. On the television show 'Crazy for Five O'clock', Matsuko Deluxe, visibly enraged at being forced to comment on what he perceived to be a pseudo-event, drew attention to the ways Japanese media rush to report anything to do with AKB48 – those 'shit idols' (*kuso aidoru*) – which makes them complicit in promoting a system that is 'disgusting' (Crazy for Five O'clock 2013). Meanwhile, Japanese artists on international tours were asked to explain what was going on back home. On 'Le Petit Journal', a French television show, cutesy singer Kyary Pamyu Pamyu took the opportunity of a question about Minegishi to differentiate herself from idols:

In the world of Japanese idols, they are very strict about relationships. It's like – in return for male fans supporting idols, idols must keep themselves away from love and relationships in their private lives ... In my opinion, the job of an idol is more or less to suck up to men, like thinking about what they can do to catch male fans' attention ... What I'm doing is more like an artist rather than an idol.

(Quoted in Kono 2013)

Kyary Pamyu Pamyu, who was at the time being positioned as a global representative of Japanese cute culture (Thomas 2013), differentiated herself from Japanese idol culture, represented by

Minegishi Minami and AKB48. On the global stage, Kyary Pamyu Pamyu, the artist and good cute female performer, spoke out against idols, who are bad cute female performers.

Given this perception of idols generally and AKB48 specifically, it is perhaps not surprising that the subsequent appointment of AKB48 producer Akimoto Yasushi to the executive committee of the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo proved controversial (Japan Trends 2014; Anime News Network 2014). Suddenly, the possibility of AKB48 representing Japan at the opening ceremony of the most prestigious sporting event in the world was all too real. Indeed, Akimoto, who has been accused of abusing positions of power to promote AKB48 in the past (Sankei News 2014), was very soon floating a plan to make his idols central to the opening ceremony. In this plan, the sister groups of AKB48 around the country would be platforms for a selection process to form Japan48, a new group that would perform at the 2020 Summer Olympics (Rocket News 2015a). Faced with Japan48, or Japan presented to the world in the image of AKB48, Matsuko Deluxe could not hold his tongue: 'I absolutely don't want them to perform at the opening ceremony ... As long as they aren't part of the opening or closing ceremony, I don't care what they do, but please use somebody for the opening and closing ceremonies that wouldn't be an embarrassment' (Rocket News 2015b). In short, Japan48 is unsuitable to represent Japan, because it would be nothing but a national form of AKB48. Matsuko Deluxe's comments struck a chord with some, who commented online that 'AKB48 is the shame of Japan', which they claimed to be 'the consensus of Japan' (Rocket News 2015b). Indeed, an online petition against Akimoto and, by extension, AKB48 makes similar claims:

There is a silent majority of Japanese who are apprehensive of a future entertainment industry that emphasizes artists without talent who only push marketing and personal branding and set up special interests and exclusive economic zones ... [AKB48 symbolizes] the Japanese entertainment industry's further decline ... [and] a decline in quality of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

*(Anime News Network 2014)*⁴

It is unclear whether or not there is a national 'consensus' about AKB48, and whether or not the 'silent majority' is with or against them – the petition, for example, received only 13,668 signatures – but it is clear that vocal critics are denouncing these idols as unfit to represent Japan.⁵ For these critics, AKB48 seems to represent Japan in the wrong way, represent the wrong things about Japan, to represent all that is wrong with Japan.

Discourse about national idols is just that, discourse, which media theorist Thomas Lamarre describes as something meant to 'define a historical moment, promote a set of objects, or establish an identity' (Lamarre 2006, p. 365). Contentious national(izing) discourse about idols reveals popular culture to be the terrain of struggle that theorist Stuart Hall always knew it to be. 'National-popular culture,' Hall writes, is 'a battlefield', and the battle is also over definitions of 'the people' (Hall 1998, pp. 451–2). One could not imagine a better example of this dynamic than Matsuko Deluxe claiming that AKB48 does not resonate with 'the hearts of the Japanese' (*Nihonjin no kokoro*) or 'the people' (*kokumin*) (Livedoor 2015). The Japanese word translated here as 'the people' is also translated as 'national' when used as an adjective, as in 'national idols' (*kokumin-teki aidoru*). Matsuko Deluxe's argument, then, is that the members of AKB48 are not national idols and their fans are not the people of Japan. We would do well to remember that this is a position on the battlefield of national-popular culture, which is a terrain of struggle. Like all claims about national idols, it is political and should be critically

assessed rather than taken for granted. This is not, however, what is happening overall. Instead, we are witnessing a moment when national(izing) discourse about media and popular culture is increasingly common.

Inter-nationalism, idol politics and 'Japan'

National(izing) discourse about media and popular culture has snapped into focus in the contemporary moment of what theorist Koichi Iwabuchi calls 'brand nationalism', where governments attempt to brand and promote their nations as a form of public diplomacy (Iwabuchi 2010, p. 90). This is aided and abetted by corporations, which package and market the nation and its culture (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009, pp. 4–5). In this contemporary moment, Iwabuchi calls attention to growing 'inter-nationalism', or the 'reworking and strengthening of the national in tandem with the intensification of cross-border media flows' (Iwabuchi 2010, p. 89). Brand nationalism is an increasingly common and important form of inter-nationalism. We see it at work in the Japanese government's 'Cool Japan' policies, which are intended to promote Japanese media and popular culture and create 'Japan fans' globally (Sugimoto 2013).⁶ We see it in public and private institutions funding the international tours of idols, who are thought to assist in efforts to win the hearts and minds of young people around the world (Arama Japan 2014). We see it in AKB48 operating sister groups in Shanghai, Jakarta, Taipei, Manila and Bangkok; Prime Minister Abe Shinzō asking Akimoto Yasushi, the producer of AKB48, for support; the appointment of Akimoto to the Cool Japan Promotional Council; AKB48 performing at a gala dinner for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, where heads of state hopefully are or become fans (Japan Trends 2013; Sankei News 2014; Rocket News 2015a). The goal of promoting Japanese media and popular culture generally and idols specifically is to generate affection for Japan, which can be capitalized on economically and politically. The politics of idols, or what might be called 'idol politics', is the deployment of idols to capture and hold attention, affect individual and collective bodies and move them to action as fans.

While Japan provides a good example of idol politics, it is certainly not the first or even the best one. Indeed, the Cool Japan policies of the 2000s were anticipated and perhaps inspired by earlier moves in South Korea (Choo 2011, p. 101). After facing bankruptcy, accepting harsh conditions for a bailout from the International Monetary Fund and going into recession in 1997, South Korean president Kim Dae-Jung signed the Culture Industry Promotion Law, which supported media as a growth sector (Kim 2011, p. 336). The following years were marked by notable successes. After his television drama *Winter Sonata* was shown on NHK, a semi-national broadcaster in Japan, actor Bae Yong-Joon experienced phenomenal support from primarily middle-aged women in Japan, who treated 'Yon-sama' as their idol. Previously only one of many idols in South Korea, Bae's major break in Japan led him to be heralded in his home country as 'better than 100 ambassadors' (KBS World 2004). The increased export of Korean television dramas has been linked to a massive uptick in tourism, primarily from Japan (Shin 2010). After the boom in South Korean television dramas came music. In 2012, rapper Psy's 'Gangnam Style' went viral and broke all records with over 2 billion views on YouTube. Psy, who opened the door for a global 'K-pop' craze, appeared with President Park Geun-Hye for a Korea Night function in Switzerland, which drew 400 national and corporate leaders (All K-Pop 2014). In much of the world, K-pop is now associated with idol groups such as Girls' Generation and Big Bang, which are characterized by catchy lyrics, dancey beats and sexy looks (Lie 2015).

The South Korean government's interest in idols is such that communications scholar Yeran Kim calls South Korea the 'Idol Republic' (Kim 2011). Kim draws attention especially to female

idol groups, or 'girl idols' being constructed by 'girl industries', which bring together corporate production and government promotion. In the South Korean media, girl idols are said to have 'girl power', which is not only 'the power of motivating, seducing or interpolating citizens to become involved in the project of global nation building', but also 'the actual *force* that has the effect of bonding various individuals and groups across different genders and generations, projecting a nation's dream of cultural pride in the construction of an imagined community' (Kim 2011, pp. 341–2). The dream is not only of national bonding as an imagined community, but also international competition as one. By Kim's estimation, the government projects its nationalistic ambitions onto girl idols, who 'are expected to bring a renaissance of Korean cultural power on a global scale' (Kim 2011, p. 341). The South Korean media 'persistently defines Korean girl idols' superiority to their Japanese counterparts' and delights in stories of Korean idols 'conquering the nation' of Japan (Kim 2011, pp. 341–2), which points to rising inter-nationalism in idol politics in East Asia.⁷

While Japan noted the regional success of its television dramas, J-pop and idols in the 1990s (Aoyagi 2000; Iwabuchi 2002, chapters 3 and 4), the government was comparatively late and timid to invest in idol politics. Consider for example a 2006 speech by Asō Tarō, who was Japan's minister of foreign affairs at the time. Addressing a room full of cultural producers in Akihabara (home of AKB48), Asō praised the competitiveness of J-pop, which is 'much more than you might imagine', but confirmed that the government had yet to be directly involved in supporting it:

What you in the content business are doing is work that you yourselves have chosen to do, not work that someone – least of all people at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – has asked you to do. It is that fact that is bringing about a steady increase in the number of fans of Japan. We have a grasp on the hearts of young people in many countries, not the least of which being China. What you are doing through your work is something that we over at the Ministry couldn't do if we tried. And that is why I say that you are the people who are the new actors involved with bringing Japanese culture to the world. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs looks forward to building solid partnerships with you in the years to come.

(Asō 2006)

Although Asō realizes that the spread of Japanese media and popular culture is contributing to the growing number of Japan fans and so wants to build partnerships with producers, he admits that the Japanese government is responding to fans and producers, who are the ones driving the spread. Indeed, the government's Cool Japan policies have largely been reactionary. Rather than a direct investment in production or subsidizing professional training, Cool Japan policies have been more concerned with promoting Japanese media and popular culture, or rather responding to global trends such as the rise of manga and anime in Europe and North America. After a series of phenomenal successes from the late 1990s into the mid-2000s, the buzz around Japanese media and popular culture in these places has died down. Rather than being the next big thing, Japan seems to occupy a niche globally and appeal to a small but loyal fan base.

The niche that Japan is associated with is not an entirely positive one. Idols do not always and only attract Japan fans, but can also repulse casual consumers and uninterested parties and convert them into Japan critics. While angry exchanges on bulletin boards and in chat rooms online may appear trivial, journalists also participate in critiquing idols, evaluating Japanese media and popular culture and (re)producing knowledge about Japan. Consider this from Roland Nozomu Kelts, well known for his writings on Japanese media and popular culture:

AKB48's commercial success in Japan is often derided as a sign of the culture's patriarchal infantilization of women, and the girl group's inability to appeal to Western audiences a sign of Japan's increasingly isolated ideas about femininity, sexuality and pop music. Put simply: outside of Japan, AKB48 will never be Psy.

(Kelts 2015)

The perception of sexism as a factor in the production of AKB48 is common and, indeed, sexuality is a key component of the criticism of Japanese idols. For example, in response to news that AKB48 might perform at the opening ceremony of the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo, a Japan-watching website wrote: 'Have our worst dreams come true? ... [W]ill the Opening Ceremony for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games feature a battalion of skimpily clad, underage girls representing Japan?!' (Japan Trends 2014). Note how AKB48 represents not only 'Japan', but also underage sexuality, which, of course, is cause for criticism. In the summer of 2014, Jake Adelstein, well known for his investigative reporting on organized crime in Japan, co-authored an article on the Japanese government making the possession of child pornography illegal. With production, sale and now possession of child pornography all illegal, the premise of the article is that Japan still has a problem with borderline pornographic material, which leads to the following statement about Japan, idols and AKB48:

To some degree, the sexualization of young girls is mainstream in Japan. For example, Japan's most popular and mega-profitable all-female pop group AKB48 includes members as young as 13; and they've posed for ++sexy & semi-nude layouts in Japan's *Weekly Playboy* several times ... The AKB48 members are bound by their contracts to remain celibate while working for the parent company that manages the group, but they often appear in lurid commercials and videos depicting the band members exchanging kisses and singing sexually suggestive lyrics.

(Adelstein and Kubo 2014)

Adelstein goes on to suggest that one of the founders of AKB48 is associated with an organized crime syndicate involved in human trafficking and producing child pornography. Fact checking the often misleading information presented in the article does not reduce its rhetorical power to incite outrage. Adelstein's controversial description of Japan as the 'Empire of Child Pornography' colors the ways in which idols are perceived – not as an attractive aspect of Japanese media and popular culture, but rather a repulsive one. The effects of reports such as this one are far reaching. In response to an April 2015 news report that an 11-year-old girl was a finalist in the selection process to become a member of AKB48 (Wrigley 2015), a group of Japan fans turned critics had the following conversation online:

Poster 1: 'It's almost like they're trying to make sure they have a girl for EVERY possible creepy otaku's taste.'

Poster 2: 'Always felt like the core reason for the project's existence. It's a buffet for [the] chronically enfeebled.'

Poster 3: 'This is a country that only in the last year or so criminalized looking at child porn.'

Poster 2: "'They're especially so nice when they're small – SO THEY CAN'T GET AWAY.'":: all caps in guttural Batman voice::'

Poster 1: 'Just a reminder that this girl is 17 cm shorter than the national average for her age.'

Poster 3: 'One would think that the average Japanese would be appalled.'

Poster 2: 'Well, the majority was just so inured that it never looked like a problem for decades.'

Poster 1: 'One of my university-aged students had the best reaction to that 11 year old being "drafted" into AKB48: "GO! TO! SCHOOL! You don't need to be an idol right now!"'

Poster 4: 'Didn't they have a minimum age requirement ...?'

Poster 2: 'Hey. They need the money. Restrictions are fluid when the heads [of corporations] are desperate. Just another day in J-media.'⁸

Again, the information presented is misleading and often inaccurate, but that does not stop the confident judgment of Japan and Japanese idols and fans. Recall that AKB48 idols sing, dance, act, model and make appearances in person and in the media, but the above discussion seems to imply something else. In this discussion, becoming an idol almost seems like having sex. As the concerned netizens see it, there should be a minimum age of consent, but not in Japan. Following descriptions of that nation as the 'Empire of Child Pornography' (Adelstein and Kubo 2014), the group is not surprised by all this so much as ready to condemn. 'One would think that the average Japanese would be appalled,' writes Poster 3, but no. After all, Poster 2 explains, the people are habituated into not perceiving the abuse for what it is: 'Just another day in J-media.' Here we see a national(izing) discourse about Japanese media and culture, which is perverse, pathological and predatory in its 'Lolita complex', or 'fascination with sexual interaction with young girls' (Adelstein and Kubo 2014).

Things escalate quickly in national(izing) discourse. So it is that, in a video report released by Vice News in July 2015, Jake Adelstein describes Japan as 'one of the most misogynistic, sexist societies ... in the world', a place with 'an incredible tolerance for the sexual exploitation of young girls' (Vice News 2015). The report, titled 'Schoolgirls for Sale in Japan', features award-winning journalist Simon Ostrovsky, who spends most of his time in Akihabara (home of AKB48) observing female idols and female performers who wear costumes and interact with customers in cafés. These women are not underage sex workers, as are some of the others introduced in the report, but as representatives of the entertainment and service industries are positioned as part of larger problems in Japan. Ostrovsky watches vigilantly as fans buy CDs in order to shake the hands of their idols, and allows that it is 'pretty innocent when it is just teenagers meeting teenagers', but then draws attention to one middle-aged man in a suit; the camera zooms in on his face as the background music goes into an Oriental riff; this smiling fan paying to interact with young women is the smoking gun, proof positive of Japanese social and sexual problems. At a café, Ostrovsky and his crew use a hidden camera to listen in on the conversation of a customer and female performer costuming as a schoolgirl, fully expecting to hear negotiations for sex. Although the conversation turns out to be pedestrian, Ostrovsky nevertheless asserts that, '[I]t's hard to overlook the very creepy fact that an adult man has paid for the company of an attractive schoolgirl.' Nothing needs to be illegal, and the costumed performer need not even be a schoolgirl, for the critique to land home. Illegal or not, these interactions are still creepy. The problem is linked to 'Lolita culture' and 'Japanese culture', which effectively inflates the critique of adult male idol fans as creepy (Aoyagi 1999, p. 137) to the entire nation as such.

Beyond journalism, a similar line of critique is on display in an article on Cool Japan policies by feminist academic Laura Miller (2011), who takes as her primary example the 'Ambassadors of Cute' (*kawaii taishi*). Appointed in 2009, the Ambassadors of Cute are three professional female performers in their twenties selected by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) to represent

Japanese fashion, and particularly cute fashion, at fan events around the world. The street fashion of Harajuku, a neighborhood in Tokyo made famous by American singer Gwen Stefani and Japanese singer Kyary Pamyu Pamyu, is on display, as is Lolita fancy dress and the schoolgirl uniform. Given the discourse on the Lolita complex, Lolita fancy dress might be disturbing for those unfamiliar with the values of this female subculture (Gagné 2008), but it is Fujioka Shizuka, a 20-year-old model and actress posing as a schoolgirl, who most unsettles Miller:

Because the schoolgirl motif is such a widely recognized object of sexual fetishization in Japan, one wonders why the MOFA thought that this particular envoy would not raise a few eyebrows ... One suspects that the team of MOFA creators and implementers did not see the similarity to global sex trafficking of young women when they created the Ambassadors of Cute.

(Miller 2011, pp. 20–1)

Here again, as with Jake Adelstein before, female performers serve to imaginatively link Japan to sex trafficking. Not only does the schoolgirl reveal Japan's own fetishism, but she is also marketed to Japan fans around the world, who enjoy 'often sexist and creepy *otaku* [sic] products from Japan' (Miller 2011, p. 19). 'Cool Japan performances,' Miller argues, 'naturalize women and girls as the objects of paternalistic control and desire' (Miller 2011, p. 22). Further, Cool Japan 'essentializes and eroticizes girls and women, putting them into service for the state' (Miller 2011, p. 19). For her part, Fujioka, the female performer as schoolgirl, understands the game and plays along: 'I think it will be in Japan's national interest if there is at least one person in the host country who thinks I'm pretty' (quoted in Kaminishikawara 2009). In all of this, women become what Miller calls 'fantasy-capital' for Japan in the global economy of desire (Miller 2011, p. 23), and Japan a 'pimp' selling young women, or at least the fantasy of sexually available young women, on the global market. If, as Akahori Takeshi, director of public diplomacy at the MOFA, suggests, 'The objective is to promote an understanding of Japan, a better image, or the correct image' (quoted in Ellwood 2010), then he has failed. In its idol politics, from the Ambassadors of Cute to AKB48, Japan seems to critics to represent and promote fetishization of girls and 'pedophilic culture' (Miller 2011, p. 22).

This critique echoes tropes of writing on Japan that have appeared for decades. For example, in 1989, in a report about a Japanese sexual predator and serial killer who targeted little girls, the *Los Angeles Times* drew attention to 'the other side of innocence', the 'Lolita complex', which is 'rampant in Japanese society' (Schoenberger 1989). 'Not only is pre-pubescent, feminine cuteness and innocence enshrined in Japanese popular culture,' the journalist reports from Tokyo, but 'those qualities are routinely peeped at and degraded in the flood of symbols that make up the vulgar side of the contemporary landscape here'. Despite the wakeup call of the horrific crimes, which 'come so close to home':

Japan's love affair with little girls continues unabashed and uncensored. Soft-porn magazines on the racks of neighborhood bookstores still zoom in on that all-time favorite fantasy of the Japanese male: seductive schoolgirls in sailor suit uniforms. Comic books are chock-full of promiscuous characters who look like children. Teen idols in pre-teen dresses squeal pop songs nightly on television variety shows.

(Schoenberger 1989)

The problem in Japan, quite simply, is 'innocence idolized'. To drive this point home, the article ends with a chilling description of a Japanese advertisement for the sex industry, which features drawings of women who look like children; it is an escort service called the 'Idol Republic'

(Schoenberger 1989). While promising to connect the client to a woman between the ages of 20 and 23 – ‘a girl’, the journalist insists – the advertisement is still taken to be a clear indicator of the connections between pedophilia and the sex industry, both of these and idols, and pedophilia, the sex industry and idols and Japan. Once again the Lolita complex is confirmed to be a national sickness in Japan (Schodt 1996, pp. 54–5; Naitō 2010, pp. 326–9; Saitō 2011, p. 6; Norma 2015, p. 85).

While offering necessary interventions, the focus on Japan is so tight in such writing that it risks obscuring the issue more broadly conceived. By way of comparison, consider again another ‘Idol Republic’: South Korea. Communications scholar Yeran Kim argues that girl industries are seen as a productive force for the nation in South Korea. On the one hand, ‘girl bodies are manufactured as cultural content and converted into economic values’, and, on the other hand, the ‘values of girl idols as cultural content are further actively promoted as national cultural resources’ (Kim 2011, pp. 335, 340).⁹ While this production and promotion of female performers in the global economy of desire fits Laura Miller’s critique of national pimping, the South Korean government is not only unashamed, but also in fact proud of its successes, which is a form of what Kim calls ‘Lolita nationalism’ (Kim 2011, pp. 341–2). Lolita here refers to ‘a sexy girl who serves the market needs of the current mediascape’ (Kim 2011, p. 342), which the idol clearly does by attracting and holding attention and moving individual and collective bodies to act as fans. The hope is that the idol fan is also a fan of the nation behind the idol. ‘In this respect,’ Kim explains, ‘girls are shifting in their social position from sexual objects of patriarchal desire into agents of patriotic nationalism, capable of bringing the nation a victory in the global cultural war’ (Kim 2011, p. 342). Therefore: ‘Lolita nationalism has become justified and proliferated in the nation’s neo-cultural imperialist governmentality of girl bodies in response to global competition ... Girl bodies are defined as national property in celebratory tones for the conquering of the global cultural market and exhibition of national power’ (Kim 2011, pp. 342–3). As with Japan, in South Korea, national investment in the girl industries and the global circulation of girl bodies as national(ized) idols leads to public negotiation of sexuality and its limits – as, for example, in 2012, when South Korean authorities threatened to regulate ‘over-sexualized performances by teenage stars’ (Global Times 2012). Despite this, members of a South Korean group of girl idols were detained while entering the United States, where they were suspected of being ‘sex workers’ (ABC 2015). Although nowhere near as pointed as much of the writing on Japanese idols, this incident was an opportunity for the journalist to critique ‘South Korea’s K-pop scene, which has been exported with enormous success across Asia and beyond, [but] is dominated by young girl and boy bands whose members are sometimes as young as 13 or 14 years old’ (ABC 2015). The story is tellingly tagged as one about ‘music’ and ‘sexual offences’. From the case of South Korea, Kim concludes that there is a new global regime of gender in which the bodies of girls and women are controlled not only by regulatory power, but also to capitalize on their ‘productive and seductive power’ (Kim 2011, p. 343). Worldwide we face the phenomenon of girls and women becoming female performers engaged in idol politics. National(izing) discourse that reduces this to a Japanese or South Korean problem – or an East Asian problem, their problem over there, which has nothing to do with us or our nations – makes it difficult to understand and confront global issues.¹⁰

Conclusion

Although the status of the members of AKB48 as national idols is anything but certain, they are often taken as representatives of, or are made to represent, ‘Japan’ in national(izing) discourse. Depending on your position, the critiques of AKB48 idols and fans may sound sensible and ring

true. Critiques of AKB48 as unfit to be national idols – representing Japan in the wrong way, or representing the wrong things about Japan – may resonate. Conversely, perhaps AKB48 appear to you to be national idols representing all that is wrong with Japan. Maybe they reveal Japanese 'culture's patriarchal infantilization of women' (Kelts 2015). Perhaps you share the impression that adult male fans of idols in Japan are 'otaku' harboring 'indecent fantasies' (Aoyagi 1999, p. 137), or that fans of Japanese idols globally want a pass for enjoying 'often sexist and creepy *otaku* [sic] products from Japan' (Miller 2011, p. 19). Perhaps AKB48's business of selling access to and interactions with idols seems dangerously close to sex work and sexual exploitation (Adelstein and Kubo 2014; Vice News 2015). Perhaps Cool Japan policies promoting media and popular culture seem also to be promoting the fantasy of sexually available young women in Japan (Miller 2011). Perhaps you agree that idols appeal to socially and sexually dysfunctional men, especially Japanese men, and further that Japan is a socially and sexually dysfunctional nation. In idols, you might see the 'Japanese Lolita complex' (Saitō 2011, p. 6), fetishization of girls as a national sickness (Schoenberger 1989; Schodt 1996, pp. 54–5; Naitō 2010, pp. 326–9; Norma 2015, p. 85), or Japan as the 'Empire of Child Pornography' (Adelstein and Kubo 2014).

While not dismissing these points out of hand, it is clear that they shade into national(izing) discourse about Japanese weirdness and perversity, if not outright Japan bashing. If done uncritically, scholars (re)producing knowledge about Japan risk falling into a familiar Orientalism (Said 1978), where Japan is the sexually deviant other to our normal and our nation. In taking the nation as the unit of analysis, scholars also reproduce the boundaries of the nation as imagined community. As we have seen in the case of AKB48, idols are often supported by small numbers of core fans, not the nation as a whole; moves to position these idols, who are ultimately operating in a niche, as representatives of the nation are highly contested. When scholars insist that they are discussing 'Japan' and 'Japanese' media and popular culture when discussing idols generally and AKB48 specifically, they are guilty of what theorist Koichi Iwabuchi calls 'methodological nationalism', which 'unambiguously and uncritically regards the nation as the unit of analysis, thus disregarding the diversity and differences within national society, and the transnational connections that cannot be dissociated from it' (Iwabuchi 2010, p. 93). Like everyone else, scholars are capable of contributing to and invigorating national(izing) discourse, whether it be through critiques of 'Weird Japan' or celebrations of 'Cool Japan'. Following Iwabuchi's insight about 'the cultural imagination's reinscription of exclusive national boundaries' (Iwabuchi 2010, p. 94), scholars must be critically aware of the dynamic struggle to imagine nations. Even in something as seemingly innocent as discussing AKB48 as Japanese idols, national idols in Japan or Japan as a nation of idols, we are involved in that struggle.

Ultimately, approaching the members of AKB48 – or any other idols, for that matter – and their fans as representatives of 'Japan' obscures more than it reveals. Discourse about nations takes much for granted, and in fact limits our understanding of the issues at hand, which makes necessary interventions difficult. The limitations of national(izing) discourse are something that historian Naoki Sakai has been emphasizing for decades:

We really have to shift the scope of the problematic away from whether one speaks for or against Japan. Rather, I would like to create a different framework in which the simple binary alternative of either speaking for or against Japan, of locating oneself inside or outside Japan, is shown to be nonsensical and irrelevant.

(Harootunian and Sakai 1999, p. 638)

The point is not to speak for or against Japan – to attack or defend Japan – but rather to realize that such discourse in fact constructs 'Japan'. Following Sakai, the new framework must go

beyond reductive positioning of ‘us’ and ‘them’ to allow for more nuanced critiques of culture, idols and cultural and idol politics. As communications scholar Yeran Kim argues in her work on South Korea, ‘[C]onsidering girl sexuality merely in a Western framework is not comprehensive enough an approach to account for the diversity and complexity of the gender politics at work in capitalist exploitation of ... affective labor in the transnational mediascape’ (Kim 2011, p. 343). Well said. In the spirit of Sakai, it is also necessary to question the ‘Western’ in ‘Western framework’, or the default position of critique. This potentially opens up pathways for developing a better understanding of the economics and politics of idols, who are part of the global phenomenon of celebrity and power (Marshall 2014).

Notes

- 1 See www.oricon.co.jp/rank/js/y/2014. Unless otherwise indicated, all references to sales figures for AKB48 in this chapter come from the Oricon website.
- 2 The scope of the analysis is necessarily international – inter-national, between nations – because ‘Japan’ emerges as idols circulate and generate feedback (Novak 2013, pp. 10 and 24).
- 3 See http://stage48.net/wiki/index.php/Senbatsu_Sousenkyo. Unless otherwise indicated, all references to election results for AKB48 in this chapter come from the Stage48 website.
- 4 See www.change.org/p/no-to-yasushi-akimoto. The problem of idols catering to ‘special interests’ and establishing ‘exclusive economic zones’ suggests a Japan where a peculiar set of fan interests dominate, alternative creativity is suffocated and what is on display and for sale in Japan is completely out of synch with the people generally and unwelcome overseas.
- 5 Who exactly is suitable to represent Japan is unclear, but one can imagine many possibilities. Matsuko Deluxe prefers Morning Musume, an idol group that was widely popular in the early 2000s (Livedoor 2015), while others suggest singer-songwriter Sheena Ringo, who ideally would be backed by traditional Japanese dancers and festival floats (Japan Trends 2014).
- 6 For example, a report titled ‘Measure and Framework for Strengthening Japan’s Public Diplomacy: To Increase the Number of People Understanding Japan and the Number of “Japan Fans”’ was submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA 2008).
- 7 Not to be left out, in 2015, China unveiled an idol group called the 56 Flowers during a national broadcast on CCTV. The members, aged 16 to 23, were said to represent the ethnicities and women of China and convey the nation’s culture and positive energy. Furthermore, China’s national idols were made distinct from competitors; the producer of the 56 Flowers told Chinese media that the academy-educated singers and dancers will not appeal by acting cute or sexy, as, one infers, Japanese and South Korean idols do (Huang 2015).
- 8 Although this discussion took place as a series of public posts online, the posters may have assumed that they were engaged in private conversation and will thus remain anonymous. Posts were in English and made by three women and one man, all of whom were in their twenties and had lived in, studied or expressed interest in Japan.
- 9 Something similar is occurring in Japan, where commentators write about ‘idol national wealth’ (*aidoru kokufu*) (Sakai 2014).
- 10 It should be noted that analyses of Google trends reveal ‘a substantial amount of interest in youth-oriented pornography in the United States’ (Walker et al. 2016, p. 676), despite many of the most vocal critics of Japanese idols and the ‘Japanese Lolita complex’ hailing from that country. However tempting it may be to project global issues onto Japan and contain them there safely away from us, this is not entirely honest or helpful.

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Media idols and the regime of truth about national identity in post-3.11 Japan

Yunuen Ysela Mandujano-Salazar

Reflecting on the relation between power, knowledge and truth in societies, Michel Foucault argued that:

Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its régime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true ... [Truth] is the object, under diverse forms, of immense diffusion and consumption (circulating through apparatuses of education and information whose extent is relatively broad in the social body, notwithstanding certain strict limitations); it is produced and transmitted under the control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army, writing, media), lastly, it is the issue of a whole political debate and social confrontation (‘ideological’ struggles).

(Foucault 1980, pp. 131–2)

In Japan, the regime of truth about Japanese national identity between the 1960s and 1980s – a period of great economic development at the origin of the ‘national middle class’ myth – followed the ideas of *nihonjinron* – the discourse about Japanese uniqueness. Originating in Japanese intellectual circles and then sponsored by governments, corporations and media that disseminated it within society, this discourse instituted as truth assumptions about Japanese homogeneity and inherent ethos.¹ The *nihonjinron* rhetoric operated by covering itself with a scientific veil, generalizing conclusions from anthropological, psychological and sociological studies under the assumption of Japanese society’s homogeneity. It established a genetic determinism that promoted an ethnocentrism by which Japan was placed above the rest of Asian nations. The attitude and characteristic behavior of Japanese people was said to be shaped by ‘groupism’ in the context of a vertically integrated paternalist society (Nakane 1973). This vertical structure inside the groups was said to be nurtured by paternalistic relations that promoted *amae*, an emotional dependence toward superiors, which strengthened the relationship between them and subordinates (Doi 1981, 1988). The avoidance of conflict and shame, the strength of spirit, the ability to resurge from tragic events, a unique thought process reflected in the language structure and patterns of non-verbal communication, a unique aesthetic sense, and a syncretic inclination, were

essential elements of the Japanese identity that this ideology endorsed (Befu 2001; Lebra 2004). And all these characteristics were promoted as the key elements behind Japan's resurgence as an economic power after its defeat in the Pacific War.

However, by the end of the twentieth century, *nihonjinron* had been greatly discussed and discredited within academic circles. Questioning the discourse's theoretical precepts, scholars unveiled its ideological nature (Befu 2001; Iida 2002; Koschmann 1997; Lie 2001; Yoshino 2005) and delegitimized its power of 'truth'. Furthermore, Japanese society had clearly changed. Amid a deep economic crisis, the once celebrated national middle class began to shrink, revealing Japan's social diversity and its deteriorating traditional ideals hidden for many years under the prevailing truth of *nihonjinron* and economic success.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, multiple subcultural groups developed in Japan. Lacking the economic environment to be embraced in the formal and permanent job market, without a strong indoctrination into the 'true' Japanese identity, and amidst increased accessibility to foreign ideas through the rapidly developing internet, young Japanese started to reject traditional models of national and gender identity. In this context, the conditions of an inverting population pyramid – with gradually fewer youths and a greater proportion of seniors to support – and an increase in the number of unmarried young adults were putting more stress on policy makers.² Reacting to these problems, Japanese right-wing politicians and conservative citizens began to express the need to strengthen national identity and traditional values.

As Japan was dealing with these internal circumstances, Japanese 'pop' culture was gaining a growing share in international markets, creating a subculture of 'Japan fans'. The increasing fascination around the world for Japanese cultural products was perceived among Japanese policy makers as a potential key for revitalizing the national economy. Thus, in 2010, the government established the Cool Japan Office to coordinate the promotion of Japanese culture, essentially aiming to expand its impact on foreign markets (Cabinet Office Government of Japan 2010). Nonetheless, one year later, after the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake and subsequent tsunami and nuclear disaster – events commonly referred as '3.11' – threatened to aggravate the country's economic and social problems, the Japanese power elites refocused the policies of cultural promotion toward Japan, aiming to revitalize national identity, while continuing to attract foreign tourists and consumers with its mix of renewed traditional qualities and already admired postmodern culture. As a result, a wide-ranging domestic media campaign began spreading messages about Japan and *Japaneseness*, making extensive use of local celebrities to endorse patriotic discourses wrapped in contemporary, non-aggressive and slightly globalized images, supporting the everyday non-political representation of a traditional national identity and easing their renaturalization in society.

This chapter relies on Foucault's notion of regime of truth to discuss the Japanese domestic media discourses circulating during the post-3.11 period. It argues that Japanese power elites have been using popular celebrities as ideological tools to interpellate society and establish a patriotic discourse that takes the main ideas of *nihonjinron* in order to create a social environment in which critical and controversial policies related to Japan's economic and international stance can be adopted without much resistance. By performing a comprehensive analysis of the context in which these messages appeared, as well as of the narratives about the nation related to a sample of powerful celebrities, this chapter seeks to elucidate the discursive regime of truth that was established in post-3.11 Japanese society. The discussion presented here is built substantially on an intensive interpretative textual analysis of media contents produced between 2008 and 2015, as well as on information and interviews obtained during 11 months of fieldwork in Japan performed in three different periods between 2012 and 2015.

The context: Cool Japan, Japan Endless Discovery and 3.11

In a previous work on the development of Cool Japan policies (Mandujano 2013), I argued that in the early 2000s, as Japan was trying to revive its economy, China and South Korea were experiencing an accelerated industrialization that was threatening Japan's position as the number one economic powerhouse in the region. Notwithstanding that, as early as 2002, Douglas McGray had already observed that Japan was reinventing itself as a superpower through the global dissemination of its popular culture. He referred to this phenomenon as 'Japan's Gross National Cool' and further suggested that Japan could be expected to make use of the soft power derived from the popularity of its culture to 'serve political and economic ends' (McGray 2002, p. 53). Despite this global recognition, the Japanese government had not, paradoxically, been actively involved in the expansion of the country's cultural influence. 'Sometimes we come to know ourselves less through our own efforts than through the actions of others', begins a report of the Economic Research Department of the Japan External Trade Organization (2005, p. 1). This and other official documents (see Keizai Sangyōshō (2003, 2004) clearly suggest that the attention attracted by McGray's article was what prompted the government to first acknowledge this fact, subsequently coining the term 'Cool Japan' and beginning to consider content industries as strategic areas for economic policies.

The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI)³ was the agency responsible for conducting the adequate research and planning of policies related to Cool Japan. Soon, it reported on the strategies for cultural internationalization adopted by other countries and stated that, while 'national contents, as an industry, had been neglected domestically, because they were strongly perceived as things for kids or for play'⁴ (Keizai Sangyōshō 2003, p. 21), other Asian nations were already adopting policies to support their respective content industries and were profiting from them, putting pressure on Japan's popularity abroad (Keizai Sangyōshō 2004).

The most immediate threat was the 'Korean Wave', which was the result of policies adopted by the South Korean government to work closely with cultural producers and corporations in order to promote cultural exports, tourism and its national brands around Asia and, gradually, in other markets.⁵ Between 2002 and 2009, the Korean Wave 'hit' Japan, turning various sectors of the Japanese population into avid consumers of South Korean products and media contents. The first cultural product to open the Japanese market was the television drama *Winter Sonata*, embraced mainly by a sector of middle-aged women. Then, Korean idols – such as BoA and Tohoshinki – began setting records in the Japanese music industry,⁶ appealing to younger audiences by using a multicultural image and embracing the Japanese language and culture. By 2009, South Korean cosmetic brands had made their way to the Japanese malls, and Shinjuku – the Korean town in Tokyo – had become a trendy place for Japanese people. Tourism from Japan to South Korea also greatly increased due to the rush of Japanese women who were fans of Korean artists and had developed a taste for South Korean food and beauty products (Mandujano 2013).⁷

In June 2010, METI responded by establishing the Creative Industries Promotion Office 'Cool Japan', which would be in charge of the planning and application of strategies to promote the development of the entire sector related to cultural production (Keizai Sangyōshō 2012). Shortly before this, in the midst of the Korean Wave and the increasing tourism from Japan to Korea, the Japanese media reported that the Japan Tourism Agency (JTA) – part of the Ministry of Land Infrastructure Transport and Tourism (MLIT) – had designated the Japanese idol group Arashi as the 'Leader of national tourism' (*Kankō rikkoku navigētā*) for the campaign *Japan Endless Discovery*. At that time, the five-member male group was nationally acknowledged as the most

popular and successful act that also had a significant number of fans in East and South East Asia (Mandujano 2013, 2014a, 2014b). These were the reasons openly stated by the JTA for Arashi's selection as the 'face of Japan', in the hope that the group could help increase domestic tourism (Kankōchō 2010a; Kankō Keizai Shimbun 2010). Accordingly, a few strategic actions were taken by MLIT and economic elites to capitalize on the popularity of the group and use it as an ambassador for the Japanese people.⁸

In September of that year, the JTA published and distributed a free guidebook among all elementary, middle and high schools in Japan, explicitly stating its aim to inspire in young generations the love for their country and the desire to work for its constant improvement – and implicitly targeting an increase in domestic tourism (Kankōchō 2010b). The book was aptly called *Nippon no Arashi (The Arashi/Storm of Japan)*.⁹ The narrative of the book was focused on rediscovering the country's natural, cultural and human national treasures throughout all regions and corners of Japan. However, instead of being presented as a boring and evident indoctrination by the government, the guide book adopted the form of an idol photobook, showing the group in different tourist spots across the country, interacting with local people and enjoying various aspects of national culture (Mandujano 2014a, 2014b). Clearly, it was capitalizing on Arashi's popularity to appeal to youngsters through very affable and intimate interviews and reports on fieldtrips. The messages purportedly written by Arashi members were very straightforward in their aim to boost national sentiments among young Japanese and, in a more veiled manner, to persuade them to favor national products and services over foreign ones:

Japan is very beautiful and Japanese people are very kind. Before, saying these words would have made us blush, but today we can say them honestly.

(*Arashi 2011, p. 4*)

We want to know more and more about this Japan that we are living in; we also want to transmit this feeling to the children of the future.

(*Arashi 2011, p. 5*)

We have contemplated true globalization, but the best way to get close to the world is to move forward while having at the very core of ourselves the thoughts of Japan, our town, our family and ourselves. Right now, what we have to do is to be truly proud of being Japanese.

(*Arashi 2011, p. 9*)

At the time, this strategy was rather independent from the incipient Cool Japan policy. The ministry in charge was different and the central objective was to regain domestic interest in Japan as a tourist destination through a heavily ideological campaign that highlighted the richness of Japan's regional practices and products, while simultaneously emphasizing shared Japanese values and the uniqueness of the country's national culture. Furthermore, the campaign ambassador was a mainstream group inside Japan – unlike the Cool Japan phenomena, which represented subcultures within the country. Also, in 2010, the JTA released a small-scale campaign in East and South East Asia, which targeted very different and specific foreign consumer groups than those targeted by the global Cool Japan campaign. Likewise, using Arashi as key ambassadors, this campaign relied on appealing to the growing sector of Asians with a high disposable income – Asia's new rich – through images of high-end brands and products available in Japanese metropolises, while promoting the exotic and exquisiteness of Japanese conventional touristic spots, food and crafts.

However, shortly after the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake of March 11, 2011 caused one of the most devastating nuclear disasters in recent history, the Cool Japan Advisory Council – a group of experts composed of business people, scholars, journalists and representatives from the different governmental ministries that had been working with the government’s endorsement since 2010 – responded with a strategy meaningfully called *Creating a New Japan, Tying together ‘culture and industry’ and ‘Japan and the world’* (Cool Japan Advisory Council 2011). As I have discussed elsewhere (Mandujano 2013, 2014a, 2014b), this proposal implied a refocus of the objectives and measures of the Cool Japan policies to promote more ‘traditional’ aspects of Japanese culture and values. This plan resulted in the reinforcement and dissemination of the most ideological aspects of the campaign started by the JTA throughout all national media. From this moment onwards, the JTA campaign would also become part of the global Cool Japan policy, following homogeneous and reiterative narratives about values – such as solidarity, self-sacrifice, persistence, calm amid crisis, strength of spirit, civility and love for the nation – that were identified as ‘national’, ‘traditional’ and ‘inherent’ to Japanese people. To this end, local media celebrities, like Arashi, were to play a leading role in the propagation of the messages of Japanese elites.

Idols turned ambassadors of the nation

The relevance of popular media culture in contemporary societies cannot be ignored. As Gramsci (2009) put it, cultural texts are particularly useful ‘safe escapes’ to naturalize ideas within a society. The most popular of these can achieve a great level of influence, making them relevant elements in government strategies.

In Japan, idols are multifunctional celebrities that, by means of their ability to attract and maintain the attention of audiences, are at the core of Japanese media discourse (Galbraith and Karlin 2012). The following analysis of Arashi’s rise as the ‘face of Japan’ will illustrate how such idols can be effectively used by Japanese elites to interpellate people into the national discourse they try to establish as truth.

Arashi – formed by Ōno Satoshi, Sakurai Shō, Aiba Masaki, Ninomiya Kazunari and Matsumoto Jun – made its official debut in the Japanese media in 1999. Its public role expanded within the first five years thanks to numerous musical releases, concert tours, presentations in music and variety television shows, the participation of its members as actors in television dramas, movies and theater, regular appearances in idol magazines, endorsements of different products and the hosting of their own television and radio shows. This media presence initially established Arashi as a typical mainstream popular idol group with a core audience of mostly young adult women and teenagers (Mandujano Salazar 2009). However, between 2004 and 2009, as South Korean idols entered the Japanese market, Arashi started to evolve in order to appeal to a greater share of the population.

In 2004, Arashi was designated as the face of the annual charity program *24 jikan terebi* produced by the Nippon Television Network Corporation (NTV), one of the major private broadcasting corporations in Japan. The audience of this show is consistently wide-ranging, so its participation allowed Arashi to show a socially conscious and more mature image not only to regular followers, but also to people who did not know them. The same year, Aiba Masaki became host in a variety show – *Tensai! Shimura Dōbutsuen* (NTV) – targeted mainly at children. Between 2005 and 2007, Arashi was given a regular corner in the family-oriented variety program of another private broadcasting corporation – *mago mago Arashi* (Fuji TV) – in which they visited regular families and spent a whole day with them taking the role of grandchildren to older couples, or of child-minders and cooks to young couples with children. The year 2006 was particularly busy for the group. Sakurai Shō started anchoring the weekday news program *News*

Zero (NTV), breaking completely with the stereotype of idol and reaching to adult social sectors as an intellectual young newscaster. Ninomiya Kazunari was granted one of the main roles in the Hollywood production *Letters from Iwo Jima*, and was praised in the media for his personification of the feelings of Japanese soldiers during one of the last battles fought by Japan in the Pacific War. Finally, Arashi made its first tour outside Japan, visiting South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand, and participating in the Asia Song Festival as the representative of Japan.¹⁰ In 2008, the debut of Ōno Satoshi as *geijutsuka* (artist),¹¹ with an exhibition of his sculptures and illustrations in Tokyo, further expanded the interest of diverse sectors of the Japanese public in the group.

By the end of 2008, Arashi was at the top of the music rankings (Recording Industry Association of Japan 2009), the group's supporters were more evenly distributed among men and women of different age clusters, and the media had begun to refer to the five members as the 'national idols' (*kokuminteki aidoru*). In 2009, this adjective was increasingly used when referring to the group, even more so after it established numerous records in the national music industry (Recording Industry Association of Japan 2010).¹² In 2010, the five men's status as national representatives was formally endorsed, as they became the 'face of Japan' designated by the MLIT through the JTA campaign.

Analyzing the specific context in which Arashi acquired its label of 'national', it becomes evident that this development came at a moment when Japanese elites were coping with the menace of Korean counterparts actively seeking to strengthen their soft power and advance in the Asian markets by means of the Korean Wave and, more importantly, dangerously challenging Japanese cultural productions in the national market. Nonetheless, their designation cannot be seen just as a result of the recent popularity of Arashi and the pressure from foreign competition.

The five members of the group were embodying something other than typical idols, who symbolize the energy of youth, attractiveness, genuineness and freshness, thus contrasting with the adult world (Aoyagi 2005; Galbraith and Karlin 2012; Sakai 2003). They were becoming ambassadors of and for their society. Five men in their late twenties, they were able to make numerous Japanese children, teenagers, adults, men and women identify with them and with the messages they represented. They were still trendy idols and entertainers, but they were also young adults interested in the same issues as the rest of society, getting involved in productions related to social and traditional culture topics. Furthermore, while they represented the epitome of Japanese male attractiveness and young masculinity, they also promoted the values of traditional Japanese manhood, such as stoic work ethic, group orientation, vertical society orientation, and *amae* in their relations (Mandujano 2014a, 2014b).

***Japaneseness* endorsed by the national idols in post-3.11 media**

The natural disaster that had devastated the north-east part of Japan also signified the threat of a major general crisis, as expressed by the Cool Japan Advisory Council when it called all ministries and Japanese people to work together to achieve a quick rebuild of the country in terms of both infrastructure and national spirit (Cool Japan Advisory Council 2011). From that moment on, the members of Arashi became leading media personalities in numerous productions related to the restoration of Japan and its national spirit (Mandujano 2014a). For example, in that eventful 2011, as early as April 8, the group performed in a special concert called *Uta de tsunagō* (*Let's connect through songs*) produced by the national public broadcasting corporation NHK (Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai), in which the members expressed their belief in the strength of Japan and invited the audience to do so as well. In the same month, a commercial spot for a mobile phone company had the members referring to Japanese people as 'gentle, hardworking and a bit shy', following the same narrative as the book *Nippon no Arashi* about wanting to know more about

their country and to connect with its people. In June, *Nippon no Arashi* was published with the aim of selling it around the country to raise funds for the victims of the earthquake. In July, *Message from Japan*, a video produced by the JTA, was broadcast on the Japan National Tourism Organization's website,¹³ presenting Arashi as ambassadors of Japanese people's gratitude for the support the nation was receiving from around the world, while also showing that the country was quickly recovering.

Also since 3.11, Arashi's song *furusato* (homeland) was promoted as an anthem of national bonding and pride in multiple contents produced by NHK and in Arashi's diverse activities.¹⁴ Drawing a scene of someone who is contemplating the sunset, reminiscing about his/her hometown where his/her loved ones live amid the mountains and the sea, where he/she can be completely honest and where people help each other through difficult times working towards a bright future, the song clearly expresses messages aimed at the strengthening of national identity and spirit through the evocation of allegedly traditional national values, aesthetic sense and imagery.¹⁵

Between November 2011 and December 2013, NHK produced a sequence of special documentaries called *Arashi no asu ni kakeru tabi* (*Arashi's journeys that build the bridge for tomorrow*). These were television programs hosted by Arashi and presented in a hybrid format of documentary and variety show: the members of the group went to diverse places in the country, reported on topics related to Japanese culture and interviewed common people in a cheery and entertaining fashion. The first episodes were focused on presenting the richness of Japanese traditional culture throughout the country – arts, customs, cuisine, relation with nature – as well as emphasizing the skills, talents, strength and courage of Japanese people. In the show's 2011 and 2012 episodes, Arashi visited towns in the prefectures hit by the tsunami on March 11, 2011 – Miyagi, Ibaraki, Iwate – and others linked to traditional cultural elements, such as Kyoto, Okinawa, Kochi, Saitama, Wakayama, Saga and Toyama. In 2013, the members visited Okayama, Gunma, Fukushima and Iwate, on this occasion aiming to show 'the seeds of hope that support the future of Japan' by focusing on groups of high schoolers who were investing their time and effort in technological or scientific projects. These contents were basically the television version of *Nippon no Arashi* regarding the narratives related to Japanese cultural, natural and human richness and the deeper patriotic discourses embedded in them.

Also in 2013, the members of Arashi were once again designated as the main personalities and MCs on *24 jikan terebi* (NTV), which this time had 'Japan' as its theme and 'Japan ...? The nature of this country' (*Nippontte? Kono kuni no katachi*) as its catchphrase. During the public designation of the group, the members explained that they intended to reflect – and make Japanese people reflect – on the unique and particular features of their nation and on the nature of being Japanese. The commercial spot for the event showed the idols in different situations arguably depicting typical Japanese behavior.

Along with the video representations, a voice-over described the behaviors as follows: Scene 1, 'Japanese people cannot say no and always help others; even if they are not grateful, we help them; that is our true self. For the sake of all Japanese people, give your best'; Scene 2, 'Japanese are thoughtful; we think that consideration to others is the energy that moves the world. For the sake of all Japanese people, give your best'; Scene 3, 'Japanese apologize a lot, but what is wrong with that? Good people are good people, let's be proud! For the sake of all Japanese people, give your best'; Scene 4, 'Japanese compromise; before oneself, we think about the other. Life is not about gains and setbacks, nor about winners and losers. For the sake of all Japanese people, give your best'; Scene 5, 'Japanese are sensitive; we look for balance here and there; because we are a little fragile, our spirits get tired. For the sake of all Japanese people, give your best'.¹⁶

In 2015, Arashi's event *Waku waku gakkō*¹⁷ had as a topic 'Japanese culture in the four seasons of the year'. There, the members performed as school teachers in front of fans, teaching about traditions such as summer festivals, tea ceremony and end-of-the-year celebrations. The same year, Arashi's music album was called *Japonism* and in its promotion activities the members expressed that they aimed to 'represent Japan's magnificence' through music, lyrics and performances.

These are just a few examples of the way in which, after March 11, 2011, Arashi became increasingly visible in media productions that clearly stated its objective to show the beauty, uniqueness or significance of the Japanese environment, culture and society, openly evoking a discourse on *Japaneseness* that resembles the *nihonjinron*, but that is 'sanitized' by the non-political and largely positive image of the idols.

The media promotion of Japan through Arashi is evident to the audience, but it is not necessarily perceived as ideological or calculated. Japanese participants in interviews I conducted during fieldwork noticed the fact that the group was being constantly called 'national' or the 'face of Japan', but followed the same reasoning as was implicit in the media discourse: Arashi was called 'national' because it was very popular inside and outside Japan and because the members represented 'Japanese traditional values'. At the same time, since they were the 'national idols', their close association with Japan in many media contents was perceived as 'natural'. When asked to elaborate on the national values represented by Arashi, informants mentioned peacefulness, respect, hard work, stoicism, sensibility, persistence, kindness and skillfulness.

This suggests that a portion of Japanese people – those who consume the texts related to Arashi – have been interpellated by ideologies of national identity drawing from elements of the *nihonjinron* discourse represented by the group. It can also be argued that these ideologies have been naturalized in media consumers' daily lives, so they no longer question why there are so many continuing references to the nation and who is behind them.

In the place of a conclusion: Japan's new security legislation and possible political aims behind the discursive regime of truth about national identity

This analysis of the trajectory of Arashi as national idol has helped map the development of Japanese elites' interest in the promotion of a discourse on national identity. It has revealed a widespread domestic media discourse on *Japaneseness* that aims to reinstall as truth the values and social ties related to the strongly criticized ideology of the *nihonjinron*, in order to use such national-spirit or patriotic-sentiment capital to lessen the diverse crises Japan has been facing. While this has been particularly true since the events of 3.11, an expansion of national spirit and union has other potential uses.

The fact that the main reason behind Arashi's extensive media power and popularity is the support they receive from Japanese people, gives the impression that Japanese society itself has selected them as ambassadors, facilitating the process of interpellation. By embedding the patriotic discourse in the idols' affable and non-political images, the political and ideological purposes of the bureaucratic, media and economic elites and their control over the dominant messages found in the idols' narratives remain disguised, making the discourse more easily accepted not only by local, but also by foreign audiences.

If, as Foucault (1980) argued, there is, in each society, a regime of truth produced by multiple forms of constraints that determine which discourses are accepted and which are rejected, then this is the regime of truth in the realm of national identity operating in post-3.11 Japan. The recurrence of narratives containing the same discourse about Japan and Japanese people

produced by diverse power institutions and wrapped in diverse disguises has allowed their naturalization in Japanese society in such a way that people are compelled to choose between complying with the promoted ideas or facing social judgment for not being a good Japanese person.

Such ideological constraint is relevant in a political environment like the one Japan has been experiencing in the post-3.11 period, particularly since December 2012, when Abe Shinzō took office as prime minister of Japan with the recovery of the national economy and the normalization of Japan's international status as a sovereign and powerful nation in all its rights as its main agenda.

Abe, a politician of the Liberal Democratic Party, a major conservative force, had already been in office between 2006 and 2007, when he had to quit due to health issues. He had always expressed his patriotic – his detractors say ‘nationalist’ – stance. In 2006, just before he was elected prime minister for the first time, his book *Towards a beautiful country: For a confident and proud Japan (Utsukushii kuni he. Jishin to hokori no moteru Nihon he)*¹⁸ was published. In it, he defined himself as a conservative with an open mind, sharing his thoughts on how Japanese society should be (Abe 2006). During his 2012 campaign, Abe's slogan was ‘Restore Japan’ (*Nihon wo torimodosu*), appealing to the much needed infrastructural, economic, social and emotional restoration after 3.11, but also referring to the reinstatement of Japan's international position in military and international spheres. He believed that Japan had to move from a ‘passive pacifism’ to a ‘proactive pacifism’. With this aim, one of his main outspoken goals was to get approval for a reinterpretation of Article 9 of the Japanese constitution to allow Japanese military involvement in affairs implying the defense of the nation's interests.

On September 19, 2015, despite recurrent civil demonstrations since the Japanese Cabinet had approved a new interpretation of the constitution in July 2014 (NHK 2014; Sieg and Takenaka 2014; Yamaguchi 2014), the House of Councilors passed a bill by which a new security legislation would allow Japan to participate in military joint actions aimed at defending Japan or its allies (*Japan News* 2015). This was seen by some as a symbolic turn of the nation's pacifist stance, which has been an essential feature of postwar Japanese national identity (*Asahi Shimbun* 2015). The official position, however, has constantly denied that it is such a case, emphasizing that the change only means that the government will be able to actively protect its citizens in case of an attack (Abe 2015; Yoshida and Mie 2014).

In this context, the reinforcement of national identity, particularly among sectors of citizens who did not live in the war – who are the main consumers of Arashi's texts – could be used by elites to convince them of the need for this kind of controversial policy, or at least to calm the social atmosphere in the name of the protection of the nation.

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Notes

- 1 For more on the *nihonjinron* of the 1960s–1980s as a cultural nationalism phenomenon, see Befu (2001) and Yoshino (2005).
- 2 According to data from the 2000 Population Census, in five years, the strata of older people had increased by 25.6 percent, while the strata of people 15 years old or less had decreased by 7.7 percent

- (Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2001a). Adding to this, the number of people between 25 and 34 years old who were married had decreased (Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2001b).
- 3 In Japanese 'Keizai Sangyōshō'. In the main text, I will refer to it as METI, but, as it publishes different materials in English and in Japanese, the references are under either name, according to the language in which the documents were published.
 - 4 All textual citations from materials originally in Japanese have been translated by the author.
 - 5 For discussions focused on the Korean Wave, see Chua and Iwabuchi (2008), Fuhr (2016), Huang (2011) D. Shim (2006) and S. Shim (2008).
 - 6 BoA, a solo singer, had been the first Korean artist to have a million-seller in Japan, while Tohoshinki, a male quintet, conquered multiple monthly first-place singles and albums, rivaling Japan's most popular idol groups (Recording Industry Association of Japan 2002, 2009).
 - 7 According to monthly statistics from the Korea Tourism Organization (2013), in January of 2003 – before the arrival of the Korean Wave to Japan – Japanese female visitors were just 41 percent of the 153,703 Japanese who entered South Korea; however, by January 2009, they were almost 59 percent and the total number of tourists from Japan had increased to around 200,000.
 - 8 For a comprehensive analysis on the development of the project of Cool Japan, see Mandujano (2013).
 - 9 *Arashi* means 'storm'.
 - 10 The Asia Song Festival is an annual event organized by the Korea Foundation for International Culture Exchange and supported by the Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism as part of the South Korean government efforts to locate this country as the cultural leader in Asia. See http://asiasongfestival.com/2015/html/history_01.php (September 14, 2015).
 - 11 The term *geijutsuka* refers to people who produce some artistic piece (painters, illustrators, sculptors, photographers). This term is different from *geinōjin* – performer – which is used as a general reference for actors, singers, etc.
 - 12 Artist of the year, Top 5 best-selling singles of the year, Album of the year and Top 2 best-selling music videos of the year.
 - 13 www.jnto.go.jp/ (video no longer available).
 - 14 The song had been originally presented on December 31, 2010, as part of the special performances that Arashi had prepared as Master of Ceremonies of the *Kōhaku Uta Gassen*, an annual gala concert held since 1951 by the NHK. Currently, the *Kōhaku*, as is usually known, is a live broadcast of four and a half hours during the last night of the year and is regarded as one of the most important media events, usually having the highest annual ratings. Artists to perform are chosen by a committee designated by the NHK and are announced in a ceremony some weeks before. The selection is supposed to reflect the participation of the most popular artists in a national sense, this is, including the preferences of all sectors of people. For this reason, all media – including the private corporations – report on the event. The format of the show is a musical competition between the red (women) team and the white (men) team. Another important selection is that of the masters of ceremonies, who also act as 'captains' of each team; these roles are awarded to celebrities who were 'nationally' relevant during that particular year. Since 2010, for five consecutive years, Arashi was selected as Master of Ceremonies for the white team, supporting its media status as national group during the pre- and post-3.11. See www1.nhk.or.jp/kouhaku/index.html (July 21, 2016).
 - 15 This song was released by the group on October 21, 2015 in the album *Japonism*.
 - 16 Scene 1, '*Nihonjin ga kotowaranai. "No" to ienaibun, dōryoku suru, tatae kansha sarenakutemo hito no tame. Sore ga watashitachi no honnō nanoda. Ganbare nihonjin. Nihonjin no tame*'; Scene 2, '*Nihonjin wa enryō suru, sono omoi yari ga rensachii, kyō no sekai wo mauasu energii ni naru to omotte iru. Ganbare nihonjin. Nihonjin no tame*'; Scene 3, '*Nihonjin wa yoku ayamaru. Sore no doko ga warui? Ii hito wa ii. Mune wo harō. Ganbare nihonjin. Nihonjin no tame*'; Scene 4, '*Nihonjin wa yuzuriau. Jibun yori, aite wa saki ni omou. Ikiru koto wa sontoku devanai, kachimake demonai. Ganbare nihonjin. Nihonjin no tame*'; Scene 5, '*Nihonjin wa ohitoyoshida. Kochi ni mo, acchi ni mo, sō yatte, yo no naka no barānsu wo totte iru. Ki ga yokai kara koso, ki ga tsukareru no da. Ganbare nihonjin. Nihonjin no tame*'.
 - 17 This event was held for the first time in 2011 in the Tokyo Dome as a charity for the victims of 3.11. Since then, it has become an annual summer show that attracts thousands of fans. The characteristic element of the event is that the venues are turned into giant classrooms were Arashi members act as professors who 'teach' classes on diverse topics around a theme that changes every year, but has to do with becoming 'better citizens'.
 - 18 An English version was published in 2007, entitled *Towards a beautiful country: My visions for Japan*.

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Part III

Japanese identities – plural: race, gender and sexuality in contemporary media



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Queering mainstream media

Matsuko Deluxe as modern-day *kuroko*

Katsuhiko Suganuma

Queer visibility and mainstream media

One cannot discuss the social conditions facing sexual minorities without taking into consideration the idea of visibility. As implied in the discourse of ‘coming out of the closet’, gaining public visibility has been one of the major political objectives of queer activism and of relevant equal rights campaigning. While the Japanese mainstream media have been instrumental in assisting sexual minorities with becoming more visible in society, they have simultaneously exploited queer representations. In situations by which sexual minorities gain public visibility, Leo Bersani aptly reminds us that ‘(o)nce we agreed to be seen, we also agreed to being policed’ (1995, p. 12).

Although Bersani’s reminder mainly concerns North American contexts, it could be equally applicable to some situations in Japanese mainstream media. One such instance can be seen in the way in which gender-queering male *tarento* (talents) and celebrities are portrayed in recent TV shows and other media. Reminiscent of media frenzies on *nyū-hāfu* (New Half) and *misutā reidī* (Mr. Lady) in the 1980s and 1990s, both of which mainly referred to male-to-female transgenders and cross-dressers, there has been yet another increase of media visibility of queer *tarento* in recent Japanese media, namely *onē-kyara* (queen character). More often than not, *onē-kyara tarento* represent an exaggerated form of femininity through the use of camp speech (*onē-kotoba*) and humorous wit. What separates *onē-kyara tarento* from their predecessors, such as *nyū-hāfu* and *misutā reidī*, is that not all *onē-kyara tarento* are transgenders or cross-dressers. Furthermore, most *onē-kyara tarento* have carved out amazingly successful and diverse careers as singers, make-up artists, flower artists, and choreographers (Akita 2013, p. 89), while gender-queering entertainment was the primary occupation for many *nyū-hāfu* and *misutā reidī*. What they have in common, however, is the ways in which they are depicted and presented in mainstream media.

Similar to the media wave of *nyū-hāfu* and *misutā reidī* in the 1980s and 1990s, the post-millennium popularity of gender-queering male *tarento* could imply that the spectators of mainstream media momentarily consume gender-bending media as a form of entertainment not necessarily to challenge the conventional hetero-gender paradigm, but instead to reinforce it (Maree 2013). A momentary suspension of gender norm has its own tendency to generate the desire to undo the suspension. As a result, gender-queering people remain an object of public display, spectacle, and shame. The exploitation of queer cultures in general through means of

stylization is a common practice within Japanese mainstream media. Queer people and cultures in Japan are often portrayed in association with the domains of urban space, commercialized sex industry, and entertainment, which, in effect, estranges them from the purview of ordinariness and hetero-normative domesticity (Suganuma 2011).

There has been some improvement in the media's treatment of queer people and cultures recently in Japan. NHK, Japan's national public broadcasting organization, in particular, has made some effort to address the issues facing LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) people in Japan. For instance, its series *hāto o tsunagō* (Heart TV) (2006–2012) featured queer ordinary people and activists who were not necessarily *tarento*. Instead of highlighting high-profile *onē-kyara tarento*, the TV series assisted in shedding light on the lives and stories of ordinary LGBT people. Rather than treating gender-queering people as a comic device or a form of entertainment, their everyday life matters and concerns were addressed in the series along with those of other social minorities, including people with mental or physical challenges.

And yet the fundamental structure and power dynamics between the hetero-normative audience as the subject of investigation and queer individuals as its object remains uncontested. NHK's TV series employs a format in which non-*tōjisha* (people who are not directly concerned) TV hosts, who represent the mainstream audience, learn about social minorities through confessions of *tōjisha* guests. *Tōjisha* – sexual minorities – are always compelled to speak out about their sexualities while the sexualities of hetero-normative people are always already assumed and taken for granted in society, and hence granted the status reservation and respectability. One of the shortcomings of such representation is the assumption that queer people in Japan wish to claim the normalcy of their gender and sexuality, and gain equality within larger society.

Some Japanese mainstream media have further orchestrated this discourse of 'gender-queer normalcy'. For instance, several major newspapers, particularly *Asahi* and *Mainichi*, published articles on one Japanese lesbian activist, Koyuki Higashi, who once was a star of the highly acclaimed all-female *Takarazuka* revue. Higashi and her female partner, whose looks do not largely deviate from 'traditional' definitions of femininity, drew much media attention by becoming the first same-sex couple to conduct a wedding ceremony at Tokyo Disneyland in 2013. Images of Higashi and her partner both wearing a white wedding dress side-by-side with Mickey and Minnie Mouse were widely disseminated throughout the Japanese media. Their wedding ceremony and their daily lives were also featured in mainstream Japanese TV programs. The same lesbian couple yet again appeared in news headlines when they became the first same-sex couple whose partnership was officially recognized as one which equals that of a married heterosexual couple under municipal by-law legislated in the Shibuya ward assembly of Tokyo in 2015.

Even when taking Higashi's previous career as an entertainer at a prestigious theater company into account, the mainstream media's infatuation with lesbian images over those of gay men is noticeable. In contrast to a visibility of gender-queering (at times re-inscribing) male *onē-kyara tarento* who can be contained as a comical device for hetero-normative audiences, images of lesbians are more frequently drawn upon when the issues of lifestyles and daily concerns for queer people are addressed in the media. The reason for this relates to an idea of normalcy imbedded both in sexism and homophobia. One does not need to rehearse this argument in its entirety, but lesbians are not men but women who are already a social minority before having their sexual orientation considered. Lesbians' non-normative sexuality, more often than not, poses less of a threat than that of gay men to social norms, simply due to a lack of social autonomy and power assigned to women in general. Martha Gever aptly summarizes this relatively vulnerable and 'tenuous position' of lesbians as 'neither "real" women nor "real" homosexuals' (2003, p. 29). Any political claim for equal rights on the part of a same-sex couple could be a subversive or 'real' challenge against Japan's hetero-normative

society. It is no wonder, then, that mainstream media find it easier to deal with this sort of politics by way of appropriating less threatening and less provocative images of lesbians relative to gay men. One might suspect that the conventional gender looks of both the ex-*Takarazuka* star and her partner only make this potentially politically contentious issue less threatening to and more containable within the purview of normalcy.

Japan's mainstream media's love affair with less threatening lesbian images can be found elsewhere. The American/Canadian coproduction *The L Word* (2004–2009) became the first TV series made available to Japanese mainstream audiences that had almost all queer lead characters. Following its success in North America, the series was quickly dubbed into Japanese and widely circulated – mainly through rental video franchises across Japan. While *The L Word* gained recognition among Japanese audiences, a Showtime precursor *Queer as Folk* (2000–2005), which mainly depicts the lives of gay men and their families and friends, never gained a similar presence among mainstream audiences due to a lack of translation, in addition to, perhaps, the raunchiness and high frequency of sex scenes between male cast members.

The fact that *The L Word* was an overseas production featuring a foreign cast might have helped to secure a comfortable distance for the Japanese audience through which to digest the contents while keeping the direct threat of social change at bay. In 2015, however, the Japanese broadcasting corporation started its own TV series, *toranjitto gāruzu* (*Transit Girls*), featuring two women who fall in love with each other. While the extent to which the screenwriter of the series depicts the main character as a lesbian, rather than as someone who ‘happens to be in love with another woman’, remains unclear, the series nonetheless demonstrates that the mainstream media's affair with representations of queer women continues.

Questions of authenticity frequently arise in discussions of mainstream media representations of homosexual lives. As noted, it is difficult for queer minorities to avoid being ‘policed’ once they become visible (Bersani 1995). Many gender-queering individuals and representations are policed by the mainstream media to such an extent that they become complicit in the re-inscription of a hetero-normative gender system. There are, however, some exceptions. The performance of Matsuko Deluxe – arguably one of the most popular male-to-female cross-dressing figures in Japan – represents a rare challenge to the mainstream media's policing process by exposing and making a mockery of its policing tactics.

The popular who – Matsuko Deluxe

One cannot spend a week watching free-to-air TV in Japan without noticing the presence of Matsuko Deluxe. Appearing in nearly nine different TV programs every week since 2015 (Ota 2015), Matsuko has in recent years been virtually all over Japanese TV, from commercials to talk shows, with some employing her as the main host. Once a professional editor of *Badi*, a Japanese gay lifestyle magazine, Matsuko slowly developed her career in the mainstream media spotlight by writing columns and essays in commercial journals. Since her regular appearance as a commentator in the program *gojini muchū!* (*In Love with 5pm!*), broadcast by Tokyo MX (Metropolitan Television Broadcasting Corporation) since 2005, her popularity has increased. Now every TV program wants a piece of Matsuko.

Similar to the aforementioned *onē-kyara* and male-to-female cross-dressing *tarento*, Matsuko uses camp speech (*onē-kotoba*). She has been known for and elevated her popularity by making scathing commentaries on contemporary matters as well as gossiping about celebrities and *tarento*. Matsuko's use of camp speech to this effect only affirms her male privilege. As Jan Haaken points out, male minorities as opposed to their female counterparts are, more often than not, better positioned to deploy ‘comic relief through biting banter’ because the form of humor

and comedy normally ‘involves the artful management of aggression’ (2005, p. 320). As such, Matsuko does possess some common characteristics with other *onē-kyara tarento*.

However, this alone does not explain her exceptional popularity. Due to the recent *onē-kyara* boom in the Japanese media, *onē-kyara tarento* are abundant in supply. Describing Japanese *tarento* in general, Patrick W. Galbraith and Jason G. Karlin suggest that ‘[t]arento are mostly an interchangeable group of largely untalented celebrities’ (2012, p. 6). This does not necessarily suggest that *onē-kyara tarento* completely lack skills and talent. As noted, most of the popular *onē-kyara tarento* have professional careers and occupations in addition to their media performances. There is an obvious tendency, however, in the Japanese media to lump *onē-kyara tarento* together for program marketing purposes despite differences in their actual occupations. Hence they are still very much deployed as ‘an interchangeable group’ of similar talents. Here again, however, Matsuko’s presence stands out. She has far more *kanmuri bangumi* – TV shows that an individual or talent group hosts under their own name (an example in the US context would be *The Oprah Winfrey Show*) – than any other *onē-kyara tarento*. Those include *Matsuko no heya* (Matsuko’s room, 2009–2011) and *Matsuko no shiranai sekai* (Unknown world to Matsuko, 2011–present). The latter became so popular that its airtime was transferred from late night to a prime-time slot in 2014. Rather than an interchangeable *tarento* serving as a stand-in for all queer individuals, Matsuko is a distinct phenomenon.

In and out of mainstream media

If anything, Matsuko’s cross-dressing and gender-queering seems to only partially contribute to her popularity. Matsuko stands outside convention not only in terms of gender representation, but also in other dimensions. One of the visual elements that sets Matsuko apart from other *onē-kyara tarento* is her body type. Her large figure is undoubtedly one of her trademarks, especially when visual media is concerned – she was once introduced as ‘A super fat drag queen with a weight of 130 kilograms who is on the verge of heart and brain failure’ in *Queer Japan* (Nanshī et al. 2000, p. 7). While this was presumably written as a form of self-mockery, Matsuko has continued to unapologetically showcase her large figure. She does not shy away from speaking frankly about her unbalanced diet or from being featured eating large amounts of unhealthy food items on numerous TV programs. Matsuko’s attitude in this case goes against the narrative of *onē-kyara* prevalent in recent Japanese TV shows and other forms of media. As Claire Maree (2013) states, many publications and media commentaries by gender-queering *onē-kyara tarento* facilitate a neoliberal doctrine of self-managing and improvement imposed upon each, particularly female, individual consumer. As a result, the highly profitable cosmetic and fashion industries capitalize upon the popularity of many *onē-kyara tarento*. In contrast, Matsuko’s visual presence inevitably puts her off-center, not quite in line with established discourses for gender-queering figures.

Maree reminds us that ‘(a)lthough *onē-kyara* have been incorporated fully into mainstream media, they are positioned on the periphery as often-comic figures who are failing in both femininity and masculinity’ (2013, p. 100). As such, the momentary exhibition of ‘non-straight’ gender and sexuality embodied by *onē-kyara* is called forth only to highlight, in turn, the contours of ‘straightness’ of mainstream society. As Sara Ahmed (2006) elaborates, our sexuality is often imagined and discussed in spatial terms, in that hetero-normative sexual orientation is supposed to associate with the idea of straightness, directness, and rightness as opposed to queer orientation which aligns to the idea of bent, indirectness, and wrongdoing. In the *onē-kyara* context, their bent edge is appreciated only to the extent that the straight line of hetero-normativity is firmly established. In the case of Matsuko, what might be considered to be her tongue-in-cheek commentaries and the ways in which she positions herself in relation to the editorial directorship

of TV programs demonstrate at times – even if not always – her efforts to critique the representation of ‘straightness’ in mainstream media.

In order to elaborate this point further, it is useful to take a closer look at the first few episodes of one of Matsuko’s *kanmuri bangumi*, ‘Matsuko’s room’ (hereafter MR). For many viewers, it was apparent from its onset that MR is a parody of *Tetsuko no heya* (Tetsuko’s room), one of the longest-running TV talk shows in Japan featuring Tetsuko Kuroyanagi. And yet, apart from the lexical homage, MR is nothing like its original counterpart. The failure to follow the original is obviously deliberate. While *Tetsuko no heya* follows a conventional talk-show structure in which Kuroyanagi, the host of the show, talks to a different guest in each episode, MR invites no guest with whom Matsuko converses. In MR, Matsuko instead speaks to the director of the show, Tetsuya Ikeda, for the entire duration of each episode. Unlike the studio setting of *Tetsuko no heya*, which has the pretense of a cozy European-style tearoom with fancy and elegant décor, MR is shot in a dingy storage room with little furniture but a chair that Matsuko sits on. Matsuko always wears the same black dress, and projected into the background behind her is a computer graphic image of a quietly weaving red curtain. A ‘telop’ – text superimposed on the screen – stating ‘Matsuko’s room, the low budget program’, appears throughout the entire first episode of the show, emphasizing the deconstructive intent of the apparent shabbiness of the room when compared to its original. The first episode begins with Matsuko sitting in the room not having been informed about the nature of the program at all. With a vacant look, her confusion grows further when the director Ikeda starts the show rather abruptly asking Matsuko to start talking. Indifferent to Matsuko’s confusion, Ikeda goes on to instruct Matsuko to make what he considers to be her usual ‘*nanamen no*’ commentary in reaction to some prerecorded clips made by the program staff. The adjective *naname no*, which means ‘offsetting’ or ‘slanting’ in Japanese, is repetitively used by Ikeda throughout this segment, explaining what he, as a director, wishes to get out of Matsuko. Offsetting or slanting commentaries by Matsuko are the target in this show. It can be said that MR is a microcosm of how Matsuko treats Japanese mainstream media by being part of it. Devoid of all the fancy studio settings and guest talents, or any other effects commonly found in variety shows including decoy applauders, MR uncannily exposes what Matsuko has offered and provided in mainstream Japanese media. In other words, the show contains elements that set Matsuko apart from other *onē-kyara* and increase her popularity among mainstream media consumers.

We never know exactly what Ikeda imagines Matsuko’s *naname no* comments will be. On a linguistic level, however, we suspect that what he has in mind is not the ‘straightforward’ kind, but rather something more deviant. Matsuko is expected to offer something out of the standard of normalcy simply because of her presumed status of being ‘deluxe’. As Ahmed points out, however, being on *naname* in relation to the straight line, does not in itself necessarily offer the potential for resistance or subversion. If any *naname* line or deviancies are gradually accommodated over time, or in Ahmed’s word, ‘orientated’ by way of leaving the hetero-normative straight line unchallenged (2006), then *naname*-queer quality inevitably loses its edge. The *naname*-ness or offsetting-ness that Matsuko goes on to tackle with in the following series of the show, instead, represents a rare, but critical, queer mode of being that resists presenting herself as a malleable blank *onē-kyara tarento* that is subject to media directorship.

Sitting just off the edge of a shabby computer-generated graphic of Matsuko’s room, the camera captures the director Ikeda as often as Matsuko herself in the show. Clad in casual attire, often in T-shirt and jeans, his demeanor clearly represents the production side of the show. The frequent switching between shots of Ikeda and Matsuko – the former is on the production side, the latter performing – illustrates to the viewers a sort of dissolution of boundaries between the two. Without any other significant human resources available to him in the show, Ikeda

inevitably has to assume the role of providing cues and directions for Matsuko to act and deliver. However, what is most interesting about the show is the fact that Matsuko frequently rejects such requests from Ikeda, or sarcastically lays bare or sneers at his directorial intents. The show almost evolves into something in which Matsuko dismisses or mocks the ways in which TV programs themselves attempt to portray someone like Matsuko as *naname* talent.

Episode 2 features a segment in which Ikeda asks Matsuko what led her to her current occupation. Matsuko swiftly redirects the question back to Ikeda by asking what he thinks her work is. Ikeda responds by saying that Matsuko is a columnist more than anything else. What ensued is the following exchange between the two.

Matsuko: So then that would be enough for you, wouldn't it? Should I respond to your question in any more formal way?

Ikeda: No, what I want in your response is that usual offsetting and slanting edge of yours.

Matsuko: Well then, what you are saying to me now is that I should talk about how I have become a columnist with what you might think as my 'offsetting and slanting' wit?

Ikeda: (Yes). I think any moralistic or moving stories can be saved for your column writings, but for this show please be offsetting.

With a little pause immediately after this exchange, Matsuko recalls the path she took to become a columnist after several other occupations. Her monologue, however, has no punchline. Matsuko goes on to say to Ikeda that her response just now is no way near the '*naname*' edge he requested, and demands that Ikeda either take it or leave it. This particular way of betraying the expectations of the director on the part of Matsuko becomes a common pattern of the show.

Matsuko's challenging of the directorship of the program is best illustrated in episode 3. The episode starts with a shot capturing Matsuko's rather grumpy facial expression, and she refuses to initiate the routine of the show. The director Ikeda reminds her that the film is already rolling and uses the term *naname* again as the sort of comments that the show wants out of Matsuko. As a response, Matsuko declares to him that she will no longer associate with any such directorial intention from this episode onwards. After expressing her discomfort about Ikeda's insistence on *naname* commentary in the first two episodes, Matsuko takes him on by interfering with the flow of the show. Matsuko assigns Ikeda to define the meaning of *naname* in his own terms. And yet, Ikeda only manages to do so by way of equating it with the pattern or angle of Matsuko's commentary. By this, Matsuko erupts as follows:

I have never intended to talk with a *naname* angle here or elsewhere, not even once. I am always a *chokkyū* (straight) talker. It's not much of a big deal if you guys want to call that (*chokkyū* talk) *naname*. It is however nothing but annoying for you to force me to say things in *naname* way (almost as if that is a template).

This exchange is very suggestive of Matsuko's overall attitude toward her own media appearance. What Matsuko is implying to Ikeda here is that her media commentary is always based on what she wants to say and what she believes needs to be said. Being utilized or taken advantage of by the media is the last thing that Matsuko wishes to see happen. As Matsuko mentions above, it does not matter to her if the production side of MR wants to call what they believe to be Matsuko's commercial asset a *naname* commentary. However, if MR becomes a show in which Matsuko always needs to meet the particular demand of Ikeda, she will no longer be able to

sustain her stance of always providing what she believes important and needs to be heard regardless of the media's intent or directorship. What we see in this exchange is a radical inversion of the rhetoric of straightness.

As we have seen, *onē-kyara tarento* are often portrayed as individuals who divert from the 'straightness' of social norms. However, what Matsuko lays bare in this exchange with Ikeda is how manipulative and artificial mainstream media or directorship can be in terms of exaggerating and highlighting the 'non-mainstream' elements of gender-queering people. It can also be said that there is, in turn, nothing 'straight' about the representation of social norms themselves. These are already manifested with careful calculation. In MR, the fabrication- and calculation-filled nature of media production is exposed by Matsuko's 'straight' insights and wit.

We, of course, never know as the audience whether this eventual result is something Ikeda is wishing to coax out of Matsuko, or just so happens to develop as the episodes evolve. Nonetheless, MR represents a microcosm of what Matsuko does when she appears in mainstream media, such as TV.

Matsuko as *kuroko*

As one of the most sought-after figures on recent Japanese TV, Matsuko is aware that her *chokkū* speech – her directness – cannot always be off-limits. In contrast to a relatively smaller-scale program such as MR, the larger the budget and scale of a program, the more difficult it becomes for her to challenge the production side's intents and logistics. In her autobiographical essay, Matsuko discusses her media appearance as follows.

In a sense, appearing on TV means selling your soul. The more that people watch you on TV, the more of your soul you need to give away. There is a limit as to what you can do by yourself. You cannot do everything as you please. It means you sometimes need to butter up. Of course I would not do anything that goes against my philosophy, but it is of course a matter of fact that I also need to accommodate the demands of the media. In one word, I am a 'media geisha' ... Or better yet, I could be the media's docile pet.

(Matsuko 2014, p. 21)

This statement resonates with Bersani's (1995) discussion of queer visibility quoted at the beginning of this chapter. However, Matsuko is also once again exposing the structure of media representation by way of suggesting that her media persona is the result of a complex mix of her own deliberation, directorship, and production intents. By using print media on this occasion, Matsuko suggests that her presence embodies an uncharted territory that falls between fiction and reality, or falsehood and truth.

In order to further explore Matsuko's role as a figure who mediates the realms of fiction and reality, I would like to turn our attention back for a moment to her visual appearance. Either on TV or print media, Matsuko almost always appears wearing a large gown dress completely covering her entire body beneath the neck. Her bell-shaped large garment makes what is underneath it almost invisible, apart from the presumed large size of her body. Most frequently, her dress is black. The combination of a black figure in the spotlight but contemporaneously visible and invisible reminds us of the features of the *kuroko* who appears in traditional theater performances.

Kuroko, originally called *kurogo*, are most common in *kabuki* as well as in *bunraku*, a Japanese puppet theater. Covering themselves in a black garment, *kuroko* appear on stage mainly for the purpose of assisting actors with delivering their performances. *Kuroko*'s activities include handling stage props in the case of the former and assisting the puppet masters in the latter. In

contrast to Western theater tradition where a change of stage settings occurs behind curtains between subsequent acts, in Japanese *kabuki* and *bunraku*, the artificiality of performance is always highlighted in the theatrical space by the presence of *kuroko* on stage intended to be seen by the audience. In other words, the presence of *kuroko* has the effect of illuminating the subtle artificiality of any drama or story.

This *kuroko* effect is no longer unique to theater. Director Masahiro Shinoda's 1969 film *Double Suicide* was one of the first attempts to apply the theatrical effect of *kuroko* onto the cinema screen. *Double Suicide* is a film adaptation of the classic 1721 *bunraku* puppet play *The Love Suicides at Amijima*, directed by *bunraku* master Monzaemon Chikamatsu. Rather than the plot of the film itself, what is relevant to our present discussion about Matsuko is the way Shinoda treats *kuroko* figures. Instead of keeping *kuroko* in the background, as is often the case in a traditional theater setting, in Shinoda's film, *kuroko* at times dominate and occupy the subject position of the screen. The behavior of the *kuroko* is closely followed. In one scene the camera even zooms in on the *kuroko*'s facial expression under the black mesh hood, as if to beg for commentary about directorial intents and the makings of the story. To director Shinoda, the *kuroko* character embodies 'the thin line between truth and falsehood' (cited in Johnston 2001). In a review essay of the film, Claire Johnston suggests that the artificiality implied by the presence of *kuroko* has the effect of emotionally distancing the audience from the actual characters, and in turn draws the audience into the *kuroko*'s viewpoint.

Johnston's interpretation of the use of *kuroko* in Shinoda's film is perhaps equally applicable to the function of a director's commentary imbedded in the present-day DVD merchandising of films. Many viewers are perhaps not in favor of using this particular function when they watch the films for the very first time. With the commentary function, which often contains a disclosure of directorial attempts and failures and other behind-the-scenes episodes, viewers are inevitably deprived of the sense of reality of a fictitious film. There is no wonder, then, that it is so uncommon for theaters to screen new films with commentary.

Of course in Shinoda's film, *kuroko* never speak up. As a result of his/her ability to expose the theatricality of a film, however, the audience is sutured into a *kuroko* perspective that is emotionally withdrawn from the film's actual cast (Johnston 2001). As noted, Matsuko's popularity heavily relies upon her 'tongue-in-cheek' commentaries as well as her manner of exposing the thin line between fiction and reality. It could therefore be argued that Matsuko is a present-day *kuroko* with a loud voice in the Japanese mainstream media. However, this raises a number of questions. If Matsuko-*kuroko* is given a voice on screen, can she maintain the original quality of the *kuroko*? Can Matsuko keep the proximity to her audience's position of spectatorship? Can Matsuko remain as *kuroko* when being given a voice to express her thoughts and emotions, or does she automatically become a main character?

Matsuko as surrogate for the mass and ordinary

In the case of the commentary function or of Shinoda's intervention, there is still a tendency to describe the makings of the film in a positive light, despite simultaneously exposing its fictitiousness. Rarely do such gestures fundamentally challenge the directorial intent of the film being sold. In the case of Matsuko, however, her commentaries are more often than not indifferent to the director's eventual intents. Her insights and observations are, instead, made from a position of spectatorship aligned with that of the audience – and therein lies her popularity.

As Shōichi Ota suggests, a common feature of all of Matsuko's media interventions is their relationship to an 'audience gaze' (2015). What Ota means by this is that Matsuko's commentaries are always made from the perspective of a spectator, and never from that of the production.

In other words, no matter how loud and mean her commentaries may be, they are generally addressed to people with power and control, such as TV producers and directors, and rarely to those who are powerless, including ordinary media consumers. Similar to her treatment of Ikeda in MR, Matsuko frequently deems high-ranking TV production staff ‘stupid’ and ‘idiotic’ in the aforementioned Tokyo MX program, *goji ni muchū* (Sato 2015, pp. 98–9).

Arguing that the boundaries of the private and the public are frequently blurred in late capitalist society, Kimiko Akita posits that Matsuko embodies what she calls ‘*kinjo-no-obasan*’ – the loud and forthrightly speaking ‘middle-aged women neighbors’ who could be found on every street corner in postwar Japan (2013, p. 93). To Akita, Matsuko is a modern-day ‘*kinjo-no-obasan*’ that many Japanese consumers summon to ‘their homes on large-screen, high-definition TV or through an iPad, iPod, or iPhone’ (p. 95).

Matsuko’s appeal to mass audiences can also be attributed to her topics of conversation. One of the recurring themes she discusses on TV is her passion for female idols from the 1980s, such as Akina Nakamori. Such super idols are highly familiar to Matsuko’s generation who are now in their forties, and sufficiently well known to also appeal to previous generations. Furthermore, Matsuko’s discussions of Nakamori and others are so detailed that her narratives recall those of obsessive fans of idols in general (Sato 2015, p. 105). Again, this positions Matsuko as a member of the mass audience that is consuming popular culture rather than on the side of the professionals producing it. What is highlighted in what might be perceived as Matsuko’s idle chatter about Japanese idols such as Nakamori, is not so much the greatness of Nakamori herself, but the excitement of fandom. In other words, the spotlight is shed not upon the star, but on the people who are supposed to assist and sustain the star’s appeal, such as the *kuroko*.

Matsuko’s layperson presence on mainstream media is best exemplified in the popular program *Matsuko no shiranai sekai* (Unknown world to Matsuko) (Sato 2015, p. 105). In each episode, guests are invited to talk to Matsuko about a product or industry on which they hold expert knowledge. In most episodes, however, the subjects of conversation are kept quite ordinary so that it is likely that any viewer will have previously consumed the product, or at least been aware of it – topics have included, for instance, instant noodles, cola juice, Japanese dumplings, and sweets. What is noteworthy about Matsuko’s commentary on these items is its practical and down-to-earth tone. For example, when evaluating Japanese-style deep-fried chicken, Matsuko might point out subtle differences in the batter used by *Lawson* and *Circle K* – two convenience store giants highly familiar to the audience (Sato 2015, p. 106). The food items picked up as topics for the show are representative of mass consumers’ everyday life consumption. They are never expensive or luxurious products beyond their means.

The layperson’s nature that Matsuko represents could also be found in ways in which she is treated in cyberspace. Strangely enough, despite her enormous popularity, Matsuko’s activities on the internet are pretty minimal, almost non-existent. In an era when many Japanese *tarento* compete with one another to gain viewers for their blogs, Matsuko’s indifference to the medium is another sign of her particularity. While the internet is rapidly becoming the most common medium for information exchange, it still serves as a space for laypeople or individuals without any prominence to critique and voice their opinions against mainstream media. The presumed anonymity of users accelerates a tone of criticism that might otherwise remain more contained. It goes without saying that mockeries and attacks on celebrities, famous figures, and politicians are rampant in cyberspace. As Matsuko herself points out in her autobiography, however, harsh criticism or cyber bashing of her media appearance is extremely rare among Japanese net users (Matsuko 2014, p. 49). This points to the fact that Matsuko’s work as a mainstream media critic is similar in nature to that of net users’ intent on critiquing or laying bare the fictitious and hierarchical nature of mainstream media. As a result, Matsuko is a mainstream media figure without

a target. If critical reviews can be written about the performance or acting skills of the main cast in *kabuki* theaters, they never target the *kuroko*. If the audience finds issues with props or stage settings, the blame is normally placed on the prop masters or performance directors – i.e. on those at the top of the hierarchy. As a modern-day *kuroko* with words, Matsuko inhabits a space that is already outside social hierarchy.

The title of Matsuko's recent biographical essay – '*derakkusu ja nai*' or 'on not being deluxe' – is rhetorically suggestive of this case in point. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term 'deluxe' means 'of a superior kind' (Oxford Dictionary 2015). Despite her 'deluxe' size, her experiences and anecdotes captured in the pages of her essays are in a sense surprisingly ordinary. On top of episodes ranging from her eating habits to her private usage of Google Earth at home, Matsuko confesses here and elsewhere that she has yet to come out to her parents about her sexual orientation and her habit of cross-dressing (Matsuko 2014, p. 30). While Matsuko concedes that her parents must have been aware of her sexuality due to her media presence, she has never directly 'come out' to them. In spite of her unprecedented media visibility, which easily surpasses that of many Japanese celebrities and other *tarento*, Matsuko is nothing but ordinary when it comes to the complexity of coming out, which continues to be a pressing concern shared among many sexual minorities in Japan. By both speaking to the mass audience and including discussions of sexual minority issues, Matsuko is turning the experience of coming out into an ordinary issue to which even the heterosexual audience might relate.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude this chapter by returning to the question of queer visibility discussed at the beginning. Bersani's contention that '(o)nce we agreed to be seen, we also agreed to being policed' (1995, p. 15), should not be taken as his disapproval of visibility or identity politics. If anything, Bersani is among those who believe that visibility in mainstream society and identity politics for queer people is necessary despite the reactionary policing effect. As we have seen in the first section of this chapter, cases where the representation of gender-queering people or sexual minorities is exploited or manipulated by mainstream media and its hetero-normative authority are rampant in contemporary Japan. While much queer visibility results in being 'policed' by and incorporated into a hetero-normative system, we have also looked in this chapter at a rare exception to the rule.

What separates Matsuko from many other contemporary male-to-female cross-dressing *tarento* is not only her physicality – including her large body type – but also, most importantly, the manner in which she acts as a mediator between the realm of fiction and reality on Japanese mainstream media, particularly on TV screens. Similar to the (non-)role assumed by *kuroko* appearing in traditional Japanese theaters, what Matsuko does on screen is to inevitably expose and lay bare the artificiality and theatricality of the show. Audiences in Japanese traditional theaters realize that without the *kuroko*'s efforts – handing props, changing stage settings, and so forth – the performance by the cast could not occur. In this sense, the *kuroko*'s presence and labor uncannily harness both the reality of the show and the fragility of its 'reality'. As a result, *kuroko* subjectivity represents the critical media audience who always question the murky line between truth and falsehood. With a small inversion of traditional *kuroko*, Matsuko not only remains silent, but also speaks up to refuse or critique ready-made scenarios of TV shows and directorships. In doing so, attempts to exploit the image of gender-queering people – including Matsuko herself – on the part of mainstream media are often diverted and made less effective.

Furthermore, Matsuko's stance on maintaining her layperson's character as well as the minority's perspective on society is another attribute for her massive popularity among the

Japanese mass audience. If anything, her queer act of intervention we see through the phenomena of Matsuko's enormous popularity is targeted at the mainstream media's pretense of its own legitimacy. As noted above, this is not to argue that Matsuko's popularity is nothing but a triumph of queer subversion. As she herself points out, her popularity is achieved through compromise. However, her presence as well as her popularity in the current Japanese media offers one possible way through which queerness can be utilized in mainstream media not to consolidate its hetero-normative attitude, but in fact to gradually expose it for eventual modification.

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Mediated masculinities

Negotiating the ‘normal’ in the Japanese female-to-male trans magazine *Laph*

Shu Min Yuen

Introduction

In 1996, sex reassignment surgery (*seibetsu tekigō shujutsu*) was legalized in Japan following the introduction of the medical concept of Gender Identity Disorder (*seidōitsuseishōgai*) (hereafter, GID) – a disjuncture between one’s gender identity and biological sex.¹ From 2004, with the enactment of the Exceptional Treatment Law for People with Gender Identity Disorder (*seidōitsuseishōgaisha no seibetsu no toriatsukai no tokurei ni kansuru hōan*; hereafter Exceptional Treatment Law), transpeople who have been diagnosed with GID and completed sex reassignment surgery are allowed to change their legal gender in the family register (*koseki*). As of 2015, 6,021 transpeople have changed their legal gender in the family register (gid.jp 2016).

The mass media played an especially significant role in the dissemination of the new GID framework for the understanding of one’s gender identity to the mass populace through newspaper articles, news reports, documentaries, and television dramas. From the mid-1990s on, reports and discussions on GID and its related issues (especially legal issues) frequently appeared in print journalism and televisual media, bearing titles such as ‘Female (male) body, male (female) soul: A call for the right understanding of GID’ (*Asahi Shimbun* 1997), or ‘The age of transgender: GID now’ (Torai 2000). A simple search on *Amazon Japan* with the keywords ‘性同一性障害’ (*Seidōitsuseishōgai* GID) returned 974 books, and ‘トランスジェンダー’ (*toransujendā* transgender) 110 books.

However, while the emergence of the medically recognized category of GID did indeed provide a new language for (a particular group of) transpeople to articulate their identities and existence – that, until that moment of self-awakening and subject-making, had been annulled – this medicalized discourse of transgender as a ‘disorder’ and the legislative changes toward the legal recognition of (again, a particular group of) transpeople also silenced other transpeople who did not or could not follow its prescriptions of what a ‘normal’, ‘correct’, and ‘deserving’ transperson should be, or should do. As a result, only those transpeople who adopt the GID discourse and undergo sex reassignment surgery are able to access legal recognition in the form of having a correct(ed) record in the family register, the instrument *par excellence* for defining Japanese citizenship, while those who do not continue to live as invisible, partial citizens. Furthermore, notwithstanding the (increased) ‘serious’ media attention to female-to-male (FTM) and GID issues, representations of

gender variance in the mass media (especially primetime variety shows) continue to be dominated by male-assigned gender/sexual variants who play up their gender in-betweenness for comic effect (see Valentine 1997; Maree 2013).²

In his study on queer cultures in postwar Japan, Mark McLelland (2004, p. 16) observes that compared to their male-assigned counterparts, 'information about female-to-male transgenders is much harder to come by'. However, especially in the last decade or so, there has emerged an increasingly rich pool of (self-)representations and cultural productions by, for, and of Japanese FTM transpeople – persons who are assigned female at birth but who identify and/or live as men – ranging from autobiographies, to blogs, zines, a photobook on Bois,³ and idol groups/bands such as Girls to Men (now disbanded) and Secret Guyz. The production and circulation of many of these cultural expressions of FTM lives, however, operate very much 'under the radar'.⁴

This chapter therefore focuses on those transpeople and, in particular, on FTM transpeople who have been left out of the official discourse and mainstream media representations of transgender in present-day Japanese society. It explores how they, through (sub)cultural media production and participation, negotiate inclusion into Japanese society. I focus my discussion on the production and representation of masculinity, or more specifically, FTM masculinity, in the *mini-komi* (mini-communication) magazine *Laph*, a self-published lifestyle magazine by and for FTM transpeople in Japan. Through a textual analysis of the back issues of *Laph*, as well as by drawing upon my fieldwork at the magazine,⁵ I will highlight the strategies that are deployed in the doing/making of one's masculinity, and show how the elements of 'FTM masculinity' that the magazine constructs as 'normal' strongly echo hegemonic masculinity in postwar Japanese society. I argue that this can be seen as a form of strategy adopted by a group of marginalized transpeople who have been excluded from the 'normal' to access the 'normal' – through their everyday embodiment and performance of normative masculinity – for survival and for social membership.

Mini-komi and zines: the politics of alternative media

In studies on media and social movements in Japan, the *mini-komi* (mini-communications) have often been cited as channels alternative to those of mass communication through which the voices of the marginalized could be represented, and networks among these people could be formed. A Japanese English term, *mini-komi* is commonly used to refer to self-produced 'small-scale communication media' (Chalmers 2002, p. 33) that is circulated among political groups, and may range from hand-written and photocopied pamphlets and newsletters to broadcasting on unregulated radio stations (Mackie 1992; Gottlieb 2003; Sugimoto 2014, p. 270). As Nanette Gottlieb (2003, p. 193) writes about *mini-komi* and social protests in Japan,

[S]ocial protest groups who for one reason or another found access to the mainstream media difficult utilized a variety of what were known as *minikomi* ... which could be cheaply and easily reproduced without having to approach mainstream publishers ... By facilitating wider debate at the level of individual contribution, they extended the commonly-held view of the public sphere, creating 'an independent space for critical public discourse not readily available in the mass media'.

(Sasaki-Uemura 2002, p. 90, cited in Gottlieb 2003, p. 193)

Yoshio Sugimoto (2014, p. 269) describes *mini-komi* as a 'counterculture' that operates in 'deliberate opposition to the mass media's depiction of the world'. Especially within the context of women's movements in Japan, *mini-komi* has been attributed much significance in facilitating

the production and circulation of alternative means to discuss women's issues which have been ignored or misrepresented in the mass media (Mackie 2003, p. 156; Buckley 1997, p. 14–15).

In a similar vein, English-language studies on subcultural self-publishing have emphasized the political, oppositional, and underground nature of such DIY small-scale publications. For example, Amy Spencer (2008 [2005], p. 22) claims that zines are a means for their writers to 'celebrat[e] their position outside of the mainstream'. Stephen Duncombe, in his book-length analysis of zines – which he defines as 'noncommercial, nonprofessional, small-circulation magazines' (2008 [1997], p. 10) – points out that zines offer a means for their producers, whom he calls the 'everyday oddballs' who 'wear their loserdom like a badge of honor' (p. 23), to speak against mainstream culture by making their differences visible and provide their readers with alternative possibilities (p. 7). The 'politics of zines', according to Duncombe, lie in

[W]hat zines writers articulate, either explicitly, or as is often the case implicitly as being the problems of the present cultural, economic, and political system; what they imagine and create as possible solutions to these problems; and what strategies and chances they have for actualizing these ideals on both a small and a large scale.

(p. 9)

For Duncombe, zine publication is a means through which those who have been labeled as 'losers' by (American) society are able to articulate their differences and celebrate their mundane everydayness. It is through zines that the 'unrepresented everyday, the unheard-from everyperson' (p. 29) is made visible, and imbued with a newfound value. For both Spencer and Duncombe, the amateur nature of zines – often handwritten, photocopied, and bound with staples – constitutes part of its politics. As Duncombe argues, while 'commercial media (much like high art) are professional: slick, polished, seamless ... [z]ines are dissonant; their juxtapositions in design and strong feelings in content are unsettling. Instead of offering a conflict-free escape from a tumultuous world, they hold up a mirror to it' (2008, p. 134).

However, as Anna Poletti (2008) rightly points out in her study on zine culture in the Australian context, zine studies to date have tended to overemphasize the political promise of zines as sites of resistance by virtue of their underground nature and amateur form. As she argues,

While it may be sufficient to read zines as instantiations of particular ideologies, without a suitably reflexive understanding of how the productive effects of discourse inscribe the domain of their intelligibility, interpretations of zine culture structured by discourses of resistance remain of limited use in the examination of zine narratives.

(p. 32)

Poletti proposes a new framework for the study of zines and zine culture that focuses on the dialectic relationship between the cultural products and the discursive regimes in which they are produced and circulated. It is, in Poletti's words, an 'interpretative framework which explains and contextualises *how* and *what* is actually being produced' (p. 28, emphasis original). I follow Poletti's framework in my analysis of the Japanese FTM magazine *Laph*, and in the following sections, I will examine the representations of (FTM) masculinity in the magazine in relation to hegemonic notions of masculinity, 'official' discourses of transgender, and community definitions of 'real' FTM-ness in Japan. I argue that the strategies adopted by the magazine in its construction of FTM and FTM masculinity can be read as an attempt by a group of people who have fallen outside the norm in both mainstream society as well as in the FTM community, to access and place themselves in (rather than resist) the realm of the 'normal' from which they have

long been excluded. Through the case of *Laph*, I hope to, following Poletti, complicate current understandings of *mini-komi* or zine publications and propose a (re)conceptualization of these self-produced media beyond notions of resistance.

A brief history of FTM self-publishing in contemporary Japan

To understand the production of and representations in *Laph* in the present, one needs to trace back to another FTM self-produced publication, the discontinued [*LIKE*] (later renamed *LIKE-Boy*) founded in 2005, of which the current editor of *Laph* was co-editor. Branding itself as a ‘General magazine for FTM androgynous boyish’ (FTM *chūsei bōisshu sōgō zasshi*), the 50-page, predominantly printed in black and white biannual magazine marked an important stage in the development of the contemporary concept of female gender variance.⁶ As aptly captured by the phrase that appears below its title, “‘I was born female’ – Those of us living in between the gaps of male and female’ (*Boku wa onna de umareta’ – otoko to onna no hazama de ikiru bokura*), [*LIKE*] was produced by, and became a crucible for, those female-assigned transpersons who did not fall into the rigid contours of the categories of ‘male’ or ‘female’, and by extension, ‘GID’ and (existing definitions of) ‘FTM’ (Figure 12.1). It did not take issue with how its community members identified themselves, or how they exteriorized their gender identifications.

An attempt to represent the unrepresented – one of the key characteristics that scholars attribute to zines and *mini-komi* publications – can be observed in [*LIKE*]. As the editors write in their synopsis of the magazine, which is printed on the back cover of the first few issues, one of the key objectives of the magazine is to bring into public imagination the existence of this (new) group of people whom they called ‘FTM androgynous boyish’. By showcasing their daily lives (in a positive light), they hope not only to foster an understanding among mainstream society of these people, but also to empower their trans readers (and we may add, the editors themselves):

All human beings have the right to live freely in a way that suits themselves, and the FTM androgynous boyish also live with such beliefs. We want [you] to get to know about the FTM androgynous boyish through this magazine, and it is with these thoughts in mind that we produce and sell this magazine.

(Yamada and Akito 2006a, back cover)

The term ‘androgynous boyish’ (*chūsei bōisshu*) was coined by the magazine to refer to ‘those who are unsure about their gender identities (*seijin ni mayoi ga aru kata*), those who are unable to live as men due to social circumstances, or those who adopt a masculine gender presentation/style’ (p. 19). On the other hand, ‘FTM’ is defined, closely along the lines of its conventional usage, as those ‘who are female by birth and recorded as such in the *koseki*, but who identify as male, or who have gone from ♀ to ♂’ (Yamada and Akito 2006b, p. 46).

As I pointed out earlier, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the concept of female-to-male gender transitivity, as popularized by the mainstream media, was very much framed with reference to the then newly available medical condition of GID. The transgender movement in the early 2000s that fought for legislative change to recognize the acquired gender of post-operative transpeople further tied gender transitivity to notions of congenital illness and sufferings (for more on this movement, see Nōno 2004, 2013; Nomiya 2005; Nomiya et al. 2011). Such ‘official’ articulations of transgender under the medical model of GID in turn influenced the conceptualizations and performances of FTM trans-ness within the FTM community in the early–mid-2000s (and to some extent, to this day). In her research in the FTM community in Tokyo, Tsuruta Sachie (2009) observes that in the early 2000s following the introduction of GID, there emerged



Figure 12.1 Cover page of LIKE

Source: Yamada and Akito 2007

a set of criteria within the community that drew upon the medical definition of transgender,⁷ and which attempted to define and regulate who is considered a 'real' FTM and who is a 'fake' (*nanchatte*) (p. 193). She interprets this as an attempt by those (gatekeepers) in the FTM community to fortify the legitimacy granted to them by the medical language of GID by keeping out those who appeared to be a threat to their identities as 'real FTM'.⁸ Tsuruta argues that for her informants, FTMs are perceived as men, and as a result, the category of 'FTM' was crafted, at least by her informants, based on a set of criteria that expressed and reaffirmed this belief. As she points out, the evidence of one's 'FTM-ness' (*FTM de aru koto no akashi*) was constructed as

being found in the seriousness in both one's desire to transition (through medical intervention) and the 'doing' of one's FTM-ness, the latter of which is, or should be, expressed through the consistent enactment of a heterosexual, socially appropriate, and 'natural' masculinity (p. 199).

Located within a context where both official and community definitions of FTM are heavily rooted in the medical discourse, the emergence of [*LIKE*] and the term '(FTM) androgynous boyish' are clear illustrations of an attempt by a group of young female-assigned transpeople to find new expressions for articulating their forms of gender variance that had not been adequately captured by either mainstream society or the (then) GID-centered FTM community. In other words, they signify an attempt by those who were excluded from the 'normal' or the 'correct' (way of being trans) to craft out an alternative space – mediated by a print magazine – for themselves.

In 2008, [*LIKE*] was given a facelift and changed its name to *LIKE-Boy*. The magazine also went full color, expanded to an average of 60 pages, increased its price to 1,000 yen (about USD\$10), and trimmed down to A5 size. It continued to be published twice annually until it ceased publication in 2010. Although the editors and their key objectives to present the everyday lives of a diverse group of female-born transpeople remained unchanged, the term 'androgynous boyish' disappeared almost entirely from the pages of the zine, except for an entry in the 'Glossary of Terms' page that came with every issue. 'Androgynous boyish' was also removed from the zine's tagline, which now reads (in English), 'Ftm Life Magazine!' (Figure 12.2).

In their brief explanation of the name change, the editors suggested that adding 'Boy' to their original title '*LIKE*' could invoke the idea of being 'like a boy/man' (*otoko no yōna*) (Yamada and Akito 2008, p. 57). While they did not provide any further explanation of their choice of referring to themselves (and their models and readers) as 'boy' and 'Ftm',⁹ an examination of the representations of female gender variance in the zine reveals that there was an attempt on the part of the editors to (re)claim the category of 'FTM' and/as 'man' (Yuen 2015). *LIKE-Boy* folded in 2010 following the resignation of almost half of its members in 2009, but I would argue that the consolidation of the category 'FTM' and the 'professionalization' of FTM magazines continues, and reaches its peak with the founding of *Laph* by its co-editor.

A 'Men's trendy magazine for FTM'

Laph, an acronym for 'Life about Photo Human', is a Tokyo-based, biannual magazine founded in 2010 by Sunao Akito (Figure 12.3).¹⁰ Featuring themes such as coming-out, employment, lifestyle, and relationships that are presented through photographs, interviews, survey reports, comics, and advice columns, the magazine seeks to depict 'real' and 'ordinary' FTM lives as they are, informing (and reassuring) their FTM readers about the existences of other people 'like them' – something not easily attainable (if at all) from the mainstream media.¹¹ It was nominated for the Cultural Award at the first Tokyo Superstar Awards, which recognizes the efforts of those who have contributed to LGBT culture and community, in its very first year of publication. Today, it is the only Japanese publication that is still in circulation that is produced by and predominantly for FTM people.

While the association of 'FTM' with 'men' is even more apparent in *Laph* than in its predecessors – as indicated by its tagline (which is also written in English) 'Men's trendy magazine for FTM' – the stage of one's bodily modification (if any) is never a matter of concern in the magazine's definition of 'FTM'. Rather, masculinity (or FTM masculinity) in the magazine is largely constructed in accordance with notions of heterosexuality, work, and a gender normative masculine embodiment – the core elements of hegemonic masculinity in contemporary Japan.

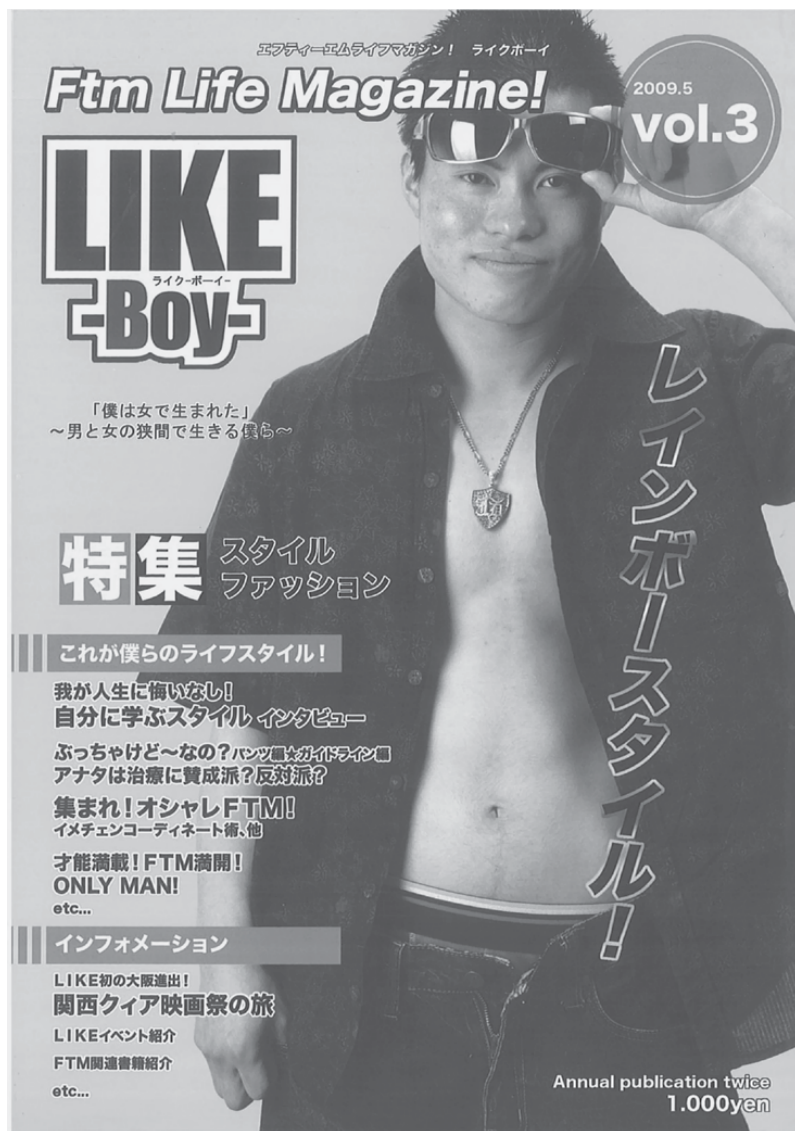


Figure 12.2 Cover page of LIKE-Boy

Source: Yamada and Akito 2009

Intersections of hegemonic masculinity and 'FTM masculinity': the productive and reproductive 'man'

In postwar Japanese society, the figure of the salaryman has emerged as the dominant and representative form of masculinity. As the key pillars for Japan's postwar economic growth, the white-collar, middle-class, heterosexually married corporate worker, as encapsulated in the image of the salaryman, has often been 'considered as responsible for and representative of "Japan"' (Roberson and Suzuki 2003, p. 1). Romit Dasgupta (2005, pp. 169–72) points out that hegemonic notions

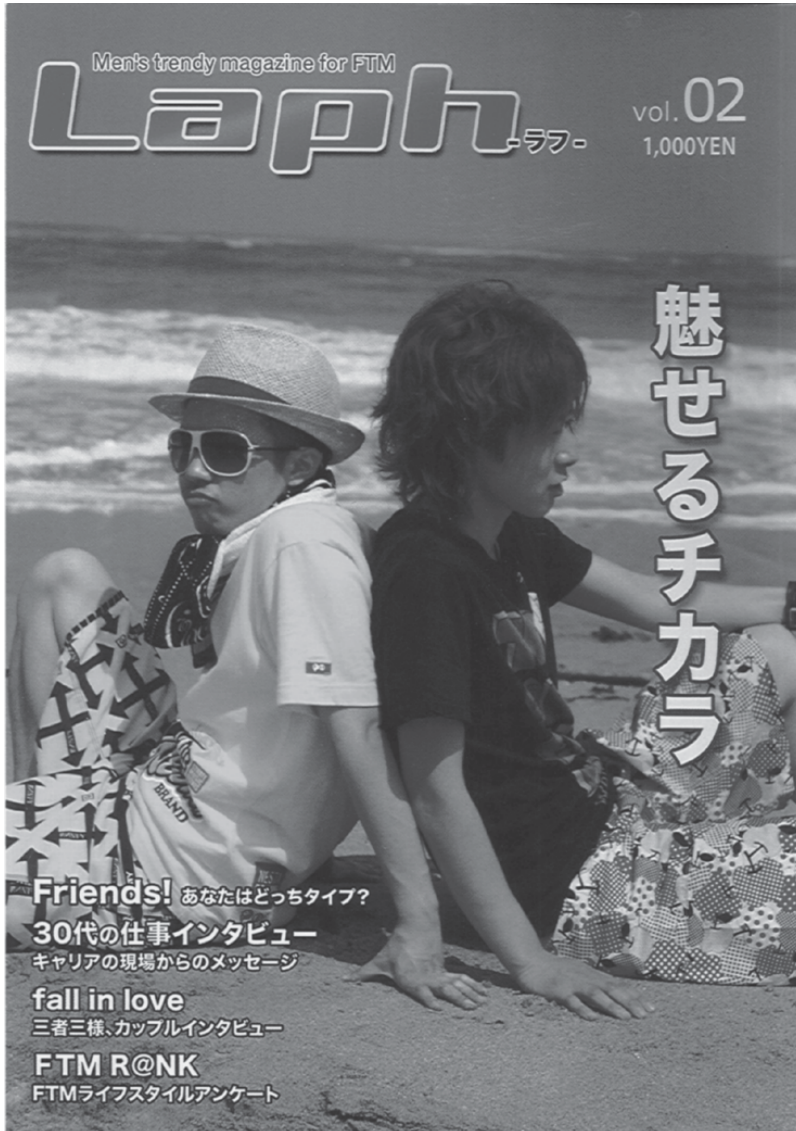


Figure 12.3 Cover page of *Laph*

Source: Akito 2010a

of masculinity in Japan construct the socially responsible (male) adult (*ichininmae no shakajin*) as a gainfully employed *worker* and *provider* for his family, that is, the *daikokubashira* (literally, the big black pillar in traditional Japanese houses) or the pillar of support of the household. McLelland (2005, pp. 99–100) also notes that in addition to succeeding at work, one’s ‘masculine credentials’ also rest on getting married ‘at the “correct marriageable age”’.

Scholars have argued that with the bursting of the economic bubble in the early 1990s, the model of the salaryman as masculine ideal has lost its dominance, allowing for alternative masculinities to surface (see for example Roberson and Suzuki 2003). However, Dasgupta’s

research on the salaryman highlights that in spite of the loosening of its ideological grip, expectations and (self-)constructions of men and masculinity in present-day Japan continue to be informed by the 'hegemonic cultural ideal of the man as husband, father, and provider'. As he rightly argues,

[D]espite the increased visibility in recent years of alternative lifestyle options for men, this hegemonic cultural ideal premised on a specific gender ideology of *regulated* heterosexuality is still firmly entrenched, and continues to exert a powerful influence on the lives of *all* men, regardless of whether or not they fit into the category of husband, father, and provider.

(Dasgupta 2005, p. 168; *emphasis in original*)

Similarly, I have argued in my own research on the recent 'danshi cooking' boom (Yuen 2014) – an apparent trend among young Japanese men to enter the home kitchen and make their own meals and/or boxed lunches – that although socio-economic changes in Japanese society in the last two decades have enabled traditionally 'feminine work' such as home cooking (as well as personal grooming and child-rearing) to make their way into the definition of ideal masculinity in Japan, the core elements of hegemonic masculinity, that is, work and heterosexual marriage, have remained very much unchanged. An analysis of the representations of 'men' in *Laph* also reveals that the cultural ideals of masculinity – those of production and reproduction – which as McLelland (2005, p. 98) points out are 'fundamental sites for both social- and self-definition for a vast majority of Japanese men', also extend to, and are reinforced by (at least a particular group of) FTM transpeople.

All of the ten issues of *Laph* to date include a regular section entitled 'Interviews on work' (*shigoto intabyū*) that takes up 10–15 percent of the total content of the magazine, and which features interviews with three to six FTM transpeople on their current occupations. When I asked the editor Sunao Akito to explain his rationale for spotlighting the working lives of FTM people, he says that he himself loves to work, as for him, it is through work that he is able to 'gain social recognition as a man'. As he continues,

You don't expect men past their thirties to still be freeters [part-timers] right? You'd wonder how they are going to get married. If one is a [real] man, one should be more practical and work [even as a female employee]. As long as one is properly employed, the salary is not an issue.

Here, we can see the twin pillars of hegemonic masculinity – work and marriage – coming through clearly in Akito's statement. First, to be considered a man, one needs to not only have a job as such, but to have a full-time, stable one. This is also illustrated by the case of an in-transition model in one of the occupation interviews in the zine. Twenty-five-year-old Shunsuke is working as a female employee even though he is undergoing hormonal therapy. 'I wanted to get a full-time job (*seishain*) no matter what. So I did my job-hunting in pantsuit and shirt, although I didn't put on any makeup,' says Shunsuke. He also points out that since he is still recorded as 'female' in the official documents, he thinks that asserting his male identity would only make things difficult at the workplace. Therefore he decided to be practical (*warikitte*) and work as a female (Akito 2012, pp. 12–13).

While work is perceived (by both Akito and his models) as an important signifier of masculinity, it remains a reality, as Akito also points out, that being employed as a male is not something easily attainable for FTM transpeople, much less achieving the (hegemonic masculine) ideal of

the middle-class, white-collar salaryman. Rather than becoming a salaryman as such, it is the gaining of regular, full-time employment (whether as a man or as a woman) that is perceived as enabling these FTM transpeople's social, and most importantly, self-validation as men.

The second point that we can extract from Akito's statement above is the connection between gainful employment and one's ability to become a provider for the family through his claim that part-timers will find it difficult to get married. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of marriage (or at least, heterosexual coupledness) in the definition of (FTM) masculinity. In fact, 'Couple Interviews' (*kappuru intabyū*) is another regular section in the magazine, where FTMs and their partners are asked questions such as how they met, what they like about each other, and how they came out to their parents.¹² While some are legally married, others are dating and/or co-habiting; but with the exception of two couples where both partners identify as FTM, all the couples featured in the ten issues of the magazine are made up of an FTM (who in the earlier issues are marked by the male gender symbol '♂') and a female-identified partner (who in the earlier issues are marked by the female gender symbol '♀').

Marriage is often brought up by the models in their interviews, often as a desired goal that they hope to achieve (or as a potential barrier to the recognition of their relationship as a 'normal' one). For example, when asked about her coming out to her parents, Ayana, partner of a post-transition FTM, says, 'I told them that he was born as a female, but as he has already changed his legal gender in the *koseki*, we can get married in future' (Akito 2010b, p. 33). In its fourth issue, *Laph* did a four-page special on a Japanese lesbian wedding entitled, 'Learning from lesbian couples – wedding ceremonies' (*bian kappuru ni manabu: kekkon shiki no tsukuri kata*). It provided an overview of three different 'plans' – ranging from getting legally married in Canada with a church wedding, to a family-only small-scale party in a hotel suite, to a banquet-style 'traditional' wedding – with details on the prices and 'points' to note. The editor, addressing his FTM (and partners of FTM) readers, writes, 'Don't give up on your dreams! Weddings are possible!' (Akito 2011a, pp. 21–4).

It is clear from the above examples of FTM models' day-to-day negotiation with the prevailing gender expectations that work and marriage/heterosexual coupledness play a central role in their self- and societal validation as men. Such definitions of (FTM) masculinity reveal not only a resonance with but also a desire to conform to hegemonic gender ideologies. While the hegemonic ideal may be unreachable for most FTM transpeople (and many cisgender men, for that matter), many still try to get as close as possible to this hegemonic masculine ideal (or as far away as possible from the female counterpart of the salaryman, the office lady) through various creative means. Shunsuke, mentioned above, for example, claims that even though it is written in his company's employee handbook that they (female employees) must at least put on some lipstick, he does not do so and has not been told off. He switches between male and female toilets in public – when he is alone, he uses the male bathroom, but when he goes drinking with his colleagues, he always uses the female bathroom with his female colleagues. These various strategies that FTM transpeople adopt to be 'as normal as possible' (Yau 2010) are not only illustrative of normative notions of masculinity and femininity, but they also illustrate the ways in which these norms can potentially be simultaneously reinforced, stretched, and resisted.

With the increasing ease of gender transition, especially with the rise of Bangkok as a center for sex reassignment surgeries, the hurdles to achieving a desired gendered body are relatively lower compared to as recently as a decade ago. However, as my informant Johnny observes, 'People do not look here (*making a circular motion in front of his chest with his hand*) all the time, if at all (*laughs*). It's more of your overall aura (*ōra*), the hair, the clothes and all that.' That there is a (presumably) male 'aura' that can be exuded further suggests that the recognition of one's newly

acquired gender lies also, or perhaps more so, in one's 'successful' embodiment and performance of that gender, rather than merely 'changing the physical body', as another of my informants points out.

The elements of FTM masculinity discussed so far – work and heterosexual relationship/marriage – are all located in the social rather than the physical. The next element I will examine – the notion of 'naturalness' – further places FTM people under the sway of the existing social order. And when these elements are packaged under the label of 'mundane everydayness', which is the founding principle of *Laph*, we can begin to clearly see the forces at work in attempting to draw this marginal masculinity as close to the center as possible.

Just one of those men: performing 'natural masculinity'

To recall the earlier discussion on the criteria of 'real' FTM-ness in the early and mid-2000s, one expectation of those who claimed to be 'real' FTMs at that time was to present a form of 'natural masculinity' (*shizen na otokorashisa*). According to Tsuruta's (2009) analysis, integral to this notion of 'naturalness' is the idea of not being over-the-top in the enactment of one's masculinity, as well as behaving in a manner that matches one's social position and age. A decade later, the notion of 'natural masculinity' continues to exert its influence over the expectations and performances of masculinity among FTM transpeople, although I would argue that the definition of 'naturalness' has evolved: rather than (or in addition to) a simple focus on a non-exaggerated form of socially appropriate masculine *behavior*, being 'natural' (at least in *Laph*) also requires one to blend into the crowd *visually* as one of those *ordinary-looking* men on the streets.

For example, in a three-page feature entitled 'Tōhoku Men's Collection' in the Spring 2013 issue of *Laph*, the self-coordinated fashion styles of five FTMs in the Tōhoku (north-eastern Japan) region are introduced. The five models are photographed on the streets (on the pavement or under a tree by the side of the road), and are categorized into various styles, such as 'Street casual', 'Vintage', and 'American casual'. Below each of their full-body portraits are comments, presumably the editor's, on their choice of outfit and coordination. The 25-year-old model Mori, who is put under the category of 'Casual style', is shown in profile carrying a purple backpack and wearing a pair of black-rimmed glasses, grey windbreaker jacket, and black khaki pants; while in another front-on picture, he is wearing a black and grey argyle cardigan with a matching shirt underneath (Figure 12.4, second from left). His expressions and 'poses' are almost identical in both photos – a shy smile, one hand casually put in the pocket, and a slight slouch. The editor writes in the comments section, 'A foolproof style (*ōdō sutairu*) with a sense of naturalness (*shizentai*) that matches his age. Cool (*kakkoii*)' (Akito 2013, p. 31).

Shortly after the publication of this issue of *Laph*, I attended a gathering that the editor Akito organized in a city in north-eastern Japan with a group of FTMs from the region, including Mori. At the gathering, Akito, referring to Mori's modest style of dressing, soft-spokenness, and a demeanor that is calm and composed, commented more than once on how 'natural' Mori is, and how his 'naturalness' (*shizensa*) is the kind that is well liked and popular (*moteru*) (among FTMs) in Tokyo. In an interview with Akito, I asked him to elaborate on what he meant by 'natural masculinity' and he suggested that FTMs who are 'natural' are those who 'blend seamlessly into the crowd on the streets and nobody would know [that they are trans]'. He went on to point out, as an example of a (FTM) masculinity that is perceived as 'unnatural', the model on the cover page of the first issue of *Laph*. The model, with his well-styled, blond-highlighted collar-length hair, perfectly shaped eyebrows, and salon-tanned skin, is wearing a black vest over a red and white checkered shirt, and a range of branded accessories (Figure 12.5). Although the



Figure 12.4 'Tōhoku Men's Collection'

Source: Akito 2013, p. 31

model does resemble those models in men's magazines featuring and targeted at *gyaru-o*,¹³ and had indeed appeared in those magazines in the past, such style is usually only spotted at trendy places populated by young people like Shibuya, the 'headquarters' of *gyaru* and *gyaru-o* fashionistas. In contrast, another model in the magazine whom Akito pointed out as another example of one who is 'natural' and 'blends seamlessly into the crowd' is, like Mori, sporting a modest fashion style comprising a plain hooded jacket with jeans, and a simple and minimally styled haircut (Figure 12.6).

As Akito points out, to be 'natural' is not to give an appearance of or semblance to 'normal' (*futsū ppokunai*), but to actually be part of what comprises the 'normal' (or the norm), that is, to be 'ordinary' and not 'out of place'. The concern here is not only with passing as such, but with passing sufficiently as an *average* man. To be 'natural', at least for *Laph's* editor, implies the embodiment and enactment of a sense of ordinariness and everydayness that one would find in the Mr. Suzuki or Tanaka next door.

The emphasis on, and the celebration of, the ordinary and everyday (or at least the attempt to do so) comes through clearly not only through *Laph's* focus on lifestyle matters of FTM people as discussed earlier, but also in the way in which these 'FTM lives' are presented. The main objective of *Laph* is to portray the everyday lives of FTM people through photographs. As the nuts and bolts of the magazine, photographs make up 80 percent of its content. The FTM models are usually photographed outdoors in a natural setting (beaches, parks), or indoors at the models' homes or workplaces. In the occasional choice of an urban backdrop, they are often unidentifiable locations in the city (roadside pavements, by some stairs, at the harbor front) with ample open spaces in the background. Even at the indoor studio shoots that I participated in, there was no fancy equipment, lighting, or backdrops – the only lighting came from the basic

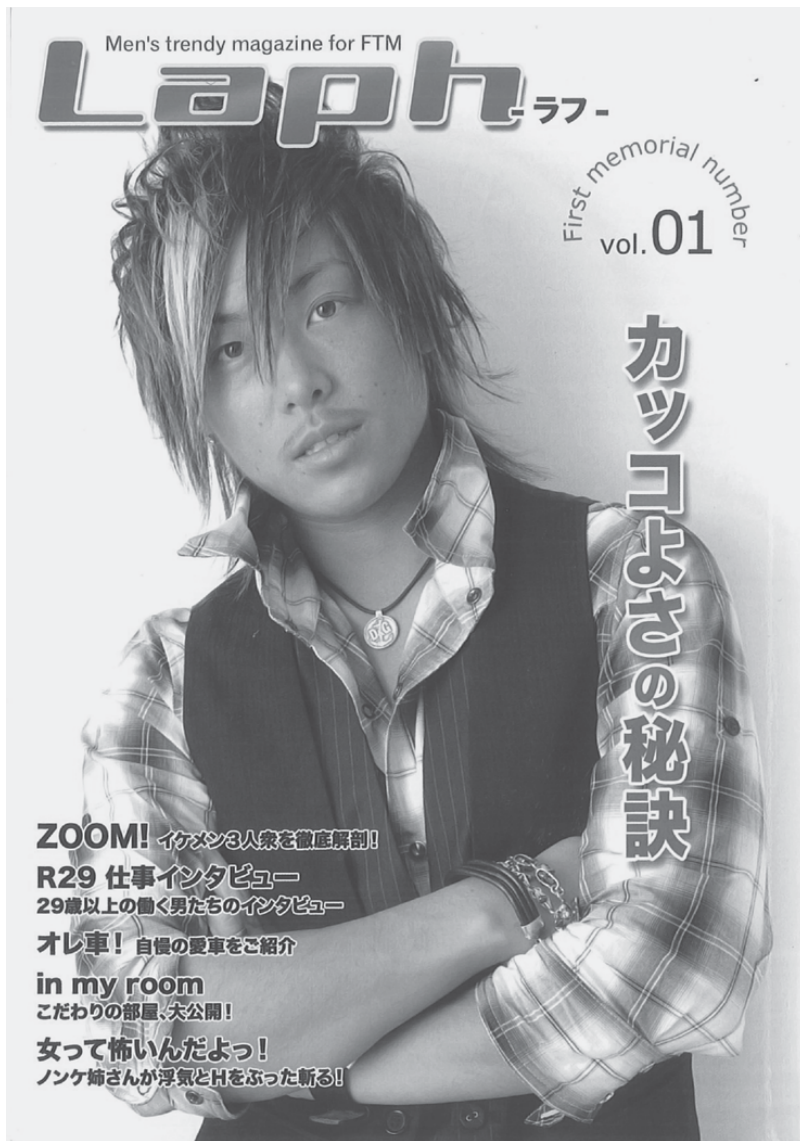


Figure 12.5 Cover model for the first issue of *Laph*

Source: Akito 2010a, front cover

spotlights and florescent lamps already in the rental studio, and the white walls in the room were used as background. Although the FTM models featured in the zines do strike poses similar to those found in mainstream fashion magazines, such as hands in pockets, smiling into the camera, leaning against the wall with one knee bent, they are also photographed as if they are in the middle of their daily activities, such as talking to their co-models, reading a book, pouring beer into a glass, or stirring a cup of coffee. However, if we look into the behind-the-scenes of the production of the magazine, it becomes clear that the sense of naturalness in the photographs is highly choreographed.



Figure 12.6 The 'natural' look
 Source: Akito 2010c, pp. 18–19

Most, if not all models are first-timers, and many of them admitted that they are nervous standing in front of the camera, often not knowing what to do. While shooting, Akito frequently gives them instructions such as, 'talk to each other naturally', 'chest up', 'look to your right ... no no, too much'. He also goes up to them and makes adjustments to their clothing and postures, and at times asks them to imitate the poses of the models in the idol magazines and men's fashion magazines that he usually brings with him.¹⁴ Although Akito does encourage his models to improvise, he is always the one with the final say as to what gets captured by the camera. By intentionally placing the models in their 'natural environment' – their homes, workplaces, in the city, or in the park (instead of choosing exotic locations that are unthinkable or unrelated to them) – and by capturing them at their seemingly most unassuming moments, the overall sense that the magazine conveys of the FTM models appears to be one that is raw,

unpretentious, and, indeed, everyday. As Akito writes in one of his editorials explaining his rationale for producing *Laph*,

I'm not making the book [*Laph*] with the intention of changing society. It was also not my aim for it to become a trigger for something. It'll be great if it does, but rather, [what I want to bring across is that] there is value in the very ordinary (*atarimae*) lives that [we] are living in [our] own ways (*jibunrashiku*). These are not remarkable, famous or rich people. These are people that can be found everywhere (*doko ni demo iru*). And this is what I hope to continue to focus on.

(Akito 2011b, p. 61)

However, contrary to Akito's fascination with depicting the 'ordinary' and the 'average', models, especially younger ones, often brought luxury items with them to the (fashion) photo shoots. Glittering, crystal-encrusted gold G-shock watches, Emporio Armani necklaces, and Ralph Lauren clothing are not uncommon in the pages of *Laph*, the prices of which are often listed below or next to the photos of the models, a format closely resembling that of mainstream Japanese fashion magazines. There is indeed an element of consumerism in the magazine, illustrated not only by the attention to the brands and prices of the clothes and accessories worn by the models, but also by the occasional full-page feature on the models' prized possessions such as 'My most expensive purchase'. The focus on brands in *Laph*, probably a result of its reference to, and an attempt to emulate mainstream fashion magazines, appears to have brought about the assumption among some of its models that the items they showcase must necessarily be expensive ones. At one photo shoot session, two models, while halfway through filling in their 'worksheets' where they had to provide details of the clothes and accessories worn on that day (brand and price), shyly revealed to Akito that they usually shop at Uniqlo and Muji (low-to-mid-cost fast-fashion brands), and that some of the clothes that they were wearing that day were from Uniqlo. Upon hearing that, Akito excitedly said, 'Great, do put them in too!' It was only then that both models included the common, non-luxury brands into their lists.

As illustrated by these examples, there is a conscious attempt by the magazine to construct FTM people as not merely *like* 'real', 'normal' men, but that they *are* actually part of the norm, consuming products that most men would consume (such as ordinary brands like Uniqlo and Muji), and being at places (workplace, parks, or somewhere in the city), or doing things (drinking, shopping) that men would 'normally' do. The emphasis on the everyday, rather than being something that is inherent to the genre of such small-scale self-produced publications – as Duncombe (2008 [1997]) argues – is in fact a carefully thought-through move to advance the agenda of the magazine, that is, to make the voices of a non-recognized group of transpeople heard, and to gain recognition and acceptance from mainstream society. As Akito emphasizes in the inaugural issue of *Laph*, '[I] want to convey [the message] that *we* (*boku tachi*) are 'normal' (*futsū*)' (Akito 2010a, p. 61; emphasis in original). The message that *Laph* conveys is clear: regardless of the state of one's bodily modification, one's masculine identity is represented as validated in and through the embodiment and performance of a gender-normative, heterosexual, productive, and socially respectable male subject who blends seamlessly into the crowd. By packaging these elements that make up 'FTM masculinity', and that echo those of dominant masculinity (as well as those in the 'real' FTM discourse), under the frame of 'insignificant everyday lives' (*dō demo ii nichijō*), it is clear that there is an attempt to claim the equivalence of FTM masculinity with male masculinity. Yet, rather than seeing this move as necessarily a reversion to the rigid conceptualization of female-to-male transitivity as prescribed by the medico-legal discourse in the mainstream

and the discourse of ‘real FTM’ in the FTM community in the early–mid-2000s, we can read this as a strategy by a group of people who have fallen outside the norm in both mainstream society as well as in the early FTM community, to access (and place themselves in) the realm of the ‘normal’ from which they have long been excluded.

In her introduction to her edited volume on non-normative genders and sexualities in mainland China and Hong Kong, Yau Ching (2010, p. 3) points out that contrary to the movement in the ‘West’ – especially among scholars in queer studies – towards a resistance to queer normalization, gender/sexual non-conforming people in many parts of the world like China and Hong Kong ‘are deprived of the right or the option to resist to be normal to start with’. As she notes,

When it is given that certain forms of sexuality could not be ‘normal’ period, the challenges for the continual and thriving existence of non-normative sexual subjects reside between the operations of at least these two levels (among others) simultaneously: accessing ‘normal’ as a possibility and transforming ‘normal’ into ‘possible’.

(p. 4)

In the context of Mainland China and Hong Kong (and, in fact, in many parts of Asia) where being openly queer is not an available option, normativity, in Yau’s reconceptualization of it, is something that gender/sexual non-conforming people need to negotiate and seek to achieve (rather than resist) in order to survive. In the case of Japan, members of the *Laph* community (at least some of them) have fallen out of the ‘normal’ in various ways – because of their pre- or non-transition status, they fall neither into the official discourse of transgender, nor that of the ‘real FTM’ discourse prescribed by the earlier FTM community. Borrowing Yau’s ideas, the drawing on the ‘normal’ notions of gender in the construction of FTM masculinity by *Laph* then not only reveals their desires to become what is considered ‘normal’, it also transforms these elements that are found in the ‘normal’ into something that people like them – who have been deemed not ‘normal’ – can attain (and indeed have attained); and in doing so, shows that becoming ‘normal’ is possible for them too.

Duncombe (2008 [1997]) argues that the aesthetic form of zines, which is distinctly amateurish, constitutes a significant part of its politics in ‘speaking back’ to the mainstream – forwarding a critique of the commercial world and challenging the perceived binary of the active producer and passive consumer. *Laph*’s well-organized layout, glossy pages, and polished finish may appear to be antithetical to zine aesthetics. Yet, I would argue that it is the very *semi-professional* aesthetic form the magazine takes that enables it to advance its goals in not only creating an avenue to make visible an un(der)represented group in both ‘underground’ and aboveground worlds, but also claiming belonging in mainstream society through the representation of FTM people as ‘normal’ men. These pseudo-commercial elements, rather than being a sell-out to the ethics of small-scale alternative media, can actually help to move the magazine and its messages out of the ‘underground’, that is, beyond its immediate community, and create wider awareness and acceptance of FTM lives that do not fit into the official discourse of transgender – a goal that Akito (and his former chief editor) sought to achieve starting a decade ago through [*LIKE*].¹⁵

Conclusion

In the last 20 years, Japanese transgender people have acquired increased visibility in mainstream Japanese society. Notwithstanding that, understandings of FTM transpeople continue to remain hazy among the Japanese public and largely unaccounted for in both Japanese and

English-language academic studies. As noted earlier, representations of FTM transpeople are not non-existent, although many of them are produced and circulated in the ‘underground’ in the form of small-scale self-produced media.

This chapter examined a group of FTM transpeople who have been excluded from the new discourse of (trans)gender framed under the medical model of GID, and showed how they attempted to craft a space of survival and belonging by tracing the expectations and expressions of FTM masculinity as they are played out at the level of the everyday. From the various strategies that they adopt in order to be socially validated as men (or at least not women), we can see that the desires, and also perhaps the pressures to conform and to fit into mainstream society, are indeed very ‘real’ to them. Scholars writing about *mini-komi* publications and zines have tended to privilege a resistant reading of these alternative media.

However, as I have demonstrated, the construction of (FTM) masculinity in *Laph*, with its emphasis on heteronormativity and (re)productivity – the core elements of hegemonic masculinity in postwar Japan – reveals that DIY culture need not always occupy an oppositional or confrontational position against mainstream society. As Poletti (2008, p. 32) rightly highlights, ‘there is a need for the recognition of a spectrum of political and cultural activity which takes place under the rubric (and just as often not) of DIY, a level of nuance often overlooked by theorists who focus solely on the resistance such practices instantiate’. Analyzing the conceptions and constructions of gender among female-assigned transpeople helps us come to an understanding of these masculinities at the margins, or in Raewyn Connell’s (1993, p. 610) terms, of ‘subordinated masculinities’. It can also shed light on the dominant form of masculinity that while continuing to exert its influence on those marginal masculinities, is also simultaneously ‘stretch[ed] and resist[ed]’ (Yau 2010, p. 4) by those at the periphery.

Notes

- 1 The surgery had not been performed in Japan since 1969 when a surgeon was prosecuted under clause 28 of the 1948 Eugenic Protection Act (revised in 1996 as the Maternal Protection Law) for removing the reproductive organs of three male prostitutes. After almost three decades, sex reassignment surgery became possible again in Japan when surgery was recommended as one of the ‘treatment’ (*chiryō*) procedures for the ‘disease/disorder’ (*shikkan*) known as Gender Identity Disorder in 1996. The first sex reassignment surgery sanctioned by this new regulation took place in 1998 at the Saitama Medical University Medical Centre. For more on the history of GID and sex reassignment surgery in Japan, see Ishida and Murakami (2006), Taniguchi (2006), Nōno et al. (2013), and Yamauchi (2004, 2011).
- 2 Despite their rarity, FTM transpeople have occasionally come into the spotlight in mainstream media representations of transgender: the first drama in the history of Japanese commercial television to deal with the topic of GID, season 6 of *3 nen B gumi Kinpachi Sensei* (*Teacher Kinpachi of Class 3B*), has an FTM character as its lead protagonist; the coming-out of FTM motorboat racer Ando Hiromasa in 2001, and the campaigns for legislative changes led by prominent FTM writer and activist Torai Masae in the late 1990s and 2000s have been widely reported both in print and on screen.
- 3 ‘Bois’ refers to a range of female masculinities from masculine lesbian to male-identified female-assigned persons.
- 4 Although the terms ‘transman’ and ‘transguys’ have gained currency in the English-speaking world in recent years, ‘FTM’ remain the dominant term in Japan to refer to persons who were assigned female at birth but who identify and/or live as men, or have desires to do so, with or without hormonal therapy and/or surgery. It is in this sense that I use the term ‘FTM’ in this chapter.
- 5 Fieldwork for this chapter was carried out as part of my larger PhD project over a 15-month period between October 2012 and January 2014, predominantly in the Greater Tokyo area. I conducted a total of 12 in-depth interviews with 11 informants, in addition to participant observation at *Laph*’s production sessions, and at over a dozen events and gatherings organized by and/or for FTM people, such as drinking parties, private home gatherings, and barbecues.

- 6 Other than the front and back covers, the 700 yen (US\$7), 7x10 inch magazine was published in full black and white for the first four issues. From the fifth issue, it began including colored pages for its eight-page photo collection that featured the main ‘models’ for that particular issue. The magazine was sold both online through their website (and later also through Amazon Japan), as well as in a few bookstores in Tokyo that specialize in self-publications. Prior to *LIKE*, there was another *mini-komi* for FTM people, *FTM Nippon*, published between 1994 and 2008, and edited by writer and activist Torai Masae. Unlike its contemporaries, *FTM Nippon* comprised predominantly of short essays, personal accounts, poems and fictional stories sent in by its readers, was printed solely in black and white on A4 size paper, and bound by staples.
- 7 Tsuruta loosely defines the ‘community’ as the support groups for and gatherings of people with GID.
- 8 Tsuruta uses the term ‘FTM’ (or more precisely ‘FtM’ in her actual usage) to refer to those persons with GID who are transiting or have transited from the category of female to male (2009, p. 12).
- 9 Although *LIKE-Boy* uses ‘Ftm’ in the title, the term always appears as in its capitalized form ‘FTM’ in the articles in the zine. Both ‘Ftm’ and ‘FTM’ seem to be used interchangeably without particular significance to the difference in the way that they are written.
- 10 ‘Sunao Akito’ is the editor’s pen name, and that which he goes by within the FTM community. For the informants whom I cite in this chapter, I refer to them by pseudonyms of their choice or (nick)names that they use within the community. As for those models from the FTM magazines whose accounts I cite, I refer to them by their names as they are published in the magazines.
- 11 The FTM people who are featured in the magazine are mostly readers who wrote in to sign up as models or as interview participants. Adopting the same format as *Like-Boy*, *Laph* runs for 60-something pages, is printed in B5 size in full color, and sells at 1,000 yen (USD\$10).
- 12 Two to four couples are interviewed per issue.
- 13 *Gyanu-o*, the male counterpart of *gyaru*, refers to the subculture and fashion-style of young Japanese men who are characterized by their salon-tanned skin, bleached hair, and branded outfits.
- 14 Among the magazines that Akito brought along to the photo shoots were *Junon* and *Poporo*, popular magazines featuring interviews and photos of Japanese boybands largely targeted at teenage girls and young women. In an interview with Akito, he points out that he does regularly refer to idol magazines like *Duet*, and men’s fashion magazines like *Men’s Non-No*, *Choki Choki* (a street fashion magazine largely made up of photos taken off the streets), and *Men’s Egg* for their photo-taking techniques, presentation styles, and layout.
- 15 Akito points out to me that his readers include not only FTM transpeople but also homosexual-identified men and partners of FTM people. During my fieldwork, I also met some parents whose children are trans at *Laph*’s sales events and drinking parties.

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Writing sexual identity onto the small screen

Seitekishōsū-sha (sexual minorities) in Japan¹

Claire Maree

In decades of Japanese entertainment television Mr. Ladies and Miss Dandies, queers and queens have been represented as a hyper-visible spectacle. Switch on television on a week-night in 1990s Japan and you might stumble across a variety show such as *Mister Lady Deluxe Edition*.² In the contemporary moment, however, we are experiencing greater coverage of LGBT issues not only through the rubric of variety-style fascination with all things queer, but also in news and current affairs shows where so-called ‘LGBT issues’ are often positioned in relation to partnership rights and ‘LGBT markets’. This is remarkable, considering that as recently as 2012, Doi Kanae³ of Human Rights Watch lamented the imbalance in media representations of LGBT peoples and issues in the Japanese press. Doi called for greater reporting on LGBT issues, noting that the use of the term *onē* (queer/queen personality) far outnumbered the use of the term LGBT in *Asahi Shimbun*, one of the nation’s more progressive newspapers (Doi 2012). Today, a basic search in the *Asahi* database *Kikuzo* for the term LGBT as used in articles published in the national edition from January 2012 to December 2015 returns 134 hits. Widening the search to the entire newspaper database reveals 344 hits⁴ – only the first 14 of which appear between 2004 and 2010. We appear to be in the midst of a veritable *LGBT*⁵ boom. And, as television news and current affairs shows have become increasingly layered with captions and populated by flip-cards,⁶ digital monitors and in some cases Twitter feeds, the terms LGBT and sexual minority (*seitekishōsū-sha*) have become highly visible, or, as I will argue below, hyper-visible.

The chapter examines how ‘LGBT’ is inscribed onto the screen in mainstream news and current affairs programming by exploring two forms of language technologies that facilitate this hyper-visibility: captions and flip-cards. Critical examination of these media technologies, I suggest, offers one way to analyze the complex citational practices (Goodman et al. 2014) that shape media representations of sexuality and gender. As I will demonstrate, captions and flip-cards facilitate the textual visibility of LGBT and augment the hyper-visibility of ‘sexual minorities’. In the contemporary media environment in which the term ‘LGBT’ saturates sections of the visual sphere, however, LGBT people are positioned as being heretowith hidden from mainstream society. In this chapter, I will show how contemporary hyper-visibility of ‘LGBT’ in mainstream media pivots on continuous, or continuing, in/visibility in which LGBT rights are never fully brought into historical context. Before examining examples of the use of captions and flip-cards

in broadcasting related to LGBT issues, however, a brief overview of the current status of these issues in Japan is in order.

The background

The current media focus on all things LGBT extends from a history of activism in relation to sexual and gender minorities as well as academic writing in gender studies and queer studies within and about Japan (Curran and Welker 2005, Takemura 2010). This also resonates with the global positioning of LGBT rights and the legalization of same-sex marriage as a marker of a progressive democracy. Same-sex marriage is yet to be legalized in Japan, and there are few overarching laws that protect the rights of alternative families (for an overview in English see Taniguchi 2006, 2013). However, local ordinances such as those recently introduced in the Shibuya and Setagaya wards of Tokyo and in a number of other locales outside the metropolis have garnered much attention. Diversity awareness and training is also making inroads into corporate culture in Japan. As the Nikkei Business Online proclaims, ‘LGBT’ is the ‘ultimate in diversity’ (*Nikkei Business Online*, August 24, 2015). An online survey into sexual orientation conducted in 2015 by the Dentsu Diversity Lab (DDL), a corporate social responsibility (CSR) entity within advertising giant Dentsu Group, claims that an estimated 7.6 percent of the population, or approximately one in thirteen people residing in Japan, identify as LGBT (Dentsu Corporate Communication 2015). The same survey estimates the so-called rainbow market to be valued at 5.94 trillion yen, which is less than the 6.6 billion estimate compiled by Pageanta and reported in *Nikkei Business* in 2007 (Hosoda 2007). Although the accuracy of such online surveys has been questioned (Hiramori 2015), corporate Japan has been urged to ‘wake the slumbering LGBT market’ (*nemureru LGBT shijō o kakusei saseyo*) (Gotō 2006) and ‘capture it’ (*kōryaku se yo*) (*Shūkan Diamond*, July 14, 2012).

Following the inclusion of sexual orientation to the anti-discrimination clause of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Charter,⁷ a multiparty caucus to examine discrimination against sexual minorities was formed. As Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) politician, Hase Hiroshi explained at a press conference in March 2015, the multiparty caucus aims to deepen understanding of LGBT issues ‘to show that there is no discrimination against LGBT peoples in the run up to the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics’ (*NTV News 24* 2015).⁸ An article in the *Nikkei* newspaper (Kōno 2015) warns, however, that the 2020 games will test corporations’ ability to respond to the IOC Charter and, more generally, Japan’s ability to extend its highly advertised Japanese-style welcome (*omotenashi*) to LGBT-identified visitors from overseas.

The turnaround in LDP policies is remarkable, given that in the early 2000s Japan experienced a backlash by conservative LDP politicians and commentators against newly formed gender equality guidelines and, in particular, *jendā furī* (gender-free) education. The queer-phobic undercurrent of backlash discourse is evidenced in parliamentary exchanges from this period where conservatives from both of the major parties voiced concern that education free of overt gender biases would cause the ruin of the family and the breakdown of society (Kazama 2008). At the time of the backlash it seemed inconceivable that the LDP would actively partake in a multiparty caucus and go on to release a statement outlining the party’s ‘foundational thoughts on sexual orientation/gender identity’ (LDP Special Committee 2016).

The preamble to the LDP report claims that ‘since the Middle Ages (*chūsei*) our nation (*wagakuni*) is said to have been tolerant (*kanyō*)’ of diverse sexual orientations and gender identifications. The LDP’s goal, however, is not to introduce anti-discrimination measures, and Prime Minister Abe has stated in parliament that he does not support same-sex marriage. Instead, the aim is to raise awareness around LGBT people and issues and enact a society in which ‘there is

no need to come out' (*kamuauto suru hitsuyo no nai*) (LDP Special Committee 2016). An editorial in the English-language newspaper the *Japan Times* refers to this as 'LDP's questionable LGBT policy' (May 21, 2016). This appeal to a long-standing tolerance through which 'we each accept each other naturally' (*tagai ni shizen ni ukeirareru*) also obfuscates a long history of both activism and academic writing that highlights the overarching systems of discrimination and heteronormative institutions operating in contemporary Japan.

The current explosion of newspaper and magazine articles, light entertainment and current affairs shows that refer to 'LGBT' and the 'LGBT market' occurs in a contradictory socio-political environment where a 'boom' in media interest makes lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender men and women in contemporary Japan hyper-visible. A complex entanglement of 'tolerance' and 'acceptance' also demands, however, that their diverse needs be noticed, but not necessarily catered for at the policy level. I use the term in/visibility to refer to this complex situation where 'LGBT' are in full view of media representation but simultaneously marked as 'out of sight'. While today's local socio-political concerns are unique to our contemporary era, this complex juxtaposition is evident in previous articulations of the recurring cycles of media fascination in all things queer.

Tolerance and acceptance/hyper-visibility and invisibility

A short documentary segment on the Tokyo Broadcasting System's (TBS) evening news program *N-Sta* (2013), that documents the first same-sex wedding ceremony between two brides dressed in gowns to be held at Tokyo Disney Resort, is one example of the complex entanglement of 'tolerance' and 'acceptance' within media hyper-visibility that constitutes ongoing in/visibility. The segment raises awareness of issues surrounding the legal recognition of same-sex partnerships in Japan. However, as I have argued elsewhere (Maree 2016), the use of complex citational practices common to contemporary audiovisual media – such as captioning, narration and image repetition – recontextualizes these issues to fit within a discourse of 'tolerance'. This is particularly noticeable in a segment of the broadcast in which the couple negotiates a request from a now-married wedding guest who asks that her previous relationship with one of the women is kept secret for 'the sake of her child'. Captioning and visual citation is manipulated to highlight advice given by a trusted mentor to accept this request, and to show forgiveness or tolerance toward the woman making the request. Here the notion that 'forgiveness' on the part of the lesbian couple is overtly stated as being essential to their mutual existence (*kyōsei*) within the wider society. This message fits seamlessly within the heteronormative ideological parameters that shape the mainstream early-evening news program. Citational practices manipulate the framing of the discussion of partnership rights such that a claim to recognize the machinations of perceived lesbophobia are hidden by a discourse of 'tolerance' and 'acceptance' on the part of the lesbian couple. Hyper-visibility again facilitates in/visibility.

In the early 1990s, activist and writer Hiroko Kakefuda problematized the notion that Japanese society is tolerant towards women in lesbian relationships by stating that perceived 'tolerance' is facilitated by the practice of 'pretending not to see' (*miteminufuri*). Kakefuda noted that a lack of open antagonism toward lesbians in Japan did not signal acceptance and/or tolerance, but instead was indicative of a lack of acknowledgment of women in same-sex relationships (Kakefuda 1992, pp.104–29). The practice of 'pretending not to see', therefore, facilitates in/visibility. In much the same way, the technologies that visualize speech in the 2013 *N-sta* mini-documentary briefly discussed above facilitate a discourse of tolerance that pivots on in/visibility. As we shall see in the below discussion, this can also be noted in the contemporary media-generated 'LGBT' boom.

The LGBT market in the news and current affairs

2015 saw an explosion of news and current affairs programs reporting on ‘LGBT issues’.⁹ Earlier in the decade reporting had been somewhat skewed toward news of same-sex marriage legislation in countries other than Japan. However, with the release of new figures from major advertising firm Dentsu’s CSR organization, DDL (Dentsu Corporate Communication 2015), and in response to socio-political concerns in the run-up to the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the acronym LGBT came to feature widely in news and current affairs shows. The term was also repeatedly explained to the public through verbal and textual descriptions, such as captions and flip-card technology that facilitated a layer of textual hyper-visibility.

Impact captions and flip-card technology are key parts of contemporary Japanese television media. Both occupy the visual field and convey information regarding the content of a broadcast. Impact captioning appears simultaneously with the speech heard in a broadcast. Flip-cards are used to reveal additional information relevant to the broadcast. Research into impact captions in variety programs has shown how captions manipulate the meaning of content (Park 2009, O’Hagan 2010, Gerow 2010, Sasamoto 2014). In light entertainment and variety programs, font type, color, animation and orthography, as well as placement and timing, are manipulated too for comedic effect (Park 2009, O’Hagan 2010, Gerow 2010, Sasamoto 2014, Shiota 2001, 2005). In variety shows, impact captions operate to induce laughter in much the same way as canned laughter does (O’Hagan 2010). Little research, however, refers to news and current affairs broadcasting or newer technologies such as digital flip-cards. Let us look at two examples of the use of flip-card technology and impact captioning that frames the discourse of the ‘LGBT’ boom as represented in light news and documentary programming.

Societal understanding toward ‘LGBT and the like’

On June 7, 2015, the weekly news and current affairs program, *Shinsō hōdō Bankisha!*¹⁰ (NTV), hereafter *Bankisha*, aired a 15-minute segment on ‘LGBT: Societal understanding, familial understanding’ (*LGBT: Shakai no Rikai Kazoku no Rikai*). In the opening to the segment, a digital monitor that blends both the quiz format and the informational format of the flip-card is used to introduce and explain the LGBT acronym (Figure 13.1).

Flip-cards have traditionally been a paper-based medium. However, digital technologies are increasingly being used. In an annual report on trends in audiovisual broadcasting, Sudo et al. (2013) point to both the cost-effectiveness and versatility of digital monitors. Unlike paper-based flip-cards that are disposed of after use, monitors are multifunctional. They can display text and graphics like flip-cards, and can also be used as prompters and retake displays on location (Sudo et al. 2013, p. 406). The change in technology also alters how they are used. Smaller paper-based flip-cards¹¹ are often hand-held by an announcer or MC who reveals the information contained by removing an adhesive covering layered over the board. Although the look of the adhesive covering is sometimes reproduced in graphics, if the human hand is now used at all, it is to point to or tap the screen to prompt the appearance of text on a screen. The positioning of the newscaster or announcer’s body in relation to the media displayed therefore differs producing a different kinetic relationship to the information being displayed. The resulting configuration mimics that of the positioning of an instructor pointing to relevant sections of text to be learnt and understood. This impacts on the way in which information is presented to viewers, and strengthens the pedagogical stance employed in media representations of the term ‘LGBT’. For example, the digital monitor used in the opening of the ‘LGBT: Societal understanding, familial

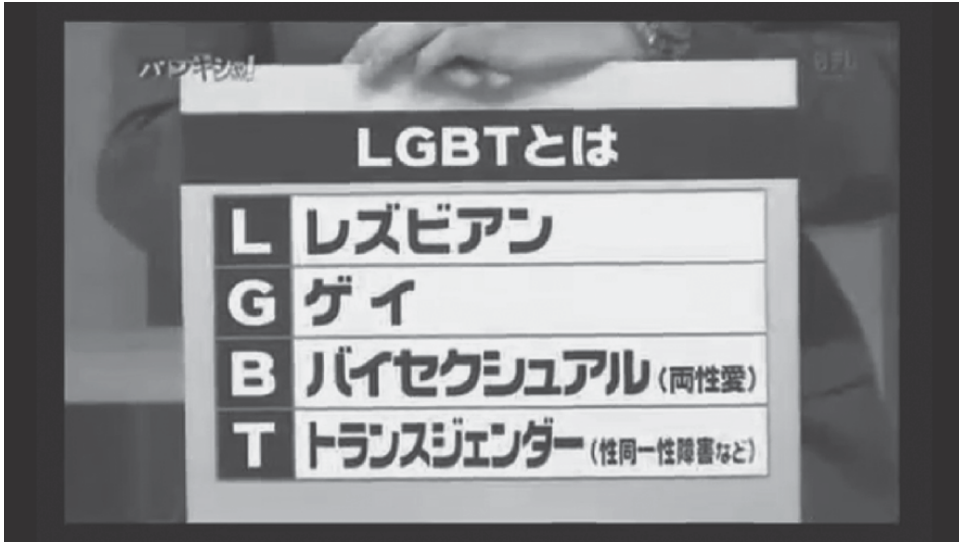


Figure 13.1 Paper-based flip-card

Source: *Bankisha* June 7, 2015

understanding' segment in the June 7 *Bankisha* episode provides the answer to the question Fukuzawa Akira¹² poses directly to the camera/viewer: 'Actress Jodie Foster, Singer Elton John, Apple CEO Tim Cook, Swimmer Ian Thorpe. So, do you know what these people all have in common?'

As Fukuzawa speaks, the camera pans large photos of each of the personalities mentioned that have been placed in a diagonal line in the studio. The shot then widens to include Fukuzawa himself standing behind the photos. He continues, 'all right, the answer is' and the shot widens again to include the digital monitor on which 'LGBT' is displayed in synch with his final words: 'this, LGBT and the like, sexual minorities'. The diagonal line of photos leads to the yellow screen displayed on the monitor in the center of which the acronym 'LGBT' appears in black text. The other 'main caster' Natsume Miku¹³ stands next to the monitor. Behind the monitor are panels of portrait photographs from the *Out in Japan* project.¹⁴ Two guests are seated to the left of the screen behind Fukuzawa. In this opening sequence, we have visually been drawn into the answer to Fukuzawa's quiz question in a manner that frames 'LGBT' as a hitherto unknown concept that needs to be explained.

Immediately following the staged introduction, the camera shifts to a shot of Natsume who, poised to offer a definition, orients her body to the screen and points to the LGBT acronym. She carefully enunciates each letter 'L G B T' before pausing to add: 'the meaning of this word is ...'. There is another slight pause before the display changes to show the letters running vertically down on the left. Pointing to the blank space on the right of the monitor Natsume provides explanations for each letter as the word for it appears: 'L is lesbian, women attracted to each other; G is gay, men attracted to each other, and B is bisexual, those who are attracted regardless of whether male or female, T is transgender, which means GID and others whose gender identity and sex are different' (Figure 13.2).¹⁵ Lesbian (*rezubian*), gay (*gei*), bisexual (*baisekusharu*) and transgender (*toransujendā*) appear written as transliterations of the English in *katakana* (the boxed syllabary used to represent loan-words in standardized Japanese writing). An additional term

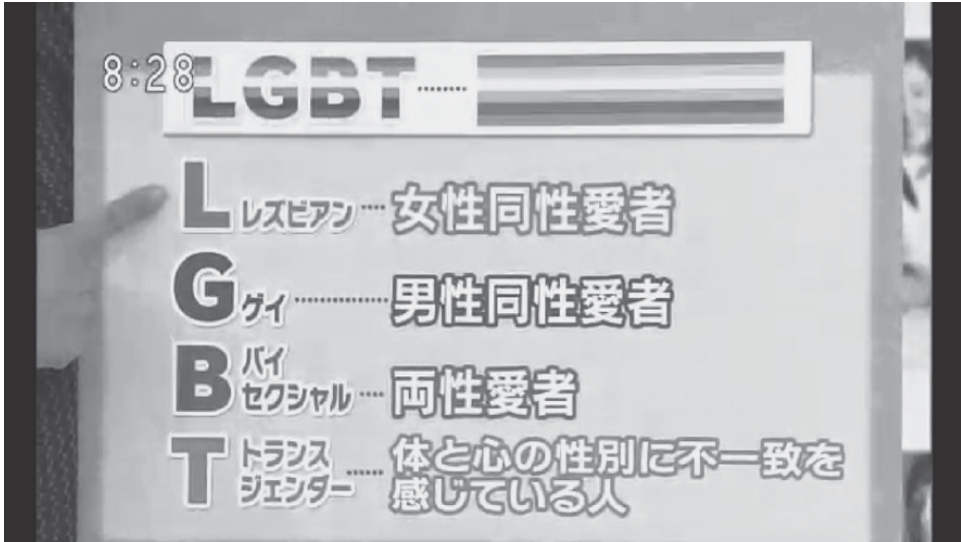


Figure 13.2 'LGBT': paper-based flip-card

Source: Sakidori NHK November 15, 2015

'*ryōseiai*' appears next to bisexual enclosed in brackets in smaller font. The phrase *seidōshitsusei-shōgai nado* (Gender Identity Disorder and the like) also appears next to transgender. Note that the explanation for transgender contains both the term 'GID' (*seidōshitsusei-shōgai*) and 'and the like' (*nado*). In fact, in his opening Fukuzawa also uses *nado* ('and the like/etc./and so on') when he rephrases LGBT as 'sexual minorities'. This use of 'and the like' is repeated throughout the segment, creating a sense that the term LGBT is larger and perhaps more encompassing of the definition that is being offered within the confines of the studio.

The opening stance of the program assumes a lack of familiarity on the viewer's part with the term 'LGBT'. The use of a quiz-style opening question followed by a verbal definition, then the use of the digital monitor with accompanying explanation is not only highly repetitive, but also positions the phrase as one which is unknown. The examples of well-known personalities prefaces the educational force of the explanation, which is visually highlighted through both Natsume's orientation to the monitor and the text displayed therein. Viewers are situated as pupils engaged in a pedagogical endeavor, being schooled in all things LGBT. This pedagogical framework seems at odds with the representation of contemporary Japanese society as progressive in its understanding of 'LGBT issues'. The program stresses the 'progress' being made in the area of same-sex partnership recognition – as evidenced in Shibuya ward's Same-sex Partnership Ordinance and support being offered by industry and businesses – however, it also seeks to question the feelings and experiences of 'LGBT people and the like' (*tōjisha-tachi*; literally 'persons concerned') by emphasizing the hardships faced by two same-sex couples as they negotiate relationships with their families.

The documentary of the same-sex couples that is embedded in the *Bankisha* LGBT episode starts with shots from the 2015 Tokyo Rainbow Pride event. Images of booths operated by foreign embassies, global companies and local businesses visually highlight support for the LGBT community. Once again, the phrase 'LGBT and the like' appears, this time as part of the caption explaining the event that visually cites the narration (Example 1). And, in the

9-second stretch of narration that describes the Pride event the term ‘LGBT’ is both verbally and visually cited.

Example 1. *Bankisha* (June 2015)

UL: *Bankisha!*¹⁶

UR: # ‘LGBT’ o meguru rikai# Ōkii na henka no ippō de ... Shin//sō

[Understanding around ‘LGBT’ in the midst of huge changes ... facts]

LM: *Tōkyō Rainbow Pride // #LGBT# nado e no rikai o fukame // henken o nakusō to iu ibento*

[Tokyo Rainbow Pride: An event to deepen understanding and eliminate discrimination of LGBT and the like]

Narration: *kore wa LGBT, seiteki mainoritī no hitobito e no rikai o fukame henken o nakusō to iu ibento da.*

[This is an event to deepen understanding about and eliminate prejudice toward LGBT, people of sexual minorities.]

Key: LM = lower middle of screen; UL = upper left of screen;

UR = upper right of screen; # = change in text color; / = line break

In the text layered on the screen ‘LGBT’ has been highlighted through both color and the use of citation marks and is therefore been made hyper-visible. However, there is already tension inscribed into this visibility via the use of the ellipsis mark (...) in the upper-right caption that orientates viewers toward a story that will undoubtedly tell of continued challenges. Indeed, the documentary goes on to follow the struggles of two same-sex couples to gain acceptance and understanding from their families, even in the midst of a celebrated increase in societal understanding.

When we return to the studio at the end of the documentary section, Fukuzawa and Katayama are now seated. Fukuzawa holds a paper-based flip-card that replicates the contents of the digital monitor used in the opening (Figure 13.1). The program has come full-circle to return again to a visual citation of the program’s definition of LGBT. Fukuzawa asks special guest Sugiyama Fumino – a transgender activist – to identify the greatest issue currently facing LGBT people. ‘There are too many,’ Sugiyama answers. He then explains that although ‘we are thought to not exist’ (*inai hito to sareteiru*) it is more accurate to say that ‘we can’t speak out’ (*ienai*) openly. He then points to the panel of photographs from the *Out in Japan* project that decorates the studio as an example of making LGBT visible (*mieruka*). He astutely suggests that although it is usually implied that sexual minorities experience problems, it is equally important to question how the pressures exerted by the ‘majority’ exasperates those problems. This closing echoes Kakefuda’s writings in the ‘gay boom’ era that stress that a notion of tolerance is actually an act of ‘not seeing’ and therefore an issue of in/visibility in the midst of extreme media visibility.

LGBT markets opening up the future

The ‘LGBT x economy: Sexual minorities carve out the future’ episode of NHK’s *Sakidori Trends and Business*¹⁷ (November 15, 2015) follows a narrative similar to the *Bankisha* news segment – that of progressive awareness of LGBT issues within Japan. This time, however, the focus is on markets and business. The episode opens with footage of the partner registration in Shibuya. Higashi Koyuki and Masuhara Hiroko, the couple who campaigned for permission to

wear wedding dresses at their Tokyo Disneyland wedding ceremony, are shown speaking at their news conference upon being the first couple to register and receive a certificate from Shibuya ward. Shots of the local landmark the iconic Hachi, a statue of a dog that sits in the open area outside Shibuya station, wearing a sash advertising the issuance of same-sex partnership certificates is spliced into this segment. The accompanying narration notes that ‘social recognition of LGBT, so-called sexual minorities, is currently progressing’ in contemporary Japan. The link from partnership registration to business chances is achieved with the next phrase: ‘in the midst of this, businesses targeting them are making moves’. The caption ‘LGBT x economy // sexual minorities carve out the future’ appears on the top right of the screen. The term ‘LGBT’ is rendered in rainbow colors. White font with yellow highlighting is used for ‘economy’. The colors have clearly been selected for their symbolic resonance; the rainbow-color motif is often used to represent LGBT pride and social movements, and the gold-like connotations of yellow suggest wealth. This design continues into the impact captions – subtitle-like captions that appear in synch with the audio track.

Just over 35 seconds into the broadcast, as the narrator turns to companies who are making moves into the LGBT market, a rainbow-colored caption ‘LGBT’ slides from the left and a yellow-hued caption ‘economy’ slides from the right of screen. The ‘x’ oscillates as the animated texts collide at the center of the screen. The ‘x’ diminishes in size and falls. All of this is accompanied by a sparkling sound effect. This kind of animation is common to variety programming, and is increasingly used in light infotainment-style shows. As the narrator cites the figures from Dentsu’s (2015) estimate of the value of the LGBT market, the caption ‘6-trillion yen market’ replaces the ‘LGBT x economy’ caption. Once again font, size, color and placement are used to highlight specific terms from the narration and frame the program itself. At this point, the title caption is still in place at the right of the screen and there is a visual repetition of the theme ‘LGBT x economy’. The captions fit well within the *Sakidori* concept that aims to delve into the latest trends and business concerns.

With the size and importance of the LGBT market clearly identified, ‘LGBT’ are marked as ‘trendsetters’. With a whooshing sound effect, the word ‘trendsetter’ (in purple font) is layered over footage of the Tokyo pride parade. Drink packaging, luxury cars and men’s underwear are shown as examples of booms instigated by marketing to LGBT consumers who ‘are not sticklers to existing values’. Impact captions are used to highlight the reactions of anonymous passers-by asked to comment on the bright and colorful men’s underwear currently ‘booming’. Next, special guest Leslie Kee – a Singaporean photographer working in Japan – is introduced as a photographer to the stars. Examples of the images he has shot are projected, showing the names of the stars in English. The *Out in Japan: 10,000 Portraits* project is introduced, and as images of the photo shoot dominate the screen, the words *lesbian*, *gay*, *bi-sexual*, *transgender* and *x-gender* are layered onto the screen. Each moves separately, first from left and then from right onto the screen. The Japanese transliteration of these terms (in a white font with a yellow border) is layered with the English (in white with pink-bordered text). Sections of an interview with Kee – where he explains that the talents of LGBT peoples are just waiting to be uncovered – is also layered with impact captions. Finally, at the end of the introduction to the episode, the narrator explains that: ‘today we focus on the financial frontline which has started to connect with LGBT sexual minorities’. The caption now shown on the bottom of screen reads ‘making a future with LGBT’ and therefore differs to the title caption on the top right of the screen which still reads ‘LGBT x economy // sexual minorities open up a future’.

This brief description of the 3-minute 17-second opening of *Sakidori* gives an indication of the sheer volume of text that is layered onto the screen. The use of text onscreen has always been a feature of Japanese broadcasting. However, as Shitara’s (2011) research on text in broadcasts

from the NHK archives has shown, the amount of text shown in 30 minutes of programming has increased from just over 20 instances per 30 minutes of broadcasting in the 1960s, to just under 120 instances per 30 minutes of broadcasting in the 2000s for variety programming on NHK. In this *Sakidori* episode, key terms from the narration are layered as short captions. Selected utterances from the interviews with employees of the marketing company, the passers-by on the street and special guest Leslie Kee are also rendered as impact captions. Each utilizes a different color scheme. Park's (2009) work on impact captions used in Korean television clearly indicates that this style of captioning not only shapes the interpretation of content, but also influences the social positioning of speakers whose words and/or supposed thoughts have been visualized as text-on-screen. This is achieved through linking visual representations to editorial interpretations of the affective content of the utterances. As with the *Bankisha* episode analyzed above, 'LGBT' is positioned, through the use of color and animation, as a diverse yet somehow clearly identifiable group that exists separately from the viewer. Although removed from the viewer, LGBT is positioned as a key player in strengthening the Japanese economy through as yet untapped markets and trendsetting patterns of consumption.

The viewer has now been exposed to a rich explanation of the contemporary movement around LGBT markets, in which the meaning of the term 'LGBT' has been layered onto the screen. However, before the guests – celebrity photographer Leslie Kee and drag-queen performer and essayist Bourbonne – are introduced, the acronym 'LGBT' is defined using a paper-based flip-card (Figure 13.2).¹⁸ In a style that resonates with the example from *Bankisha* discussed above, the explanation is prefaced by a question. Announcer Katayama Chieko asks: 'So, just what is LGBT? Let's explain.' She then points to each letter on the flip-card she holds cradled in her arm, and spells out each term: 'L Lesbian female homosexual, G Gay male homosexual, B Bisexual, T Transgender, someone who feels dissonance between their heart/mind and physical sex, Take the first letters, to call LGBT, right.' After explaining each letter, Katayama then removes an adhesive rainbow flag at the top of the flip-card to reveal the percentage of the population said to be LGBT-identified according to the 2015 Dentsu online survey: 'and LGBT people make up 7.6% of the population, that means that one in every 13 people is LGBT' (image 7).

Directly addressing the viewer, co-presenter and radio personality Jon Kabira contextualizes the figure: 'so, in other words, right, um what size is a primary or junior high school class? According to that percentage there are or were 2 or 3 LGBT people in each class.' In this very radio-style of presentation, Kabira asks viewers to reflect on the size of our school classes and acknowledge LGBT as 'considerably familiar or close' (*kanari midika na sonzai*, literally 'a familiar/close being/existence'). This utterance demonstrates the educational stance of the show. As with the *Bankisha* example above, the viewer is configured as being ignorant as to the meaning of the acronym LGBT, and to matters of the LGBT market. Similarly, through the use of flip-card technology, textual information is employed to define LGBT. In a highly heteronormative move, this *keihatsu* (awareness) stance constructs an ignorant majority who must be educated in matters concerning sexual minorities.

Writing sexual identity onto the small screen

As we have seen in this chapter, there has been a dramatic increase in reporting on issues related to sexual minorities in Japan in news and current affairs genres. While reporting in these genres differs significantly to that of entertainment programming, the tabloidization of news has led to an increased use of captions that is coupled with informational tools such as flip-cards, and the volume of text-on-screen has dramatically increased. This textual information visualizes specific segments of a broadcast that have been selected by the production team in the editorial process.

The captions and flip-cards used extensively in mainstream television occupy the visual field and convey information regarding the content of a broadcast. Both are citational, and although they appear simultaneously with speech at the point of broadcast, they represent language and ideas produced prior to that moment. Captions and flip-cards not only cite previous speech and/or display previously stated ideas, they also form part of the chain of citations that informs public opinions of social groups, issues and events.

In these captions and flip-cards, font, orthography, animation and graphics are manipulated to reflect a specific interpretation of events, people and situations. Although the manipulation of these elements for comedic effect is not evident in the news and current affairs segments analyzed here, what emerges is a practice of defining and inscribing LGBT onto the screen such that the viewer's ignorance of LGBT communities and issues is facilitated via the act of visual citation itself. This process of entextualization, or text-making (Bauman and Briggs 1990, Briggs and Bautnan 1992, Park 2009), and mediatisation (Jaffe 2009) regiments understandings of peoples through editorial manipulation of visual semiotics and language ideologies (Irvine and Gal 2000, Johnson and Milani 2010, Schieffelin et al. 1998, Silverstein 1979). In this process, views 'inconsistent with the ideological scheme' (Irvine and Gal 2000, p. 38) of the program and the broadcaster are erased.

Text and graphics layered onto audiovisual media in post-production editing act to inscribe a particular editorial reading onto the broadcast package. In reporting on 'LGBT issues' and 'LGBT markets' in contemporary Japanese media, the 'official reading' (Park 2009) is one of positive social change and the potential for market expansion. However, the citational practices that inscribe this onto the screen also facilitate the hyper-visibility of LGBT peoples and the normalization of heteronormative ignorance.

Tolerance facilitated by in/visibility echoes in the results of a 2015 survey exploring attitudes toward sexual minorities. Forty percent of respondents indicated that they had seen fewer media portrayals of lesbians compared to other 'minority' groups (Kamano et al. 2015).¹⁹ The result is remarkable when we consider that women have been at the forefront of calls for recognition of same-sex partnership rights since at least the so-called 'gay boom' years of the early 1990s when Kakefuda was writing (Ōtsuka 2009, Sugiura et al. 2007, Tsutsui 2004, Izumo 1993, Ito 1993, Yanase and Ito 1994). In the interim years as well, lesbian-identified activists and personalities have been active in the public sphere. Since the mid-2010s a growing number of books have also been published; many of these discussing same-sex partnership rights in an easily accessible format featuring creatively contemporary titles such as *Lesbianish Married Life* (*Lezubian-teki Kekkon Seikatsu*; Higashi and Masuhara 2014) and *Bian²⁰-marriage* (*Bian-kon*; Ichinose 2016). We can only conclude that in the well-documented recycling of queer images in Japanese popular media (Ishida and Murakami 2006, Maree 2014), lesbian, bisexual and queer women remain in/visible.

The implications of media hyper-visibility are evident elsewhere. Although 80 percent of respondents reported having seen male-to-female transgender people in the media, in the same 2015 survey, a quarter of all respondents indicated resistance to sex reassignment. Furthermore, just fewer than 60 percent of male respondents, and just over 35 percent of female respondents registered 'disgust' at the thought of male-to-male sexual relations. The saturation of the media with images of queer/queen personalities does not seemingly result in greater acceptance of either transgender issues or male-to-male sex.

Situating the 2015 survey results alongside media reports that call on industry to 'capture' sleeping LGBT markets and foster awareness of LGBT people in the lead-up to the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics highlights the need to engage in critical approaches to media analysis. As we become witness to corporate expansion into so-called rainbow markets and to the

proliferation of political discourses pertaining to LGBT rights, we must critically think through the entanglement of discourses of tolerance/acceptance and in/visibility.

Notes

- 1 This research was supported under Australian Research Council's Discovery Projects funding scheme (project number DP150102964).
- 2 The title of an episode of retired comedian Kamioka Ryūtarō's (1947–) popular variety show *Kamioka Ryūtarō ga zubari* (Kamioka Ryūtarō cuts to the heart), which aired on TBS 1992–1996. For a discussion of the *Fifty gay men* episode of the show, see Hall (2000).
- 3 This chapter follows Japanese conventions for Japanese names where the last name is followed by the first name.
- 4 This search includes the *Asahi* Newspaper national and prefectural editions (1985–) as well as the weekly magazine *Aera*.
- 5 In this chapter I will use the term LGBT to reflect the current usage in the Japanese language media.
- 6 The terms 'flip board', 'flip', and 'pattern' are also used. In this chapter I will use the term 'flip-card'.
- 7 Section 6 of the Fundamental Principles of Olympism states that 'The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Olympic Charter shall be secured without discrimination of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status' (International Olympic Committee 2015).
- 8 Hase, a former Olympic and professional wrestler, attributes his own growing awareness of LGBT issues to the boycotting of the Sochi Winter Olympics' opening ceremony by several foreign leaders due to anti-gay legislation in Russia.
- 9 The data come from an ongoing project into text-on-the-screen funded by ARC DP150102964. Thanks to the research assistants who have assisted with the initial transcription.
- 10 *Shinsō hōdō Bankisha* is a live news and current affairs show broadcast weekly on Sunday. The title literally translates as 'Truthful reporting: On the beat'.
- 11 Circa 1964, the NHK production standards showed two sizes of flip-cards, A-size; 180mm–265mm and B-size; 263mm–365mm (Hirofumi 2014, p. 75).
- 12 Fukuzawa Akira (1963–) is a freelance announcer and television personality. He is one of two 'main casters' on *Shinsō hōdō Bankisha*.
- 13 Natsume Miku (1983–) is a freelance announcer. She is one of two 'main casters' on *Shinsō hōdō Bankisha*.
- 14 The project aims 'at shining the spotlight on sexual minorities in Japan – with various acclaimed photographers taking portraits of LGBT-identified individuals from all walks of life – with the goal of showcasing 10,000 portraits in the next five years'. For more details see the official website: <http://outinjapan.com/concept/>
- 15 All translations by author unless otherwise stated.
- 16 This is the program logo.
- 17 Sakidori literally means 'preemption' or 'anticipation'.
- 18 Prior to this Jon Kabira introduces the studio, which is adorned with portraits by Kee as part of the *Out in Japan: 10,000 Portraits* project. The white floor, too, has been punctuated with large tiles in each of the six colors of the rainbow.
- 19 Eighty percent of respondents reported have seen male-to-female transgender people, and only 60 percent reported seeing 'female homosexuals' (sic) in the media.
- 20 *Bian* is an abbreviation of 'rezubian', the Japanese transliteration of lesbian. The term was coined in 1990s activism to contest the derogatory term *rezu* (lez/lezzie).

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Housewives watching crime

Mediating social identity and voyeuristic pleasures in Japanese wide shows¹

Michelle H. S. Ho

Four hours before Sawada Takayuki's² murder, his wife, Satsuki, fed him sleeping pills to induce unconsciousness. Satsuki and Kikuchi Akiyo, her accomplice and friend, subsequently stabbed the man with a knife and covered his head with a plastic bag filled with helium. All this occurred in the Sawada home in Ibaraki prefecture, Japan, on June 14, 2011. After Satsuki's arrest, she confessed to killing her husband because she could no longer deal with his domestic violence.³

This outlines a typical crime story circulated on morning 'wide shows' (*waido shō*),⁴ a talk show and subgenre of *jōhō bangumi* (information programs) covering a broad range of topics, such as celebrity gossip and social problems, on Japanese television (Ishita 1998). Indeed, it has become commonplace for audiences of wide shows, mainly women in their thirties and forties,⁵ to 'witness' murder, violence, and sexual assault involving other women occurring in the ordinary, familiar, and domestic space of the home on a daily basis. Based on the lives and crimes of real women, these sensational narratives usually portray women as victims and sometimes as perpetrators. With weekday morning television garnering the second highest in viewership ratings,⁶ how do we make sense of such crime narratives in relation to women's social identity and their viewing pleasures? Focusing on *Sukkiri!! (Freshen Up!!)*,⁷ a morning wide show broadcast daily on weekdays on Nippon Television (NTV), one of the main commercial television networks in Japan, this chapter examines the program's representations of women in crime narratives and how their social identities are mediated.

While definitions of wide shows may differ, scholars generally agree that they target housewives who are watching from home (Ishikawa et al. 1991, p. 866; Suzuki 1995, p. 77; Ishita 2010, p. 224) – a premise supported by the creators of these programs (Tanaka Hiroshi, personal interview, March 20, 2012; Nozawa Hideki, personal interview, March 13, 2012). This is interesting given that the crime story I recount above presumes a specific target audience, housewives, in constructing Satsuki as the 'poison woman' (*dokufu*). The poison woman refers to a vindictive female criminal who injured and murdered her enemies through toxins among other means and whose stories were serialized in nineteenth-century tabloid newspapers as a form of social control (Marran 2007, pp. xiii–xix). Like the poison woman, Satsuki is portrayed as a figure of transgression who violates established moral and social norms by administering drugs to her husband. Yet, similar to the poison woman's didactic function in the media, Satsuki's deviant position simultaneously reinscribes for audiences these same values promoted by the prewar

national ideology of 'good wife, wise mother' (*ryōsai kenbo*). Good wives and wise mothers refer to women who fulfill their roles as managers of homes and nurturers of children (Uno 1993, p. 294). The 'good wife, wise mother' ideology, especially its emphasis on mothering, has powerfully continued to influence state policies and society but, more importantly, women's own perceptions of their labor and social identities without explicitly naming this ideology (Uno 1993, p. 295; Allison 1996, p. xviii).

I argue that women cast as victims and perpetrators in wide show crime narratives both transgress and reinforce their normative social roles as good wives and wise mothers. Although these media representations may be pedagogical in instructing Japanese women to be more responsible in childcare and household management, they also defy these accepted roles by offering housewives voyeuristic pleasures in the act of watching. By 'witnessing' other women abuse their children or encountering crimes of passion, housewives derive pleasure, which operates based on the taken-for-granted assumptions of obeying certain social norms. On the one hand, the housewife-viewer relishes the knowledge that she is *not* that woman, who is either a criminal or victim. On the other hand, the housewife-viewer identifies with the criminal or victim at a deeper level, as someone who understands her frustration of having to fulfill similar roles in society. Put differently, her pleasure comes from being able to vicariously enter these spaces of violence and yet extract herself from them.

Anne Allison's notion of 'desire' as deriving from people's mundane lives at school or work instead of being separate from them is useful for thinking about the housewife-mother figure, who pervades the imagination of children and adults in Japanese mass cultural products and practices (1996, p. xv). Extending Allison's ideas to the desires of mothers and housewives, I explore how crime narratives and wide shows in general may be a part of their 'everyday practices of consumptive pleasure' (p. xv), since they consistently watch these programs. More importantly, these women's desires are intimately connected to and may even derive from their social roles of childrearing and running a household since the home is the primary site for voyeurism, both as the crime scene and the platform for continuous viewing.

In the rest of the chapter, I detail my methods – a combination of ethnographic approaches and textual analyses – and review how gender has figured in past scholarship on wide shows and crime narratives. In two sections, I examine two types of crimes most commonly reported on *Sukkiri!!*: 'family crimes' and 'crimes of passion'. First, I trace representations of women as perpetrators in what I call 'family crimes' or violent crimes⁸ committed by a person against one or more members of the nuclear family, and the discourse surrounding children as 'good victims'. Good victims are characterized by their small stature, innocence, and inability to defend themselves when they undergo trouble (Langer [1998] 2001, pp. 78–9). Next, I compare how women are depicted differently as victims and perpetrators in 'crimes of passion' and investigate how watching reports of a woman killing another woman produces pleasure for women. Crimes of passion occur when a person in the 'heat of passion' commits an un-premeditated murder against another person involved in a romantic relationship, although motives for crimes of passion may also include instances where the perpetrator is sufficiently provoked in other intimate relationships or situations (Ahmad 2004, pp. 1302–3). Finally, I will conclude by relating family crimes to crimes of passion, particularly how they complement each other to construct perpetual tensions between reinscribing and transcending established social norms.

Reading, talking, and watching *Sukkiri!!*

In this chapter, I employ what Louisa Schein calls an 'ethnotextual approach', or a method that stresses the close interpretation of texts from the anthropologist's subject position, which

is situated within specific locations and shaped by cultural encounters with individuals (2013, pp. 205–6). From the perspective of an international graduate student enrolled in a Japanese university who lived in Tokyo with a host family between August 2010 and February 2011, I observed Yamane Haruko,⁹ my host mother and a housewife, watch *Sukkiri!!* every weekday morning without fail. Gradually, I began watching *Sukkiri!!*, which is broadcast on NTV from 8:00 a.m. to 10:25 a.m., alongside her, and having casual chats with her about the show, continuing to watch it long after I moved out of her house. Using discourse analysis, I track how *Sukkiri!!* portrays women in crime narratives and how viewers might read and find pleasure in these representations by focusing on episodes in July 2011.¹⁰

I supplement my ethnotextual approach of *Sukkiri!!* with fieldwork carried out over nine months between 2010 and 2012. I conducted semi-structured interviews and informal conversations with three directors and/or producers of morning wide shows and engaged in participant observations at two sites, one in the living room of a Japanese home (that of Yamane's) and the other at a live broadcast of *ZIP!*, another morning wide show that runs on NTV before *Sukkiri!!* from 5:50 to 8:00 a.m. At the time of the interviews I conducted in March 2012, Tanaka Hiroshi told me he had worked as both director and producer of *Sukkiri!!* ever since the program began in 2006, but had over ten years of experience working on *jōhō bangumi* (information programs). Nozawa Hideki, on the other hand, directed *Zūmu-in!! Asa* (zoom-in morning) and *Zūmu-in!! SUPER* (zoom-in super),¹¹ morning wide shows broadcast by NTV that preceded *ZIP!*, but occasionally directed news reports on *Sukkiri!!*. Maeda Jun, who is producer of *ZIP!*, interviewed me about my project on morning wide shows for a segment on *ZIP!* surveying the different kinds of research that foreign students at the University of Tokyo were conducting.¹² Maeda later invited me to observe a live recording of *ZIP!* in April 2012¹³ and briefly appear on the program to give my opinions on and reasons for studying morning information programs.

Gender in wide shows and crime narratives

Literature on Japanese television variety programs is generally limited and fairly dated. Except for Ishita Saeko, few scholars have written extensively on wide shows. Previous studies have investigated the relationship between wide shows and audiences (Broadcasting Ethics and Program Improvement Organization 1981; Forum for Children's Television 1985), especially the cultivation of intimacy through ethnographic research (Painter 1996; Holden and Ergul 2006) and the production and consumption of celebrities through wide shows (Ho 2014; Ishita 1998, 2001; Kirsch 2014). In a chapter on representations of women on Japanese television, Midori Fukunishi Suzuki stresses the failure of wide shows, or what she calls 'women's magazine-style shows', to provide useful information for uncritical female audiences (1995, 77).

Contrary to seeing wide shows as trivial, scholars have argued that the genre is important precisely because audiences consistently watch these programs (Ishita 1998), which target women (Ho 2014) and promote close identification with *tarento* (talent),¹⁴ who pervasively appear on wide shows (Ishita 2010, 234; Kirsch 2014). Barring my previous article on sportswomen (Ho 2014), none of these scholars have directly addressed how gender explicitly figures in wide shows. Taking my cue from recent scholarship examining women and femininity in Japanese television dramas (Freedman and Iwata-Weickgenannt 2011; Ito 2004; Lukács 2010), this chapter fills this gap in literature and extends previous research on television and gender identity.

More attention has been paid to gender in scholarship on crime narratives, although this is mostly in the United States context. The existing literature on television news magazine programs reveals that women are portrayed more as victims than as perpetrators of crime (Grabe 1999; Grabe et al. 2001), reinscribing gender stereotypes of women as requiring protection from

men. Scholars have generally agreed on the function of media crime narratives to reinforce the existing (patriarchal) social order (Chesney-Lind and Eliason 2006; Grabe 1999; Grabe et al. 2006; Cavender et al. 1999). Stories focusing on female victims structure crime in binary terms of good and evil, publicly censuring (male) criminals and perpetuating the ‘crime doesn’t pay’ myth (Grabe 1999, pp. 167–8). These stories are also didactic in regulating women’s behavior and encouraging (female) audiences to follow normative social roles (Cavender et al. 1999).

Other studies on media narratives depicting women as criminals show that women who commit violent crimes or crimes against children or transgress social and gender norms in other ways, such as exhibiting ‘unfeminine’ behavior, are condemned to a larger degree than men and women (who conform to these norms) committing similar crimes (Grabe et al. 2006; Chesney-Lind and Eliason 2006). This imbalance in media coverage calls for comparisons between representations of women as victims and perpetrators of crime instead of analyzing them separately – something my chapter seeks to address. Due to inadequate resources discussing gender and crime in the Japanese media, I situate my own reading within US scholarship on this discourse without necessarily collapsing US and Japanese media crime narratives. Although there are similarities between the two, I recognize that Japanese media crime narratives are located in specific cultural, historical, and historical contexts that render them distinct from US narratives. Conversely, I think that a transnational approach to Japanese media crime narratives would avoid essentialist assumptions of the texts and facilitate exchanges across and in-between US and Japanese borders.

Family crimes: poison mothers and damaged children

This section focuses on how the wide show portrays women mainly as perpetrators of family crimes, especially as ‘poison mothers’ (*dokuhaha* or *dokumama*) who hurt or murder their young children. ‘Poison mothers’, a term appearing in Japan in the last ten years in books and more recently on television,¹⁵ comes from ‘toxic parents’, a phrase describing parents who consistently abuse or neglect their children to the extent of hampering their growth or damaging their sense of self (Forward 1989, pp. 5–6). Wide show family crime stories grant women pleasure by temporarily suspending their social roles as wives and mothers during the act of watching. Yet the housewife-viewer is never entirely detached from them as the narratives constantly remind her of her childrearing responsibilities. Moreover, because the housewife-viewer frequently engages in *nagara shichō* (watching and listening while doing something else), she may be doing household chores or taking care of children while watching wide shows, which complicates how she transgresses her social roles – something I will discuss later. The wide show genre, which is designed to appeal to women, also shapes the way women view family crimes through certain characteristics, such as the weaving of visual narratives, dramatic narration, and non-diegetic music, and fragmentation and repetition of information (Ishita 1998, 2001).

Of the six family crime cases reported on *Sukkiri!!* in July 2011, four involved women who abused and/or murdered their children and husbands. The remaining two cases involved men as aggressors: one who abused his son and another who murdered his son and wife – the only case in which the victim was a woman. Furthermore, as compared to the two cases involving men as aggressors, *Sukkiri!!* covered the four cases involving women as perpetrators more extensively and less sympathetically. The latter cases had significantly more airtime, up to 15 minutes, which is considered long given a five-minute average for each topic or segment in a fast-paced program of nearly two and a half hours like *Sukkiri!!*.

In family crime narratives, mothers and wives more than fathers and husbands were reproached for neglecting their responsibilities and allowing violence to occur on their watch. Furthermore,

the creators of *Sukkiri!!* consciously select and illustrate these crime stories in a bid to educate the housewife-viewer (Tanaka Hiroshi, personal interview, March 20, 2012). This is similar to patterns in US media crime narratives in which crime reports on television news magazine programs serve as a form of social control by teaching audiences moral values and promoting social cohesion (Grabe 1999). It is therefore important to explore the reasons for *Sukkiri!!*'s deliberate constructions of woman-wife-mother as criminal and child as victim, which I will examine using one of the four cases as an example.

Case study: vacuum cleaner child abuse

This case in Sakai, Osaka concerns a mother, Okumura Mai, and her boyfriend, Mizutani Kazushi, who abused her small children, a three-year-old girl and six-year-old boy, using a vacuum cleaner. The first thing that viewers see during this July 4 report is what seems to be footage from the crime scene, a close-up showing the balcony of the family's apartment taken from the outside, which is displayed on a screen next to the reporter, Nishimura Ayako, in the studio. The home as both the site of the crime scene and the place where the family lives is a familiar point of entry for the housewife-viewer. As Nishimura tells viewers in a somber tone and expression that the couple was arrested last week for using a vacuum cleaner to suck the children's faces, the camera moves inside the apartment to reveal a cardboard box filled with a small child's belongings, such as a bright yellow ball and one yellow ballet shoe. Images and footage, such as these and later those showing a child's pink bicycle outside the apartment, allow the housewife-viewer to readily approach the narrative. They also operate effectively to elicit emotional responses from the housewife-viewer, such as sympathy for the children.

The images and footage are intentionally selected to match the discourse and all three are weaved together into a narrative. The crime narrative is carefully curated through a method *Sukkiri!!* consciously employs called *kirikuchi* (incision), which refers to a person's point of view regarding a certain issue, such as the housewife's perspective (Tanaka Hiroshi, personal interview, March 20, 2012). Through *kirikuchi*, the wide show predicts and demonstrates the housewife-viewer's position on a certain social problem in order to allow her to approach it easily. *Kirikuchi* is predicated on the assumption that audiences uncomplicatedly assume their roles as good wives and wise mothers without challenging the status quo, reinscribing these roles through a projected viewing position. For instance, the good victim discourse surrounding the children appeals to the housewife-viewer's motherly instincts. Okumura and her lover, Mizutani, torture and almost kill her young children, who are completely at their mercy, abusing their power as guardians. However, although Okumura and Mizutani are both responsible for the crime, Nishimura puts most of the blame on Okumura by repeating the word '*hahaoya*' (mother), constructing a narrative that child abuse is a direct consequence of the mother's lack of care. In other words, Okumura's failure to be a mother is perceived as the main source of these family crimes. These visual narratives and Nishimura's reporting effectively frame the woman as poison mother and criminal and her children as victims for the housewife-viewer.

Although we have established that the housewife-viewer immediately relates to the innocent children in the crime narrative, I would also suggest that she identifies with Okumura as a mother. The presence of Mizutani indicates Okumura's social position as a single mother in Japan, who typically receives little state support and has to work to provide for her children while singlehandedly raising them. Nowhere in the crime narrative does Nishimura address this social issue of single mothers other than through implicit references to Okumura's lover and the absence of a nuclear family. The housewife-viewer has to infer from the narrative that Okumura is a single mother who struggles with taking care of her children, facing multiple obstacles in

Japanese society. Through Okumura, the housewife-viewer feels the burden of having to conform to normative roles of wife and mother.

Single mothers like Okumura expose the gap between reality and social expectations of women in Japan. Since the 1970s, the number of single-mother families has drastically increased (Peng 2013, p. 116). In addition, large-scale economic restructuring and the long recessionary decade following the bursting of the bubble in the late 1980s meant that fewer women could afford to stay at home full time, not to mention a sharp decline in marriage and birth rates. Despite this, Japanese women are still expected to fulfill their social roles as good wives and wise mothers. This gendered discourse of women as housewives and men as breadwinners continues to shape state policies and social practices (LeBlanc 2011, p. 118).

The housewife-viewer's identification with the poison mother, who is closest to her own social position, arguably forms the source of her pleasure when watching violence in family crimes. Part of this pleasure also derives from voyeurism that is shaped by these sensational narratives on wide shows. Since the family crime has already occurred, much of the reporting entails a reconstruction of the abuse and/or murder. This allows for overly dramatic narration coupled with shocking visuals and suspenseful sounds. For instance, as Nishimura proceeds to tell audiences exactly how the abuse occurred, the camera cuts to a close-up of a vacuum cleaner against a black background with the words 'sucked [their] faces using vacuum cleaner' highlighted in red. Accompanying this are high-pitched non-diegetic sounds, presumably to portray the horror of the children's abuse. Illustrating the vacuum cleaner abuse in an exaggerated manner, these visuals and sounds have the effect of stirring up emotions in the housewife-viewer. As Nishimura continues narrating that Okumura's daughter sustained injuries for two weeks after being mistreated, the camera cuts to a close-up of the vacuum cleaner superimposed over another close-up of the yellow shoe from before. This repetition and fragmentation of visual elements is characteristic of the wide show and constantly reminds the housewife-viewer of her accepted roles through the carefully chosen visuals. The reconstructed narrative closes with details of the numerous protection orders the children have had against their own mother following several counts of abuse, driving the point home on the failure of women to adhere to social norms.

Again, we might read this sensational story as merely relaying a kind of admonishment to the housewife-viewer, but I am more interested in the voyeuristic pleasures it generates, which is ultimately built on her ideological position as good wife, wise mother. As in the previous example, *Sukkiri!!* uses the images of random objects that are loosely related to the crime report to weave fuller narratives. In fact, we are unsure if the apartment, child's belongings, and vacuum cleaner actually belong to the crime scene until the word *imēji* (image) appears on the screen next to the superimposition of shoe and vacuum cleaner, indicating that these are representations. Portraying these objects in the domestic space, such as a child's toys and home appliances, signals the housewife-viewer's identification with the poison mother as sharing similar social roles. Indeed, part of the housewife-viewer's voyeuristic pleasure comes from her recognition of these stock images, which symbolize the roles of caring for children and doing household chores. Seeing these objects that are present in the poison mother's home as in her own home, the housewife-viewer may feel an elevated sense of familiarity when watching the narrative. At the same time, another part of her pleasure arises from being able to detach herself from the poison mother as the better mother and from the text consumed as the consumer.

Another source of pleasure for the housewife-viewer lies in the sensational format of wide show crime narratives, characterized by dramatic narration, non-diegetic music, and fragmentation and repetition of information, as discussed earlier. Using reenactments (sometimes by actors) to reconstruct the crime narrative is common in the wide show genre. Tanaka explains that while

they have to ensure accuracy in the narrative by revealing the town and city in which the crime occurred, they also have to protect the personal information of the victims and their families by obfuscating the crime's exact location (Tanaka Hiroshi, personal interview, March 20, 2012). Reenactments therefore present a good solution for this problem. Whether to put women in their place or to preserve the victims' privacy, what is certain is that these reconstructed stories attract the housewife-viewer to watch crime.¹⁶

Moreover, as shown in the vacuum cleaner child abuse case, much of its material or its components, such as images, were fragmented, recycled, and reused in the crime narrative. Sometimes, this fragmented information is repeated in the same episode or later episodes, which functions as a persistent reminder of the housewife-viewer's social roles and shapes how she watches wide shows in two ways. First, fragmentation and repetition of material that is characteristic of the wide show format accommodates *nagara shichō* (distracted viewing). Recurring information on wide shows intensifies the continuous flow of content on daytime serials, which aligns with women's daily practices of watching while carrying out work at home (Herzog 1941; Modleski 1983). Second, this repetitive nature also ensures that all audiences will encounter the crime in the program at one point or another, which inducts the housewife-viewer into a particular community of women who watch wide shows daily for an extended period of time.

Distracted viewing accounts to a great degree for the high viewership ratings of morning wide shows (Ishita 2010, p. 224). On an average weekday, while housewives watched 4 hours and 36 minutes of television in total, approximately half of these women engaged in distracted viewing (NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute 2010, p. 10). Although a large number of housewives consume wide shows through *nagara shichō*, I would not be so quick to dismiss the significance of this distracted form of viewing. Having observed Yamane participate in distracted viewing and having taken part in it myself, I realize that contrary to belief, distracted viewing deepens, not diminishes, the watching experience. Indeed, because the 'interruptability' of daytime programs corresponds closely with the housewife's divided tasks at home, she is more attentive to these serials, deriving pleasure from rhythmic consumption (Modleski 1983, p. 71).

Yamane often seemed as if she were barely aware of what was broadcast on *Sukkiri!!* but I noticed that whenever a heinous crime was reported at length, she would stop and look at the television screen. Sometimes, she would even express her disbelief, utter comments about the crime, or discuss it with me. Although Yamane and I would interpret the crimes differently, our viewing of wide shows intensified because we engaged with television through each other as social practices instead of merely with the medium. In this digital age where consumers increasingly perform distracted consumption, the housewife-viewer watches morning wide shows as an 'interactive and participatory experience' alongside other women that complements, not rivals, the digital domain (Karlin 2012, p. 84). Content on wide shows is not just reproduced online, it also proliferates in conversations among housewives whether in person or through other communication devices. It is this alternative engagement with the media through other viewers that I argue enhances our viewing practices and offers us pleasure in the process of consumption.

When the housewife-viewer learns about the crime through watching wide shows, albeit while carrying out household chores or childrearing responsibilities, she gains entry into a loosely connected community of women who enjoy similar programs, or what Lauren Berlant calls 'intimate publics'. In intimate publics, women who participate in the culture of watching wide shows become emotionally connected with one another, maintaining beliefs in a 'vernacular' sense of belonging and an imagined good life that hinges on their accepted social roles (Berlant 2008, p. 13). When such material is fragmented and repeated on the wide show, however, the housewife-viewer revisits the same crime over and over again – a process further heightened by her interactions with other women who watch the program on a daily

basis at the same time as her, as if they were next to her. Nozawa describes women's collective viewing of wide shows in terms of *idobata kaiji*, referring to the old practice of housewives gathering next to the well to engage in gossip (Nozawa Hideki, personal interview, March 13, 2012).

Gossip might be perceived as a tool of empowerment and a source of pleasure for the housewife-viewer. Within intimate publics, the housewife-viewer actively generates and spreads gossip to other women about crime stories she encounters on wide shows. This form of communication about crime narratives intensifies the housewife-viewer's voyeuristic pleasure and grants her emotional involvement with other women. However, gossip can likewise perform the role of upholding social norms in less prescribed but equally effective ways within these affective spaces (Riegel 1996, p. 204). Put differently, although gossip cultivates community building and develops emotional attachments for the housewife-viewer, it can also encourage self-regulation within the group and competition among fellow group members to play the good wife, wise mother, all of which propagate different forms of pleasures.

The creation of an intimate public shapes the housewife-viewer's interpretation of crime narratives, which largely depends on knowledge she has accumulated over the many years of watching wide shows. These programs in turn encourage long-term viewing by serializing the same crimes or similar types of crimes and broadcasting them according to viewer expectations. The housewife-viewer's relationship with the wide show genre therefore entails a shared set of codes and conventions, which offers pleasure by circulating effectively among consumers and promising to satisfy their desires (Berlant 2008). Far from being passive receivers of wide show content, these women make meanings by generating gossip. After vicariously experiencing these crimes, the housewife-viewer familiarizes herself and other women with developments in the crime investigation or court proceedings and speculating on the outcome. Considering how audiences may read these crimes differently, discussions and predictions about them lend an immensurable sense of satisfaction.

Crimes of passion: vengeful lovers and entangled audiences

Consider the following crime reports concerning two young women, 22-year-old Lindsay Hawker and 27-year-old Fukuda Masumi. Hawker's body was found naked in a soil-filled bathtub relocated to her murderer's balcony and bore signs of rape and prolonged assault. All her hair had been shaved off, her mouth gagged, and hands and feet bound. Fukuda's corpse, on the other hand, was discovered lying in a massive pool of blood in her own living room, having suffered neck injuries and multiple stabbing in her chest. What both cases have in common is not just the brutality of the crimes, but also the way the murderers are depicted as barely acquainted with their victims and described as 'overcome with emotion' when they carried out the sudden and un-premeditated act. Hawker's murderer was a man billed as a stalker whose love was unrequited, whereas Fukuda's murderer was a woman who was cast as an overly jealous lover involved in a love triangle.

These crimes of passion were the only two cases broadcast on *Sukkiri!!* in July 2011. However, coverage of Hawker and Fukuda spread over four to six episodes in excruciating detail and air-time for each case in a given episode ranged from 1 minute to 15 minutes, which counts toward a considerable part of the program. Like family crimes, the home is often the site of violence for crimes of passion and women play central roles, whether they are victims or perpetrators. As compared to family crimes, however, crimes of passion appear to be even more dislocated from reality for the housewife-viewer. Not only does she have different social roles from the women involved in crimes of passion, but the home is also displaced as an abode of safety and young

women, who are usually victims, are punished. Examining Fukuda's murder as a case study, this section tracks how the housewife-viewer might relate to and find pleasure in crimes of passion by comparing wide show representations of women as crime victims and as perpetrators.

I am especially interested in how watching a woman murder another woman out of vengeance might appeal to the housewife-viewer and entangle her in the crime. Watching allows the housewife-viewer to vicariously experience crimes of passion through the eyes of both the victim and the perpetrator. Herta Herzog refers to this condition as 'borrowed experience', in which audiences gain satisfaction by becoming immersed in another person's (sometimes negative) encounters (1941, p. 76). Studying women who consume radio programs, Herzog discovers that although listeners do not wish to experience firsthand the incidents depicted in daytime serials, they want to borrow these experiences in order to make sense of their own lives. Similarly, by watching crimes of passion broadcast on *Sukkiri!!*, the housewife-viewer borrows the experiences of victim and perpetrator, which simultaneously reinscribes and transgresses her social identity. This suspension of reality and constant tension between identifying with the female victim and female perpetrator create the greatest pleasure for the housewife-viewer.

Adding to wide show genre characteristics discussed so far, other representation styles that attract audiences and drive crime of passion narratives include two types of 'live' news format, 'dash interviews' (*totsugeki shuzai*) and on-the-spot coverage. Dash interviews refer to a form of live representation where the reporter conducts spontaneous interviews with passersby in front of a camera (Ishita 1998). On-the-spot coverage is what Tanaka calls going to *genba*, or the crime scene or site of action, meaning the reporter travels out of the studio to the crime site and reports the crime from there (Tanaka Hiroshi, personal interview, March 20, 2012). All these techniques powerfully draw the housewife-viewer deeper into the crime narrative, entangling her feelings and binding her to the reporter, victim, and perpetrator.

Rehashing the 2007 highly publicized crime of passion involving Hawker, *Sukkiri!!*'s 2011 coverage announces the trial of her murderer, Ichihashi Tatsuya, who confesses to his crimes for the first time. In 2007, Ichihashi approached Hawker, who was a young and attractive British teacher working in a private English conversation school in Koiwa, Tokyo, to become his private tutor and later brutally murdered her. Fukuda's murder, on the other hand, occurred more recently in July 2011 in Kizugawa, Kyoto. Fukuda's murderer, Takama Mika, purportedly pursued and killed Fukuda out of vengeance, after harassing her on multiple occasions. Fukuda, who herself had a boyfriend, worked as a hostess at a club where Takama's ex-boyfriend frequented. Comparing these two cases, it is interesting to observe gendered constructions of women as innocent victims who garner sympathy because they are closer to the feminine ideal of good wife, wise mother, and those of women as poison women, who are castigated for deviating from these social norms. I will focus mainly on Fukuda's case as an example of women committing violent crimes against other women.

Case study: slashing the other woman

Sukkiri!!'s report of Fukuda's murder on July 26 begins in the studio with Mori Keisuke, a newscaster, who announces the case to audiences in a detached manner. To his left is a screen with Fukuda's and Takama's names, ages, and images. Strategically placed in-between the two women's headshots is the question, 'Point of contact?' (*setten*), to ask how Fukuda and Takama are linked to the crime. Mori proceeds to reveal a triangular relationship between Fukuda, Takama, and an anonymous man as the camera cuts to an extended chart illustrating these connections, indicating the man by a drawing. The yellow arrows in the chart suggest respective connections

between Fukuda and the man as hostess and regular customer and between Takama and the man as ex-lovers. This time, in-between Fukuda and Takama is the word 'grudge?' (*urami*), which implies that Takama committed a crime of passion because she was jealous of Fukuda's association with her ex-boyfriend.

Sukkiri!!'s introduction to Fukuda's murder feeds audiences vital information about the case and draws them in, resembling detective stories and crime dramas that beg to be solved. This is prevalent in wide show crime narratives, which often echo whodunits that meticulously detail the motives and circumstances of crime suspects (Ishita 1998). In the example outlined above, *Sukkiri!!* depicts this information using charts and images because its creators believe that visual methods are easier for the housewife-viewer to grasp certain ideas and news (Tanaka Hiroshi, personal interview, March 20, 2012). Other examples of visual approaches to crime narratives include animation and *kamishibai* (picture card show), such as to portray fraud cases involving housewives and elderly women. Although the makers of *Sukkiri!!* claim that visual narratives are creative ways to communicate information, these representation styles also sensationalize crime and frame the way women watch crime and derive pleasure from it.

Although Mori's report appears objective, the visual narratives immediately construct Fukuda and Takama as antagonistic: Fukuda, the deceased victim and good woman, is pit against Takama, the arrested criminal and poison woman. Similar to family crimes, this method attracts the housewife-viewer to quickly enter into the narrative and adopt a stance she is encouraged towards, which, as in this case, usually favors the good victim over the bad criminal. While we might read this as merely reinscribing accepted social roles, by inserting herself into the crime of passion narrative, the housewife-viewer temporarily transgresses these norms when she plays witness to Fukuda's victimization and Takama's criminalization. In borrowing the experiences of both Fukuda and Takama, the housewife-viewer may lose herself in the narrative. Yet, the housewife-viewer also manipulates these borrowed experiences when she selects which parts of the crime narrative to relate to her own life. Indeed, it is the housewife-viewer's ability to alternate between identifying with criminal and victim and between defying and obeying social norms that gives her voyeuristic pleasure.

In subsequent episodes on July 27 and 28, coverage of Fukuda's case becomes lengthier and Abe Yuji, an older and more charismatic reporter, takes over from Mori in narrating the crime. In fact, Abe does more than narrate because he visits the crime site in Kizugawa, Kyoto to trace Fukuda's steps on the day of her murder when Takama pursued her from the club to her apartment. By reporting details of Fukuda's case from outside this club, Abe assumes a kind of detective role in following the events leading up to the murder. He even enters the club to conduct a dash interview with Fukuda's colleague, who maintains that Fukuda's relationship with Takama's former lover was solely professional. Audiences also learn from this partial account that Fukuda was a capable worker who was willing to learn. Going to *genba* and dash interviews are powerful for constructing the illusion that this coverage of Fukuda's case is completely objective, which encourages sympathetic identification with the victim. Combined with its dramatic news format, by performing its own police work, or at least appearing to do so, *Sukkiri!!* blurs reality and fiction.

It is important to note that Abe's presence as a reporter differs from that of Mori since Abe is a *tareto* in his own right. As 'the face of *Sukkiri!!*', Abe is almost like a celebrity himself, being extremely popular with middle-aged women (Tanaka Hiroshi, personal interview, March 20, 2012). In fact, Abe's fame works to his advantage because he is sometimes the only reporter to obtain exclusive interviews, since bystanders are more likely to talk to a recognizable face. This is why *Sukkiri!!*'s producers send him to the crime scene as much as possible (Tanaka Hiroshi, personal interview, March 20, 2012). Akin to a celebrity-fan relationship, Abe's proximity to the

housewife-viewer influences the way she watches crime. Abe's reporting of crime weaves his personal feelings and opinions into the narrative, sometimes to the extent of playing detective, such as in Fukuda's case. Similar to Mori, Abe's characteristic reporting style compels audiences to identify sympathetically with the victim, who is painted as good and innocent, and to condemn the perpetrator, who is depicted as insanely jealous.

For instance, Abe conducted another dash interview with a woman Takama had harassed prior to murdering Fukuda. This anonymous woman, who was a social escort of Takama's ex-lover, confesses that Takama had pestered her for a month, ringing her doorbell in the middle of the night and entering her house with her shoes still on (a sign of bad manners in Japan). When Abe asked her how she perceived Fukuda's murder, she admitted that it gave her goose bumps since she could have been the victim instead of Fukuda. While supposed to be revealing of Takama's character, this interview focuses on the woman as a near victim of a crime of passion. Since this segment is only indirectly relevant to Fukuda's murder, *Sukkiri!!* might have aired it in order to drum up interest in the case and give credibility to Abe's private investigation. On the one hand, the interview reinforces the housewife-viewer's impression of Takama as a hysterical jilted ex-lover. On the other hand, the intensified sensationalism amplifies the housewife-viewer's voyeurism by including a parallel narrative of the case, in which the woman confides in Abe and, by extension, the housewife-viewer her fears of coming close to death. When watching this exclusive interview, the housewife-viewer accesses the almost victim's uneasiness, revels in the knowledge that she is privy to, and feels relieved that she is not this woman. Yet, at the back of her mind, the housewife-viewer is acutely aware that murder can happen to anybody even within the home, which means her voyeurism operates as a constant tension between fear and pleasure.

In a lengthy 15-minute episode on July 28, Abe continues to collect testimonies about Takama in four anonymous dash interviews with one of Takama's customers at the hostess club she previously worked in, a friend of Takama's ex-lover, Takama's neighbor, and another hostess at a club Takama's ex-boyfriend frequented. Abe even travels to Takama's apartment and reports from outside the apartment that she had slashed her ex-boyfriend when they lived there. Prior to this, Takama had committed adultery during her first marriage and lost custody of her child after the divorce was finalized. Unlike the previous interview with the near victim, most of these interviews focus on Takama, but more specifically, possible reasons that would account for her murder of Fukuda.

Although these interviewees' responses were predictably negative – not one person had anything good to say about Takama – it is worth asking why such a thorough investigation persists when the victim/perpetrator dyad has already been repeatedly established. Similar to *Sukkiri!!*'s representations of Fukuda, those of Takama remain centered on social ideals of the good wife, wise mother. The focus in Takama's case, however, is on how she strayed from these stereotypes, since she has experienced multiple failed relationships and even had her motherly role taken away from her. For example, Takama's ex-customer said in his interview that Takama had spoken ill of Fukuda in a jealous fit before murdering her, whereas the friend of Takama's ex-boyfriend confirms that the latter denies having anything to do with Fukuda's murder. These interviews stress Takama's nonconformity to accepted social norms and paint her as abnormal and mentally unstable, which correspond with her record of violence towards her ex-lover.

I would contend that Abe's extended detective work functions to rationalize for audiences an act of violence committed by one seemingly ordinary woman against another such woman. Although these interviews with persons connected with Takama may not legally count as circumstantial evidence for the murder, they are important in the wide show for constructing

Takama's character and for understanding the conditions that led to the crime, both of which allow the housewife-viewer to come to terms with the brutal crime. Takama's neighbor in his interview alleges that he had seen Takama crying and speaking on the phone in her car the day after the murder. He also observed that Takama's right arm was bandaged. Contrary to the other two interviews with Takama's ex-customer and the friend of Takama's ex-lover, this account of Takama as equally shaken by the murder appears to humanize her by reminding audiences that she is not so different from them. Indeed, in the heat of passion, Takama, like anyone else, may be driven to act irrationally violent. Such a reading complicates the neat boundaries between victim and perpetrator, which arguably allows the housewife-viewer to identify with the poison woman and offers her pleasure in the interstices between these contained spaces. Yet, even as the poison woman violates social norms in crime narratives, she is nevertheless reinscribing them since this transgression operates on the shared knowledge that everybody adheres to these norms.

Conclusion

Despite morning wide shows garnering consistently high viewership ratings – a feat for most television networks today – and the major role these programs play in the lives of women, especially those in their thirties and forties, it is baffling to see the blatant disdain for and dearth of scholarship on this topic. Part of this chapter's aim is to address this lack in research by tracking the ways in which morning wide shows structure the housewife-viewer's social identity and her viewing pleasures. Studying representations of women in family crimes and crimes of passion broadcast on *Sukkiri!!*, a prime example of a wide show I had watched regularly with Yamane, I have suggested how these narratives are constructed in specific ways to appeal to audiences, drawing on interviews with Tanaka and Nozawa.

Throughout this chapter, I have contended that crime narratives reconstructed on wide shows affirm for the housewife-viewer her accepted role as the good wife, wise mother even as they subvert it by granting her pleasure derived from voyeurism. The housewife-viewer's greatest voyeuristic pleasures come from the suspension of reality, which allows her to vicariously experience these crimes from which she can extract herself, and her identification with both crime victims and female perpetrators, especially from constantly alternating between the two. These pleasures are enabled and propagated by the sensational format of wide show crime narratives, such as visual narratives, fragmentation and repetition of material and live and dramatic forms, and the building of certain communities based on shared codes of knowledge and interactions between women who watch similar programs through gossip and distracted viewing. All these heighten the housewife-viewer's sense of emotional involvement in and shape her social practices of watching television.

Comparing family crimes and crimes of passion, these two types of crime complement each other through the tensions developed between reinforcing and transcending established social norms. Family crimes and crimes of passion broadcast on *Sukkiri!!* share several similarities, such as the home as the site of crime, in which women figure either as victims or perpetrators. This violation of the home, which is supposed to be a safe space for the housewife-viewer to manage and protect, goes against her normative social roles. Yet, both family crime and crime of passion narratives are also constructed based on the housewife-viewer's familiarity with these accepted roles, drawing on established norms. More importantly, these narratives induct the housewife-viewer into a particular community that facilitates exchanges between women who are cued by wide show characteristics, including private crime investigation, to interpret the crimes.

Family crimes differ from crimes of passion in that victims and perpetrators are usually related by blood or marriage in family crimes, whereas victims and perpetrators in crimes of passion tend to be strangers or less acquainted with each other. This subverts the assumption that crimes will not take place if everyone conforms to the agreed-upon moral and social values, particularly among people who share intimate relations. However, these narratives also function as warnings, especially for women, to adhere to these norms. While perpetrators in family crimes are predominantly women, especially housewives, victims in crimes of passion are mostly young women. Comparing women as victims and perpetrators across the two types of crime, these narratives seem to perpetuate the belief that bad things happen to women who defy their accepted roles. At the same time, these violations are turned into voyeuristic pleasures for the housewife-viewer. In this way, family crime and crime of passion narratives fit together in wide shows to continually alternate between reinscribing and transgressing women's ascribed social roles, which defies any simplistic way of reading them. Instead of perceiving these crime narratives uncritically, female audiences do make meanings out of them within their limited roles in Japanese society.

Notes

- 1 An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the Asian Studies Conference Japan (June 30–July 1, 2012), where it benefited from the participants' insights. I am especially grateful to Jason G. Karlin, Yuki Nakayama, and Fabienne Darling-Wolf for their productive feedback on previous drafts. All remaining errors are mine.
- 2 All Japanese names follow the convention of surname first; Sawada Takayuki, not Takayuki Sawada.
- 3 All translations are the author's except where otherwise noted. Long vowels in Japanese words have been marked with macrons, such as *ā*, *ī*, *ū*, *ē*, and *ō*.
- 4 '*Waido shō*' is a '*wasei eigo*', a borrowed loanword from English where the meaning may differ from the original term (Miller 1998, p. 123). For simplicity's sake, not to collapse 'wide show' and '*waido shō*', I will refer to this television genre as 'wide show' throughout this chapter.
- 5 Women in the 35–49 age bracket have the highest viewership ratings, peaking at 14.8 percent, for the wide show *Sukkiri!!* (Nippon Television) (Tanaka Hiroshi, personal interview, March 20, 2012) and for television watching in general in the last 15 years, garnering between 86 percent and 92 percent in 2010 (NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute 2010, p. 8).
- 6 Weekday morning television viewership stands at over 20 percent, following weekday primetime evening television, which is over 40 percent. These ratings do not vary much on weekends (NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute 2010, p. 11).
- 7 This is the translation offered by the program on its official website. The term '*sukkiri*' is used in common parlance in various ways, especially with the transitive verb '*suru*' (to do), such as feeling refreshed or better, being relieved of a burden, being clean, neat, and clear.
- 8 Violent crimes refer to the use or threat of physical force to kill, harm, or violate another person (FBI 2015).
- 9 All names of informants have been changed.
- 10 As Allison (1996) observes, more ethnographic methods such as surveys or interviews with specific audiences may not necessarily yield better understanding of how fantasy and desire operate in certain texts (p. xxiv).
- 11 *Zūmu-in!! Asa* was broadcast by NTV during the 7:00 to 8:30 a.m. timeslot from 1979 to 2001 and succeeded by *Zūmu-in!! SUPER*, which was broadcast on the same channel from 5:20 to 8:00 a.m. and ended its run in March 2011.
- 12 This segment on *ZIP!*, '*Hate? Navi*' (*hate* navigation, where '*hate*' is a term often used to express one's doubt or perplexity) was broadcast on April 19 and features footage showing Kato Yuri, the reporter, interviewing foreign students at the University of Tokyo on their unexpected reasons for coming to Japan to pursue their studies.
- 13 This was a rare opportunity given that most Japanese variety programs like *ZIP!* and *Sukkiri!!* do not have live studio audiences (Kirsch 2014, 75).

- 14 *Tarento* belong to a category of celebrities in Japan, who appeal to audiences by being ordinary, having no special talent (Lukács 2010, 46).
- 15 See, for example, Nobuta Sayoko's (2008) first collection of narratives on *hakamori musume* (daughters tending to their parents' graves), NHK's (2014) education program on *dokumama*, and Kagami Tatsuya's (2015) book on *dokuhaha*.
- 16 Since the selection and repetition of topics to broadcast on *Sukkiri!!* depend largely on the viewership ratings of previous episodes, this would mean that audiences are drawn towards crime narratives (Tanaka Hiroshi, personal interview, March 20, 2012).

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Beyond the absent father stereotype

Representations of parenting men and their families in contemporary Japanese film

Christie Barber

Parenting men in film

Various issues related to the gendered division of labor have recently received increased media attention in Japan, not least because of the introduction of government policy that aims to improve support systems and employment structures for working men and women with children. There is acknowledgment within public discourse that greater contribution by men to household and childrearing responsibilities would not only have considerable socioeconomic impact, in that women as a consequence would have increased opportunities to participate in the paid labor force, but would also foster better interpersonal relationships within families.

Popular film is one media form that participates in this social discourse about the nature of fatherhood in Japan, in that it addresses a range of themes and issues related to the intersection of masculinity and parenthood. My specific focus in this chapter is representations of parenting men and their families in three Japanese films: *Soshite chichi ni naru* (lit. *And then I became a father*, also known as *Like father, like son*, 2013), *Usagi doroppu* (*Bunny drop*, 2011) and *Kiseki* (lit. *Miracle*, also known as *I wish*, 2011). These films share a common focus on the role of fathers in the lives of children and reference – if only to reconfigure – the absent father stereotype. According to this stereotype, the demands and constraints placed on men by work result in a lack of participation in family life, which leads to the characterization of Japanese families as ‘fatherless’ (Ishii-Kuntz 2003, p. 199). The films provide a response to this generalization not only with the suggestion that fathers and families can take diverse forms, but also through an exploration of the complex nature of relationships between men and their families in contemporary Japan. In order to convey these ideas, each of the films presents viewers with a moral dilemma that engages with issues related to masculinity and parenting, which the characters then attempt to resolve. The films employ metaphorical expressions – using various cinematic techniques and strategies – in order to communicate the complexity of these moral dilemmas, and in so doing invite viewers to engage with the themes and issues with which the films are concerned.

Metaphors, moral dilemmas and film

Each film prompts viewer engagement with the moral dilemmas presented through the use of a particular type of metaphor called conceptual metaphor. The conceptual metaphor may form the basis of a film's entire narrative, or be expressed in single shots, scenes or sequences.

Conceptual metaphor, argue George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, helps to structure the way we perceive, experience and act in the world on an everyday basis (1980, p. 3). Conceptual metaphor structures our understanding of the world because it provides the means for understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain (Lakoff 1993, p. 208). A conceptual domain has been defined by Zoltán Kövecses as 'any coherent organization of experience' (2010, p. 4), and the use of this type of structured knowledge to understand experiences happens frequently: for example, when life is understood in terms of journeys, or when emotions are understood as physical forces (Kövecses 2010, pp. 3, 108).

Perhaps the most commonly discussed manifestations of conceptual metaphor are metaphorical linguistic expressions. For example, the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY¹ underlies the everyday linguistic expression *This relationship is going nowhere*. However, everyday language is not the only manifestation of conceptual metaphors; conceptual metaphor can also be made explicit in audiovisual representations. Hence films also rely on this pervasive conceptual system that we utilize to understand daily experience in order to convey meaning to viewers, through the incorporation of what Kövecses describes as 'nonlinguistic realizations of conceptual metaphor' (2010, p. 63).

Like metaphorical linguistic expressions, audiovisual expressions of conceptual metaphors map elements of one conceptual domain onto another, based on the 'sets of conceptual correspondences' that characterize a conceptual metaphor (Lakoff 1993, p. 207). In the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, for example, the distance traveled corresponds to the progress made; the destination of the journey corresponds to the goal of life; and difficulties experienced during the journey correspond to life's challenges. Filmic representations of such correspondences are likely to be complex and evocative, because they can incorporate sound and image, and utilize a range of techniques – such as composition, editing, shot sizes and camera angles – to convey the metaphor.

Typically, conceptual metaphors provide the means for conceptualizing abstract domains – such as life, time, human relationships, morality or emotions – using more concrete domains related to sensory experience, such as the human body, movement and direction (Fahlenbrach 2014, p. 58; Kövecses 2010, pp. 17–23). Hence when the films present moral dilemmas that encompass such aspects as the nature of love between family members, and desirable and undesirable forms of fatherhood, conceptual metaphor becomes an effective tool to help conceptualize the abstract domains at the heart of these aspects (for example love, human relationships or morality) in more concrete, embodied terms. As a result, viewers may be prompted to engage with the dilemmas presented by the film and the characters that experience them. As Kathrin Fahlenbrach avers, 'Audiovisual metaphors help filmmakers to make viewers not only understand, but immediately experience cultural meanings' (2014, p. 60). Conceptual metaphors can thus become a means to encourage viewers to engage with the versions or aspects of masculinity that the films seek to affirm; that is, fathers and families that challenge the absent father stereotype in Japan.

The empathetic father: *Soshite chichi ni naru*

At the center of the film *Soshite chichi ni naru* (lit. *And then I became a father*, also known as *Like father, like son*, 2013) is the moral dilemma: should babies that were switched at birth be returned

to biological parents with whom they have had no contact? The two families that face this dilemma decide, under the recommendation of the hospital at fault, to return 6-year-old boys to their birth parents, and the challenges of doing so trigger a process of self-reflection and discovery for the film's protagonist, Nonomiya Ryōta. The conceptual metaphor *LOVE IS A JOURNEY* frames the narrative, because the film maps knowledge about journeys onto knowledge about the more abstract conceptual domain of love. That is, Ryōta's achievement of a sincere, empathetic relationship with the child he has raised, Keita, is conceptualized in terms of a journey. This conceptualization supports the exploration of the complex and emotionally intense dilemma at the heart of the film about the nature of love between fathers and sons. Moreover, it helps to reveal the film's ideological stance on parenting men, by helping to frame definitions of desirable and undesirable fathers.

The early scenes of the film delineate the starting point of Ryōta's journey. He is depicted as successful, ambitious and accomplished: an architect at a Tokyo firm, he leads a large team and works long hours. Ryōta, his wife Midori and Keita live in an upmarket, high-rise apartment that Midori's mother describes as 'like a hotel'. Ryōta drives a luxury car and the opening scene of the film shows the family attending Keita's entrance interview for his father's alma mater, an elite private primary school. The film establishes the Nonomiya family as a model of conventional gender roles and relations, within which the father rarely participates in domestic life due to work commitments while the mother takes the majority of responsibility for childcare and housework (Roberson and Suzuki 2003, p. 8). Ryōta is also portrayed as an embodiment of the hegemonic model of masculinity in Japan, the salaryman: the heterosexual, married, white-collar office worker (Dasgupta 2005, pp. 168–9). Conformity to this ideal – not only in terms of his work, but also in terms of his position as the family head and financial provider – ensures that his power and dominance is assured, both in the workplace and at home.

Ryōta's manner of interaction with Keita and his wife is often domineering and abrupt, traits emphasized through shot framing and camera angles that frequently place Ryōta in physically superior positions with relation to his family. His relationship with Keita (and his wife) is also portrayed as detached and at times strained. For example, there is limited physical affection between them, and Ryōta's conversations with Keita recurrently consist of instructions or admonishments about such things as table manners or learning piano – an expression of Ryōta's general judgment that Keita is unable to meet his expectations and is therefore deficient. In these depictions, Ryōta conforms to a model of masculinity that Michele Adams and Scott Coltrane (2005) argue demands that a man not only be in a position of authority and responsibility, but also autonomous and uninvolved with his family (pp. 240–1).

The depiction of a clear contrast between the Nonomiyas and the family that has raised the Nonomiyas' biological son, the Saiki family, further illuminates not only the nature of Ryōta's journey, but also the form of masculinity that the film seeks to affirm. The Saiki family – father Yūdai, mother Yukari, their children Miyu and Yamato, and the Nonomiyas' biological son Ryūsei – live in a ramshackle, cluttered home attached to Yūdai's small electronics shop and repair business, located in a small regional town. The most pertinent contrast between Ryōta and Yūdai appears in the depiction of Yūdai's interactions with his children: he is attentive, affectionate and thoroughly involved in the day-to-day tasks of childrearing. The Saiki family interactions are open and warm, and Yūdai places great value on finding enjoyment with his children. The moral framing of the contrasting depictions of the two fathers is made explicit in the following conversation, which takes place when the two families meet at an indoor children's play area. Yūdai, after roughhousing with the children, joins a seated Ryōta at the edge of the play area and comments:

- Yūdai: I'm too old for this! Ryōta, you are younger than me, so you should make more time to be with your child.
- Ryōta: Well, I think there are different types of families ...
- Yūdai: You don't even bathe together, I hear?
- Ryōta: Our policy at home is for him to be able to do things by himself.
- Yūdai: (Wryly) Well if it's a policy, then not much can be done. But you can't see those sorts of things as a hassle. I mean, I've spent more time with Keita in the past six months than you have.
- Ryōta: It's not just about time I think.
- Yūdai: What are you saying? It *is* about time, for kids it's about time.
- Ryōta: There are jobs that only I can do.
- Yūdai: But no one can take your place as a father.

Here Ryōta's absence from Keita's life is plainly marked as problematic, and as such, the scene establishes a clear definition of what is desirable and undesirable in terms of fatherhood and family relationships. These depictions also become a key strategy for engagement, because viewers are invited to make moral appraisals of the characters, which in turn may prompt viewers to construct preferences for potential resolutions to the problems the characters are facing. Indeed through Yūdai's reprimands of Ryōta, the film signals what is deemed the preferable outcome to the dilemma. Hence Yūdai's interactions with Ryōta appear to function as the signposts for the necessary steps for Ryōta's realization of this outcome.

Several scenes in the film also suggest that Ryōta's progress towards self-awareness is linked to his capacity to meet an ideal of fatherhood that involves a connection with the outdoors. In the opening sequence of the film, Keita tells a lie during his primary school entrance interview – as instructed by his tutor – stating that during the summer holidays he went camping with his father and flew kites. The portrayal of the outdoors as part of ideal fatherhood further reinforces the contrast between Ryōta and Yūdai, because the Saiki family is depicted as regularly spending time in the outdoors. Indeed, just prior to the attempted exchange of the boys, Yūdai specifically asks Ryōta to maintain the connection to nature in the following conversation:

- Yūdai: Back when we were kids – oh, well, but I'm a bit older than you but anyway – my father used to make us kites out of you know, bamboo sticks and *shōji* paper and made the, ah, tail by cutting up thin strips of newspaper. These days the kites fly so easily, but back then, they were so hard to get up ...
- Ryōta: My father was not the type of person to fly kites with his children.
- Yūdai: But you don't need to be like your father, right? [Pause.] Could you please fly kites with Ryūsei for me?
- Ryōta: [Stiffly] Yes.

This passage makes clear that Yūdai embodies the model of fatherhood that Keita initially describes as ideal. Yūdai is the type of father who actually flies kites with Ryūsei, as opposed to Ryōta, whose dedication to his profession – which centers on the built environment – initially means he rarely spends time with his child. A shift in this pattern is signaled when, towards the film's closure, Ryōta is transferred to work on a new project on environmentally sustainable buildings in Utsunomiya (a comparatively small city, approximately two hours north of Tokyo). Ryōta's subsequent professional contact with nature – through which he is shown to develop an appreciation of the way in which one's environment influences the way the world is perceived – is depicted as another step in his journey, as it becomes the trigger for Ryōta to reconfigure

his expectations of his new relationship with Ryūsei. This reconfiguration is portrayed through Ryōta's increased efforts to play with Ryūsei, which culminate in the purchase of a tent and fishing gear that they use to have a mock family camping trip in the living room of their apartment. This time spent with Ryūsei implies Ryōta's willingness to change – and build a loving relationship with his son – but only by moulding the outdoor father ideal to fit in with his own priorities. The depiction of Ryōta conveys the pervasive ways in which gender ideologies related to work and parenthood operate in the lives of men; as Stephen M. Whitehead observes, 'in a majority of societies any emergent nurturing patterns of (new) fatherhood are likely to remain in tension with conventional notions of the authoritarian, aloof, male provider' (2002, p. 154). It is worth noting, too, that although the ideal of the kite-flying father is portrayed as the more positive of the versions of parenting men presented in this film – and is clearly incorporated in order to construct yet more contrast between the two fathers – such an ideal also maintains established masculinity schemata that represent boys and men as active and suited to the outdoors. Hence the journey undertaken by Ryōta is not portrayed as a radical change, but instead the achievement of a negotiated form of fatherhood.

The *LOVE IS A JOURNEY* metaphor continues through repeated sequences of the Nonomiya family returning to Midori's hometown of Maebashi, Gunma (a city approximately two hours north-west of Tokyo) to deal with the hospital in which the children were born and spend time with the Saiki family as part of the arrangements to exchange the two boys. The repeated shifts in location seem to reflect the unfamiliar and unstable circumstances the families are attempting to navigate and in particular, Ryōta's difficulty in adjusting to the situation. Towards the film's closure, after the families decide to permanently exchange the boys, Ryōta, Midori and Ryūsei return by car to the Saikis' home because they make the realization that they cannot continue with the exchange arrangement. One scene in this sequence, in which the camera follows the Nonomiyas' car from behind as it travels to Maebashi, is shot using shaky handheld camera footage. The use of this technique, in contrast to the smooth, slow-paced camera work used for the majority of the film, draws attention to this event as a crucial step in a life-changing journey. This depiction also helps to conceptualize the abstract nature of love in more bodily based terms.

The final sequence of the film incorporates the most explicit expression of the *LOVE IS A JOURNEY* metaphor. After the Nonomiyas arrive at the Saikis' home, Keita escapes outside, seemingly based on his feelings of rejection and confusion about the exchange, and Ryōta is shown chasing him. Various shots depict Ryōta steadily pursuing Keita, and they come within speaking distance of each other when they reach a narrow road that runs parallel to a footpath lined with leafy trees and shrubs. The scene reconfigures Ryōta's usual dominant position because point-of-view shots in a shot-reverse-shot sequence show Ryōta walking along the footpath and looking up at Keita, who walks along the road as it rises above. Trees between the two paths frequently block vision of the two characters, an expression of Ryōta's struggle to understand and relate to his son. Ryōta determinedly pursues Keita in order to apologize, admit his own failings and sincerely express his love. The reconciliation is shown to be complete when the road and footpath merge and Ryōta embraces Keita. This display of affection – the first of its kind between them in the film – along with Ryōta's acknowledgment of his own deficiencies, suggest not only that Ryōta has made a significant shift in terms of his values as a father, but also that Ryōta has attained both self-awareness and meaningful empathy for his son, and has thus reached the culmination of his journey: a loving relationship. This depiction of the love between Ryōta and Keita as empathetic, sincere and made stronger by the challenges faced on the journey to achieve it, offers an emotive, embodied response to the moral dilemma posed by the film, and thus urges viewers to make a positive appraisal of this resolution.

The nurturing father: *Usagi doroppu*

In *Usagi doroppu*, viewers are again prompted to engage with a moral dilemma about the nature of love and of families. The film asks: who should be responsible for raising a child whose biological parents are unwilling or unable to care for him or her? The film offers a response to this dilemma through the depiction of the efforts of a 27-year-old unmarried male company employee, named Kawachi Daikichi, to care for Rin, the 6-year-old daughter of his grandfather. Rin was born after her elderly father's brief relationship with a now absent former house-cleaner, and the death of Rin's father at the start of the film leads Daikichi to volunteer to be her guardian. The wide range of challenges that Daikichi must overcome while learning to care for Rin form the basis of the film's plot and, like *Soshite chichi ni naru*, the development of a loving relationship with Rin leads to increased self-awareness and other-regardingness in Daikichi. Hence *Usagi doroppu* also features expressions of the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY, especially in portrayals of Daikichi and Rin's relationship. However, I will focus here on another conceptual metaphor that is used to conceptualize the nature of a desirable family relationship in more embodied terms: LOVE IS PHYSICAL CLOSENESS. Daikichi contests the notion that men are unable to be nurturing parents, because the relationship that he develops with Rin is depicted as sincere, affectionate and mutually trusting.

The LOVE IS PHYSICAL CLOSENESS metaphor appears early in the film in scenes that convey the immediate warmth and trust in the relationship between Daikichi and Rin. For example, when Daikichi asks her if she wishes to stay with him, Rin expresses her agreement to his offer physically, not verbally, by intently grabbing his suit jacket; they hold hands while walking; and Rin sleeps leaning on Daikichi's shoulder as they return by bus to his home. Moreover, a recurring expression of the LOVE IS PHYSICAL CLOSENESS metaphor in the film is the depiction of Rin making *onigiri* with her hands: during their first meal together, she spontaneously dips her hands in her tea and forms clumsy balls of rice in order to share the leftovers with Daikichi. This ritual appears again later in the film in another emotionally significant moment: after illness leaves Rin bedbound for several days (during which Daikichi remains constantly at her side), Daikichi wakes to find her in the kitchen once again making *onigiri*, an act that symbolizes both her return to health and to their shared life. The LOVE IS PHYSICAL CLOSENESS metaphor is also reinforced throughout the film in depictions of the pair's daily life. Rin is portrayed sleeping right next to Daikichi in his bed (despite having one of her own); at times they are even portrayed sleeping in the same posture. On their daily commute, Rin is always thoroughly attached to Daikichi as they ride the subway, wind through crowded stations and dash through suburban streets to get to Rin's daycare center: they hold hands, he cradles her in his arms, or she sleeps on his lap on the train. This emphasis on the depiction of physical sensations and proximity means that the more abstract concept of love is clearly conceptualized in embodied terms. The repeated depiction of physical closeness between Daikichi and Rin becomes an important strategy of engagement. The depiction of various behaviors or expressions (for example hugging, hand-holding or smiling) to represent characters' emotions or states of mind prompts viewers to simulate those behaviors or expressions. This automatic simulation occurs because of a process called mirroring, in which observing the actions or emotions of others activates the same areas of the brain as the performance of the same action, or the experience of the same emotion (Gallese and Guerra 2012, pp. 184–5). Such embodied simulation can then guide viewer understanding of, and empathizing with, character intentions or motivations (Barber 2015, p. 114). In the case of empathetic engagement with Daikichi, viewers may therefore be prompted to develop a positive moral appraisal of a version of masculinity that rejects conventional understandings about parenting men.

Internal audience appraisal of Daikichi and Rin's relationship that implicitly refers to the LOVE IS PHYSICAL CLOSENESS metaphor provides further explication of the film's ideological stance on desirable fatherhood. When Rin falls ill with a fever, Daikichi relies on the assistance of Yukari, the mother of another child at Rin's daycare, to figure out how to treat Rin. In the following dialogue, a distressed Daikichi explains to Yukari, in an apparent attempt to justify his lack of knowledge, that he is not Rin's father:

Daikichi: Thank you very much. I had no idea at all what to do. You really helped me.

Yukari: Sure.

Daikichi: Um, actually I am not Rin's father or anything. I'm just a close relative. To be exact, I'm Rin's nephew.

Yukari: Is that so? [Pause.] The other day, Rin was holding on tight to you, right?

I guess kids know who it is that will look after them. For Rin, that person is you, Daikichi. For Rin now, as long as you are around, things will be okay.

Here Yukari consoles Daikichi based on her observation of his loving relationship with Rin, as expressed in Rin's physical attachment to Daikichi. A key way in which this scene communicates the LOVE IS PHYSICAL CLOSENESS metaphor is through the inclusion, during the above dialogue, of a flashback that depicts the moment Yukari describes. In the flashback, Rin, shot in close-up, dashes forward and grips Daikichi's legs when he arrives to collect her from daycare. Soft sunlight behind the characters creates a hazy effect and the feelings of warmth, comfort and intimacy that these filmic devices generate result in a brief yet effective audiovisual manifestation of the conceptual metaphor. Such a conceptualization of love conveys a response to the moral dilemma posed at the start of the film: affection and support are what defines a loving father-child relationship, and a good father provides nurturance and comfort to his child.

Depictions of the nature of Daikichi's work as well as his work colleagues enhance the film's conceptualization of a loving family relationship through the LOVE IS PHYSICAL CLOSENESS metaphor. The demands of looking after Rin lead Daikichi to request a demotion from his role as a manager in the corporate section to a job 'with no overtime' – in his company's case, in the packing warehouse. It is the influence of two women that prompts Daikichi to make this decision: one is a work colleague from whom Daikichi seeks advice about how to manage work and childrearing; and the other is Daikichi's mother, whom Daikichi learns made significant personal and career sacrifices to raise him and his sister. The implication is that Daikichi is forced to make the same sacrifices. It is worth noting that this change in the nature of his employment involves a reconfiguration of gendered roles and practices in the private sphere (that is, within the home) but not at work, the change is instigated by Daikichi (not his employer), and Daikichi's decision to become Rin's caregiver results in negative consequences in terms of salary and status. Such a portrayal could be understood as a reflection of actual world circumstances in Japan, where working parents may struggle to have their preferences accommodated at work, in an environment where organizations may be slow to change.² However, Daikichi's portrayal does challenge established ideas about gender roles and relations in Japan. Daikichi is an unmarried man with a child who prioritizes Rin's needs over his own career, and trades the economic and symbolic benefits of his managerial position to devote time to childrearing.³ This characterization constitutes a rejection of the hegemonic model of masculinity – under which a man's primary family responsibility is to work to provide financial support – and offers viewers an alternative version of masculinity.

Daikichi's demotion results in significant changes in his work life: he moves from a position of authority in a hectic office environment to physically demanding labor in the warehouse.

This shift in working environment is clearly expressed in appearance and attire, in that Daikichi no longer wears suits at work but the uniform of the packing warehouse, baggy blue overalls, which constitutes the external manifestation of his drop in status. Despite the negative consequences of the demotion, the film affirms Daikichi's transfer from the corporate environment to a manual labor job in multiple ways. Daikichi is able to become a better parent according to the moral logic of the film, because he can spend more time with Rin and has more flexibility to manage her needs. Moreover, Daikichi enters into a community of men – the other packing warehouse workers – who become enthusiastic supporters of his parenting. Despite their initial depiction as unwelcoming and rough (as expressed in aspects of their appearance that would not be acceptable in a typical Japanese corporate environment, such as tattoos and brightly dyed hair), the warehouse workers are shown to be adoring and committed fathers, who offer Daikichi insight and advice on various issues he experiences with Rin, and eagerly and proudly share photographs of their children. These characters could be understood as representations of *ikumen*: this media term (which combines *iku* from the Japanese word *ikuji*, childrearing, and English *men*) refers to men who proactively participate in childrearing. The term has gained social currency in multiple ways: for example, its resemblance to another coinage that refers to an idealized form of masculinity, *ikemen* (literally 'cool guy', from *iketeru* (cool, stylish) and the English *men*) likely helps to enhance the positive image that the term *ikumen* seeks to convey; and since 2010 the concept has been used in a government public awareness campaign titled the *Ikumen Project*, which seeks to encourage and support men's participation in childcare. Filmic representations of nurturing fathers like those in *Usagi doroppu* demonstrate the ways in which popular media also has a role to play in presenting positive images of parenting men.

Although the warehouse workers are considered subordinate to the hegemonic form of masculinity, the salaryman (Daikichi's initial role), the film marks their model of masculinity as preferable because they are portrayed as constructing their own definition of parenting that depends upon meaningful and empathetic interaction with their children. Through the depictions of Daikichi and his colleagues, the film affirms forms of masculinity who, through their desire to be present in the lives of their children, challenge established ideas about the nature of fatherhood with relation to work.

The independent son: *Kiseki*

Kiseki (2011) follows the efforts of primary school student Kōichi to reunite his family after his parents' divorce. Kōichi's younger brother Ryūnosuke lives with their father Kenji in Fukuoka, and Kōichi, who has returned with their mother Nozomi to live with her parents in her hometown of Kagoshima, finds it difficult to understand and accept the divorce and its effects. The film engages with a range of moral dilemmas related to family breakups: how can the needs of children of divorced parents be addressed? How much contact do children need with the physically absent parent? Should siblings be separated after divorce? A journey is again central to the film's narrative, but in the case of *Kiseki*, the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor is used to conceptualize Kōichi's path towards understanding and acceptance of his circumstances. A variety of human problems are interconnected with Kōichi's journey: the fear of public judgment that plagues Nozomi as she works to rebuild her life; Kenji's focus on reviving his career as a rock musician, which forces Ryūnosuke to take on many responsibilities at home; and Kōichi's grandfather's search for meaning in old age. The use of the conceptual metaphor becomes a mechanism to convey that the process of reconfiguring family relationships after separation may be arduous, unstable and confusing. However, the film proposes that father–son relationships can take diverse

forms, and that the physical absence of a father does not preclude the development of positive relationships with children, nor necessarily hinder a child's development.

Through the portrayal of Kōichi's journey the film suggests that the realization of subjective agency – demonstrated by self-awareness, other-regardingness and the construction of meaningful relationships with others (Stephens 2002, pp. 38–9) – for both children and parents is key to managing family separation. For Kōichi, the path to the achievement of subjective agency is linked with two trains that will run on the soon-to-be-completed Kyushu bullet train line – a line that will connect the two cities in which the brothers live. Kōichi becomes convinced that the two bullet trains passing each other for the first time will bring about (through some form of magical effect) the miracle he hopes for, a family reunion. In order to facilitate the realization of this miracle, Kōichi arranges with Ryūnosuke to meet at the midway point between their homes, Kumamoto. Kōichi recruits two friends to join him on the train trip from Kagoshima, and Ryūnosuke invites three friends from Fukuoka to travel with him. The film depicts this quest for a miracle as a journey of self-discovery for Kōichi.

The distance Kōichi travels on his journey is conveyed through initial depictions of him as attached to the past, and desiring some form of agency in the context of great upheaval in the present. Kōichi struggles to adjust to his new home in Kagoshima, and his longing for his hometown of Osaka – where the family used to live together – emphasizes the gap between the old family life and the new. Kōichi is shown to express his discontent with his new living environment as well as his desire to have some control over his surroundings in his reaction to a nearby active volcano, Sakurajima, that regularly coats the city in ash. The opening scene of the film (along with several others) portrays Kōichi attempting to clean the ash from his belongings and his room at home, as if he is attempting to remove Kagoshima from his daily existence. He also repeatedly remarks, 'I don't get it' about various aspects of his life in Kagoshima: for example, the way the community is unfazed by the volcano activity, or the location of his school at the top of a hill, which necessitates a long commute. These comments seem to be a displaced expression not just of his sense of instability and unfamiliarity with relation to his new life, but also his limited capacity to understand the changes that have occurred. Kōichi comes to wish that the volcano will explode so that his family is forced to move away and live together again in Osaka. The film again suggests that he desires some sense of agency when he is depicted painting the volcano's eruption; he then hangs the painting on his bedroom wall and simulates praying to it, in the hopes of bringing about his wish for an eruption (and therefore a family reunion). These endeavors represent his efforts to fashion his own future.

Sequences that portray the different ways in which the brothers manage the separation also convey the nature of Kōichi's journey. Unlike Kōichi, Ryūnosuke is portrayed as happily adjusted in his new home in Fukuoka. Ryūnosuke appears more like a father figure to Kenji, whose irregular work hours and devotion to his music career result in Ryūnosuke bearing the burden of many household chores. This burden is depicted as gladly taken, however, a further demonstration of Ryūnosuke's comparative maturity despite his younger age. Indeed Kenji, in comparison to the fathers in *Soshite chichi ni naru* and *Usagi doroppu*, is depicted as showing very little desire to prioritize his children over his own interests, and mostly seems untroubled by the family separation. Such a portrayal reinforces the sense that this film seeks to highlight and affirm the capacity of children to empower themselves to overcome difficulties and construct their own happiness.

Prior to the journey to Kumamoto, a phone conversation between Kōichi and Kenji provides a glimpse of the goal of Kōichi's journey. They talk at night, and darkness surrounds both characters in their respective locations. They are shot in medium close-up from the side, looking

across the screen, so that as the shots alternate, they appear to face each other when they talk. In the scene Kōichi expresses his difficulty accepting the family's situation:

- Kōichi: If you want to get back together, you'd better hurry up.
 Kenji: What does that mean? Has your mum found someone?
 Kōichi: So you want to know ... Then ask her yourself.
 Kenji: You know I can't do that!
 Kōichi: Don't we matter to you anymore?
 Kenji: That's not true. But I want you to become the sort of person who cares about
 more than just what is happening in your own life.
 Kōichi: What's that mean?
 Kenji: Like music, or the world.
 Kōichi: What's 'the world'? I don't get it.
 Kenji: You'll understand, soon enough.
 Kōichi: 'Soon enough', when is that? 'Soon enough' ... when is that, I said?

This scene suggests that Kōichi struggles to find meaning in his father's advice because he has not yet developed a degree of subjective agency that enables him to make meaningful connections with the world around him. However, this lack of agency is depicted as temporary: the *LIFE IS A JOURNEY* metaphor continues through depictions of the various steps that Kōichi takes to organize the trip to Kumamoto. His concerted efforts prove to be an important impetus for change: as Kōichi investigates train timetables, routes and ticket prices, devises a plan to skip school, and gathers the funds to pay for the trip, he exercises a form of agency and independently develops his own coping mechanisms.

A key factor in Kōichi's progress is his relationship with his grandfather, Shūkichi, who is portrayed as the most constant presence in Kōichi's home life. Shūkichi encourages Kōichi's independence and respects his need to find his own way of being with relation to the new family circumstances. The connection between the two develops when Shūkichi, a Japanese sweets maker, contemplates producing a new cake to commemorate the arrival of the new bullet train service. Kōichi becomes his grandfather's taste-tester and although Kōichi (initially) does not really enjoy the sweets they make, the two bond by baking together, a process that symbolizes their active, shared reconstruction of the family unit. The trust developed between them leads Kōichi to reveal to Shūkichi his secret (from his mother and teacher, at least) plan to travel to Kumamoto, and Shūkichi then lies to the school so that Kōichi and his two friends can miss classes. Shūkichi constitutes a version of caregiving masculinity that is far from the *ikumen* ideal, but through the depiction of this mutually supportive relationship, the film suggests that nurturance can come from a variety of sources, and that lack of conformity to conventional family structures – in this case, the physical absence of the father – does not equate to an unhealthy or inadequate family environment.

The most explicit manifestation of the *LIFE IS A JOURNEY* metaphor appears in the sequences portraying the train trip to Kumamoto. Kōichi, Ryūnosuke and their friends each have their own reasons for participating in the quest for a miracle, but for all of them, the journey to see the trains represents a desire for subjective agency, including in terms of playing a role in bringing happiness to others. When the children finally reach their destination and find a spot to see the trains, the two trains are shown speeding towards each other, but the film then cuts to an animated sequence that shows the eruption of the volcano in Kōichi's painting, followed by a montage of single frames of earlier scenes of the film, along with what appear to be flashbacks to various moments in the memories of the characters. This sequence suggests that after

traveling to this point in his journey, Kōichi's wish is about to be realized. However, when the trains pass each other, as the other children shout out the wishes they want fulfilled, Kōichi remains silent. It is soon revealed that both of the brothers have diverged from the original plan: Ryūnosuke wishes for musical success for his father, and instead of asking for the family to be reunited, Kōichi heeds his father's advice and as he explains to Ryūnosuke, 'chooses the world over his family' – that is, he realizes that he must accept the changes that have occurred and broaden his perspective on life. Hence the meeting of the trains is what Anne Bartsch describes as a 'metaphorical agent' (2010, p. 255) because it symbolizes the moment that Koichi achieves a deeper understanding of the world in which he lives, and realizes his capacity to be responsible for his own life.

The final scene of the film conveys the progress that Kōichi has made when he is shown to mimic the habit of his grandfather to lick his finger and test the wind to ascertain whether ash from the volcano will build up during the day. This habit is generated from the specific circumstances of the community, and is therefore deeply embedded behavior. When Kōichi is depicted performing this behavior, the film signals that he too has become embedded in the community, in clear contrast to his position at the start of the film. Kōichi's adoption of this habit also symbolizes that Kōichi has accepted the way things are – not just in terms of the volcano and his new hometown, but also his family circumstances.

The depiction of Kōichi's development as a journey provides a means to convey the ways in which the relationship between Kōichi and his father is reconfigured. Despite Kenji's physical absence, he plays a meaningful role in Kōichi's life. Importantly, Kōichi is shown to have found that meaning for himself, and fashioned the relationship based on his needs. The film affirms the capacity of young people to self-constitute, despite their subordinated position to adults, both physically and psychologically. Moreover, the film marks Kōichi's subjectivity as a positive version of masculinity because of his achievement of independence, self-awareness and meaningful connections with others and the world around him.

Conclusion

Given the vital role that conceptual metaphor plays in our understanding and experience of the world in everyday life, it is not surprising that it is also frequently employed in film. Conceptual metaphor may appear only briefly in a shot or scene: for example, to reveal a character's emotional state through a gesture or body posture. However, as the analysis above has shown, it is also an effective device for communicating complex elements of a narrative.

Any representation of families in film is likely to engage with highly emotive themes and issues. The films analyzed in this chapter present moral dilemmas that deal with some of the most fundamental and complicated aspects of human existence: the nature of love, what constitutes good and bad human relationships, and what individuals need to be happy. Conceptual metaphor is employed in all three films to help conceptualize such abstract concepts in more concrete terms, usually related to sensory experience. When such conceptualizations create a rich, multilayered and interconnected viewing experience, conceptual metaphor can prompt viewers to engage with the film's content in meaningful ways. For the films I am concerned with here, viewers are invited to engage with representations of Japanese fathers and their families as they face a range of human problems. The depictions of masculine subjectivities challenge conventional ideas about parenting men as well as family relationships, and as a result, the films offer viewers the chance to see beyond the absent father stereotype.

Notes

- 1 Following the convention of the field of cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphors are expressed using small capital letters.
- 2 Although a 2008 survey of 4,160 private-sector workplaces with five or more regular employees on work–family balance found that 31.8 percent of 752 male respondents would like to take childcare leave (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2008), according to the 2014 *Basic Survey of Gender Equality in Employment Management*, only 2.30 percent of male employees took childcare leave (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2014, p. 2).
- 3 In Japan, it is usually women who sacrifice their careers for childrearing. The White Paper on Gender Equality 2015 Summary states that over 60 percent of women who are working leave their jobs on the birth of their first child (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office 2015, sec. 2 para. 2). Moreover, according to statistics from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2015, p. 1), for the years 2005–2009 the percentage of working women who continued working after the birth of their first child only increased by 0.1 percent compared to figures for the years 2000–2004 (from 26.7 percent of working women to 26.8 percent). This increase falls well short of the target set for 2015 (50 percent of working women continuing working after the birth of their first child) in the 2010 Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare no date, p. 1).

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Japan Times' imagined communities

Symbolic boundaries with African Americans, 1998–2013

Michael C. Thornton and Atsushi Tajima

'No foreigners allowed' signs are visible on doors of businesses, and the Japanese media seldom censure discrimination – a phenomenon that, along with the presence of Japanese minorities, the government formally recognized only recently. This silencing of domestic racial diversity contrasts with Japanese interests in one external racial minority: African Americans. During World War II, the Japanese government used US racism against Blacks as a propaganda tool. The Black image resurfaced with the growing presence of mixed-race offspring following US occupation, to reemerge in the 1990s around hip-hop clothing and music. African American Dante Carver has been a top commercial star in Japan since 2010 (Samuels 2015). He became famous after appearing in a series of TV commercials for Softbank Mobile as the 'Yosō Guy' ('unexpected' guy) and later as part of a 'white' family headed by a dog. While some academic work has focused on the first wave of Japanese fascination with Blackness, studies of its more current reiteration have tended to focus solely on Japanese youths' engagement with African American culture, ignoring Japanese elite interests (Russell 2009).

We examine the *Japan Times'* reporting on African Americans from 1998 to 2013. This period saw rising tensions over the meaning of being Japanese, a falling Japanese population, an ensuing need to address dwindling domestic labor options and the resulting influx of a diverse immigrant pool. As Japan's leading international English-language paper, the *Times* provides a unique perspective in that its consumers are ostensibly more diverse and urbane about race than a domestic audience. Furthermore, since few foreigners can read Japanese, the *Times'* reporting is a rare avenue through which outsiders are exposed to Japanese worldviews. We examine how the paper uses African Americans to represent *nihonjinron* (Japaneseness) to a global audience.

Symbolic boundaries, identity and cross-national relations

Forero-Montoya (2011) wrote that 'mental borderlands' are structures around which we articulate social boundaries. The social environment is grouped into cognitive categories, stereotypes and collective identities, constituting a dialectic process of internal and external definitions (Jenkins 1996). While people distinguish themselves from others drawing on an internal sense of shared belonging, identity is also a reflection on outsiders, clarifying the outer borderlands of identity (Cornell and Hartman 2007). These symbolic frontiers are conceptual distinctions by

which we categorize objects, practices, people and even time and space, tools used to contest/build consensus around definitions of reality. This relational perspective resonates with work on identity construction that envisions it as a process of self-definition and the creation of symbolic boundaries and assignment of collective identities by others (Lamont and Molnar 2002). Both borders serve to separate people into in- and out-groups, engendering feelings of group solidarity. Exploring the representation of African Americans in the Japanese context will reveal the shifting dynamics of social boundaries as Japanese grapple with the changing undercurrents of ethnic/racial conflict within Japan.

As Hall (1997) explains, the production of meaning occurs in the process of differentiating, comparing the in- and out-group; what we are and are not. One goal is to achieve or maintain a sense of superiority over an out-group (Hogg and Abrams 1988). Hence, in-group favoritism is common, especially among high-status groups (Prentice and Miller 1999). The media in Japan help construct the idea of race and the Other, and are tools dominant groups use to perpetuate their own power and ideologies (Tsuda 2003; Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu 2008).

While group frontiers are routinely tied to biases formed within bounded spaces, in the age of the internet mental borderlands are geographically expanded, allowing for the re/forming of relations in virtual locales. This indirect contact is negotiated via technology, impersonal markets, technocratic organizations or imagined personal links via television, visual/print depictions or tradition (Seebrock 2013). Other options are large collectives with common identities but little direct contact, such as nations, races or political parties (Anderson 1983, p. 96) which have access to classification systems denoting in- and out-groups and language linking people together in the same symbolic community even when their living conditions notably vary (Lamont 1992).

Japan's mental borderlands and race

A 'performing' of race is central to a process of national self-identity and attempts to create coherent identities and social boundaries (Omi and Winant 1994). Thus nation and race entwine: race undergirds dominant discussions about national identity and is implicitly/explicitly part of its essence. Until recently the Japanese government asserted that since racial favoritism did not exist there was no need to address it legally (*cf.* Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1999, 2008). The common definition of race in Japan is couched in cultural and linguistic uniqueness. Unlike the 'clear' boundaries in the West, in Japan race is muddled by its merging with ethnic community and nation (McLelland 2008), a concept assuming a one-race nation, and a static racial, linguistic and cultural homogeneity (Lie 2001, p. 144). Befu (1993, p. 115) describes this mythology as 'the isomorphism of geography, race, language, and culture' where nations exhibit distinct boundaries, languages, races and cultures. At the very least being Japanese means to have Japanese blood (*jus sanguinis*) (Yoshino 1997). This discourse of *nihonjinron* (Japanese uniqueness) dictates a homogeneous Japaneseness (Befu 2001, p. 71).

While used primarily to clarify boundaries with domestic others (e.g., Koreans), Japanese elites have used African Americans to help clarify *nihonjinron*, gauging their own identity and future. This past century, Black Americans have been exemplars of what Japan could expect as people of color in a universe of white elites, using them to reconfigure themselves as honorary whites (Doerr and Kumagai 2014; Tajima and Thornton 2012). During the Cold War, many Japanese modeled their political strategies on the Black civil rights movement (Koshiro 2006). In ensuing years a 'Black boom' arose among Japanese youth, paralleling the White Negro phenomenon circa 1950s United States and, more recently, via hip-hop culture (McLoed 2013). Decried as sites of resistance against Japanese norms and white cultural dominance, these efforts were hardly subversive, for they were naive about American racial imagery, eluded meaningful

dialogue with Blacks, decontextualized and depoliticized Blackness, and denied Japan's history with other Asians (Russell 1998; Takezawa 2005).

Black male bodies are commonly 'consumed' by women enticed by their athleticism, primitivism and wildness (Ogihara 2003). Japan's youth mimic Black entertainers (seen as glamorous, decadent, hedonistic) and urban Black youth (seen as fashionable rebels), and engage in lifestyles outside mainstream Japanese values (Black 2009; Condry 2007). A blackface (*ganguru*) fad arose in the 1990s–2000s among young women¹ who, borrowing from Hollywood and hip-hop, donned exaggerated orange–black tans, blackface and Afro-wigs, and posed, danced and otherwise moved in 'Black' ways. Black Sambo is a staple fortifying Blackness as primitive, inferior yet musically talented (Fellezs 2012). *Dakkochan* (circa 1960s) is replicated by the Jynx character of the Pokémon children's franchise, a Black-skinned, large-lipped 'species' (a creature in the Pokémon world) that moves by wiggling its hips.

Konketsuji in Japan (mixed-race children) are a legacy of American military occupation and Afro-Japanese are seen as social problems. Japanese films early in the occupation depict the hardship of Afro-Japanese families (*Ebony* 1953), and special targets for ridicule (Sato, cited in Iwata n.d.). Black *konketsuji* are essentialized as Black, highly distressed and socially undesirable (Koshiro 2003). Until 1985, they were legal nonentities, often without a nationality (*mukokusekiji* 無国籍児) since citizenship was bestowed by the father – who, in this case is usually Black (Kobayashi 2009).

While internationalization is the substance to this diversification, underlining Blackness serves to clarify *nihonjinron* by illuminating what Japanese are/are not. *Nihonjinron* speaks in essentialisms. It bolsters the Japanese exceptionalism that gained popularity in the late twentieth century by linking Japaneseness to economic success. This exceptionalism constructs a bipolar world in which 'Japan' and 'the West' are juxtaposed, creating a Japanese national identity deeply complicit with Western Orientalism. With social unrest, a protracted economic recession, an earthquake, nuclear mishaps and ever increasing worldwide intersections, Japanese focus shifted from international to global, reflecting the less confident and more passive self-perception of their world status (Iwabuchi 2002).

As a more equivocal identity developed, the Japanese media hardened the idea that foreign contact and the development of a multiracial society begot increased social problems and threats to community. These messages were animated by three avowals about Japan: it is a mono-ethnic nation, with limited social class stratification and has a notable sense of community (Muramatsu 2002). In the process, racial out-groups were marginalized. Thus, in advertising, whites, while appearing in nearly all product categories, are still essentialized. Blacks and non-Japanese Asians are used more narrowly, the former appearing as musicians and athletes, and the latter linked to products from their country of origin (Prieler 2010). It is in this context that *nihonjinron*, a normative model for culture, reinforces the idea of Japanese homogeneity (Lie 2003; Htun 2012).

The media also collude in the larger debate about Japan becoming a multiracial nation by stressing the role of foreigner crime. Including recent immigrants, visitors and temporary residents, foreigners are seen as a hotbed of illegal activity. For example, *rainichi* (Japan-visiting 来日) foreigner² crime is linked to specific nationalities (Yamamoto 2010). South Americans, one of the top immigrant groups, become law violators or athletes – denoting physical strength – in media retellings (Tsuda 2009). Otherness is also applied to multiracial marriages and people (Doerr and Kumagi 2012), such that the idea of multiculturalism excludes immigrants and mixed cultures (Chung and Kim 2012).

While Japanese interest in African Americans has endured, it is based more on stereotype than substance. A useful idea to think about these dynamics is the Social Content Model (SCM). The SCM suggests that competence and warmth are fundamental to dimensions of intergroup

perceptions (Fiske et al. 2002). While competence represents how confident, efficient and skillful out-group members are perceived, warmth reflects how friendly, well intentioned and trustworthy they appear to be. In turn, both are linked to the socio-structural factors of relative status and intergroup competition. Group competence/respect rises/lowers depending on the perceived status of the out-group, while warmth is linked to perceived competition, with increased competition tied to less warmth. There are thus two extremes: people seen as highly competent and warm (admired, and typically one's own group), and people held in contempt, embodied by out-groups possessing low competence (and/or intelligence) and seeming coldness.

In this context, Japanese are ambivalent toward African Americans. Ambivalent groups are of two types. Some are seen as competent, even smart, yet are cold – they are envied and/or resented (e.g., rich people). In contrast, those seen as incompetent but warm are pitied. Black professionals, including musicians and athletes, are seen as highly competent but not warm, while poor Blacks are recognized as incompetent and cold, and held in contempt (Fiske et al. 2002). While commonly linked to intelligence, for African Americans competence is coupled with specialized skill but not intellect. Thus Black musicians and athletes are seen as having a natural/cultural talent (Walzer and Czopp 2011). During the twentieth century, Japanese elites envisioned Black Americans as parallel racial travelers and, more recently, as objects of 'cool'. Commonly depicted as oppressed, sorrowful and pitied, primitive yet physically talented, they elicit little warmth or envy (Tajima and Thornton 2012).

Because most Japanese views of African Americans come from indirect contact, symbolic resources (e.g., social actors, conceptual divisions, traditions) play a role in establishing, challenging and sustaining or disbanding traditional social statuses (e.g., race, class and gender) manifested in various forms of 'us' and 'them' (Lamont and Molnar 2002). What the *Japan Times* narratives should reveal is an interplay of internal (to be Japanese) and external (not to be Japanese) definitions. This process of reformulating *nihonjinron* occurs as the global increasingly intersects with the domestic, raising notions of cultural transgression such as hybridity, transnationalism and cosmopolitanism.

Nihonjinron* and African Americans in the *Japan Times

Since 1990, Japan has faced a shrinking domestic labor force. Replenishing jobs with a multiracial and international labor pool has created ethnic and racial tensions and pressures to redefine Japaneseness, historically linked to blood ties. The *Japan Times* provides a window into the nature of these adjustments. According to the paper, its coverage of news, business and politics serves to promote 'understanding between Westerners and the Japanese', revealing 'what Japan is really like'. Since few people understand Japanese, the paper 'provides foreign residents and visitors with a true picture of Japan' (*Daily Earth* n.d., para. 15). This English-language newspaper reaches the largest number of foreign residents, including diplomats, opinion leaders and the international business community. Founded in 1897, it is self-described as 'praised as a highly effective means of getting messages across to the expanding foreign market and to internationally-minded Japanese'. Readership is mostly North American.

Generated by key words 'blacks' and/or 'African Americans', we examined 100 articles, from 1998 to 2013, accessed via Lexus-Nexus. *Times* reporting gravitated around African Americans in the United States (45 percent of coverage), Japan (35 percent) and other parts of the globe (20 percent). We first quantitatively assessed themes. This involved reading articles, enumerating themes and then identifying frames. After several practice runs, discussion and adjustments to the themes, we came to a 95 percent agreement over coding. Tabulating the articles revealed the people, issues and themes most and least frequently covered and this guided our textual analysis

Table 16.1 Themes appearing in *Japan Times*, 1998–2013

N=84	1998–2001	2002–2005	2006–2009	2010–2013	Total
Frames					
USA total	16	15	10	4	45
1. Modern world	8	9	6	2	25 (56%)
multiculturalism	2	3	0	1	6 (13%)
post-racial	6	5	6	2	19 (42%)
2. Old era	8	6	4	2	20 (44%)
International total	6	8	5	1	20
1. Modern world	6	6	3	0	15 (75%)
multiculturalism	4	6	2	0	12 (60%)
post-racial	2	0	1	0	3 (15%)
2. Old era	0	2	2	1	5 (25%)
Japan	5	13	12	5	35
1. Modern world	3	12	7	5	27 (77%)
multiculturalism	3	12	3	4	22 (81%)
post-racial	0	0	4	1	5 (18%)
Old era	2	1	5	0	8 (22%)
	27	36	27	10	100

Note: The totals for each frame, as well as the total number cited, do not add up because several of the themes appear simultaneously in multiple articles

(Table 16.1). Items uncovered in textual analysis through examining language and rhetoric, style and presentation are borne by and linked to the social, political and cultural era in which the texts were produced. Textual analysis assumes that the significant items may not recur, but by their absence have the greatest weight. We were thus enabled to examine the main organizing ideas that suggest why given events are important and how they are to be understood. It is then possible to discover the specific ways certain issues are given prominence, while others are delegitimized or ignored (Squires 2007).

Overall we found that the amount of reporting on African Americans – focused both internationally and on Japan – varied over time, reaching a peak between 2002 and 2005. Curiously, a low point was 2010–2013 during the US's first Black presidency. While the *Times* paralleled other Japanese media in devoting a disparate share of coverage to the US compared to other countries (Ish 1996), interest in the US diminished from a peak in 1998–2001.

Two frames emerged in our analysis. The 'Modern World' frame reflects how Japan intersects with the rest of the world. Within this frame are two subthemes. 'Multiculturalism' examines how Japanese participate in Black cultural exchange. Absent is any specific reference to race/racism, which dominated Japanese concerns during the twentieth century, as an important bond linking the two people. The 'Post-racial' theme points to a world absent of much racial intrigue. The second frame, which we titled 'Old era', portrays a world in which race has changed little in the past 30 years, as evidenced by blatant racial bias. Linking both frames are narratives focused on individual bias, and absent comment on social policy or resource allocation – i.e., structural discrimination.

Representations of African Americans in the *Japan Times* are employed to negotiate the nation's standing in the modern era, a quality underlined by *nihonjinron*. In bolstering *nihonjinron*, the *Times* envisions the Japanese population as more enlightened about race than (white) Americans. This portrayal ignores Japan's checkered history with domestic minorities and treats African Americans as caricatures notable merely for their (musical) performances.

Modern world

The Modern world frame dominated reporting, especially in international and Japan coverage (75 and 77 percent, respectively). The US was typified as the least 'modern' when accessing the quality of relationships involving African Americans, with two in five narratives noting African Americans still encountering 'Old era' discrimination there. In contrast this frame appeared much less often in reporting on Japan or internationally (22 and 25 percent in turn). This frame suggests that Americans are especially ambiguous about the place of African Americans in society. It is also noteworthy that the *Times*' reporting was more critical about race relations in the US than elsewhere, describing a situation in which races rarely mix and where African American cultural production is far from celebrated. The coverage points to more actual intersections with African Americans (albeit cultural, specifically related to music or dance) in Japan (81 percent) and internationally (60 percent) than in the US (13 percent). In the US context, the vast majority of items under Modern world (42 percent) are linked to the 'post-racial' theme, an abstract concept pointing to race as obsolete.

Multiculturalism

While the idea of multiculturalism drew international attention during the late 1990s, the *Times*' reporting suggests that this topic missed the US, especially after 2005 – despite the election of a Black president. Typically, when brought up, multiculturalism was defined rather superficially – for example, when Black and Japanese American museum visitors viewed an exhibit about Japanese American World War II internment (*Japan Times* 1999a), or when Spike Lee movies were noted (Fazio 2004). The most extensive discussion of multiculturalism appears in one article, offering a silver lining to the wounding of Congresswoman Gabrielle Gifford. The paper suggested that the shooting showed some of the worst and 'some of the very best' of the US. In support of this it quoted historian Allan Ginsberg who wrote that 'Last week we saw a white Catholic male Republican judge murdered on his way to greet a Democratic Jewish woman member of Congress, who was his friend. Her life was saved initially by a 20-year-old Mexican-American gay college student, and eventually by a Korean American combat surgeon.' This 'was eulogized by our African-American President'. The *Times* then wrote: 'The strength of the U.S. is its ability to unite and work toward a single purpose despite diversity and political discord' (*Japan Times* 2011). This one article brought the most attention to multiculturalism in the US.

Coverage focused on other parts of the world stressed multiculturalism chiefly through the spread of musical influences seen to traverse traditions, such as soul and African and Brazilian sounds (Jenkins 2002; Brasor 2005). Otherwise, interest was focused on how Japanese culture influenced others. For example, Richard Wright, author of *Native Son*, wrote haiku as he neared death. So committed to the form, he composed over 4,000 verses in the final 18 months of his life, antidotes against illness. In his final days in exile, displaced by America, his love of haiku speaks to a curative nature of Japanese culture (Lowitz 1999).

The coverage focused on Japan's relationship to African American culture suggests that Japan negotiates its place on the world stage by accepting and incorporating Black music. According to the *Times*, Japanese admiration of Black performers and musical forms runs deep. Much of the reporting focused on Japanese imitating Black soul and jazz (*Japan Times* 2002b; Brand 2003; Pronko 2002; Tartan, 2003). In a Japanese NHK-sponsored music festival in Bangkok with Japanese and Thai performers, 'Rocking out to bicultural rhythms', reporter Philip Cunningham described one performance mimicking Black cultural influence: 'At one point in the evening,

four fake blond men strut onto stage and launch into a hip-hop dance number.' Are they Japanese or Thai? They turn out to 'be African-American wanna-be Japanese band Da Pump' (2000). While Cunningham seems to dismiss this effort at parody, elsewhere, the paper speaks much more positively about why Black culture has found a home among Japanese. It 'springs from a background of racial discrimination, from backbreaking labor, from sadness, from salvation. There's just so much to it' (*Japan Times* 2002c; *Japan Times* 2003).

This cultural influence is also presented in coverage as a catalyst of Japanese rebellion (Osaki 2013; Bojko 2004; Hongo 2007). The newspaper notes that jazz has been an inspiration in reforming the Japanese judicial system (Kamiya 2010). It points out that Black culture is used to protest injustices and create in Japanese manga Black superheroes who fight 'Zombies and racist stereotypes' and are on a 'spiritual mission to unearth the hidden riches of Voodoo culture and ancient African history' (Kawashima 2004). According to the *Times* this influence goes both ways for Japanese helped establish standards for Black fashion models during the 1970s, when the influx of jobs for non-Asian models contributed to a Japanese fashion boom (Dash 1999), and when haiku poets moved Alice Walker (Kamiya 2003).

Continuing the theme that Japan has entered the age of internationalism, the *Times* reported on the continual flow of Blacks who live and/or perform there (e.g., McKenna 2013; Hamilton 2011). In 'Dancing in the footsteps of Ailey' Gilles Kennedy writes about how the Ailey dance group celebrated its 40th anniversary touring Japan. Ailey was seen as revolutionizing how African American rituals, experiences and music were presented via dance (1999). In reporting on a visit by a gospel group, the paper described them launching into "'Oh Happy Day" – called Japan's gospel anthem – feet were stomping, hands were in the air and there wasn't a dry eye in the house'. This was no staid Japanese, for 'reticence and reserve' was 'joyously thrown to the wind'. The paper noted that 'Gospel – the musical amalgam of West African call-and-response, Protestant hymns, jazz and the blues that is on the rise in the West – is taking root in Japan' in the mainstream and grassroots (*Japan Times* 2003). Interestingly, the proof offered for Japan's connection to the international music scene was 'old school', noting only performers of old-school styles, while contemporary forms, like hip-hop, and more popular artists, like Beyoncé, are notably absent.

Particularly telling in terms of both Japanese cultural influence on the world and Japanese acceptance of outsiders is the case of Jero, a foreigner who assimilated traditional Japanese music. During the 2000s, Jero, who was raised by a Japanese grandmother and half-Japanese mother, became an 'enka' (traditional Japanese music) sensation. The newspaper noted that although he had a 'hip hop look', his worry was 'not how the [Japanese] audience would perceive me, but how other *enka* singers would'. As reflective of a modern nation, according to the *Japan Times*, *enka* singers were 'appreciative of his style, supportive and cheering him on' (Ito 2008). In other words, Jero's race becomes irrelevant in the Japanese context.

Post-racial world

A popular theme in the *Japan Times'* coverage of the United States was how the country is approaching a new racial era, foreshadowed by younger generations who no longer consider race a major obstacle (*Japan Times* 2000b). For example, the *Times* highlighted a bicultural man – Jewish and African American – who lives in the US but has siblings born in Japan and Denmark. While of mixed (white/Black) racial makeup, the man saw himself as culturally Japanese and noted that while his identity was important, 'it really doesn't matter if I'm black or white or Japanese. I listen to hip-hop music and love Japanese comedy ... I could be happy wherever' (*Japan Times* 1998b).

The election in 2008 of Barack Obama, the first multiracial US president, epitomized this new era. According to the *Times*, his presence reminds us 'that all things are possible in the U.S.' and 'that the country will strive to find and use the best of its people. His win embodies the ideal of America as a land of opportunity for all' (*Japan Times* 2008). Others asserted that his election challenged the world to still claim that America is a bastion of white privilege (Rafferty 2008). Even Obama's presidential opponent John McCain was not immune, the paper describing how his heart was not in beating Obama. 'A true American,' said McCain 'did not want to stand in the way of history' (Plate 2008). Thus, Americans were 'immensely pleased with themselves, and while 'not transforming all levels of race relations, his win erases the legacy of slavery, the deepest stain on American history' (Dyer 2008).

In the reporting from Japan, post-racial themes were not about Japan but about perceptions of the US, and much was related to opinions toward President Obama. One article explains why 'Japanese and foreigners find reason for optimism in Obama'. 'I think it's great that Americans elected an African-American as president, because I had thought that was impossible due to racial prejudice against Black people. Americans showed they really can change,' said a university student (Matsutani and Johnston 2009). Others linked how two Black men, Obama and MLK, rose to lead the country through 'difficult times' (Kamiya 2009). Absent here is any hint that Japanese find a Black president scary, incompetent or somehow, because of his race, not ready for the job. The contrast is clear: the Japanese are ready for this new world.

Old era

In contrast to this soaring rhetoric, the Old era theme reveals how the US remains reliant on race to categorize and limit, including how scientists persist in linking genes to criminality, intelligence or athletic pursuits (Hooper 2003, 2004). Articles stressing incidences motivated by racial bias – such as the murder of James Byrd, Jr. by white supremacists, or mentioning media of color forming coalitions to fight mass media bias (*Japan Times* 2001; *Japan Times* 1999b) – spoke to the effects of racism. Much reporting focused on political machinations. The newspaper mentioned, for example, how Republican dog whistle politics pandered to whites against Blacks and foreigners (*Japan Times* 2000a), or how Obama must 'overcome the often unspoken sentiment that an African-American cannot be president', a 'daunting assignment' (Bahour and Tsurumi 2008). Despite advances over the decades, the paper noted that 'there remains a long way to go', for race still defines too many opportunities. As it concluded, 'Mr. Obama is not the symbol of a post-racial society', but embodies the anxieties of the twenty-first century (*Japan Times* 2013). The paper also offered testimony from an African American musician who was pessimistic about racial progress: 'It'll take more than Sept. 11. I mean ... it'll have to be a real smack-down, where we all run in the streets together looking for things to eat. It's gotta be a real smack-down. You know what I'm saying? That's when something will happen to the racial divide' (Bojko 2002).

Race was mostly covered as Black/white. A lone example involving Japanese in the US appeared in an article about a Japanese chemical company, Shin-Etsu, and the claim that it was perpetuating environmental racism. The paper noted that plants such as the one proposed by the company had a 'horrendous record of locating near poor African American communities and literally destroying them', causing them to become all but abandoned due to excessive contamination. Yet, the *Times* reported, the company did not respond to the racial implication. The paper averred that local residents supported the project and the jobs it offered. Challenges 'centered around Greenpeace and its radical environmentalist allies' (*Japan Times* 1998a). In highlighting the company's denials, and its 'radical' opposition, the *Times* suggests that despite a history of racial discrimination leveled at Japanese companies in the US it was reasonable for Shin-Etsu to claim innocence.

Thus, while the *Japan Times* portrayed the US as a place of hope for a better tomorrow this view was counter-balanced by representations of a country clearly still at odds with a large portion of its own people. Indeed, where African Americans call home, in comparison to Japan, remains a place dominated by antiquated ideas around race.

In contrast to this coverage, the old era frame was rarely used in reporting about race relations within Japan. Clear racial barriers are mentioned only on rare occasion, as, for example, when Blacks attempt to get permission to sell booze at a Tokyo bar (*Japan Times* 1999c). At other times it is directly linked to personal biases, such as when the *Times* reported on how a Mr. Toyozato, born and raised near an entertainment district catering mostly to Black American soldiers, was afraid of them because they were 'very wild' and were thieves. These actions were described as originating from a 'violent culture' linked to racial problems plaguing the US (Asakura 2002).

More commonly, discrimination in Japan was characterized as ambiguous. More extensive coverage was given to situations when discrimination was hazy, on the margins of race or nationality (Johnston 2012). The inability to parcel race from nationality is seen in a case filed by African American Steve McGowan, who alleged that a shop refused him service due to race. As reported by the *Times*, this event was caught on tape, and the defendant claimed in court to have a 'thing' about Blacks. Nonetheless, the judge upheld the defendant's claim that McGowan and his wife were not credible witnesses, arguing that since they spoke so little Japanese they could not prove the owner used racial language against McGowan. The suit was dismissed due to insufficient evidence proving his race and not his foreign status led to the defendant's actions (Arudou 2006, 2013; Johnston 2006). Otherwise, the paper has no comment. In its silence the paper failed to contextualize this phenomenon. And because it offers little coverage of other overt racial incidents in Japan, one can come away with the idea that it is indeed a rarity. In refusing comment on the verdict, or its rationale, the paper follows a precedent followed in reporting noted above on Shin-Etsu, the company accused of targeting chemical plants for communities of color. In the Shin-Etsu case, the paper only aired the company's denials, thus insinuating its support of the company. Based on the rare occurrence of old-style racial discrimination, the *Times* suggests that Japan has become a modern nation, the implication being that all racial groups are not only accepted by average Japanese, but indeed are treated with a level of respect not seen in the US.

Finally, the remainder of the coverage, focusing on international locales outside the US, embodies both the old era and post-racial themes. Articles highlighted how Black soldiers in the Philippine-American war were met with acceptance and rebuff, or how most Amerasians, except Afro-Asians, were accepted in Vietnam (Lowitz 2003; Griffiths 2006). Reporting on the African American presence internationally reinforced the idea that the US is less developed than the rest of the world in its interactions with Black populations. The intimation is that, in this regard, other places represent a more modern world than the US.

Discussion and conclusions

Something Edward Said wrote conjures up what we found in the reporting here: 'something foreign and distant acquires ... a status more rather than less familiar ... [and is seen] as a version of things previously known' (Said 1978, p. 55). While much of Japanese media has drawn clear boundaries between the nation and out-groups, such as *rainichi* (foreign visitors), African Americans appear as an almost protected class, albeit essentialized as subordinate and fleeting. They are simple people who can teach Japanese about oppression. The *Times'* assessment of the relationship is that racial prejudice, among Japanese people, is of little note.

As the Social Content Model suggests, the *Times* essentializes African Americans as musically or artistically inclined. While their competence is noted, this trait reveals little intellectual ability, as it is grounded in cultural experience and ‘natural’ talent rather than inventiveness. This depiction of Black musicians is consistent with Japanese views of African Americans historically – as oppressed, even sorrowful, and pitied, but evincing little warmth, intelligence or envy (Tajima and Thornton 2012; Walzer and Czopp 2011). At ‘best’ these narratives suggest a kind of ‘Black cool’. Thus reporting covers culture and ‘the’ Black experience with little depth or historical context, reinforcing the idea that Black people are unsophisticated, but worthy of pity/sorrow.

This lack of interest in the range of African American lives extends to ignoring a mutual history, a connection used for political ends in the last century by Japanese and African American elites, when both saw value in resisting US white supremacy. This history could expose people of Japanese ancestry, such as Richard Aoki and Yuri Kochiyama, pivotal actors in the civil rights movement (Fujino 2005, 2012). Absent this reporting, the paper fails to capitalize on stories of personal relationships to build real interest. Moreover, the paper makes a consistent, and hence conscious, choice to focus on exclusive areas of Black culture (e.g., jazz, old-school dance), and avert mention of other aspects of Black life. It is particularly interesting that there is little remark on hip-hop or popular performers like Jay Z, Rhianna, Kanye West; professional athletes; or potentially negative aspects of Black life like crime and poverty. The absence of crime and poverty perhaps reflects the paper’s focus on individual aspects of race, ignoring structures and institutions.

So why report on African Americans at all? Our analysis suggests that such reporting serves as a means to an end: to undergird the idea of *nihonjinron*. African Americans appear as a tool to examine modern Japan. To do so the paper essentializes and marginalizes the idea of Blackness. There is no need to convey warmth or respect, for African Americans are merely objects of attention, their inclusion fitting into a broader context of Japanese media serving to elucidate Japaneseness. When race is the subject, Japan becomes a ‘shining light on the top of the hill’, a better icon of a modern nation than the one she adores, the United States.

While essentialized renderings of African Americans is routine, other factors reinforce this narrow vision and the paper’s ability to control the message about Japan’s standing in the world.³ As the primary arbitrator of Japanese views for the English-speaking world, the *Japan Times*’ role is to promote mutual ‘understanding between Westerners and the Japanese’ by ‘telling other countries what Japan is really like’ (*Daily Earth* n.d., para, 15). Moreover, the *Times* has a specific audience. Most of its readers are English speakers and North American, highly educated (88 percent have at least a college degree) and from the business community (*Japan Times* 2014, pp. 6–7). As an economic power, businesses are attentive to what makes Japan tick and what Japanese feel about aspects of social and economic life. Arguably, this audience would have little interest in Japanese views of race or African Americans, especially if the message serves as a direct critique of US society. This helps explain why the *Times* is selective about how it essentializes. It relies on a narrow range of almost benign stereotypes – such as popular cultural artifacts – and avoids other qualities typically linked to African Americans. Highlighting ‘controversial’ subjects, especially within the US, would serve to undermine the paper’s goal of speaking to its US business interests. In this context, it is puzzling why other ‘safe’ subjects like Black athletes or movie stars go unnoticed.

The power of these narratives is reinforced internationally in another way. International reporting has a limited number of sources dominating the flow of news (Hannerz 2004). This restricted conduit restricts how countries and regions are perceived, leading to essentializing audience interests. The ‘bottleneck effect’ – news emanating from limited journalistic channels affecting a large geographical area and varied audiences – is unique to transnational news

production. This effect magnifies the impact of the *Times*' reporting on African Americans. As a primary voice of Japanese views to the English-speaking world, the *Times* is a key editor of information flow and has a vested interest in representing Japan and Japanese in the best possible light. Thus the *Times* has great sway over how others perceive the tensions Japan struggles with and how it adapts to growing diversity. Especially noteworthy is how non-Japanese, especially Americans, dominate this reporting.

What remains is the 'idea' of how African America helps round out what is modern Japan. They are a slice of *nihonjinron*, since Japan's exceptionalism is also seen in the popularity of its own and Japanese-speaking foreign entertainers (*gaikokujin tarento*, foreign talent) and mixed-race television personalities. Artists like Jero, a Black Japanese singing traditional Japanese ballads, and the commercial star-power of Dante Carver symbolize the central position of Japanese culture as a model of racial tolerance in a globalized world (Fellezs 2012; Kaneko 2010).

This attempt to assert and insert Japan into a global racial hierarchy next to whiteness and, in turn, maintain a sense of cultural superiority has a long tradition. Indeed, for over 100 years Japanese elites have argued that Japan is more attuned to racial justice and Black life than the West. However, this assertion is preserved within a nation with a checkered history of race relations both locally and internationally. In overstating Japan's ability to cope with diversity, media outlets like the *Times* help set the agenda for public discourse and mold and limit public opinion about the nature of Japan as a progressive nation. It also puts an overly positive spin on how well Japan is addressing the fundamental changes it faces as it becomes an increasingly multicultural and multiracial society shaped by immigration (*Asahi Shimbun* 2015). Instead of supplying analyses inclusive of multiple world views, the *Japan Times* merely provides multiple sides of a single worldview called *nihonjinron*, a view that concludes that the US may struggle with discrimination, but not Japan.

Notes

- 1 Some suggest that blackface (*ganguro*) is an exaggerated form of *Kogal*. The deeper saddle-brown tan of this style accentuates the use of thick, garish white lipstick and eye shadow. *Ganguro* challenges female beauty norms with her anti-cute aesthetic questioning the naturalness of gender stereotypes. Some US media pundits confound the *ganguro* look with another variation on girl subculture, the 'Black' vogue of the B-Girls, who model their appearance after African American celebrities. B-Girls study American videos and read domestically published magazines such as *Hip Hop Style Bible* and *Black Music Review* to locate American 'cool', such as 'real', now used in phrases such as *riaru de tadashi* ('keep it real'). The hip-hop context is referred to as the *shiin* ('scene'), and many speak of *risupekuto o sum* ('showing respect') and *non ga ii* ('having a good groove') (Miller 2004, pp. 228–9).
- 2 The Japanese phrase is *rainichi gaikokujin* (来日外国人).
- 3 Some recent work, examining *Asahi Shimbun*, suggests that Japanese are still very interested in the subject of African America (Tajima and Thornton 2016).

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Part IV

Japanese media in everyday life



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Culture of the print newspaper

The decline of the Japanese mass press

Kaori Hayashi

Introduction

Japan is known for having an exceptionally large and resilient newspaper market. According to the Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association, the newspaper industry sells a total of 44 million copies daily, which translates to 410 copies per 1,000 adults and 0.8 copies per household. The same statistics tell us that Norway sold the second most number of newspapers, with 368 copies sold per 1,000 adults.¹ For further comparison, the United Kingdom sold 184 copies and the United States sold 157 copies per thousand adults.

Furthermore, unlike other advanced liberal democracies, it has been a long tradition of the industry to rely on more than half the amount of their revenues from individual subscription fees. Today, according to the Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association, the subscription revenue generates 58.9 percent of income (cf. 27 percent in the United States² and 33.6 percent in France³). Although the number of subscriptions has been decreasing, the decline has not been as steep as that in advertising revenues (Figure 17.1).

Another characteristic of newspaper sales in Japan is that a substantial part is in the form of print editions, despite the high rate of internet penetration into society.⁴ The transition from print newspaper content to digital formats is moving slowly in Japan, compared with other advanced industrial nations. I contend that this foundation in print subscriptions demonstrates not only the strength and uniqueness of the newspaper industry, but also the nature of journalism and its position in Japanese society and culture.

In this chapter, I explore factors that have left Japanese newspapers relatively strong, even while prominent newspapers in other nations have experienced downsizing, corporate takeovers, or bankruptcy.⁵ I shed light on the historical as well as business reasons why Japanese newspapers have continued to do well in a depressed marketplace until recently. Specifically, I argue that a complex, nationwide penetrating system of newspaper distribution underpinned by the oligopoly of powerful newspaper publishers has made the high circulation rates in Japan possible for decades and shaped a large part of what journalism is today in Japan.

Regarding Japanese newspapers and journalism, a number of works have been published in Japanese, both by working journalists and scholars. However, sources in English remain relatively limited. So far, most of these studies on Japanese journalism in the English language have focused

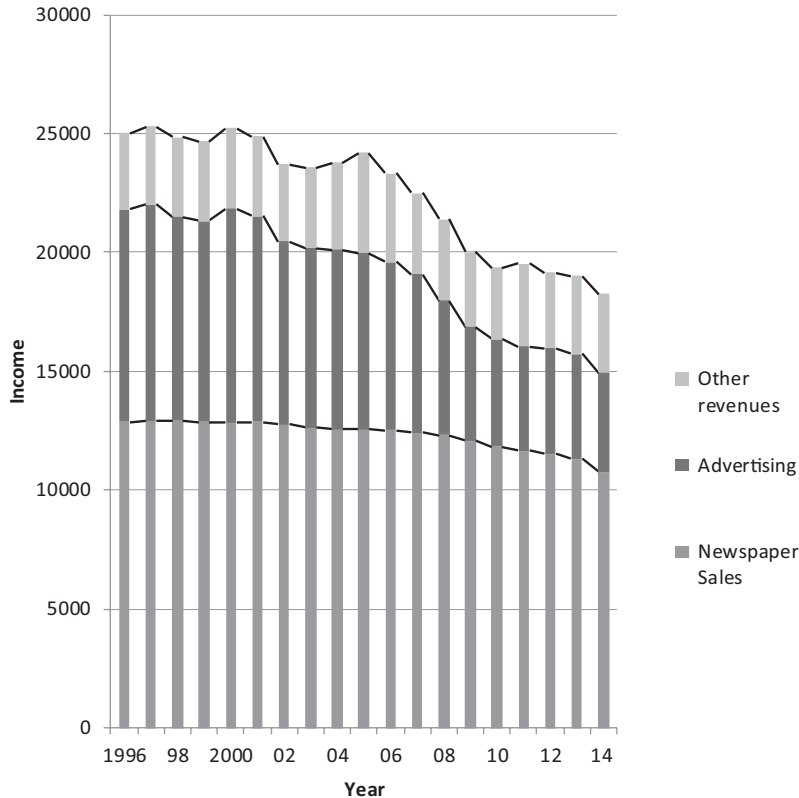


Figure 17.1 Income composition of newspaper companies
Source: Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association

on the infamous *kisha club* system⁶ and limits on freedom of the press. There is indeed a wide range of critical publications concerning the *kisha club* system by authors such as Feldman 1993, Hirose 1994, Cooper–Chen 1997, De Lange 1998, Freeman 2000, and Hall 1998, to name a few. However, there is little analysis of why Japanese newspapers, whose contents are quite serious and do not resemble those of tabloids in Europe, have grown to sell millions of copies in an advanced liberal country where the Constitution guarantees freedom of speech. Moreover, there is hardly any discussion on why newspapers in Japan continue to be so resistant to the online media, even though newspapers in other advanced nations have experienced a conspicuous decline in circulation over the past few decades.

In order to understand these unique aspects of Japanese newspapers, this chapter will first explain the cultural/historical foundation upon which newspapers in Japan have flourished. Scholars have suggested Japan has had a unique culture of reading and writing that was nourished by the wide-reaching readership of print publications. I will also explain the existence of a strong newspaper market from a business perspective. In the mid-nineteenth century, Japanese newspapers were partly opinion-oriented publications. This characteristic, however, was almost completely abandoned under the pressure of political censorship, and the newspapers grew to be quasi-public, ‘neutral’ institutions in the late nineteenth century with support of the government, which saw them as an instrument to modernize the country. During the time of the nation’s

rapid modernization process, newspapers started to promote their ‘public’ image by starting charities and other welfare activities that touched upon the lives of the lower strata of society, thereby allowing themselves to have a larger impact on society and ensuring their commercial success.

During this time, the newspaper industry also developed an elaborate franchise sales network. This sales system, which stretched from cities to the remote countryside of the nation, enabled the high number of subscriptions in Japan because it grounded the newspaper subscription into the routine of a community life and made it into something almost comparable to setting up utilities for a new household. In other words, newspapers became an integral part of everyday life of the Japanese.

However, in recent years, despite the optimism of industry experts,⁷ the decline of print newspapers has begun to take place in the Japanese media landscape. Like most advanced industrial nations, younger generations seldom read newspapers and many criticize them by calling them *masugomi* (mass trash), a play on the word *masucomi*, the Japanese word for mass media. This chapter will consider the consequences of such rapid changes for Japanese newspapers and society at large, which has traditionally been so dependent on print media.

Culture of print and paper

Early modern Japan

Reading and writing were a daily part of life for a large part of the populace during the feudal Edo period (1603–1867).⁸ Thousands of maps, travel guides, and crop records⁹ from the period demonstrate the enthusiastic recording habits of people who lived during this time (Berry 2006). Historians agree that the literacy rate of commoners was relatively high, especially compared with other contemporaneous societies overseas. Eisuke Ishikawa estimates that anywhere between 70 and 86 percent of children attended local ‘schooling for writing, reading, and calculating’ around 1850 in the greater Edo metropolitan area. For comparison, according to Ishikawa, the rate of school attendance in the United Kingdom in 1837 was approximately 20–25 percent. Although the schools in Japan were set up mostly by local private initiatives, they were also systematic in that they all had teachers, classrooms, and textbooks. Teachers in those days were volunteers who were recognized as learned men and women by the community (Ishikawa and Tanaka 1999, p. 66).¹⁰

In addition, unlike Western societies where monasteries or aristocracies were considered bastions of scholarship and high culture, writing and reading in Japan flourished among commoners, including the peasantry and merchants. Chie Nakane (1990), Japan’s leading sociologist, contends that ‘(T)here was no specific social stratum assuming responsibility for the furtherance of scholarship, the arts, and culture in general; it was left to the common people to provide the driving force for their development. This is why Japan has such a strong tradition of popular culture’ (p. 228). Nakane also regards the Edo period, which had a highly organized, centralized administrative system and experienced rapid economic development based on an abundance of agricultural products and an increase in productivity, as the defining era for what people identify as ‘Japanese culture’ today. She claims that ‘this is the period in which Japan’s distinctive culture attained its apex ... It is of interest not only for its own sake, but because it provides valuable insights into the country’s modernization and why Japan is what it is today’ (Nakane 1990, p. 3).

However, the question remains what Japan’s writing and reading culture has to do with the newspaper culture of Japan. Newspapers have multiple faces and functions: their most prominent role, derived from modern Anglo-American history, is concerned with scrutinizing

political power, which is generally posited as a normative function of journalism. However, in the case of Japan, a large part of what people understand as ‘journalism’ today emerged rather out of everyday life, with popular neighborhood culture taking on the function of relaying practical information about urgent news or gossip. Therefore, although the government had officially forbade newspapers from writing about ‘current affairs’, when sensational events such as earthquakes or large fires occurred, enterprising outlets would print the facts with drawings on a sheet called a *kawaraban* (slate impression) or *yomiuri*, and then sell them in the streets for a small fee. This was done among the populace in an unofficial manner (Huffman 1980; Yamamoto 1990). Many of these *kawaraban* sheets demonstrate the degree of intense curiosity of people in the local, regional, as well as national news in those days. In this respect, Japan’s example supports Benedict Anderson’s argument of ‘imagined community’, in which a nation-state rises together with the proliferation of a print business (Anderson 2006).

Modernization: the Meiji period

The Meiji Period (1868–1912), which followed the Edo era, was characterized by a highly authoritative, centralized nation-state regime that embraced a modern form of government with a constitution and parliamentary system. Although the nation moved toward imperialism, there were at least a few years during the early years of the period in which aspiration for democracy was present. This was the time when the People’s Rights Movement (*jiyūminken undō*), which sought to establish a national assembly, was active. The movement reached its peak from 1882 to 1884 and gradually subsided by the 1890s. The movement has been touted as the first example of popular democratic activism in modern Japanese history. Although opinions vary as to how this movement evolved, it is believed to have emerged from the lower social strata, including the peasantry, and was a counter-reaction to the authoritarianism that had existed in Japan (Kersten 1996). Scholars also maintain that the 1880s, when the People’s Rights Movement took shape, was ‘the happiest time’ for the Japanese press, when the press and its readers united in support of their respective political convictions (Yamamoto 1990, p. 97). The press of those days nearly succeeded in defining themselves as a pluralistic public sphere in terms of their normative sense.

With the People’s Rights Movement as their core ideal, activists founded a number of critical political newspapers during this period. They were called ‘large papers’ (*Ō-shimbun*) and covered mostly political issues. Most newspapers hewed to party affiliations and enjoyed a loyal readership from respective social groups. These papers targeted the political elites and intellectuals and were written in highly formalized academic language.

However, Meiji government officials grew concerned of these political protests in the media and soon imposed highly strict censorship to prevent their articles from entering controversial discourse. At the same time, the government also encouraged the founding of newspapers, as long as they remained respectful of the government or kept a neutral stance. Moreover, the government regarded newspapers as a product of modern Western industry and civilization. Thus the government supported Tokyo newspapers by buying and distributing copies nationwide, providing special postage rates for such publications, and even organizing ‘newspaper discussion meetings’ (*shimbun kōwa kai*) where government officials or educated monks would read newspapers aloud in front of village people and explain their contents. In other words, government leaders of the Meiji era saw the press as an essential instrument for the rapid dissemination of Western thought and the technology that was needed to modernize the country (Kasza 1988; Yamamoto 1990).

While the politically oriented ‘large papers’ gradually disappeared as a result of censorship restrictions, other papers that downplayed politics in favor of more general, and sometimes

vulgar, subject matters flourished. These were known as ‘little papers’ (*ko-shimbun*) and would be best characterized as tabloids by today’s standards. These papers were rooted in the familiar traditions of Tokugawa popular culture publications or the *kawaraban* by employing literati and playwrights active in the period as their writers. This approach made it far easier for the less educated to identify with their contents than those produced by the ‘large papers’. *Ko-shimbun* were written in colloquial language and with abundant illustrations to attract women and the uneducated underclass. These papers also promoted the government’s mandate of modernization by praising Western civilization while they were rooted in Japanese traditions (Tsuganezawa 1998). In sum, the modern newspapers of Japan emerged out of this tradition of small papers, into which the tradition of large papers also converged amidst censorship and commercialization. Large paper journalism that once focused on the debates on democracy for the nation discarded much of its political features and developed into a multifaceted business largely independent of political parties. By the turn of the twentieth century, the commercial bent of ‘little papers’ gradually began to infiltrate the ‘large papers’. Among these papers were the *Tokyo Nichinichi Shimbun* and *Ōsaka Mainichi Shimbun*.

Meanwhile, thanks to the high literacy rate of the nation, the introduction of new technology, and the national pursuit of higher circulation rates, ‘little papers’, too, changed by adjusting themselves to the tides of modernization and Westernization. They moved beyond the Tokugawa popular gossip publications and no longer relied only on popular anecdotes, folklore, or rumors as sources of news. In fact, ‘little papers’ often grew into Westernized journals and started to aspire to more fact-oriented, intellectual content that availed itself of the newest technology of the time.

In this way, so-called commercial papers, a composite of traditional large and little papers, became the dominant standard in the Japanese newspaper market around the end of the nineteenth century. These publications usually promoted themselves as non-partisan, fact-oriented, and market-conscious. Their reach grew remarkably together with ‘embedded’ war reports during the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905)¹¹ and reporting about the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923.

The booming Japanese economy was another trigger for growth of the newspaper market. Thanks to increased revenues from advertisements, newspapers were able to reduce subscription fees and expand readership. They also began investing in printing facilities, started to produce evening editions, and began to pay more attention to the quality of the journalists in the competition to attract more readers (Tsuchiya 1997; Tsuganezawa 1998). *Tokyo Nichinichi*, *Ōsaka Mainichi*, *Ōsaka Asahi*, and *Yomiuri* grew into top-selling regional newspaper brands in Japan by the early twentieth century. They later became the three national newspaper giants of the postwar era – *Asahi*, *Mainichi*, and *Yomiuri* – and enjoyed market dominance not only in the newspaper market, but also in the television sector.¹² Today, the five national dailies, *Asahi*, *Mainichi*, *Yomiuri*, *Sankei*, and *Nikkei*, function as the defining force in the Japanese public sphere. The five national dailies own a part of the equity capital of their affiliated five commercial broadcasters. They also send their personnel to key positions in the management of these commercial broadcasters.

Newspaper as public institution

In becoming a driving force of modernization, the Japanese newspaper industry has made continued efforts to create the kind of contents that ‘enlighten’ their readers. For example, they have introduced Western trends including food, hygiene, and manners in such sections geared toward women and lifestyle.¹³ They have also held events that introduced Western culture to Japan (e.g.,

concerts, sporting events, art exhibitions) and covered them as news. In this sense, the mission of the industry overlapped considerably with the government's effort to 'get out of the East and catch up with the West'¹⁴ and enabled to them to gain an official profile. This approach, however, led the government to co-opt the media for its Imperial propaganda.

Kenji Sato, a scholar of Japanese cultural history, states that Japanese newspaper companies have had a special role in modern Japan not unlike religious institutions (e.g., by contributing to social welfare or helping victims of major disasters) (Sato 1987). For example, Sato points to the philanthropic activities of *Ōsaka Mainichi Shimbun* and *Ōsaka Asahi Shimbun* in the early twentieth century. *Ōsaka Mainichi Shimbun*, the predecessor of today's leading daily *Mainichi Shimbun* (circulation 3 million copies per day), for example, launched a philanthropic organization named *Ōsaka Mainichi Shimbun Jizendan* (*Ōsaka Mainichi Newspaper Charity Corporation*) in 1911, as a part of commemorative events to celebrate its 10,000th issue. The most notable activity of this organization was 'mobile clinics' for the impoverished. These moving clinics operated predominantly in poor neighborhoods of the metropolitan *Ōsaka* area, but some were seen as far as colonial Manchuria and Korea (Sato 1987). Their social welfare activities were inspired by the philosophy of then-president and industrialist Hikoichi Motoyama, who lost his father in early childhood and was sympathetic to the plight of the poor. However, these activities were also designed to win more readers in the highly competitive newspaper market of the time. Motoyama's biography shows that the initiative was launched with a clear goal to gain more new readers from the lower social strata in the stronghold of its rival publication, *Ōsaka Asahi Shimbun* (Sato 1987; Tsuganezawa 1996).

After *Ōsaka Mainichi Shimbun* launched these welfare projects, its rival *Ōsaka Asahi Shimbun*, the predecessor of today's *Asahi Shimbun* (circulation 6 million per day), also started an equivalent charitable division named *Asahi Shimbun Shakai Jigyōdan* (*Asahi Newspaper Social Event Corporation*) in 1927. Inspired by the newspaper *Call* in San Francisco, California, its mission was to collect year-end donations for the needy. *Asahi's Shakai Jigyōdan* also began to provide childcare facilities during harvesting times in rural farming areas and invented a system for visiting nurses to educate people about modern public hygiene (Sato 1987).

Other enterprising newspaper managers also began a variety of charities and public events, some of which focused specifically on women's issues. In 1916, for example, *Mainichi's Jizendan* organized study tours for women that started with a visit to the *Osaka Central Post Office*, the *Osaka Telegraph Office*, and *Osaka Gas Company*. Later, it arranged visits to temples and galleries by specially reserved trains. There were more than 2,300 total participants in this program (Tsuganezawa 1996). *Asahi*, on the other hand, developed *Fujinkai Kansai-Rengō Taikai* (*Convention for the Alliance of Kansai Women's Associations*) in 1919, which was initially launched as an equivalent of *Mainichi's* women's study tours, but later developed into a leading organization for women's rights, in particular for the suffrage movement. These initiatives were mostly influenced by the liberal waves of the *Taishō* era (1912–1926), but they also aim to cultivate underdeveloped women's readership amidst fierce market competition among newspapers (Tsuganezawa 1996).

It is important to note that for Japanese newspapers, the timing of becoming quasi-public, almost official institutions coincided with that of becoming highly commercial entities. The media sector in Japan has, therefore, become an established authority in Japanese society and enjoyed a variety of privileges given by the state. The often criticized *kisha clubs*, which many scholars claim curtail Japan's press freedom (see for example, Feldman 1993, Hirose 1994, Cooper-Chen 1997, De Lange 1998, and Freeman 2000), is one exemplary phenomenon of this historically comprehensive program of the media industry backed by the state authority. Consequently, the public nature of the industry was enormously favorable for marketing purposes and encouraged the

expansion of business opportunities. Newspaper companies optimized their ‘official’ profile by publicizing cultural and charitable events, and most aimed to expand their market share to every corner of society. Consequently, newspaper companies regularly host charity fundraisers, fine art exhibitions, and other cultural events to this day and retain a face that devotes itself to building a modern, civilized nation. In a country where museums and galleries were underdeveloped, these initiatives dovetailed with the efforts of the government.

Newspaper as commodity

Outsourced sales system: hanbaiten

In Japan, there is a saying that newspapers are ‘created by elites and sold by *yakuza* (Japanese mafia)’. To be fair, this does not describe the reality of how the newspaper industry operates. However, it contains a kernel of truth about the somewhat unscrupulous¹⁵ sales practices used by the Japanese newspaper industry.

Since the early twentieth century, Japanese newspapers have been sold not by newspaper companies themselves, but by franchised, mostly smaller local sales shops called *hanbaiten*. This system is said to have come firmly into being after the 1923 Great Kantō Earthquake, which destroyed a large part of the Tokyo metropolitan area. *Ōsaka Asahi*, at that time still a local newspaper in Osaka, viewed the earthquake as a good opportunity to advance itself in the Tokyo market because its rivals had suffered serious damage caused by the earthquake. The coming of *Ōsaka Asahi* prompted Tokyo newspapers to take measures such as cutting prices to retain their market dominance. In order to enforce pricing strategies, companies started to establish exclusive sales contracts with local shops. Except for the years immediately after World War II, Japanese newspapers have generally employed this franchised sales system to this day.

In addition, while maintaining sales contracts with local shops, each newspaper company would hire sales specialists known collectively as a ‘sales expansion corps’ (*kakuchōdan*). These sales representatives were active as freelance sales corps until the mid-1990s and were employed for the sole purpose of expanding readership. Some of these *kakuchōdan* members were said to have belonged to *yakuza* groups. Their pushy, foot-in-the-door type sales style became widely known to the public and many complaints were made to the newspaper industry. They would visit households in selected areas and give out expensive gifts¹⁶ or illegal discounts to win as many new readers as possible. In the face of mounting criticism from the public since the 1990s, major newspaper companies set up official companies to which these sales personnel belong in order to make their activities more public and transparent.

The owners and employees of *hanbaiten* shops also acted as avid salespeople, in addition to their strenuous work of delivering newspapers every day. Workers would have to rise before 3:30 a.m. each morning, fold local ad flyers into each copy, carry around heavy bundles of papers, and post a copy to each household every morning and evening,¹⁷ regardless of the weather. After finishing deliveries, they had to visit readers door-to-door to collect monthly subscription fees. They were also constantly urged to solicit new customers, which was rewarded with bonus payments paid by shop owners. Up until the 1990s, the most successful deliverers were awarded with a shop of their own together with their own ‘new territory’ upon consultation of the sales shop owner and the newspaper company¹⁸ (*Yomiuri Shimbun Hanbaibu* 1962, p. 55).

Most reporters of major newspaper companies are graduates of Japan’s elite universities, given that these companies are regarded as highly secure and desirable places to work for. The sales personnel of the newspapers, in contrast, have to accept their precarious status and are decidedly working class, and thus effectively offset the image of the publications as something produced by

aloof, supercilious, ‘Westoxicated’ intellectuals. Today, thanks to the newspapers’ continued door-to-door, grassroots marketing strategies, more than 95 percent of sales come from individual subscriptions.¹⁹

Sales license and privileges

Hanbaiten shops are not just a place from which newspapers are delivered. They have been the symbol of the special status and prosperity of the newspaper industry in Japanese society. They have long enjoyed financial privileges protected by powerful corporate media houses – newspapers cannot be sold at an unreasonably low price in Japan because it is defined as a ‘cultural good’. The Fair Trade Commission has secured the exemption of newspapers from anti-monopoly law under the umbrella of the so-called *Saitan* system for more than 50 years. It allowed the newspaper companies in particular a special position that enables them to designate the sales price to sales shops.²⁰ In other words, the law officially forbids sales shops to set the sales prices of their own, regardless of the balance of supply and demand or the situation of the market. As a result, newspaper prices after World War II jumped much higher than prices of other commodities (Hatao 2015). *Hanbaiten* shops enjoyed the profits from these high prices as well. In addition, each parent company assigns to the *hanbaiten* shops an exclusive ‘territory’, meaning, for example, that a newspaper allocates only one *hanbaiten* shop in each neighborhood so that it does not have to compete with others. Of course, it has to compete with shops of other newspaper brands, but once a territory is assigned, it can automatically secure at least the readers of its particular paper, and in most cases there have been enough readers to sustain business.

This system, however, means that *hanbaiten* shops inevitably have to accept a subordinate position vis-à-vis the affiliated newspaper company because their privileges are ‘granted’ only at the will of newspaper companies. Because of this hierarchical status, newspaper companies directly and indirectly exercise pressure on small *hanbaiten* shops and sometimes demand an excessive number of paper sales in return for the ‘license to sell’.

Over the years, it has been reported repeatedly that small *hanbaiten* shops were forced to purchase a number of papers from their parent newspaper company far beyond their capacity to sell, or forced to merge with shops of other territories in the face of declining subscriptions. Some shop owners have gone out of business, while others have become debt-ridden because they had to shoulder unpaid subscription fees on their own. Time and again such questionable sales practices have been documented, some of which have led to lawsuits (Hatao 2015; Kuroyabu 2007).

The business of hanbaiten

In principle, the income of *hanbaiten* shops is derived from the difference in the price they pay to the newspaper companies and the price they can charge to the readers. However, they have another important source of revenue, namely earning fees from putting advertising flyers or ‘*chirashi*’ in each newspaper issue. Every morning these flyers are folded into newspapers to be delivered. The more copies sold, the more money can be earned from the flyers, which advertise sales promotions of local supermarkets, realtors, and car dealerships, as well as communicate messages of the local government office. Some *hanbaiten* even create their own ‘newspapers’ and fold them together within other flyers for local news. Before the internet age, these flyers from *hanbaiten* shops were the main source of information for useful tidbits about the community and were an important means for securing subscriptions as well as a source of additional earnings for *hanbaiten*. Therefore, even if the shops were obliged to purchase excessive copies from a parent newspaper, they could absorb at least a part of their losses with the advertising revenues.

Subscriber data, the most wanted asset of every marketing manager nowadays, has traditionally been in the hands of *hanbaiten*. It was these shops that created customer rosters and collected money. Moreover, delivery personnel got to know intimate details of the subscribers and their family members when they visited them door-to-door to collect money. There are anecdotes of newspaper deliverers becoming go-betweens for a couple, or even finding a new home for a baby of a mother suffering from poverty (*Yomiuri Shimbun Hanbaibu* 1962).

Another important function of *hanbaiten* shops was to provide jobs to youth, particularly college-age students from the countryside who wished to pursue higher education in urban metropolitan areas. Major newspaper companies set up ‘scholarship foundations’ (*Shogakukai*) and offered scholarships and places to live at *hanbaiten* shops or urban dormitories for students who worked as newspaper deliverers. Large newspaper companies might even pay college tuition costs. However, this system, too, has been criticized since students have virtually no time to study because of the workload they have to take on to pay off their scholarship money.

Until recently, newspaper company executives claimed to have been either indifferent to or disinterested in customer data, since these data are the domain of sales shops. In contrast, local deliverers do the bulk of customer service for the parent company, given their face-to-face communication with the community. In other words, this separate sales body has allowed Japanese newspapers to maintain an image of highly personal, caring corporations.

This system worked remarkably well during the time when newspaper sales expanded in tandem with the growth of households (Figure 17.2). In those days, sales managers of newspaper companies could afford to overlook sales strategies in the face of the seemingly ‘natural’ growth of the market. The highly personal, meddlesome neighborhood networks were in the hands of *hanbaiten*. Further, the Japanese public, on their part, accepted, if not welcomed, a visit

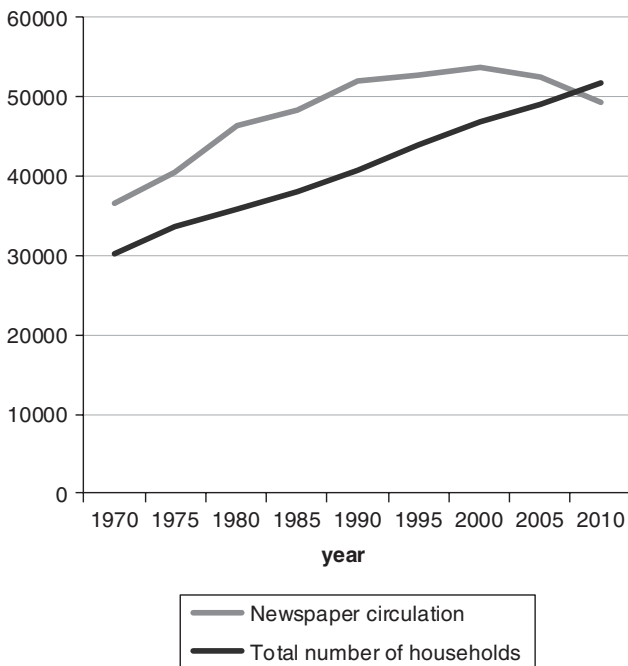


Figure 17.2 Changes of newspaper circulation and total number of households
Source: Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association, Statistics Bureau of Japan

from *hanbaiten* deliverers, and purchased newspapers ‘blindly’ for reasons that were not related to their content or ideological orientation (e.g., because their neighbors subscribed, or because the *kakuchōdan*’s gift was generous). Regardless of the name of the paper, if one started a family or became independent, signing a contract for a newspaper subscription was a symbolic ritual for a new household integrating into the community. In other words, for a long time, to the majority of Japanese citizens, the print newspaper was evidence of good communal membership and, in this sense, it was a public institution. It was never understood to be produced by a ‘corporate shark’ or willful ideological manipulator.

Newspapers on the decline

In the 1990s, the growth of the newspaper market in Japan ceased. Circulation peaked in 1997, and advertising revenues have been on a steady decline since then. The advertising revenues from the internet caught up with that of newspapers in 2009 (Figure 17.3). With Japan’s economy facing a long-term recession and the rise of the internet, the trend in circulation decline is likely to continue. In addition, there is more bad news for the industry in that Japan’s population will shrink drastically in the coming decades.²¹ Since the newspaper industry is almost completely dependent on the domestic market, the business outlook is grim. *Hanbaiten* shops can no longer pay for excess copies because revenues from flyers have decreased as a result of ailing local economies. Rumors and reports have circulated that thousands of unread copies forcibly delivered to

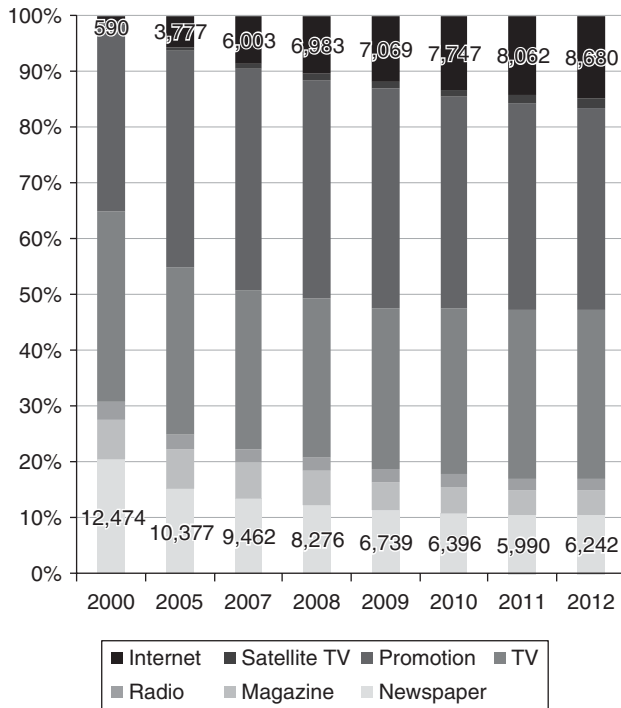


Figure 17.3 Composition of the advertising expenditures in Japan by medium (figures are in 100 million yen)

Source: Statistics Bureau of Japan

sales shops have been secretly discarded. Moreover, sales shops have begun to file lawsuits against parent companies for their questionable and unethical sales practices.

Already in the 1970s, the Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association had to respond to criticisms and complaints from the public for coercive solicitation by newspaper sales persons and it released a 'Joint Declaration concerning the Normalization of Sales Activities', which was printed on newspapers of all the members of the association on July 1, 1977 (Nihon Shimbun Hanbai Kyokai 1979). The association admitted in the statement that there had been tendencies of forcible and inappropriate sales practices due to excessive competition among newspapers. Some readers were forced to sign a subscription contract under the threat of insinuated violence, others signed a contract without knowing that he/she was purchasing a subscription (Kuroyabu 2007).

Despite these efforts on the part of the industry association, many households will not open the door for *hanbaiten* deliverers or *kakuchōdan* sales persons today. With an increase of two-income families, people are not always at home for their visit, and many subscribers pay their subscription via bank transfer. In other words, longstanding face-to-face sales practices are no longer tolerated or sustained.

The public perception of Japan's newspaper industry has radically changed as well. The newspaper industry was once regarded as a supporter of the nation's future, and of the nation's youth. In the 1960s, statues of newspaper delivery boys were built all over Japan in public places, such as parks or community halls.²² Aspiring youth would take on the job of delivering newspapers because of the attractive scholarships offered. Nowadays, newspaper delivery has become less attractive, with other job opportunities available in urban areas. In 2015, the total number of delivery stations declined to 17,000 from more than 22,000 due to the shrinking market. People working either part or full time as deliverers declined to 330,000 from around 465,000, an almost 30 percent decline in 15 years. The most remarkable change in the demographics of newspaper sales organizations has been the rapid decline of younger employees. In 2001, youth under 18 and college students formed 11.6 percent of the total employees engaged in newspaper sales. In 2015, however, that ratio had decreased to as low as 1.8 percent.²³ In rural areas, shop owners are having a hard time finding people who are strong enough to carry and deliver papers, and many routes are in danger of being unable to find deliverers.

Today, the typical value-added service offered by *hanbaiten* shops is 'monitoring' (*mimamori*). This system caters to the needs of a subscriber's son or daughter who lives in a different area. That is, the offspring would receive an alarm call if a newspaper deliverer notices that papers are left untouched for two to three days at the household of an aging parent(s). Since newspaper deliverers are one of the few people who have daily contact with elderly parents in isolated communities, this service has become very popular. The service first started in rural areas, but now a number of newspaper companies offer this option for free to subscribers in cities as well. Some sales shops offer other kinds of aid to the aged, such as changing light bulbs or lending a wheelchair.

Along with offering such personalized services, sales shops are actively resisting newspapers from becoming digital, since the digitization of newspapers immediately makes them obsolete. At the moment, the *hanbaiten* shop owners are the strongest and most resistant lobby against newspapers' transition from print to an online platform (Villi and Hayashi 2015). Although the Japanese newspaper audience generally has easy access to computers and mobile devices and can readily take advantage of an advanced internet infrastructure, these *hanbaiten* sales shop owners successfully stopped newspaper companies from going digital since they are able to exercise substantial influence in marketing and sales, a domain that they have historically monopolized.

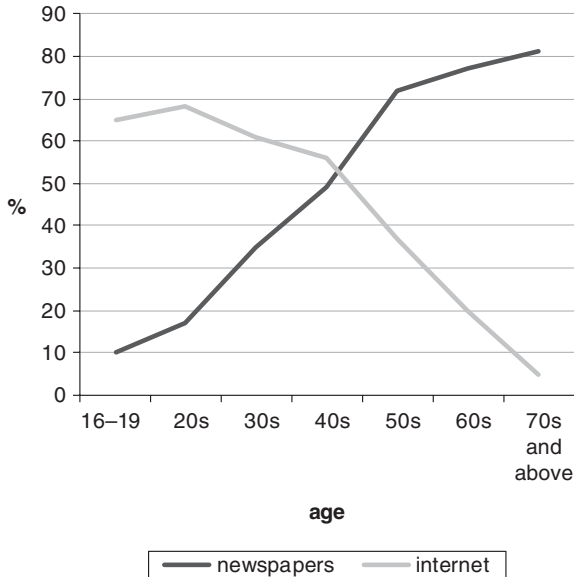


Figure 17.4 Percentage of those who access the internet/read newspapers everyday
 Source: Nihonjin to Terebi, 2015, by NHK Hoso Bunka Kenkyūjo

In image as well as in reality, newspapers in Japan are becoming a media outlet for the aged. According to a survey conducted by NHK in 2015,²⁴ 81 percent of respondents aged 70 and above said they read newspapers every day, whereas only 10 percent of respondents between ages 16 and 19 said so (Figure 17.4). The same survey noted that the ratio of those who responded that the internet is indispensable media has surpassed those who replied newspapers are indispensable media.²⁵ This was the first time this benchmark survey indicated clearly that the internet has become the dominant media source in the Japanese media landscape.

Outlook and future challenges

Generally, in the literature of media and journalism, ‘mass market’ newspapers have been understood as anything but personal, caring, and considerate. The tendency is to think that the bigger the size of the readership, the more impersonal a paper becomes. Webster and Phalen (1997) point out that the ‘consciousness industry’ creates content and sells the audiences to advertisers (pp. 48–9). Indeed, not only the commodification of media contents, but also the commodification of the audience has been the key to understanding how corporate ‘commercial media’ operates.

However, this impersonal image of ‘mass’ does not apply to all aspects of the millions of papers distributed throughout Japan each day. Whereas newspapers have been dependent on advertisements for about one-third of their revenue, their lifeline has always been individual subscribers. In 1961, at a time when Japanese newspapers recovered rapidly from wartime damages to the nation’s mass production industry, Yamato Seiichi, the managing director for the sales division of Osaka’s *Mainichi Shimbun* headquarters, said in a discussion after his research trip to the United States: ‘In the U.S., in order to get more advertisements, they try to increase the circulation, whereas in Japan, they get advertisements because they marked

an increase in the circulation' (Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association 1961, p. 111). As such, increasing the number of subscriptions from ordinary households was the most important goal for the industry. At the same time, interestingly, this business strategy was outsourced to small, grassroots local sales shops, namely the *hanbaiten* shops. Therefore, what sales and marketing meant to the newspaper companies was to print more and more papers and to force these onto the neighborhood shops. Newspaper companies would only have to order the shops to cope with the excessive number of copies so that they could artificially boost circulation numbers.

Hanbaiten shops, in turn, fought to gain more readers in their neighborhood in order to cope with pressures from the parent company. They would pay frequent visits to local households to expand the number of subscriptions. They would give thank-you gifts and provide a variety of extra personal services for free to these households. Such marketing strategies have been in place for almost a century now, and have been remarkably successful partly because the government *allowed* the newspaper industry a special status and exempted it from head-on market competition, and partly because of the persistence of traditional print culture. Thanks to the peculiar business practices of *hanbaiten*, as well as the long-embraced cultural history of reading and writing, people accepted the mass papers as something important to their everyday lives. In other words, Japanese mass-market newspapers availed themselves of abundant human resources in order to maintain the ethos of neighborhood culture and circumvent the impersonal, industrial image of 'mass' at the retail level. Meanwhile, the newspaper companies also supported charitable activities and organized many cultural and sporting events at the national level.

I contend that this complex, culturally interwoven system of newspaper distribution sustained the high circulation rates in Japan for decades. Despite this unique system, print newspapers in Japan today are experiencing a conspicuous and undeniable decline. In addition, with the expansion of internet access, the Japanese public has become increasingly aware of a number of ethically questionable practices by the mass newspaper companies. Their reputation as the 'king of information' has fallen.

In this chapter, I outlined factors that have sustained the Japanese newspaper industry and offered the basis for considering future changes in Japanese media and culture. Print newspapers have been a key institution for the modernization process in Japan, and their decline is likely to produce tremendous social, cultural, and political consequences for Japanese society. The coming years may be labeled as the end of the modernization period for Japan. What we are moving toward, at the moment, seems to be a society with more diversified, pluralistic, or even ideologically polarized audiences. In this sense, an examination of the institutional decline of print newspapers should lead to discussions of larger social changes that may have relevance in other advanced industrial nations. Therefore, further empirical comparative studies among culturally and historically different nations, which are also undergoing radical changes in the media landscape, are necessary. They may yield more valuable insights into how the decline of print newspapers influences a society and culture in more concrete terms. In addition, such analysis should also aim to discover what institution and media would replace the role of print newspapers in each society.

Notes

- 1 For all figures, see www.pressnet.or.jp/data/circulation/circulation04.html; retrieved August 27, 2016.
- 2 See www.journalism.org/2014/03/26/the-revenue-picture-for-american-journalism-and-how-it-is-changing/; retrieved August 27, 2016.
- 3 See www.culturecommunication.gouv.fr/Disciplines-et-secteurs/Presse/Chiffres-statistiques; retrieved August 27, 2016.

- 4 As of 2015, 93.3 percent of households have access to the internet (see 'Percentage of Individuals using the Internet' at www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx; retrieved August 27, 2016).
- 5 For discussions on how we approach a culture of journalism, particularly outside the West, please see Hayashi and Kopper (2014).
- 6 The Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association unofficially organize the infamous kisha club (press club) system at the sources of major news events such as ministries, industry associations, local governments, and others. It controls access to these important news sources by regulating journalists' entry to and exit from these clubs. The kisha club system has been regularly criticized by foreign media and journalists who have been excluded from news conferences. Recently, criticism has also come from online media. Despite repeated and persistent criticism from the public and even government officials, the kisha club system has remained a remarkably durable and powerful force in the Japanese political process.
- 7 See Villi and Hayashi (2015).
- 8 For a broader discussion of the Japanese public sphere, see Hayashi (1999).
- 9 For example, *Kōeki Shojaku Mokuwoku* (Catalogue of Publications for Public Utilities), published by a consortium of Kyoto firms in 1692, contains entries on over 7,000 titles divided into 46 main categories (and numerous subcategories) (Berry 2006).
- 10 Ishikawa, in particular, noted that at least 30 percent of teachers were women in the late nineteenth century (Ishikawa and Tanaka 1999).
- 11 *Osaka Mainichi* dispatched as many as 30 correspondents to the war and its rival *Osaka Asahi* also kept up with events during the war (Nagai 1977, p. 36).
- 12 Japanese broadcasting law officially prohibits cross-media ownership in order to avoid monopolies. However, a majority of newspaper companies are closely affiliated with one or more broadcasting stations and hold shares or exchange personnel (see Freeman 2000).
- 13 See Hayashi (2000).
- 14 This slogan was often cited in the late nineteenth century in the process of modernization and Westernization of Japan.
- 15 This problem has been repeatedly addressed by newspaper companies. They are aware of malpractice and are making their own efforts to 'normalize' business practices in the face of criticism from the public as well as the Fair Trade Commission. This initiative has been called '*hanbai no seijōka*'. One of the objectives of the Japan Newspapers Publishers and Editors Association is to promote fair sales practices and support sound management of sales shops. See www.nippankyo.or.jp/summary/; retrieved August 19, 2016.
- 16 Microwave ovens, coffee makers, and gift certificates are recent examples of gifts the Fair Trade Commission judged as unlawful (Hatao 2015).
- 17 Japanese newspapers publish twice daily (morning and evening editions). Many urban readers purchase a 'set' subscription and get both morning and evening editions. Recently, this trend has changed and only 25 percent of readers subscribed to both morning and evening editions in 2015. According to an industry survey, this figure is down from 40 percent in 1990. See www.pressnet.or.jp/data/circulation/circulation01.php; retrieved August 26, 2016.
- 18 For example, in a book of 'success stories' published by *Yomiuri*, repeated passages describe how delivery people had to accept a socially unrecognized, 'inferior' job as a deliverer, but that the job 'saved' them from 'lapsing into becoming a villain' and 'pulled them back to lead a decent life' (*Yomiuri Shimbum Hanbaibu* 1962).
- 19 See www.pressnet.or.jp/data/circulation/circulation03.php; retrieved August 26, 2016.
- 20 The Fair Trade Commission tried to abolish five special treatments, including that of the newspaper industry, in 2005 as outdated and problematic. However, the commission's effort did not succeed in liberalizing newspaper sales, while the other four practices were liberalized. Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association, on the other hand, issued an outright statement against this move. For more information, see the website of the Fair Trade Commission: www.jftc.go.jp/dk/seido/tokusyushitei/qa.html#cmsQ5 (in Japanese); retrieved August 26, 2016.
For the statement by Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association against the move towards abolishment in 2005, see: www.pressnet.or.jp/statement/051102_18.html (in Japanese); retrieved August 26, 2016.
- 21 'By the end of the century, Japan stood to lose 34 percent of its population, the United Nations found' (see www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/02/26/its-official-japans-population-is-dramatically-shrinking/; retrieved August 27, 2016).

- 22 There are ten statues throughout Japan, according to the Nihon Shimbun Hanbai Kyokai (Japan Newspaper Sales Association). Images of these statues can be viewed at www.nippankyo.or.jp/products/topics/2011/06/post-7.html
- 23 All figures presented by the Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association (see www.pressnet.or.jp/data/employment/employment04.php; retrieved August 27, 2016).
- 24 'Nipponjin to Terebi 2015' was published on July 7, 2016. A summary can be found at: www.nhk.or.jp/bunken/summary/yoron/broadcast/pdf/150707.pdf; retrieved August 27, 2016.
- 25 In the 2015 survey, 23 percent of respondents answered that the internet is the most indispensable media while 11 percent replied that newspapers are the most indispensable. In 2010, it was 14 percent for both the internet and newspapers.

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Japanese youth and SNS use

Peer surveillance and the conditions governing *tomodachi*

Kiyoshi Abe

Introduction

Regardless of economic and political differences between nations where the internet is available, the prevalence of electronic networking devices such as smart phones has become literally global. In other words, we are living in the digital era. Looking back at the history of academic and journalistic discourse that has enthusiastically celebrated the coming of the ‘informational age’ or ‘information society’ (Castells 1995; Kumar 1995; Robins and Webster 1999; Webster 1995), what was predicted as a brighter future to come at that time is now seen as little more than mundane every life practice. In that sense we can say that the long-cherished or long-sought dream of the information society finally came true thanks to the development of digital networking technology, especially the internet and SNS (social networking service) on the web (Abe 2011; Hassan 2008).

From the beginning of the twenty-first century some scholars and critics have enthusiastically proclaimed the characteristics and potential of a newly emergent generation called ‘digital natives’ (Kimura 2012; Pafrey and Grasser 2010; Prensky 2001a, 2001b, 2010). According to their analysis and diagnosis of young people who have been familiar with digital devices like personal computers and mobile phones since their infancy, the behavior of digital natives is largely different from that of preceding generations of media users often called ‘digital immigrants’. This sort of argument on the impacts of digital media and information technologies on people’s everyday life could be understood as the latest version of technological determinism (Castells et al. 2004). However, as critical scholars in media and communication studies have repeatedly pointed out, the theoretical perspectives of technological determinism often omit the sociocultural contexts in which the newly developed technologies are introduced and domesticated (Feenberg 1991). Historical studies of the media and society have richly demonstrated that information and communication technologies certainly shape society, but that, at the same time, they also are shaped through being consumed in specific social contexts (Silverstone 1994). Keeping this insight in mind, when we investigate the condition of the present digital era embodied by digital natives it is indispensable to pay close attention to the specific and distinctive sociocultural background

where these digital natives have emerged as a new generation of media users. While there is an abundance of similarities in the quality of behavior enacted by digital natives all over the world, it is possible that there is also diversity among digital generations whose social contexts largely differ due to the particular society or societies in which they live.

While the dreams and predictions of the information society came true through various digital revolutions, we should recognize that those dreams are not only bright but also gloomy in some respects (Robins and Webster 1999; Webster 1995). As traditions of critical media and communication studies have insisted, the bright side of the ideal of the information society has always been closely interrelated with the much darker side of reality that exists in the surveillance society (Lyon 2001). The same is the case with the present hype surrounding the digital era. On the one hand, many people have opportunities to freely express themselves and actively communicate with each other thanks to their use of the internet. Using the internet enables people to make strides toward developing a more democratic society through political debate and discussion (Rheingold 2000, 2002). But on the other hand, as a series of surveillance studies based on a variety of cases and phenomena has shown, newly developed information and communication technologies (ICTs) can often be utilized for the purpose of enhancing the surveillance and control of society and people (Lyon 2007). Moreover, the present agents of surveillance are not only the state and government, which were formerly the main actors involved in the surveillance of the population and the nation, but also private corporations whose objective is to maximize profits through collecting information about their customers' behaviors (Lyon 2006).

We are now joyfully engaging with the digital revolution that has been long sought for, but the reality of the media society seems to be more tangled and ambivalent in its nature. The academic task for critical studies on media and society is to interrogate what actually is going on in the globalized information/surveillance society where we now live (Abe 2011).

Globalization of surveillance and its differences

It is often pointed out that global surveillance was born from the terrorist attack on the United States on September 11, 2001. However, scholars of surveillance studies have acknowledged that we were reluctantly facing, and actually living with, ever tightening surveillance long before 9/11 (Lyon 2003; Monahan 2006). Certainly one of the reasons why surveillance studies attracted worldwide interest and attention in the last two decades is attributed to the rising fear of terrorism in the population at large. This is the fundamental cause for introducing a variety of surveillance devices into wide-ranging areas of our daily life in many countries, suggesting these studies should be analyzed from more historical and structural perspectives (Abe 2004). The development of technology is one of the components enabling more systematic and heightened surveillance of people. Information and communication technologies, in particular, can be easily utilized as very effective tools for surveilling and controlling society and people in each nation. The manifested objective of developing ICTs is to enhance freedom of speech, and to realize a more democratic society in general. The historical fact of how and in what ways the newly emergent ICTs were accepted and consumed in each society clearly shows that it is not so uncommon for the initially 'liberating technology' to be appropriated as a sort of 'surveillance-enabling technology' owing to power relationships in the sociopolitical contexts where those technologies are introduced.

The theoretical perspective of technological determinism has profoundly troubling implications in explicating these phenomena; it naively presupposes the impact and effect of a new technology as pre-determined (Castells 1996). However, the fact that the ideal of liberating media for the people could at the same time become the controlling device for the state illuminates the uncertainty of the consequence of distinctive sociopolitical effects engendered by

the introduction of new ICTs. To fully grasp this phenomenon it is urgently necessary to incorporate historical and comparative perspectives into surveillance studies (Zureik and Salter 2005; Zureik et al. 2010). If the same information and communication technologies are consumed and domesticated quite differently at different points in time and spaces in which they are introduced, both temporal and spatial comparisons are indispensable in investigating how and in what ways new technologies and surveillance are closely interrelated in the daily lives of the ordinary people who spontaneously use and are unavoidably affected by them.

As is easily seen in the recent publication of a rich variety of handbooks and monographs of surveillance studies (Ball et al. 2012; Gregory 2016; Wright and Kreissl 2015), the central academic and publishing places addressing research on contemporary surveillance are most often and obviously seen in North America and Europe. Of course, this fact doesn't necessarily mean that the phenomena of globalizing surveillance frequently mentioned in those studies are either pointless or insignificant. However, if the phenomenon of globalizing surveillance is understood only as a recent trend toward becoming more similar – in other words more 'global' or 'international', more homogenized and uniform, and more comparable to phenomena typically seen in the United States or Europe – it will overlook some of the most fruitful and significant dimensions of globalized surveillance studies. We cannot limit ourselves to similarities between surveillance and surveillance studies. Differences arising from sociocultural and political circumstances should be stressed and interrogated in comparative studies on surveillance and society in the present digital era (Murakami-Wood 2009). As globalization becomes more and more mundane and normal for ordinary people living in their respective societies, the similarity and sameness characterizing globalized lifestyles invites greater scrutiny or observation. But as far as we are careful enough not to fall into the theoretical trap allured by technological determinism, we have to pay closer and more sensitive attention to both the dynamics of globalization and the consequent differences emerging in distinctive sociocultural contexts where the people currently experience and domesticate globalized surveillance.

SNS and the prevalence of peer surveillance

While the rising popularity of various means of SNS (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LINE, etc.) seems to be a global phenomenon characteristic of the behavior of the digital natives, the mode and form of communication realized in SNS appears, at first sight, to be nothing less than the ideal that academic research on the information society has long discussed (Hassan 2008). It is the free and democratic interactions among those who are equal and autonomous in their positions that the proponents of the information society have long sought for. According to the enthusiastic discourse on the digital revolution, the more people can use a variety of new media enabling them to communicate with each other without any restrictions, the sooner a democratic and egalitarian society will come true (Rheingold 2002). It is not so difficult to discern such communications enacted by contemporary users of SNS on the internet. Therefore, our mundane social interactions via SNS could be interpreted as an actual realization of the ideal communication long dreamed by scholars of coming digital revolutions.

One of the most prominent aspects characterizing communications on SNS is that it is much more horizontal than vertical, interactive rather than one way, and instantaneous rather than delayed in users' interactions with others (Livingstone 2008; Zhang and Leung 2015). Thanks to the digital interactivities enabled by internet technology, users of SNS can easily exchange their written messages and visual images as if they were talking to and seeing each other in real-time face-to-face settings. However, what they 'have talked and seen' on SNS,

more correctly speaking uploaded and downloaded on sites, is simultaneously recorded and stored as past log on the web. As a result of such digital processing and recording, it is possible for users of SNS to look back and read again how and what they had said and done with other people in the past.

Such technology-assisted reflections are totally impossible in face-to-face interaction situations because what people talk about and see there just passes away and becomes irrecoverable as time goes by. Recording every piece of mediated interactions as digitalized data, so that users can look back on and remember past activities on the web, seems to be one of the most attractive and fun features that people find in using SNS. The reason why this is the case is probably the following. Based on previous research, it is easily imagined that what users of SNS upload online often closely relates to what they do and did in their daily offline world (boyd 2014). In this sense, for users of SNS the world of online and that of offline are literally seamless as they almost simultaneously live in both worlds (the global fascination with 'Pokemon GO' in 2016 typically illustrates this fact). Therefore, it can be said that using SNS surely contributes to establishing memories of the past more graphically and vividly, thanks to digitally storing the visualized images of what users have done almost permanently.

Not only is SNS fun for the individual user, but it is also significant for the collective and public utilities that SNS provides – which have been proclaimed as attractive since the launch of SNS as a new business activity on the web (Valasquez and LaRose 2015). The democratic and liberating potential of SNS was dramatically demonstrated through people's use of digital media in a variety of social movements aiming at achieving democratic societies (Kumar and Thapa 2015). According to proponents of the SNS revolution, the case of the Arab Spring is the most prominent example showing how and to what extent the horizontal communications enacted among ordinary people enabled by using SNS (in those cases it was mainly Twitter) can challenge and defeat the long-lasting authoritarian regimes that have repressed democratic communications by controlling traditional mass media (Bebawi and Bossio 2014; Kharroub and Bas 2016; Rousselin 2016).

Thanks to internet technology and free SNS applications on the web, ordinary people now have opportunities to share not only the formal information issued by the government, but also more diverse views on politics voiced by a variety of people through their exchange tweets and re-tweets. These horizontal threads of communications rapidly rose up and spread all over the nation, so that those who were not satisfied with the present political conditions bravely went out in the street to show their strong will to protest the government, even though mass demonstration had been repressed by the authoritarian regimes. Many Western journalists, critics and scholars celebrated the liberating potential of SNS in fostering political changes and prompting the development of more democratic societies in the Arab world. However, looking back on the aftermath of the Arab Spring from the present viewpoint, the enthusiastic celebration of newly emergent digital media at that time was somehow exaggerated and apparently not well balanced in its judgment of SNS. Certainly, the prevailing SNS brought about free, equal and empowering interactions among the users. But at the same time, it also took and continues to take the risk of being under surveillance and control of the people by both the state and corporations. As the research based on the political economy of media has clarified, the state is still the main actor regulating the media and law. In addition, the power of the huge corporations who own and control the platform of digital networks is becoming greater than ever (Pariser 2011; Zittrain 2008). Not so surprisingly at present, as Edward Snowden has dramatically revealed, it is apparent that the state and corporations sometimes collaborate harmoniously in surveilling ordinary people and collecting their personal information on the web in the

name of national security (Lyon 2015). Keeping these aspects of the conditions surrounding communication enacted by ordinary users of SNS in mind, we have to be cautious not to exaggerate the liberating power of SNS.

Horizontal interaction among peers is often mentioned as the most characteristic aspect of communications realized on SNS. Through using SNS one can encounter and have interpersonal relationships with others, regardless of who and what they are in an offline setting. It is true that this sort of peer communication is surely indispensable for a democratic society to work because free discussion among equal partners is the most fundamental component of democracy. However, as scholars of digital surveillance have alarmingly stated, the interactivity enabled by digital technology contributes not only to liberating communication but also to repressive surveillance (Andrejevic 2007). In other words, the peer communication enacted on SNS works at the same time as a sort of peer surveillance through watching and checking each other's personal data, information, documents, photo, videos and so on (Abe 2009). While the enthusiastic discourse on the power of SNS is often inclined to underscore the liberating potential of peer communication, it might be naive not to fully consider the darker side of the digital interactivity realized by the prevailing SNS. Therefore, it is indispensable for critical research on SNS to pay close analytical attention to the more ambivalent nature of the horizontal interactions enacted among peers on the web.

After roughly considering the present conditions of globalized usage of the internet and selectively reviewing the ambivalent potential of SNS from the viewpoint of surveillance studies, I would like to focus on the cultural differences discerned in the present Japanese social contexts where a variety of SNS is widely used and consumed, especially among people of the younger generation (mainly teenagers and university students). The following argument mainly concentrates on the relationship between the sociocultural backgrounds in which the Japanese youth live their everyday life, and the distinctive modality of communications they generate in using SNS. More concretely, the discussion picks up on the well-known topic of *tomodachi* (friend/friendship) for youth, and considers how and in what ways *tomodachi* shapes the peer communications enacted on SNS, through an analysis of what university students do with SNS in their daily life.

Japanese youth and the significance of *tomodachi*

As both sociological and pedagogical studies on Japanese youth have long pointed out, the significance of *tomodachi*, which means 'friends' or 'friendship' in English, is enormously high in their everyday life (Asano 2006, 2015; Fujimura et al. 2016). The reasons why Japanese young people's relationship with *tomodachi* is regarded to be so important that it is often deemed the most worrisome matter for them are diverse. In a relatively homogeneous society like Japan, the pressure of being the same and similar is supposed to be very high. Actually there exist certain diversities of ethnicity, economic class, gender/sexuality, etc. in contemporary Japan (Bestor et al. 2011). However, the sociocultural mechanism compelling people in the Japanese nation to be the same or similar to each other still works well enough. Therefore, even the younger generations are influenced by the effects of such a mechanism (Doi 2009). Classrooms at the elementary or junior high schools are typical social settings where conformity rather than individuality is harshly disciplined through learning together with peers. Even if students wish to express openly what they feel and think, the first thing they worry about is whether or not these thoughts or feelings are different from those of other students, or so deviant that they might lead to exclusion from the class (Doi 2008). Therefore, in cases where students have opinions that seem to be totally different from those of the majority of the class, one of the

most probable and perhaps also clever options for that student is to keep silent, and never to affirm themselves publicly.¹

Presupposing the above-mentioned sociocultural conditions surrounding Japanese youth, especially when they have to attend school, it is not so difficult to understand why the relation with *tomodachi* is so important for them. Because young people are constantly under pressure to conform to the standard shared in the school, in other words to be the same as other students in the class, they always have to be conscious of and concerned about whether their relationship with friends is good enough not to violate the social harmony manufactured through the mutual coordination among peers in classroom.² Having friends and engaging with *tomodachi* relations is great fun for young people. Moreover, it is apparent that to them keeping a good relationship with others in the classroom is not compulsory, but rather a voluntary choice they dare to take. However, at the same time, they may feel that choice is often perceived as compulsory for the purpose of keeping everyday life at school comfortable. Unless they maintain good company with their peers, their school life will soon become more miserable as it is easily imagined that they shall be expelled from the conformist relationship that is kept well through the mutual coordination of classmates.

Therefore, we can discern a sort of complicated ambivalence of keeping good relations with *tomodachi* in Japanese youth. On the one hand, the relation with *tomodachi* is indispensable to make their everyday life enjoyable and meaningful. But at the same time, in order not to be either expelled or isolated from the harmonious relationship established among their peers, young people always have to be prudently concerned about the conditions of their relationships with friends. As a result of this dilemma, they are very keen not to offend their peers at school by what might be taken as careless words and deeds, even to the point of having no intention to oppose what others say or think or feel.

When we consider the impact and effects of SNS on the digital natives in Japan, it is extraordinarily significant to take the ambivalent nature for Japan's youth in keeping good company with others into consideration (Ito 2005; Ito and Okabe 2005; Ito et al. 2005; Takahashi 2014). As discussed above, the prevailing SNS appears to be a globalized phenomenon, and its sociocultural consequences on the lives of ordinary people are often understood as fairly uniform in their form and content, just like the global standards in world business. However, I have purposely underscored the need for paying close analytical attention to the differences emerging in distinctive social contexts where new media technologies are introduced and consumed. Based on this theoretical standpoint I would now like to discuss how and in what ways the sociocultural conditions of *tomodachi*, and the usage of SNS, closely interrelate in the everyday life of Japan's young generation.

Thanks to digital networking technologies, a variety of SNS enables users to connect with other people whenever and wherever they want (Seargeant and Tagg 2014). If Japanese young people are so keen to confirm whether their relationship with friends is good enough or not, it should be logical to suppose that their usage of SNS could contribute to enhancing the degree of connection with friends, and consequently reduce their anxiety of being excluded from the harmonious circle of peers (Takahashi 2010, 2011). As far as they endlessly exchange with one another a series of what some might consider silly things that have happened in their daily life, the younger generation can be more certain that their relationships with friends continue to go well (boyd 2014; Chambers 2013). Conversely, it seems that young people in Japan relentlessly engage in using SNS so that they are not either expelled or marginalized from the precious relationships with *tomodachi*, without which their life at school would be very troublesome.

The technology of SNS allows users to communicate as equal and autonomous actors or agents. Digitally mediated peer interactions enabled by SNS have dramatically paved the way to a new communication culture in which more friendly and democratic discussion is realized at ease through not vertical but horizontal interpersonal activities (Buckingham 2008; McPherson 2008; Walrave et al. 2016). However, for Japanese young people to keep good company with *tomodachi* means not only mere fun, but also a sort of obligation. It is thus plausible to presuppose that the significance of using SNS subtly contributes to their carefully observing what and with whom their peers were and what they are now doing in both online and offline social settings. Constantly watching the social activities of other people on the web and tirelessly checking the latest information uploaded about them, each user of SNS comes to know what is going on in the circle of peers they belong to. As is easily imagined, such information-seeking and -gathering activities on the web helps the users of SNS to judge whether or not their own relationships with friends are conformist enough.

Here we can see a somewhat strange but surely understandable amalgam of communication and surveillance among peers. It is surely free and autonomous communication in that the users of SNS voluntarily engage with it. However, at the same time, SNS usage is doubtlessly an act of thorough and pervasive surveillance, as young people easily come to know in detail the personal information and private matters of other users (Abe 2009). If we cling to the stereotypical image of surveillance stressing the coercive power imposed from above by those who are politically powerful (typically the state, the military and the police), peer interactions enjoyed on SNS do not seem like surveillance at all. However, as recent studies on the contemporary modalities of surveillance have persuasively demonstrated citing a variety of examples (Andrejevic 2007; Magnet and Gates 2009; Marwick 2013), the more horizontal and seemingly entertaining modes of surveillance are becoming prevalent and predominant in society. In this sense, the peer surveillance discerned in the usage of SNS in the Japanese younger generation might predictably indicate the direction of much of the insidious surveillance to come in the future. In other words, young people may be unconsciously trained to become surveillant agencies on each other.

When the traditional mode of surveillance is practiced by the state, military and police, the purpose of surveilling the population at large is apparent (discipline, control, policing, etc.). It is thus easy to point out the determined will of those institutions in realizing their objectives of surveillance (Bigo and Guild 2005). Contrary to those instances, it is often not clear enough what sort of will or intentions the actors of surveillance actually have in the case of peer surveillance. In the case of SNS, users certainly watch over each other so as not to be expelled from the circle of *tomodachi* relationships. However, when these SNS users carefully observe and check the records of their interactions stored on the web, it seems that those who do such surveillance on other people often do not have just cause to do so. In other words, even if there are no convincing reasons to doubt friendship, the users of SNS are strongly seduced into engaging in surveillance on their own friends and peers without any reasonable reason. It seems that their surveillance of peers is performed as a sort of ritual or routine. Such peer surveillance is enacted not because they consciously or willingly do it, but because they think they should do it for one another or other purposes. SNS is thus ritually practiced so that young people can avoid being excluded from the circle of friendship among their peers. If the sociocultural rituals are to be realized through the sense of compulsion cultivated collectively among participants rather than their strong intentions or will for doing it – perhaps analogous to the traditional religious rituals that enabled ‘the sacred’ in Emile Durkheim’s sociology – it might be appropriate to regard peer surveillance on SNS as something enacted like a ritual fostering digital collectivity.

After theoretically speculating on the connections between the *tomodachi* relation and manner in which Japanese youth use SNS, let us move to more concretely and empirically analyzing what young people actually do with SNS, and how they perceive their own way of engaging with it, by way of quoting from documents written by university students.

How Japanese youth themselves perceive their daily usage of SNS

In this section I will use several concrete cases showing what university students in Japan do with SNS in their daily life and how they perceive their activities enacted by and through SNS.³

Exclusion from the tomodachi relationship

As mentioned in the previous section, the relationship with *tomodachi* and the usage of SNS seems to be closely related for Japanese youth. Therefore, it is not difficult to imagine that when a student doesn't use SNS at all he/she will have some trouble keeping good relationships with his/her friends in daily life.

Owing to my not using SNS, I sometimes have the feeling that a sort of dividing line between me and other members surely exists, even though all of us belong to the same associational group at the university. Using SNS enables us to communicate with each other more often on the web than in face-to-face settings. As a result, even when I meet them in the face-to-face situation I sometimes have difficulties in catching up with their conversation that is mainly based on the topics shared on the web, which I don't know at all.

(Case 1: second year/female)

This case clearly shows the effects of Japanese youth not using SNS. While the interactions enabled by SNS appear online, these interactions strongly define face-to-face situations in terms of how and on what matters the offline communication goes on. Therefore, not using SNS causes this student problems in dealing with her relationship with friends even if they actually meet and communicate with each other in person. For university students one of the most prominent effects of not using SNS is to be 'excluded or isolated' from *tomodachi* relationships. Many of them seem to seriously worry about that and strongly hope it does not happen.

As I don't use LINE, there is disadvantage for me to be 'excluded' from discussion among the member of the associational group. While those who use LINE are not so conscious about that fact, there certainly exists social pressure towards conformity in using it. I guess this is one of the main reasons why so many university students would like to get smart phones enabling them to use LINE so that they can smoothly communicate with their friends.

(Case 2: second year/male)

Case 2 rather convincingly suggests one of the main reasons for students to begin using SNS in Japan. While the advantages and merits brought about by SNS is often proclaimed referring to technological innovations, it seems that the sociocultural factors concerning relationships with friends strongly affects when and why young people adopt new ICT enabling more connection with *tomodachi*.

'Not so free' in using SNS

It is quite common to point out the characteristic of free and easy expression as a distinctive nature of SNS, especially that of Twitter. However, even though the application of Twitter enables users to freely portray their emotions, how and to what extent such technological potential is realized in each society heavily depends on sociocultural contexts.

By using SNS among those who are already familiar with each other, we are creating 'another society' similar to the one in which we daily live. Therefore, my friends interpret what I say on Twitter as if 'who I am in off-line setting' think. In replying to the tweets on the web, we feel as if having the conversation that is not so different from one done in the offline. While some people say that we can talk freely and easily on the web, I don't think we are free enough to say anything on SNS. If I express my negative or aggressive emotions on the web, some of my friends might feel offended by that. As far as we worry about those cases to happen, we are not so free and easy to express what we actually feel by posting on SNS.

(Case 3: second year/female)

As far as the relationship with *tomodachi* is concerned, the worlds of online and offline are closely interrelated (boyd 2014; Chambers 2013). Therefore, as Case 3 suggests, SNS users are very careful on SNS not to violate or offend relationships with friends whom they meet in person. As students are always concerned with how and to what extent their behavior on the web influences offline relationships, it is fairly reasonable for them to be cautious enough not to fully express what they actually feel and think, despite the architecture of Twitter encouraging users to realize self-expression without restrictions.

Anxiety and tiredness

On the one hand, university students in Japan seriously worry about cases in which they are expelled from the circle of *tomodachi* as signaling that they are unable to maintain relationships with friends. On the other hand, they feel they have to be very careful so as not to offend others in expressing their own feelings or emotions through SNS. Keeping these sociocultural backgrounds in which students interact with a variety of SNS in mind, it is not so difficult to argue that they are put under constant social pressure to conform to the cultural norms shared among peers. Also, it is not difficult to understand that they might be tired of always having to (1) take care of themselves so as not to be excluded from friendships, and (2) constantly being wary of not hurting their friends' feelings. Actually the term 'SNS *tsukare*' (tiredness of SNS) was coined and quickly became a new cliché when the usage of SNS first came to prominence among a larger number of young people in Japan. The term correctly points out the ambivalent conditions felt by young people insatiably using digital devices to connect with their friends.

The degree of feeling the 'tiredness of SNS', which is said to be a recent phenomenon, depends on whether the relationship on SNS links to that outside of SNS. In the case of not linking to each other, we don't mind what sort of tweets other users put on the web. However, in cases where I read the tweets of those whom I meet as my friends on a daily basis, I do mind what and how they tweet on the web. Moreover, I speculate on how those friends consider my tweets before my trying to put them on SNS.

(Case 4: second year/female)

Case 4 nicely illuminates the fact that as far as the persons with whom the students relate on the web are also their friends in offline daily life, they strongly feel not so free and easy in how they behave on the web. Ironically, it seems that using SNS for the purpose of keeping good relationships with friends at the same time engenders a sort of anxiety and fear concerning the maintenance of friendships.

The problem of SNS is, I guess, that it makes us feel like ‘Oh, I have to check it as the new messages are about to come soon’ or ‘I might be desolated because my friends don’t follow my tweets so often’. Certainly, SNS seems to foster the anxiety concerning our relationship with friends. I suppose it’s a symptom of what is called ‘SNS addiction’.

(Case 5: second year/female)

Young people are often anxious about whether they might be excluded from their peers owing to postings that may be seen as inappropriate or offensive to their friends. Therefore, they behave very carefully even if they seem to the older generations to just enjoy the digital sociality fostered by SNS. Certainly, as Case 5 confesses, consideration of and care for others make them exhausted in engaging in SNS. But it also seems to be hard for them to stop such activities, since being tired in order to keep good company is preferable to having no company at all.

Entertainment and self-choice

Understanding the significance of SNS use for Japanese young people as only a sort of anxiety or exhaustion would be misleading. While students feel uneasy and troubled in engaging in SNS, one of the main factors inducing individuals to adopt newly emergent ICT is the sense of entertainment it brings about for them (Buckingham 2008). It has been argued that online communication enables users to diversify their personality; in other words to create multiple identities that are somehow different from that in face-to-face situations (Turkle 1997, 2012). As SNS easily enables users to act more freely, individually and instantaneously, and at the same time anonymously express what they feel and think, it is quite natural that these people enjoy the diversity of self-represented characters engendered through interacting with each other on the web (boyd 2014). It seems that some users of SNS just enjoy those multiple identities performed online as a sort of entertainment rather than serious communication.

I just cannot understand why some people dislike those who enjoy their own distinctive *kyara* [the character or persona that is different from the real one in the offline setting] by using SNS. When I see people performing *kyara* on Twitter, even though I know them in offline or they seem apparently to pretend to be different characters from their real ones, I just accept all of them as jokes. Because I myself enjoy using Twitter as a sort of entertainment, I don’t care about it at all.

(Case 6: second year/female)

As the research on the characteristics of online communication has demonstrated, another entertaining aspect of SNS is that it gives users a variety of choices in managing their relationships with others (Ito 2005; Ito and Okabe 2005; Takahashi 2010, 2011). It totally depends on the individual’s choice with whom they connect and to whom they tell their personal matters on the web. The service providers of SNS afford their customers a variety of options by which they can select and decide what sort of information they share with other users. Such ‘customized’ communication enabled by utilizing those options is one of the most prominent traits of SNS.

One of the reasons why the Twitter is so much fun is that we can trace the records of what we have tweeted in the past. Looking back at the previous tweets reminds me more vividly of those feelings I had when going on a journey in the past time than the written texts uploaded on Facebook. For me, Twitter is a very convenient tool because it enables us to customize whose tweets we follow as well as what sort of tweets we ourselves would show to others.

(Case 7: third year/female)

If users would like to perform and enjoy displaying multiple identities depending on different occasions (Marwick 2013), it is indispensable for them to carefully manage and control the social settings where they interact with other members. Indeed, multiple identities only work well when neither contradictions nor conflicts appear in one's communicating with others in respective social contexts (Goffman 1967). Digital devices like SNS easily enable their users to perform and enjoy their favorite identities by guaranteeing an enhanced degree of self-choice in communicating with other users.

New desire

It is often said that new technologies satisfy people's needs that could not be met before the advent of ICTs. But such a way of interpreting the relationship between the advent of new technology and the concomitantly satisfied needs can be biased. If the need of people in interacting with others is predetermined, what the new technology is expected to contribute is merely satisfying the pre-given need as much as possible. However, looking back on the history of the development of technology it is readily understood that human needs are not only met but also produced by technology. In other words, the more sophisticated the technology becomes, the more desires we have (Stiegler 2009). In the case of new digital technologies like SNS it is common for users to develop more desires concerning their relationships with friends on the web. It seems that people come to desire more of what they would like to do in communicating with each other.

As the usage of Twitter and Facebook prevails among the population, one becomes eager to know much about others. I am not the only one who thinks like this. It is often said that recently the younger generations are indifferent to others, but I guess it is just the opposite. When we have some interests in other people, we just try to know about them through checking their Twitter or Facebook. I feel it's a pity if we are not so good at the face-to-face communications, thinking that we already know others through SNS.

(Case 8: third year/female)

Ironically, the new desires emerging through the use of SNS are not necessarily based on the choice of individual users while the principle of 'self-choice' is almost paramount in the culture of the internet. It seems as if having new desires cultivated by SNS is beyond one's control and selection. The only thing that an ordinary user can do is be exposed to and attracted by those desires. It must be difficult for anybody to negate or run away from those desires. As a result, it seems that facing and trying to satisfy the new desires generated by new technology is accepted as a sort of obligation by users of SNS.

In using Twitter I come to know when and what the friends of mine tweet to each other because the screen on my mobile phone shows that on the 'timeline' of my page. It enables

me to recognize what I don't care about in my offline daily life, and makes me wonder whether my friends really need me or not. Thanks to using Twitter we can connect with each other 24-hours a day. As a result I don't feel I am alienated. But at the same time, I am put in the situation where I am feeling as if I am compelled to communicate with others on the web. It just makes me somehow exhausted, but I cannot stop using Twitter worrying if I quit SNS it might weaken the *connections* with friends. I am just like hanging in the midair.

(Case 8: second year/male)

New technologies enable people to engage with what they couldn't do before. For example, even if a boy in the pre-digital era wanted to know what and with whom a girl whom he liked in the classroom talked about outside school, it was simply impossible for him to have that knowledge. There was no way for him to know what she was doing or thinking outside of school in any detail. Therefore, if he insisted on the notion of knowing all about her, it must be regarded as a young boy's crazy dream or, in the worst case, an unhealthy obsession. In the pre-digital era, trying to know anything much less everything about others was an unrealizable dream. However, thanks to technological developments enabling users to obtain a huge amount of information on the private matters of other people, it seems to be a common desire for everybody to know a lot about those with whom they have some interests and common points.

At first glance it seems that the more desires we have, the wealthier we can be, but such reasoning is too naïve when we understand the fact that the desires we have are often not fully satisfied. Being attracted by new desires sometimes causes people a new sort of anxiety, and as a result they have to find new ways to reduce their anxiety and fears fostered by having these new desires. The following comment written by a student illuminatingly describes the tangled relation between newly emergent desires and the concomitant anxieties in using SNS.

I suppose that the purpose of surveillance enacted on Twitter by its users is to reduce uncertainty in relationships. For example, when I met a girl whom I had interest in and we became 'followers' to each other, I could not stop watching all the records of hers to know what kind of girl she is and what sorts of tweets she put out after meeting me. On the other hand, expecting that she browses the past records of my tweeting, I quickly erased some of them that might give readers the impression that I must be a difficult man.

(Case 9: fourth year/male)

Peer surveillance and the impasse of trust

Reading the documents written by students it appears that their interactions with *tomodachi* in using SNS is somehow obligatory and compulsive in spite of being seemingly enjoyable and fun. To keep good company with their friends and to manage and customize their communication with others in a variety of social settings, users of SNS engage in a sort of surveillance of their peers. However, for some users it is only accepted and justified as a taken-for-granted matter characterizing the interactions on SNS.

I used to read almost all records of tweets made by the close friends of mine whom I followed, using the list of tweets. They also read all the tweets I made. Surely, it might be a behavior of surveilling each other, but we felt no sense of guilt for that. If there were

no responses from them it made me so anxious. We presuppose it to be quite natural to be watched by others in using Twitter. Keeping that in mind I read their tweets and often respond to them. Certainly it was nothing but surveilling other people, but it also could be understood as ‘watching over’ the peers as I cared about what they said through Twitter.

(Case 10: second year/female)

While some students don’t care about their engaging in peer surveillance on a daily basis, other students seem to have more ambivalent feelings in surveilling their friends on SNS.

One day in the morning I sent a message by LINE to a boy whom I like, but there was no sign of his having ‘already read’ my message on the screen till the same evening. I had worried about it all the day. I kept on surveilling his Twitter so that I could check whether he tweeted or not even though he didn’t reply to me on LINE. Knowing that he never tweeted that day, I was somewhat relieved. But I felt miserable because I spent a whole day worrying about the reply message yet to come. At night on the day I received his reply and it again made me worried why he didn’t reply more quickly. Feeling like that, I felt myself more miserable than before.

(Case 11: second year/female)

This self-description of her feeling in surveilling those whom she likes typically shows the fact that the users of SNS are surely aware of the act of surveillance they take. Also, it seems that some of the users regard such surveillance as not being so meaningful as they are neither relieved nor satisfied by engaging in surveillance of others as much as possible. However, it must be difficult for users to quit peer surveillance as the technology of SNS affords them a lot of technical opportunities to ‘watch over’ those with whom they are curious.

I guess the reason why we engage in the peer surveillance is that we lose trust in others when we come to recognize by using SNS what we didn’t know about them before. Needless to say, it’s just impossible for anybody to know everything about other people. However, in dreaming we might be able to know anything about them or to obtain new information on them more than ever before thanks to using SNS, we are inclined to engage desperately in surveilling each other.

(Case 12: second year/female)

As discussed earlier, one of the main reasons why the users of SNS engage in surveilling their peers is to keep good relationships with friends. However, why they have to watch each other even though they are friends might seem a little odd. Therefore, it is reasonable to suppose that if they are friendly enough they don’t need to see and check details of what their friends are doing behind their backs. But ironically enough, it seems that the more the younger generation in Japan would like to ascertain their relationships with friends, the more surveillance of their peers they feel is necessary.

Actually some students are fully conscious of the contradiction in which they are trapped. As they cannot fully trust their friends, they are often inclined to engage in surveillance of them on SNS. But it is apparent that as far as they keep on doing surveillance it is almost impossible for them to create mutual trust among their peers. Without mutual trust it seems to be difficult for the younger generation to maintain good company with others. While they want to obtain more

stable relationships with *tomodachi* through their use of SNS, what they actually do is just deepen the sense of distrust of their friends and make them feel more desperate.

I had my experience of voyeuristically seeing and reading the contents of Twitter or Facebook of those whom I like. But it just caused more anxiety and distrust rather than more trust for them. We may get much more trustworthiness in person-to-person relationships if we make efforts and dare to sever such surveillance activities as watching each other on SNS. The reason why we come to feel more distrust in other people through using SNS is that it is almost impossible to have personal one-to-one relationships in the interactions on SNS. It seems that the multi-layered relationships that SNS brings about for its users makes them feel more anxious about the personal relationships with friends already established.

(Case 13: fourth year/female)

Case 13's description vividly illuminates the present predicament of creating mutual trust among *tomodachi* in Japanese youth. While SNS users are eager to have trustworthy relationships, the action they take for realizing that objective facilitates distrust from friends as they come to obtain more information that makes them feel anxious about the truthfulness of their friendship.

Reading and analyzing documents describing students' use of SNS it becomes apparent that how and with whom they exchange SNS heavily depends on the sociocultural contexts in which they live. As far as the present Japanese youth is concerned, the conditions of *tomodachi* largely shape the ways many young people utilize SNS in their daily lives. The significance of peer surveillance, which is realized through the technology of SNS, should be interpreted more precisely in the sociocultural contexts of contemporary Japan. It can be much more clearly explicated when we consider in greater detail the close and contradictory relationships between friendship and distrust engendered through digital interactivities.

Conclusion

While the globalization of the media and communication technology have brought about a homogeneous culture consumed all over the world, we still can recognize differences characterizing how and in what way the globalized culture is domesticated in respective societies. Therefore, contemporary sociological studies on Japanese media and culture should focus not only on the apparently discernable similarities with foreign cultures, but also on the tangled sociocultural backgrounds under which globalizing phenomena are consumed and enjoyed. As new digital media like SNS have prevailed in larger populations in Japan, it is now common for ordinary people to easily express what they feel and think on the internet. As a result, it seems that people in Japan, especially the younger generation, engage in and enjoy multilayered interactions among peers through their use of SNS. At first glance, such horizontal communications are both liberating and democratic, in contrast with the vertical ones formerly embodied by the traditional mass media. However, as discussed in this chapter, how and in what way the potential of media technology is realized heavily depends on the sociopolitical context into which it is introduced and utilized.

Paying close attention to relationships with friends (*tomodachi*), the discussion of this chapter endeavored to explicate Japanese university students' experienced and lived reality of using SNS. Through analyzing how they perceive their own use of digital media, it became clear that *tomodachi* relationships largely define and affect how and in what way peer communications enabled

by SNS generate a new mode of sociality among young people in Japan. As keeping good relationships with *tomodachi* is regarded to be paramount, young people are often inclined to watch and surveil the details of activities of those with whom they are concerned. As a result, the newly emergent media occasionally function as a sort of 'surveillance-enabling' modality rather than a liberating technology in the daily lives of Japanese youth. This might partly explain why the recent drastic rise of surveillance, which is subtler and ingenious in its enacting, is smoothly accepted and not so harshly questioned in Japan.

Notes

- 1 Scholars on the youth in Japan have pointed out the significance of *kuuki* in their interactions with friends. While the meaning of the Japanese word *kuuki* is 'air', the implication of *kuuki* spoken in social settings is the climate of opinion. The common phrase 'KY' (*kuuki-yomu*, being conscious of the climate of opinion, or *kuki-yomenai*, not being able to understand the climate of opinion) often used among the young people aptly demonstrates how keeping the social harmony by mutually coordinating their behaviors, not violating *kuuki* and sustaining the order are regarded to be very important by Japanese youth. Obligation for the young people to always be cautious of *kuuki* is so paramount that they cannot escape from it even when they seem to enjoy themselves with friends.
- 2 The somehow sensational title of Doi (2008)'s *Tomodachi Jigoku* (The Hell of Friendship) attracted the public interest as the phrase correctly grasped the ironically complicated conditions of *tomodachi* in which Japanese youth daily live. The point is the following; everybody recognizes that being with friends is sometimes very hard and in the worst case felt like being in hell. However, as far as it is unimaginable how they can spend school life without *tomodachi* nobody can escape from that hell.
- 3 The following documents are collected in the lecture of sociology for the second and higher year students conducted at K University in the Kansai area of Japan in the 2013 spring term.

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On manual bots and being human on Twitter

Amy Johnson

Throughout Twitter, bots – automated accounts – abound. Among Japanese-language users,¹ the bot category itself has taken on significance. People now draw on the bot category to create bot identities that involve little or no automation – and then use these bot identities to participate in public discourse. The process entails a shift from one order of indexicality to the next (Silverstein 2003); that is, what was once just a term to describe automated accounts has solidified into a category with its own recognized and recognizable traits, a category that can be adopted and coopted. Stop for a moment and think about that: people are choosing to adopt the marker of a machine before interacting with other humans. Why?

To explain why people choose to speak and act as bots, let me first tell you more about bots, about indexicality, and about the history of Twitter in Japan. Stay with me – soon we'll dive into this curious human choice to use a nonhuman voice to speak with other humans.

Automation and bots

Japanese-language Twitter bots first started to appear in Twitter's early days. Its very early days: thanks to a partnership with Digital Garage in 2008, Japanese was the first language the platform was translated into, and Japan was the first market in which Twitter was monetized. Twitter thrived in Japan. From such early days, basic Japanese-language guides on how to use Twitter introduce readers to Twitter bots (e.g., Tsuda 2010, p. 120; Nomadikku 2010, p. 134). A thriving community of Japanese-language botmakers has long shared tips and code, and directions for how to write your own bot are readily available. But what is a bot?

The term 'bot' predates Twitter, with bots appearing in internet relay chat (IRC) and other chat systems. Nonetheless, Twitter bots have a curious existence all of their own. Key to a bot is its automation. That said, 'automation' and 'bot' are overlapping but separate categories: Not all automation on Twitter coheres into a bot. The bot is not the exclusive space for automated practices on Twitter. Other forms of automation exist on Twitter and other platforms as well. Programming code is available to users both directly, in the sense of users writing the code themselves, and indirectly through third-party software. Thus, for example, alternate forms of automation include using code – self-written or social media management software – to schedule messages, publish blog feeds, or send generic direct messaging. While all of these are accepted

automation practices on Twitter, others, such as using code to direct an account to like messages that include specific keywords or to automatically follow a targeted group of accounts, violate Twitter's automation policy² but nonetheless are frequently observed. The bot, however, is different.

Bots are often defined and discussed as automated agents (e.g., Latzko-Toth 2000; Niederer and Van Dijk 2010; Geiger 2011, 2015). Indeed, in fields like code studies and science and technology studies, the agency of bots is much discussed. What these discussions – typically focused on English-language bots³ – tend to miss is that fundamentally, the bot is automation *with identity*. The bot is an entity with a name and account powers. For a bot, code and account are integrally linked: the account is understood to be run directly by programming code. In turn, the account's place within the architecture of the platform bestows on it – as with any other account – both identity and presence. When an account is run directly by programming code, code thus merges with platform architecture to create a digital entity: the bot.

Twitter hasn't articulated an explicit policy on bots per se. However, the company does have a policy on automation: Twitter encourages automation designed to enhance user experience, but will suspend automation deemed detrimental. Further, automated behaviors – easily identifiable to the system because they enter through an application programming interface (API) – may be filtered from search results. That is, automated account actions may be removed or given different weight by the algorithms that drive Twitter's search results. Automation itself, then, is a marked category: it enters the system differently, is surveilled and assessed under different oversight, and is treated with lesser value within the Twitter architecture itself. (The bot, as we'll see, is similarly – but also multiply – marked.)

Beyond that, though, because platform architecture offers only minimal differentiation visible to the human eye,⁴ the bot account exists at an equal level with accounts run directly by individual humans or teams of humans. The bot is, of course, also run by humans: a human (or, more likely humans, given the way code is collaboratively created) wrote the bot's programming code and set up the account. This bridging relationship – between the bot's code and its human authors, and between the bot's account and the Twitter platform's human authors – is fundamental to understanding the work the bot and the bot category do and why they are used.

In 'Footing' (1981) Goffman argues that speech entails a multi-role production format often obscured by simplistic assumptions about communication. In particular, Goffman rejects the idea of a 'speaker', highlighting instead the animator, author, and principal. In brief, the animator utters or expresses, the author selects and composes expressions, and the principal commits to/is committed to the expressions (p. 144).⁵ While the three roles can be united in the same entity, they also need not be. Considerable evidence across cultures shows that, indeed, they are often not. (See, for example, Irvine (1996) on Wolof insult poems, Keane (1991) on marriage alliances among the Anakalang, and Hill and Zepeda (1992) on reported speech used to disavow roles.) Communication ideologies can at times collapse or obscure these roles, causing people to unconsciously assume unity and treat examples such as actors uttering lines from scripts or politicians speaking on behalf of their country as exceptional.⁶ The involvement of media technologies complicates this further. Thus, for example, Gershon (2010) highlights that collaborative creation can be involved even in the simple acts of interpreting and writing SMS (see also, Manning and Gershon 2013). Similarly, Hull (2012), writing on bureaucratic paperwork in Islamabad, notes that collective authorship of paper files diffuses individual accountability and is one reason employees resist shifting to an electronic system.

From one perspective, a Twitter bot in the classic automated sense thus acts as a Goffmanian animator, with the person or people who programmed it as its authors.⁷ But the bot exists at the intersection of code and platform, making it a hybrid offspring of its code's authors and the

platform's programming authors. Not only does the platform specify acceptable and nonacceptable structures of automation through its API, platform architecture and policies also filter, constrain, and reshape speech, further complicating production format. Thus, for example, Twitter's famous 140/280-character limit offers one constraint; its policies against hate speech offer another. Additionally, as Androustopoulos (2011) points out, an online space like a social media platform juxtaposes differently authored voices, leading to an emergent heteroglossia. From this perspective, the platform itself becomes an animator, with the classic bot serving either as an additional animator or author. Most important for the following discussion, the bot exists as an in-between: in-between the account author and the Twitter public, and in-between the account author and the platform. This has important ramifications for accountability, which apply to both automated bot accounts and manual bot accounts.

Marking and the manual bot

The automated bot category is multiply marked, visibly nonstandard or distinct to both human and machine eyes. (I write 'automated bot' here only for clarity: the bot category as a model type includes the notion of automation.) Such marking becomes apparent through contrast; both the architecture of Twitter and current norms of social behavior on the platform treat accounts run directly by human users as an unmarked default. The bot account, recognizable both technically and socially, is different.

Bots run through APIs, which offer separate, code-based entrance to the platform. Similarly, third-party applications that a user enables also run through APIs. Anything entering through an API is differently visible to the platform and subject to a different set of rules than those that govern humans using accounts through Twitter's official website or app. This marks accounts that are run directly by code to the eyes of the Twitter platform, yielding a monitored membership of sorts.⁸

The bot category is marked to the human eye through other means, most basically through repetition, timing, and unresponsiveness to immediate context. If the human or humans directing the bot are attempting to persuade other human users that the bot is not a bot at all, even these can be intelligently tweaked: a tweeting cycle can be set to skip normal sleeping hours in that time zone, tweets can draw from a large database of possibilities and be set on different cycles, etc. Often, however, a bot is explicitly labeled as a bot in the account name or bio, sometimes with attribution to a creator's Twitter handle as well. Further, the automation of tweets is not concealed: the nonhuman rhythms and repetitions, the nonresponsiveness or formulaic responses are visible.

In Japanese-language Twitter, the bot category is so prevalent and prominent that its identity is borrowed for non-automated and partially automated accounts. Many such accounts are explicitly labeled '手動bot' or 'manual bot' or '半自動bot' or 'semi-automated bot'. These labels demonstrate that while the bot category has widened, the standard, model type remains the automated. Such labels also underscore that a certain hybridity is possible. Consider, briefly, an example of the erosion of the absoluteness of automation: The account @auto_pasta describes itself as 'fully automated pasta' (全自動パスタ) in its Twitter bio. In its longer profile page on twpf.jp,⁹ a third-party site often used by Japanese-language accounts to offer information beyond the limitations of the Twitter profile, it describes itself as a 'pasta bot'. Deep in the directions for interacting with the automated features of this fully automated pasta bot lies a confession that, due to the many replies the account gets from other Twitter users, during free time, the account creator uses *pasuta-kun* – the account and its pasta identity – to chat with others on Twitter. That is, manually.

Various scholars have written about how meaning shifts around identity markers, moving from commonalities visible at an analytic level to explicit categories available for conscious use in identity performance (e.g. Labov 1972; Silverstein 2003; Johnstone et al. 2006). Awareness affects meaning. This shift appears to have happened among Japanese-language users of Twitter. This chapter investigates what the bot category, birthed by automated bots, indexes and the work those indexes do for manual bots.

Portal sites – a common method for exploring social media content among Japanese users – that organize Twitter via account categories often use ‘bot’ as a defining tag. Thus, for example, on the portal site twinavi, the ‘面白い’ or ‘interesting’ category of Twitter accounts is overwhelmingly dominated by accounts tagged ‘bot’. Almost all of these are also marked as ‘国内’ or ‘domestic’, indicating a perceived Japanese origin. (Unlike 国内, ‘bot’ is typically written in romaji or roman script.) twinavi’s list of ‘bot’ accounts also shows that this blurring between bot and human can occur in the other direction as well: @darthvader, an English-language account run directly by a human, is tagged as a bot.

Some automated bots extend the presence of preexisting, reputable institutions into the Twitter channel. Some are units in larger commercial botfarms created to capitalize on the attention economy and aggressively promote products or swell follower and retweet counts. (These behaviors are classified as spam or system abuse and such accounts are suspended when brought to Twitter’s attention.) Others have no apparent financial motive and simply recontextualize famous writings or interact with Twitter as itself an emergent source text – for example, through combining the tweets of multiple accounts through Markov generators, or responding to particular words or phrases in others’ tweets, etc. Examples include Japanese-language quotebots such as @Niccolobot (Machiavelli) and @gandhi_tamashi, and ‘名言’ (*meigen*) or wise saying bots such as @wisesaw. These bots share tweet-sized chunks of famous or inspiring words, automatically drawing from a database of source texts. Such bots surface in many languages, though the specifics of which authors and which wise sayings are chosen vary.

Bots for commercial characters and mascots – *kyara* and *yuru-kyara* – also abound in Japanese-language Twitter. These range from characters with longevity, such as Sazae and Snoopy, to more recent characters such as Funassyi, Rilakkuma, Totoro, and Naruto. This appears to be a phenomenon tied to language and jurisdiction. While Sazae, Funassyi, and Rilakkuma are not as well known outside of Japan, Totoro and Naruto are internationally famous, with name recognition and character goods sold around the world. However, Twitter searches¹⁰ suggest that most of the bot accounts currently linked to Totoro and Naruto are Japanese-language accounts. Curiously, so are the bot accounts linked to Snoopy, though the character is of US origin and might reasonably be expected to command a healthy crew of English-language bots in addition to the Japanese-language accounts. And Snoopy isn’t an isolated case – there are similarly high proportions of Japanese-language bot accounts for *Frozen* characters (US), Miffy (Dutch), and the Moomin family (Swedish), to name a few. The abundance of such Japanese-language accounts reflects, in part, Japan’s thriving international character culture. The high proportion of Japanese-language instances of such accounts is more complicated.

There are multiple likely reasons for this high proportion, reasons both specific to Japan and to international copyright practices. Japanese creative industries support extensive cultures of remixing and *dōjinshi* (secondary creation). While Japanese copyright law has economic and moral rights provisions that restrict secondary creation, as intellectual property scholar Toshiya Kaneko (2012) and others have pointed out, norms of toleration make legal challenges to such work rare. Some bots explicitly identify themselves as bots of derivative works. Thus, for example, in the profile for @Lelouch_Diet, a bot drawing from popular anime series *Code Geass*, the account creator describes the account as an automated, unofficial bot for a secondary creation.

Global multinationals also pursue copyright claims across languages with different degree and different times. Thus, for example, during the run-up in February and March 2016 to the cinematic release of *Captain America: Civil War* (2016), verified Captain America and Iron Man accounts run by Marvel exchanged taunts in English. However, other, nonverified English-language accounts linked to the characters appeared to have been purged. At the same time, there remained a large number of unofficial Japanese-language accounts, particularly of Iron Man. Half a year or so later, by October 2016, these Japanese-language accounts had disappeared.

Japanese-language character accounts reveal an implicit component of the bot category: the Twitter bot's status is linked to its external origin or its nativeness. While bot accounts may be used for institutional purposes and bots can run official corporate or governmental character accounts,¹¹ the bot itself cannot yet be official. That is, though bots can serve as official tools or representations, native-born Twitter bots – including numerous art-bots across languages – cannot attain similar officialness and rarely become verified, as they have no public human or organization to stand surety for them.

As I'll address in a moment, such policy assumptions both insulate the humans involved with the bots and mark bots as always and persistently no more than the everyday person on the street. These are part of the reason people repurpose the bot category.¹² And they do: while at times boundaries between the automated and the human are blurred by bots, at times they are blurred by humans, taking on a bot mantle.

The bot as critique identity

There is a long history in Japanese art and literature of using nonhumans – typically, but not always, animals – to engage in commentary and circumvent censorship. Thus, for example the twelfth-century *Chōjū-giga* or *Scrolls of Frolicking Animals*, Kuniyoshi's famous cat ukiyo-e from the nineteenth century, Sōseki's satires, Ogino Anna's novels, and many others. With the rise of Twitter, the bot emerged as a new nonhuman identity option.

Let me introduce you to @Prime_fake and @jazzy_saxophone (Figures 19.1 and 19.2),¹³ two accounts that engage in political commentary under a bot label, but without any evidence of scripted automation. Neither account adopts any explicit bot aspect other than the word itself in the username. On the contrary, each account engages in a number of Twitter behaviors that, to regular Twitter users, suggest the account is not a bot, in its classic automated sense. For example, not only retweeting other accounts (which can be automated and has been used extensively in social marketing campaigns), but retweeting other accounts while appending a comment or phrase of their own (much more difficult to automate in a natural way). Note that the use of the bot category in conjunction with political speech is not limited to a particular political or moral position. The category is used for everything from more mainstream political critique to hateful speech outside the bounds of widely accepted political morality.

@Prime_fake, which uses an image of Prime Minister Abe as the account profile photo, uses the bot label, as well as the なりきり label (a roleplaying category historically performed via bulletin boards, 2ch, email, chat) and the English word 'fake' in the account name. However, @Prime_fake makes no pretense to being automated or scripted. Tweets occur without a clear pattern – sometimes with a gap of several days, sometimes appearing in rapid sequence. The account creator is topical and responsive to current events – two characteristics difficult to automate – opining on everything from the Tokyo Olympics design scandals, various political scandals, tax hikes, and constitutional amendment politics, to the summer 2016 elections, with the occasional tsunami alert mixed in. Further, the account creator occasionally retweets



Figures 19.1 and 19.2 Two example profiles: 安倍晋三【なりきり人力bot】 or @Prime_fake, and Takayan@NoTPP半bot or @jazzy_saxophone

other accounts, from NHK News and Huffington Post Japan to individuals, shares Nikkei links with added commentary, responds to people tweeting at the @Prime_fake account, and, very occasionally, uses a hashtag such as #アベノミクス (#Abenomix). Other than the word 'bot' included in the username, nothing about this account suggests the automated, scripted character originally associated with the bot category.

@jazzy_saxophone, which uses a photo of jazz saxophonist Kaori Kobayashi plus added Japanese flag as its profile image, names the account a 'half bot'.¹⁴ The account tweets and retweets – often with added comments – xenophobic anti-immigration content, focusing on topics like North Korean abductions of Japanese citizens and denying the existence of World War II sex slaves and the Nanking Massacre.¹⁵ In this context, the account often calls out media or political bias. The account tweets and retweets primarily in Japanese, but sporadically in English as well. The account shares links and occasionally uses hashtags such as #日本のことを大切にする党 (#apartythatvaluesJapansheart) and #移民反対



Figures 19.1 and 19.2 (Continued)

(#againstimmigration). Although the account creator states in the profile that the account is primarily for disseminating information and consequently will not engage in Twitter behaviors such as replying, following, or direct messaging, in actuality, the account creator does still follow additional accounts and may reply, particularly via retweeting with a comment. Bio information for the account includes a link to an article about a survey on the reliability of the news media and lists the account's location as the latitude and longitude of the disputed Senkaku Islands. The account has a high number of total tweets, a characteristic often associated with automated bot accounts that needn't worry about the demands of human life. In contrast, the account also makes use of the pinned tweet feature, a practice historically not automatable via API. At the time of writing, the tweet total is 133,000.¹⁶

Many Japanese-language accounts have higher tweet totals than comparable accounts in other languages. In addition to suggesting possible automation, a high tweet total can also indicate a hired Twitter account or a commitment to a cause. The high volume of retweets the account engages in can affect perceptions of its temporality, as tweets retain their original time stamps

when retweeted; thus, even when they are experienced in the linearity of a timeline, it can be difficult to understand them sequentially. This, in turn, makes it harder to recognize when an account is a bot.

I want to highlight three interrelated elements of the bot category that make it valuable for accounts engaging in a spectrum of political speech. First, as pointed to earlier, the communication role of the bot – and consequently where to allocate responsibility for it – is unclear. Is it author, animator, or something else? Further, the bot is the hybrid offspring of platform and account creator: while the account creator initiated it, the platform enabled it and gave it its powers. Who, then, bears responsibility? Note that both account creators have chosen to remain anonymous. Even when not automated, together these strategies of ambiguity and anonymity help maximize the buffers between a public account – and what it tweets and does – and account creators. This appears to hold true for private or protected accounts¹⁷ as well, which may similarly use the bot category while being run manually.¹⁸

Second, the bot category carries with it the power dynamics of marking. As a category of accounts accorded less weight by the Twitter system and excluded from official status unless it serves as a tool or representation for an entity outside the platform, use of the bot category implies that it is nonthreatening and nothing special. While it is a means to embrace a particular nonhuman identity, it is also a strategic means of lowering oneself in relation to an audience, much as standup comedians typically do at the beginning of their acts in order to redress the power imbalance of commanding a stage. Ironically, the multiply marked bot category thus enables a state similar to the nobodiness deployed by voice actors (Nozawa 2016).

Third, a bot, as a scripted, automated entity, is understood as controlled and predictable. It has limits on its social interactions. Its behaviors follow a commanded pattern. Not only does the appending of ‘bot’ to a manual account position that account in alignment with accounts accorded less weight in the Twitter system itself, it includes the account in a category marked by limited social interaction possibilities. This is further strengthened by ideologies of the neutrality of technology that can influence the reactions and interpretations of Twitter users (and others). Thus, for example, the idea that if automation cannot perceive immediate context, then it must be neutral, disregarding the context in which it was imagined, designed, and built. Is it possible to be offended by a scripted, automated entity? Not, that is, by the existence of the automated entity, but by the direct action of an automated entity with limited social capabilities? The answer is surprisingly unclear.¹⁹ Users of the manual bot category benefit from this ambiguity.

All of these affect other Twitter users’ expectations of responses – timeliness, attention, etc. – of an account using the bot category. The connotations of the bot category make it a powerful tool. Individuals approach interactions with Twitter bots with a different set of communicative norms than for explicit humans on Twitter. Manual use of the bot category thus functions as an act of opacity (Nozawa 2012) that not only helps provide security and defense, but also enables a special social position from which to speak, one that sidesteps certain communication barriers.

Of bot accounts and parody accounts

Twitter actually has an explicit policy for handling pseudonymous commentary, and it doesn’t include bots. Or does it? Usually referred to by Twitter employees in offices across the globe as the parody policy – and abbreviated thus within the policy itself – the policy explicitly encompasses commentary and fan accounts as well. The policy lists requirements for signaling such

accounts within the Twitter system; for example, account creators are directed to use words such as ‘parody’, ‘fake’, ‘fan’, or ‘commentary’ in the profile bio and ‘not’, ‘fake’, or ‘fan’ in the account name. (In both the English²⁰ and Japanese²¹ versions of the policy these words are given in English, though in most other versions, including other nonroman versions, the terms appear in translation.)

The English-language version of the policy specifically addresses ‘Parody, commentary, and fan’ accounts in its title. In English-language Twitter, ‘parody account’ is an established commentary category regularly referenced in news articles. It is rare, however, to see ‘parody’ – or even パロディ, its katakana version and the word Twitter uses in the Japanese-language version of its policy – in Japanese-language Twitter or news media. As many have noted, Japanese has categories and terms for humor and comedic commentary distinct from those in other languages (e.g., see Milner Davis 2006).

The title of the Japanese-language version of the policy, パロディやコメンタリー(解説)、ファンアカウントに関するポリシー, is more inclusive. In addition to the doubly defined commentary category (the katakana *komentarī* plus the *kaisetsu* kanji in parentheses), it uses the や connector, which signals an incomplete list: there are other related categories. Such as, perhaps ... the bot?

It appears employees at the Tokyo office of Twitter interpret such uses of the bot category (and possibly accounts that include なりすまし (impersonation)²² or derivatives in their usernames, as well) within the context of the parody policy. Thus, for example, an employee related to me a case in which a newly introduced food product was receiving unflattering reviews (personal communication, 2015). A Twitter account named for the product appeared, voicing and sharing many of the unhappy flavor comparisons that were circulating online. The company, a global brand, reported the account to Twitter.²³ Before Twitter took any action on the account, however, the account creator changed the account name, adding ‘bot’. This, according to the employee, settled the matter, for it put the account within the purview of the parody policy.

Whereas the English-language bot category continues to refer overwhelmingly to the automated bot,²⁴ the English-language parody account category, much like the Japanese-language bot category, has expanded beyond its classic narrow definition. The category is used to mark and describe not only accounts that target specific individuals like politicians, but also those that voice self-aware robotic vacuum cleaners like @SelfAwareROOMBA or literary tropes such as the brooding male hero of young adult fiction (@broodingYAhero). These two categories – the Japanese-language bot category and the English-language parody account category – overlap in their carnivalesque creativity. Both allow users to adopt and explore ‘other’ identities. Both categories, moreover, have dramatically expanded, suggesting there is more going on than simply social protection and defense of commentary.

The bot as carnival, or, the growing pains of posthumanity

Consider プリンbot (@purinpurupuru31) and ポップコーン男 (@popcornman_bot) (Figures 19.3 and 19.4). @purinpurupuru31 is a cheerful pudding à la *crème caramel* with a penchant for exclamation marks and pudding onomatopoeia. ‘Purupuru’ says @purinpurupuru31, jiggling and soft.²⁵ ‘Purururururururu’ it announces to its more than 4,000 followers, amidst comments about the deliciousness and health benefits of pudding. Its language is marked by childishness, with the account sometimes using hiragana to spell out even basic kanji like 食 (‘eat’ or ‘food’, a character children are expected to master in second grade). Overall, the simplicity of the language and the use of graphic tweets makes it an account easy to understand. On any



Figures 19.3 and 19.4 Two example profiles: プリンbot or @purinpurupuru31 and ポップコーン男 or @popcornman_bot

given day, its conversational tweets directed at particular users – wishing them good morning or cannibalistically urging them to consume more pudding – will likely far outnumber its tweets to its entire following. It refrains from using ‘.@’ at the beginning of its conversational tweets, platform syntax that would simultaneously direct a tweet to a particular account and make that tweet visible to @purinpurupuru31’s larger following. It is not showing off its clever pudding-ness, it is just being a chatty pudding.

Very occasionally, the account plays with chimerical Putin–pudding images, punning on the words’ similarity in spelling (in Japanese, Putin is ‘*Puchin*’, which in turn resembles the popular *Puchinpurin* brand of pudding). Given the overall tenor of the account, this reads as irresistible wordplay rather than committed political commentary, an occasional joke mixed in with odes, emoji art, memes, cartoons, etc., all to the greater glory of pudding. @purinpurupuru31 is, to all intents and purposes, a cheerful, encouraging pudding that overflows with pro-pudding sentiment.²⁶



Figures 19.3 and 19.4 (Continued)

ポップコーン男 (Popcornman) is a character from the movie industry's anti-piracy campaign. Before theatrical showings, film audiences in Japan see a short video, in which Cameraman (a man with a camera for a head) attempts to illegally film something to the outrage of audience members Popcornman and Juiceman (men with a bucket of popcorn and a drink canister for their heads, respectively).²⁷ Patrollampman (a uniformed male police officer with a patrol light for his head) rushes in, and after a short chase-scene dance, captures Cameraman. Popcornman and Juiceman, our once-virtuous audience members, are then shown in the privacy of a home, where Juiceman is illegally downloading material from the internet. Patrollampman appears anew to capture Juiceman, reminding audience members that piracy laws apply across contexts. In 2014, Bandai began selling branded character goods related to the campaign, including possible action figures and stationery. Official LINE stamps are also available, and the live-action characters appear in additional circumstances in the campaign's official Twitter account (@eiga-dorobo), offering a media mix (e.g., Allison 2006a; Steinberg 2012) similar to that of other characters. @popcornman_bot began in 2014; other accounts for these characters, however, pre-date the Bandai release.

While there is certainly ironic critique in the act of performing a character from an anti-piracy campaign, as well as in the account's occasional musings about movie watching, at the same time much of the account is given up to the life of @popcornman_bot. @popcornman_bot is, apparently, roommates with Juiceman. Every night they play Jankenpon²⁸ to determine dinner responsibilities. Juiceman, however, is not always a good roommate, and sometimes @popcornman_bot despairs that the strawberry jam has all been eaten or the bath has spilled over. @popcornman_bot (and Popcornman) is a strange chimera, part-human, part-popcorn; simultaneously constituted of popcorn and apparently eating itself. This contradiction surfaces in the account's tweets, with frequent musing on different flavors of popcorn, but also concern when baths have made @popcornman_bot's popcorn soggy. @popcornman_bot is, further, a chimera that spans modes of reality: not only is @popcornman_bot the everyday audience member shown in the video clip, @popcornman_bot is also a self-aware participant in the anti-piracy campaign, sometimes tweeting about campaign appearances. Context collapse (Marwick and boyd 2010) has occurred for @popcornman_bot.

The account describes itself as 'semi-automated'; many of its tweets – Jankenpon results, thoughts on Juiceman, kaomoji that cleverly combine faces with popping onomatopoeia, etc. – reappear on different automated cycles. Weekly, the account also offers a specially marked message that breaks character to explain its semi-automated nature. In addition to the automated tweets, the account creator takes direct control and tweets, retweets, likes, conducts searches, and follows other accounts. Thus, for example, @popcornman_bot sometimes converses with accounts that portray other characters of the campaign.

I offer these two accounts to highlight that while manual bots are used for commentary and critique, they are also used for much more. Let's explore this through three characteristics associated with the (automated) bot category that make it appealing for manual reuse: its nonhumanity, predictability, and nonexclusivity. Nonhumanity, as discussed in the context of commentary and critique, helps manage accountability and shift other users' communicative expectations. Drawing on these same two functions, the manual bot doesn't merely allow users to take on a specific target of critique, it allows users to move *away* from given identities – by which I mean an identity or set of identities tied to human circumstances like birth, community, and social institutions. The manual bot offers a means to live an aesthetic of techno-animism (Allison 2006b), to cross and blur the boundaries of human and nonhuman. The bot speaks outside human identities. Beyond the difficulties of given identities and limits to self-fashioning, practices like the manual bot suggest that humanity itself is not fully satisfying to its members.

Why would one want to be not just a bot but a pudding bot? Pudding, even in its non-bot form, can hardly be described as particularly complex or powerful. On the contrary, pudding – even personified pudding – is predictably pudding-ish. This, I would suggest, is part of the point. Azuma (2012 [2009[2001]]) argues that Japanese literature and anime has moved away from grand narratives to a database model. Personification on Twitter, whether that's through manual bots or political parody, is a database act: the account-based nature of Twitter emphasizes character denuded of plot or setting. The bot category further amplifies this, signaling the predictability of the account. The database – in this case of pudding-related characteristics, news, art, thoughts, etc. – serves as the defining boundaries of a complex system. While an account might traverse and connect database points in different ways, it is within the database parameters.

This predictability is both a creative constraint – everything pudding, everything Popcornman, with any departures clearly marked *as* departures, but no demand for a sequence, an arc, an ending – and a social constraint. A pudding bot account is not suddenly going to

attack another account. It will stay in character. The worst that might happen is that it will jiggle ferociously and repeatedly at another account. (No, @purinpurupuru31 doesn't do even that.) And other accounts accept this predictability, interacting with such accounts at face value: there are no accusations that this is not really a pudding, Popcornman, a Sengoku-era samurai, an anime character, a local mascot. This is known and accepted from the beginning. This sort of license resembles that described by Bakhtin (1984) as the carnivalesque, but with a key difference: whereas the carnivalesque offers experimentation through wild, extravagant play, the bot category offers predictability.

Another aspect where this differs from both given identity and the classic carnivalesque is in the possibility of simultaneous plurality of identity, or nonexclusivity. In both given identities and carnivalesque identities, identity is associated with a single body, within which different identities (self-fashioned or externally impressed) intersect. Unlike bodies, Twitter accounts are nonexclusive: you can have as many Twitter accounts as you have email addresses. Having more than one Twitter account is common among Japanese-language Twitter users,²⁹ with users commanding a mixture of public and private accounts, both to control for different audiences and to have a backup or overflow account in the event of running afoul of Twitter's rate limiting³⁰ – a very real concern, given that even public Japanese-language accounts often appear to be chattier, engaging in more phatic exchanges, than those in other languages. There's even a special category for one type of account in this mix, the 裏アカウント (*ura akawunto*) or hidden account. A student might have, for example, a private *ura akawunto* that includes only the people she trusts without question. Sudden discovery of such accounts by loved ones is the subject of much angst and advice on help forums.

This possibility of plurality is built into the Twitter platform. Because the Twitter platform and account creators share the parental role for bots, the bot category carries this element with it as a characteristic: there's no expectation of exclusivity of identity with bots. Though the one person–one account assumption is perhaps less strong in Japanese-language Twitter than in other languages, thanks to the regular use of constellations of accounts, there is no such assumption that a person will only have a single bot. On the contrary, those involved in automated botmaking often make more than one bot and will frequently identify themselves or sibling bot creations in account bios. The manual bot, I suggest, retains this characteristic. It says: I am this, but I am not only this.

Conclusion

At a fundamental level, all bots are manual – bots are created by human fingers, whether directly through typed tweets, or indirectly through typed code.³¹ The use of the bot category to describe the nonautomated shows a recognition of this fundamental humanity. But it shows something more. It shows that being human in a machine-shaped social space like Twitter is hard. Sometimes it may be easier to interact there with other humans when you take on some of the machine. It shows that human identity can be a constraint. Sometimes, in order to explore and create, we need to let go of that identity.

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Notes

- 1 You'll notice the description 'Japanese-language' appears frequently throughout this chapter. This may seem odd or simply redundant given that this is a chapter in a handbook of Japanese media. The global nature of Twitter and the infrequency with which users enable its location feature means that it is difficult to determine both where users are geographically located and what their nationality is. And it's not clear how salient either of these variables is in this context. An obvious salient boundary marker, however, is use of the Japanese language. Hence the at times awkward specification.
- 2 Though not available in as many languages as the iconic Twitter platform itself, Twitter's automation policy is available in a range of languages; see <https://support.twitter.com/articles/237504> (Japanese), <https://support.twitter.com/articles/76915> (English).
- 3 Latzko-Toth's work, cited here, is a French-language grounded ethnography of IRC.
- 4 On Twitter, the only platform affordance that currently differentiates visually among accounts is verified status, marked by a blue checkmark icon.
- 5 Political speech, for example, might involve a spokesperson (animator), a scriptwriter (author), and a candidate or official (principal).
- 6 Even face-to-face dyads, which can seem to display unity across all three, are influenced by prior rehearsal, represented interests, the use of speech formulae and trendy phrases, etc.
- 7 Such authors may, but needn't necessarily, also hold the role of the principal.
- 8 Using different third-party applications can also make this visible to the human eye; thus, for example, accessing Twitter through HootSuite, a popular social media management tool, allows users to see the device or channel through which a tweet entered the Twitter platform.
- 9 http://twpf.jp/auto_pasta, accessed January 6, 2017.
- 10 Conducted during February and March 2016; Twitter changes its search algorithm without notifying users or explaining changes.
- 11 At least in theory – I haven't specifically seen any official character accounts run this way, which is curious in and of itself.
- 12 It is difficult to estimate the scope or duration of this phenomenon. On Twitter, as with most social media platforms, usernames can be changed at any point and such changes apply globally. That is, after a username change, all previous tweets now appear in the system under the new username – the old username disappears from the publicly accessible system. Speaking to duration, however, a *Japan Times* journalist seems to have noted some version of the phenomenon in passing in a May 18, 2011 article; www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2011/05/18/digital/japan-the-twitter-nation/#.Vs-4wlvdWM8
- 13 I refer to accounts throughout by their account handles, as the account runners can and do change the name associated with the account; thus, for example, @jazzy_saxophone's temporary status as a 'half-bot'.
- 14 There's reason to believe this was a change that occurred after February 3, 2012: http://twitaholic.com/jazzy_saxophone/. By November 2016, the 'half bot' description had disappeared.
- 15 I do not condone @jazzy_saxophone or the stances central to the account; I include the account here to demonstrate the breadth of the manual bot phenomenon and to acknowledge that expressive choices on Twitter involve a complex spectrum too often oversimplified or ignored.
- 16 This figure includes both tweets and retweets; the account was begun in January 2010.
- 17 A protected account is set so that only accounts that have been explicitly accepted by the protected account can follow it. This creates a measure of privacy, controlled by account users. Tweets from a protected account are not included in any of the public channels of Twitter. If retweeted, such retweets are only visible to accounts that follow both the original protected account and the retweeting account.
- 18 Thus, for example, a protected account with 'bot' in its name that has awarded likes and displays only nine tweets after roughly two years on Twitter is unlikely to be an automated bot.
- 19 As Irvine (1992), drawing on ethnographic work in Wolof society, points out, allocating responsibility for insults depends upon both certainty the insult was an insult – a certainty which can be disrupted by strategic uses of ambiguity – and how communication roles have been distributed. The use of the bot category, with its ambiguous distribution of roles, confuses both the certainty of the insult (or critique) and the issue of responsibility.
- 20 <https://support.twitter.com/articles/106373>, accessed November 22, 2016.
- 21 <https://support.twitter.com/articles/253524>, accessed November 22, 2016.
- 22 なりすまし is the same word used in the Japanese-language version of Twitter's impersonation policy that delineates such impersonation as a violation of Twitter's rules.

- 23 Presumably as a trademark violation; the employee who recounted this story to me didn't identify the official nature of the complaint. Unofficially, it was clear the company wanted to remove a source of negative commentary if possible.
- 24 Though not explicitly labeled a bot, @horse_ebooks is a rare contrasting example in English. A famous English-language account that inspired coding templates to make Twitter accounts with similar language styles, @horse_ebooks was widely presumed to be – always, consistently – a bot account due to its sometimes poetic, sometimes humorous language oddities. The account joined Twitter in August 2010, and though it may have initially included an automated component, in 2013 it was revealed as part of a performance art piece since 2011. 'The idea was to perform as a machine,' said its artist Jacob Bakkila (Wortham 2013).
- 25 My thanks to Hideaki Yamane for discussing this onomatopoeia with me.
- 26 The profile image resembles, to a certain extent, Sanrio's character Pompompurin, a golden retriever who resembles in turn, yes, a pudding. But this is a superficial resemblance; @purinpurupuru31 doesn't use images from or references to Pompompurin to position itself. Nor do its interlocutors bring up Pompompurin. 'Pucchinpurin sempai' mentioned in the account bio refers to 'Pucchinpurin', a brand of pudding widely sold in Japan, a crème caramel pudding marked by the flower shape its container imprints on the dark caramel layer of the pudding. However, while the account sometimes tweets discoveries of 'pudding juice', or pudding-flavored drinks discovered in vending machines, it does not draw on the iconic flower design of Pucchinpurin to engage in subtle capitalist critique.
- 27 Popcornman and Juiceman do not appear in the original version of this ad; rather, their role is taken on by a normal human woman who holds popcorn. The second generation of the ad replaces this solitary human audience member with this comedic duo.
- 28 Similar to the game Rock Paper Scissors.
- 29 A former Twitter employee told me privately that internal research shows that Japanese-language users have more accounts per person than other language groups.
- 30 Designed as an anti-spam measure, accounts are limited to a certain number of tweets per hour, though the number of tweets allowed has changed over the years. In the event that users hit the limit, they are unable to tweet again until the time period ends.
- 31 Okay, or voice-to-text software – but that breaks the tidiness of the metaphor.

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Keitai in Japan

Kyung-hwa Yonnie Kim

Yuri, a college student in Tokyo, wakes up every morning to an alarm tone played by her iPhone. Opening her Twitter application is usually the first thing she does, even before getting out of bed. She checks what is new on her timeline, as well as how many friends have reacted to her last posting. Then she checks her Facebook account to find interesting news and checks the network of friends who have 'liked' her latest post. She remembers to 'like' their updates in return, to confirm her reciprocal sociality in cyberspace. Yuri also enjoys virtually talking with her boyfriend via LINE (a popular chatting application in Japan) while on the subway, and uploads images reflecting her daily activities (e.g. her lunchbox, a cute neon sign, and her adorable pet cat). She frequently browses websites of interest. She refuses to release her iPhone from her hand; she feels it is a part of her body and her social existence.

Introduction: a unique but global phenomenon

Mobile technology was adopted quite early in Japan, resulting in a unique opportunity to explore the reality of a ubiquitous network society that has existed since the late 1990s. To date, the pioneering role and characteristics of Japanese mobile media have been recognized and explored to a certain extent. For example, Rheingold (2002) depicted and conceptualized his famous 'smart mob' in a futuristic mobile society using the landscape of Shibuya as an example. Furthermore, Ito et al. (2005) examined Japanese society in terms of the penetration of mobile media into people's everyday lives, thereby pointing out that the cultural specificities of Japanese mobile media illustrate what mobile societies might look like in the future. Most recently, Tomita (2016) reconfirmed Japan's continued position as a powerful test-bed for mobile technology by describing and analyzing the adoption of AR (augmented reality) elements into various sociocultural contexts in the region, providing an additional example of what future mobile societies might become. Japanese mobile society, however, has attracted attention not only for its conspicuous trajectory in terms of early social deployment of mobile technology, but also for its distinct display of cultural adoption.

Although Japan's uniqueness as an avid and early adopter of highly advanced mobile technology is notable, developing a comprehensive understanding of the nature of Japanese mobile society requires us to locate it in a more global context. Indeed, the depiction of Yuri's daily

routines at the start of this chapter is likely to strike most readers – including those hailing from other parts of the world – as not particularly unusual. Some readers may find Yuri's excessive attachment to her mobile phone worrisome, suggesting that similar concerns and anxieties surrounding mobile use have arisen in their home regions. In fact, the pervasive use of social media and dependence on mobile devices seems already to have become a global phenomenon. In this regard, Japanese mobile culture should be understood within the context of the global emergence of mobile communication (Castells et al. 2007), rather than merely in terms of cultural eccentricity.

Thus, Japanese mobile media culture should be examined from two different perspectives. First, it is crucial to consider Japan's historical context in order to fully understand its cultural uniqueness. This historical-cultural link is powerfully illustrated by the use of the Japanese word *keitai*, rather than a term based on technological or functional features (i.e., *mobile phones* or *cellular phones*), as is the case in many other contexts. *Keitai* literally means 'portable' or 'carry-with', and was originally an abbreviation for the term *keitai denwa* which means a portable phone. It grew to refer not only to mobile media but also to discourse among cultural scholars interested in the cultural sensibility of Japanese mobile culture. For example, Sousa (2007, p. 332) emphasizes the cultural connotation of the term *keitai* as 'a snug and intimate techno-social tethering – a constant, mundane, and personal device that affords a continuous communicative presence'. These cultural textures should be carefully understood within the historical trajectory of mobile media in Japan.

The second perspective from which to examine the global context of Japanese mobile culture may be found in the role of the government in terms of social dissemination of mobile technology. This perspective is important because social deployment of mobile technology in Japan had been strongly influenced and controlled by complete government oversight. Until the founding of NTT DoCoMo, the largest mobile communications provider in Japan in the mid-1980s, the Japanese telecommunications industry was monopolized by a public corporation called Nippon Telegraph and Telephone (NTT). The privatization of this public corporation, the establishment of an affiliated company (NTT DoCoMo) and the uplift of a competitive business system in telecommunications services was planned and carried out with government guidance. Even after completion of the legal procedures, the Japanese government repeatedly intervened into corporate service policy with the intention to align the nation's telecommunications policy.

Techno-nationalism is another side of the phenomenon. Although not an issue limited to mobile technology, the making of a techno-nation has been a long-held vision and national promotional strategy in Japan. The most renowned case may be the Sony Walkman, the hit global product of the 1980s. Partly because of a marketing strategy suggesting that 'Japaneseness' was synonymous with miniaturization and sophisticated technology (Du Gay et al. 1997), the Walkman's success in the global market was frequently cited as proof of the technological aptitude of Japan's intrinsic culture. As explained below, social discourse on mobile technology has often been situated as an extension of this interpretation of technology as a pivotal power for reconstructing the nation.

Tracing these sociohistorical contexts surrounding Japan's mobile society, this chapter will focus strategically on describing two notable aspects as key in understanding Japanese mobile media culture. First, it will examine the Japanese young generation as a cultural pathfinder for the adoption of mobile technology into everyday life. Second, cultural forms of mobile communications – of the practical dimension of mobile communications – will be outlined as a method for revealing *keitai* culture in specific social contexts. Although it is obvious that the younger generation has played a critical role in shaping the Japanese use of mobile media and generating new creativity, their discursive position is still controversial and contradictory. Therefore, I intend here

to reveal the dynamic cultural process of conflicts and struggles surrounding mobile technology, rather than merely delineating and exaggerating Japan's cultural singularity in mobile media use. As a whole, it is important to note that *keitai* culture cannot be conceived as isolated or historically detached. The sociohistorical contexts will therefore be given as crucial background information for understanding contemporary situations.

The role of young users and ambivalent discourses

The mobile communications service was introduced in Japan by NTT in 1987. Given that other countries, like Sweden (1969) and the United States (1977), took the lead in mobile communication (see Agar 2003), this was not necessarily an early adoption. And as in other countries, corporations in Japan were initially the dominant subscribers to mobile communication services, due to high subscription fees and a perceived lack of necessity for personal use of mobile communication. For some time, mobile communication was considered an expensive and professional tool for business, and adoption rates remained low for the first decade after its introduction.

In the late 1990s, in an ongoing effort to expand the market, NTT DoCoMo, a spin-off entity of NTT focused on mobile business, decided to offer an affordable subscription package for individuals distinct from its offerings for corporate contractors. The number of young subscribers began to grow around this time, a new trend not attributable to older and wealthy consumer groups. With the strength of young consumers' growing subscriptions, the saturation rate of mobile communication in this demographic grew astronomically, exceeding 100 percent by the mid-2000s – this suggests that some users subscribed to more than one mobile communications service provider.

Where did this burgeoning desire for new communication come from? Tomita et al. (1997) focused on youths' entertainment experiences using pagers (a nascent mobile medium capable only of sending a call signal) as a phenomenon parallel to the growing appetite for mobile communication. In the mid-1990s, it was reported that carrying a pager had become fashionable among Japanese youths, not for serious communication and information exchange, but rather for casual communication among peers and enjoyment of various call games. Such fad words as *beru-tomo* (friendships built through exchange of pager calls) or *poke-kotoba* (an abbreviation of *pocket kotoba*, or 'pocket word') gathered public attention as descriptions of the frivolous and casual nature of the youths' use of primitive mobile technology.

Poke-kotoba, for instance, was a game-like method of communicating with puns via sequences of numbers. Thus, the number set '0840' stood for 'O-Ha-Yo-U' ('good morning' in Japanese), because the phonemes for each number's sound were similar to the Japanese term – '0' stood for the sound 'O', '8' for the 'ha' of *hachi* ('eight' in Japanese), '4' for the 'yo' of *yon* ('four' in Japanese), and the second '0' for the elongated 'O' sound at the end of the greeting. Once a number set gained consensus as a medium for its designated meaning, it would serve as a common language among peers. More than hundreds of *poke-kotoba* were reportedly used to schedule meetings or appointments, describe romantic relationships and express emotions.

The practice of *poke-kotoba* among young people transformed the pager – a primitive device designed to send a call signal – into an exuberant and creative tool for literary expression (Okada et al. 2000). Preceding early mobile culture, the use of pagers served as a starting point for Japanese youths to realize their need for mobile communication in everyday life. As Okada (2005) notes, the creative use and enthusiastic adoption of mobile technology by the younger generation of Japanese significantly shaped *keitai* culture and marked the birth of the mobile society.

Despite acknowledgment of the pioneering role in and the creative contribution of the younger generation to early mobile culture, discussions of the use of new communication tools often continue to focus on negative effects, particularly for youths (Matsuda 2010). Such skepticism is not particularly new, as anxiety seems to arise with the introduction of each new technology. Just as in the mid-1920s the motion picture was blamed for causing juvenile delinquency by distributing unhealthy ideas and indecent attitudes, so now in contemporary Japanese society mobile media is a direct target of social criticism, even as youths continue to act as loyal customers.

Since the late 1990s, ongoing criticism and anxiety has surrounded youths' tendencies to concentrate on mobile communication, eventually detaching from face-to-face communication (see Ito et al. 2005; Matsuda 2010). Youths' interpersonal relationships have often been judged shallow, superficial, and undesirable by older generations who value strong and close in-person interactions. A discourse concerning 'superficialization of human relationships', which identifies excessive use of mobile media as a critical cause for weakened human ties, has gained popularity. Although evidence suggests that media use is not a critical factor in the development of human relationships (or lack thereof), the discourse regarding superficialization has been used as grounds to suppress youths' use of mobile media in the region (Iwata 2014).

Widespread criticism of mobile media as the cause of poor communication and deviant behavior sometimes instigates social action against media technology use. For instance, in Ishikawa prefecture, the northern area of Japan's main island, general regulations for children imposed an obligation on parents and schoolteachers to prevent children and teenagers under high school age from owning personal mobile phones. The stated purpose of the law, enacted in 2010, was the cultivation of a better understanding of mobile devices and promotion of their appropriate use. However, the measure clearly positions mobile technology as a social evil from which young people must be protected (i.e., as a safety issue), illustrating the impact of broader social criticism and anxiety over mobile technology. In a similar vein, the European Union is currently working to enact a law to restrict teenagers from using popular social media, such as Facebook and Snapchat. Such efforts are ironic, because social media has been touted as illustrative of the success of young creators, seen as the driving force behind cyberspace.

The Japanese case could be positioned as an early example of the contradictory and ambivalent approach toward younger users, who are positioned as both innovators in a new technoculture and, at the same time, as passive and vulnerable individuals exposed to the risks and dangers of technology. Although Japanese youths still find themselves the subject of social concern and public anxiety in terms of the potential negative effects of mobile communications and attachment to *keitai*, it seems obvious that young pathfinders nevertheless played a crucial role in generating creative desire to forward mobile communication, and as a result in bringing about early forms of cultural practices.

The emergence of mobile internet and techno-nationalism

Another important turning point in Japanese wireless communications history is the introduction of mobile internet – launched in 1999 when NTT DoCoMo started i-Mode, the world's first commercial mobile internet service – into everyday life. Since then, access to the internet from mobile devices has spread rapidly, giving Japan its position as a testing ground for mobile technology and wireless networks. The launch of i-Mode is often deemed a critical turning point in the era of mobile internet in Japan. In contrast to South Korea – whose own mobile internet service provider, which launched a mobile internet service only three months after i-Mode, initially struggled to gain users' acceptance – i-Mode immediately received a positive

response in Japan. By the late 2000s, 70 percent of *keitai* users subscribed to mobile internet and used it on a regular basis (Japanese Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications 2002).

As I have argued elsewhere (Kim 2015), Japan's early acceptance of mobile internet services can be explained by the specific context of its social organization and IT infrastructure and industry. Against the backdrop of a prolonged recession after the burst of the economic bubble, the Japanese government identified the IT industry as a key factor for economic recovery. Nevertheless, PC penetration and access to the internet remained low until the late 1990s, a result of slow connections, high costs and security concerns about the digital network. In fact, this belated growth of PC internet and lack of internet access locations provided a window of opportunity for mobile internet providers. Initially, mobile internet users tended to be individuals with a lesser affinity for PCs or lower levels of digital literacy. Rather than slowly evolving from dial-up connections to portable accessibility, the internet in Japan landed suddenly in individuals' pockets for daily use.

Thus, in contrast to many countries that began experiencing mobile internet in earnest only after the smart phone boom, in Japan the internet was a ubiquitous presence from the early stages of mobile media. For instance, Miyata et al. (2008) defined *keitai* as a mobile telephone with internet access sold in Japan, even before the global popularity of smart phones that began in the late 2000s. In light of this, it is understandable that a Japanese think tank, the Nomura Research Institute, took the lead in introducing the concept of a ubiquitous network society affording a convenient and futuristic lifestyle as early as 1999 (Nomura Research Institute 2004). At that time, primary forms of a ubiquitous network society had already emerged in Japan, as mobile services enabled people to access various online services and information at any time and from anywhere. In other words, since the late 1990s mobile internet had already been growing as an essential part of contemporary life in such cities as Tokyo and Osaka, paralleling the rapid diffusion of new mobile content including online banking, breaking news, entertainment contents, and so on.

At the same time, the successful launch of mobile internet also acted as a milestone gaining international attention for Japan as a model for converging mobile telephony and the internet. Subsequently, techno-nationalistic discourses regarding mobile technology frequently appeared concerning how to link high-tech capacity to Japanese cultural displays. The discursive linkage of mobile technology with techno-nationalism appeared increasingly as the role of the telecommunications industry was emphasized to promote leadership in the IT revolution and growth of Japan as a high-tech nation (Ito et al. 2005, p. 33).

The early dissemination of mobile internet devices in the domestic market was problematized for providing unfavorable business circumstances for players in the Japanese telecommunications industry. The term *gara-kei*, a shortened form of *Galapagos keitai*, addresses the peculiar type of mobile media circulated within Japan from the mid-1990s until the rise of smart phones. The term was originally coined to criticize the situation of Japan's telecommunications industry, evolving in isolation from the rest of the world. It initially appeared in a government document insisting that the reason Japanese manufacturers struggled with poor performance in overseas markets was this isolation and disagreement with global preference and consumption tastes, rather than insufficient technological capability (Kita 2006, p. 46). While scolding both the deadlock of Japanese products and the inward-looking attitude of the domestic industry, the *gara-kei* discourse urged Japanese industrial players to promote and prove the technological superiority of the Japanese industry by recapturing the overseas market. It is not difficult to recall the 'Cool Japan' branding scheme used to disseminate Japanese values in international society by offering 'high-tech' instead of 'soft power' (Hwang 2015).

Regardless of the techno-nationalist nuance of the term's origin, the *gara-kei* discourse could be counted as evidence of the particular Japanese situation wherein mobile internet was pervasive from an early stage of mobile communications. A distinguishing feature of *gara-kei* – even low-capacity models – was full accessibility to mobile internet, with the result that Japanese users acclimated to ubiquitous network access before the rise of smart phones. As a matter of fact, when Apple introduced its first smart phone in 2008, immediately ushering in a global iPhone boom, Japanese consumers were relatively uninterested. For Japanese users who had already been using mobile internet for more than a decade, the iPhone's key function – easy access for surfing the internet – did not appear fresh and 'smart', despite its name (Kim 2015).

The replacement of *gara-kei* with smart phones was not observed until after the great earthquake and tsunami disaster of 2011, when social media such as Twitter played a huge role in delivering and sharing information and emotions (Hjorth and Kim 2011). *Gara-kei* hitherto functioned not only as a major terminal for mobile internet access, but also as an incubator for primary mobile communications practices in Japan. It may be notable that *gara-kei* has today become an endearing term for old types of domestic handsets, suggesting that for ordinary users *gara-kei* was associated with enjoyment and favorable attachment rather than problematization and criticism.

The rise of 'neo-digital natives'

For Ito et al. (2005), the sociocultural aspects of mobile communication in Japanese society are characterized by mundane practices that they describe as the three Ps – pedestrian, personal and portable. Although these three keywords may be generally applicable to the global mobile landscape today, they accurately described the Japanese context of mobile society as early as a decade ago. Indeed, until the debut of the iPhone, it was not an exaggeration to say that Japan's mobile society was a unique example of a media ecology completely centered on mobile media.

Hashimoto et al. (2010) maintain that Japanese young people exhibit clearly differentiated tendencies toward digital technology. They characterize members of the generation born after 1986 ('the 86-generation') as 'neo-digital natives', differentiating them from the previous category, the members of the '76-generation' or 'digital natives' (Prensky 2001). They argue that the new generation's initial familiarity with mobile interfaces preceded their orientation to the screen-based desktop. For example, they note that the 86-generation tends to feel that the 'PC monitor is too big' rather than the 'mobile screen is too small'. Thus, neo-digital natives prefer 'writing on the mobile and reading on PC' to 'writing on [the] PC and reading on the mobile', practices which the previous generation may find uncomfortable and tiring.

Furthermore, neo-digital natives' perception of the internet differs significantly from that of digital natives. Prensky (2001) identifies 'curiosity', 'openness' and 'participation' as key characteristics of digital natives' online practices, explaining why the younger generation shows no hesitation in clicking unknown links in cyberspace. In contrast, neo-digital natives view the internet as something always there, never new and uninteresting. Thus, according to Hashimoto et al. (2010), appropriate keywords to explain neo-digital natives' mentality toward the internet include 'closeness', 'intimacy' and 'anxiety'. They *need* to access the internet to avoid being alone, rather than *choosing* to browse it out of curiosity; they approach the internet as a contradictory source of stressful obsession and anxiety regarding invasion of privacy.

Hashimoto et al. (2010) seem to emphasize the peculiar context of Japanese internet users with the subtitle to their book: 'How Japanese net users are different'. However, the behaviors

and mindsets of neo-digital natives seem to be linked to those of smart phone users as well as to early-stage users of the mobile internet. Thus, I believe it is important to understand how this sociocultural milieu was established in its contemporary forms, rather than simply reducing it to a dimension of Japanese culture. Because the dynamism of cultural technology deployment lies in the conflicts and negotiations between different social subjects, cultural needs and diverse interpretations within the context of eras, the sociohistorical background of technological progress in Japan deserves investigation as a primary indicator of this multifaceted phenomenon. In this sense, the distinctiveness of *keitai* culture may be found in its initiating role, rather than in its unique presentation of Japanese-ness. In fact, the preceding establishment of mobile technology and the deliberate domestication of mobile internet in everyday practice explain many aspects of Japanese peculiarity in mobile communications, as will be concretely illustrated in the following sections.

The preference for asynchronous and literary communication

Despite enthusiasm surrounding the versatile and all-powerful functionality of new media technology, everyday use of mobile media does not always accompany the diversification or creation of new communication practices. The Japanese example may be a case wherein the most up-to-date technology is deliberately devoted to old-fashioned communications. For instance, a recent survey on mobile media use in Japan (Matsuda et al. 2014) showed email (88.2 percent)¹ rather than voice calls to be the favored feature of mobile media as a communications tool, revealing a distinctive reliance on asynchronous and literary mobile communication in Japan. According to the survey, this tendency was particularly prominent among the younger demographic and female users, resulting in a general assumption that youths who may be more oriented toward and familiar with the multimedia features of new media would favor richer visual communications. As the Japanese sociologist Kensuke Suzuki (2008) concluded in his exploration of the social deployment of mobile practices, *keitai* is more accurately described as a portable email terminal rather than as mobile telephony.

The frequent use of email rather than voice calls has created a situation in Japan whereby an unannounced phone call is taken as abrupt or rude. In a polite social relationship in Japan, it is not unusual to make an appointment for a voice call in advance by email. Also, there are many situations in urban Japan where phone calls are prohibited (e.g., on public transportation, such as subways) or impractical (e.g., loud public spaces). The sophistication and diversification of various digital communication strategies suggests that proliferation of synchronous communication requires practical adjustments to avoid impairing traditional and routine methods of communication in Japan.

However, it may be notable that the aforementioned survey (Matsuda et al. 2014) was conducted before the abrupt success of the chatting application LINE in Japan, which was launched immediately after the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. The application has grown explosively, garnering overwhelming support from young users. According to the Dentsu Innovation Institute's (2015) report, LINE was evaluated as the most favorable social media application for daily use among teenagers and young people in their early 20s – more than 90 percent of high school and college students indicated that they used it.

LINE's most popular feature is the multifarious pictographic characters similar to *emoji* that are provided for richer expression in chatting, so one cannot say that use of LINE comprises purely literary communication. Still, the preference for asynchronous communications rather than real-time voice/video communications appears effective. For instance, when using LINE, the *kidoku* (already read) sign indicates whether a receiver has checked and read the

sent message. This sign serves as an important key for recognizing an interlocutor's attitude and establishing one's strategy for communication. If the *kidoku* sign appears immediately after sending a message, senders may conclude that their companion is willing to communicate; if it does not appear soon after a message is sent, this indicates that the companion is reluctant to communicate. In other words, the *kidoku* sign functions not only as a support for communication with others, but also as an important signifier or strategic tool to handle one's own communication and social skills. Handling this *kidoku* sign has become critical in establishing and continuing relations in a sociable mood, such that various tricks circulate in cyberspace for controlling the function as a communications maneuver that avoids hurting a conversational companion's feelings.

As mobile communication on such social media as Twitter and Facebook has gained global popularity, the practical preference for literary expression and asynchronous communication is increasingly observed in other countries. In this sense, the Japanese preference for literary and asynchronous communications may be better understood as a precedent due to the country's unique trajectory of mobile technology, rather than a unique aspect of Japanese cultural orientation. Yet, a sociohistorical exploration of mobile media illustrates the Japanese aspect of technological dynamism as well as interrelated conflict between old and new. Thus far, I have described mobile communication as a way to reveal old and historical customs converging in new media practices. In contrast, the next section will examine new and emerging textures painted onto the old cultural context.

Mobile literary creativity: a case of *keitai shosetsu*

As a robust example of mobile privatization (Williams 1974), the role of *keitai* not only provides a tool for interpersonal communication, but also intervenes in mundane moments to create new cultural practices. Because mobile media is 'not so much about a new technical capability or freedom of motion but about a snug and intimate techno-social tethering' (Ito et al. 2005, p. 1), it may be important to note what types of desires, emotions and affective moments work as creative motivation for mobile practices in specific contexts.

The phenomenon of *keitai shosetsu* is emblematic of the ways in which mobile practices have developed a new type of intimacy and raised a new creativity in Japan. It is a sort of interactive literature written by amateur authors whose user-created content has prospered in cyberspace and gained wide popularity, particularly among young females in Japan. As the word *shosetsu* means 'novel', the newly coined term *keitai shosetsu* literally means 'mobile novel' or 'portable novel'. In terms of content production and consumption, *keitai shosetsu* is distinct from other genres in that it is meant to be enjoyed predominantly on mobile handsets, a characteristic that helps explain its name. The genre emerged in 2000, when an online community service provider launched a *keitai*-specialized blog platform featuring a 'story writing' channel labelled *keitai shosetsu*.

In 2005, a highly popular *keitai shosetsu* work entitled *Koizora (Love Sky)* was published in book form and achieved phenomenal success. Since this success, the work has been reproduced in other media forms such as manga, a TV drama and a movie, all of which have also yielded satisfactory results. This is not the first time commercial success of amateur content generated in cyberspace has been observed. For instance, in 2004, *Densha Otoko (Train Boy)* – an interactive literature work originally uploaded to 2ch, a famous anonymous BBS forum in Japan – enjoyed great success through multimedia marketing, appearing in printed book form, four versions of manga, a movie and a TV drama. However, *Koizora* was a more marked phenomenon because of its creativity and marketing power, which were entirely grounded in mobile media. Despite

criticism regarding its low quality as pure literature, the social momentum attracted attention for *keitai shosetsu*, resulting in a reappraisal of the cultural potential of mobile technology that had hitherto been regarded merely as useful for communication and information transmission, rather than as a creative platform for sophisticated production.

In my ethnographic research on authors and loyal readers of *keitai shosetsu* in urban areas of Japan since 2009 (for more details, see Kim 2012), I have demonstrated the similarities and relationships between ‘doing *keitai shosetsu*’ and emailing. For *keitai shosetsu* authors, many of whom cling to *keitai* as their creative platform, the experience of writing stories tends to be linked to writing and sending mobile messages to *intimate strangers* (Tomita 2009). The genre’s production requires not only creation of a story, but also integration and interspersal of expressions painstakingly designed for the material characteristics and mobile interface of *keitai*. Furthermore, readers of *keitai shosetsu* have frequently reflected that their reading experience is similar to that of reading email in terms of intimacy, emotional empathy and exclusive fondness for their reading platform (e.g., *keitai*). Both the production and consumption of this new form of customized literary creativity function as *remediation* (Bolter and Grusin 1999) of email rather than conventional literature, in terms of intimacy and experience circumstances.

Historically, a prototype for epistolary creativity combined with a new medium can be found in the early stage of postal media in Japan during the Meiji era (Kim 2014). Although postal media were established as part of a social system rather than as communications technology, sending and receiving a post or postcard was a novel and enchanting way to create feelings of connection across geographical space in the early twentieth century. When the postcard was first introduced in the late nineteenth century, ordinary people attempted to use postcards to write short fictional stories. The practice was named *hagaki-bungaku* (postcard literature), and the link of the new medium to the literary genre was similar to that which takes place in *keitai shosetsu*. Although *hagaki-bungaku* receded long ago as a forgotten genre, its similarities to *keitai shosetsu* in terms of literary creativity and reactions to a new medium are striking.

Keitai shosetsu provides an interesting case to show how new technology (mobile media) resonates with existing cultural prototypes (literature) to generate new creativity. Although users unexceptionally relate their creative practices and actual experiences coping with the newness of mobile media, their creation is configured as fictional stories, probably one of the oldest and most traditional methods for sharing intimacy in a community. The practice is ‘new’ in that it offers a different content form and method of enjoyment, but at the same time, it is ‘old’ in that it depends considerably on conventional methods of fictional imagination and literary expression.

Here we see a concrete example of social appropriation and cultural customization of mobile technologies in Japan. It may be notable that in other countries, no mobile-specialized literature like *keitai shosetsu* has achieved recognizable success. As a matter of fact, the commercial hit of *keitai shosetsu* prompted attempts in China and South Korea to build online mobile novel platforms, but neither country was successful. *Keitai shosetsu* may be located at the intersection of technological input and cultural tradition.

Gendered creativity: the internet vs. mobile internet

Gender has always been a crucial and controversial aspect in understanding Japanese society, and is particularly so for the case of *keitai* culture. In Japan, while *otaku* (technology geeks) – stereotyped as gloomy, unstylish and somewhat ‘underground’ males with poor communication skills in offline situations but active and aggressive engagement in anonymous online platforms – are often seen as the creative force behind innovations in cyberspace, females are

generally considered less enthusiastic in making inroads into the internet and new devices. Certainly, the creative role of the *otaku* should not be ignored in Japan, as such communities have indeed created and nurtured much user-generated content. *Densha Otoko*, a representative interactive literature work introduced earlier in this chapter, is a typical example of this kind of male-centered creativity, as the story features an introverted *otaku* seeking a way to invite a gorgeous girl to go out with him. The male-dominated nature of cultural production via the internet explains the overrepresentation of male tastes in cyberspace in Japan, such as the exaggeration of female sexuality, the frequent use of cold and sarcastic jokes and the disdain for ordinary offline performances.

However, on the mobile platform, the situation was reversed when female users began to play a distinctive role as vigorous users and innovative creators. Earlier in this chapter, I described the importance of pagers as a driving force behind new desire for mobile communication. Fujimoto (2006, p. 81) called this history 'the triumph of girls' pager revolution' because the pager culture seemed to be incubated by young female users sociable enough to arrange meetings, play in the street and maintain central roles in peer networks. Younger female users also adopted the technology in creative ways to customize media to their tastes, decorating pagers with fashionable accessories and colorful ornaments, as well as to enjoy games, fun communications, jokes and so on. For Fujimoto, the positioning of the young female user (specifically *kogyaru*, meaning a high school female student) in the cultural deployment of mobile technology deserves particular attention – the female capture of *keitai* culture could be read as a symbolic subversion of the male-centered characterization of young female culture as strange, inferior and transitional rather than socially responsible.

Keitai shosetsu could be another example of female users fostering new creativity and successfully gaining commercial popularity and social recognition. Initially, popular *keitai shosetsu* became the target of severe criticism from professional writers and critics, partly because of its tendencies toward female-centered viewpoints and feminine-oriented romance, similar to traditional romance novels. Nevertheless, it was obvious that *keitai shosetsu* reversed the male-centered legacy of new technology and content to announce the appearance of active female users. With the rise of mobile media in Japan, females have emerged as pivotal in the adaptation of new technology and creativity in everyday life.

Hjorth (2009) suggests that McVeigh's concept of 'techno-cute' (2000) could be a useful framework for understanding gendered *keitai* culture's sociocultural context. Originally meaning 'cute' or 'pretty' in Japanese, the sociocultural context of *kawaii* maintains transitional and contradictory norms for Japanese women, which vacillate between being allowed to be attractive girls in public and remaining good wives and wise mothers at home. By exemplifying gendered creative practices such as *keitai shosetsu* and *kawaii* customization of *keitai*, Hjorth continues to note that the mobile platform has provided a niche for Japanese female users to exert their creativity and performativity and to reflect their own tastes.

An examination of *keitai* culture reveals the conflicting and contested dimensions of techno-cultures that, in turn, unveils a new gendered structure of media power and creativity in Japan. This gendered confrontation also signals a tension between the internet and mobile internet. As mentioned, early adopters of mobile internet were often individuals with relatively low levels of digital literacy, who lacked 'traditional' internet access and were seen as less equipped to handle advanced technology. The majority of those early adopters were young female residents of rural areas, as opposed to the adult male city dwellers who previously dominated cyberspace. With the emergence of new gendered creativity driven by *keitai* culture, the 'superior' position of masculinity was overtaken by the intimate, soft and affectionate texture of femininity.

Conclusion: cultural relocation of technological gadgets

This chapter has examined the relationship between mobile technology and its cultural manifestations so as to delineate *keitai* culture in its sociohistorical context. While *keitai* shares many of the cultural displays of Japanese society, its landscape lies between the macroscopic national discourse on mobile technology and the microscopic and intimate sense of individual experience. Despite a techno-nationalist expectation to position this technology within national and industrial contexts, the mode of mobile media increasingly signifies and intensifies individuality and autonomy in cultural situations. In this context, the illustration of *keitai* culture shall be situated as an effort to embrace national narratives and individual realities within a single framework of mobile technology. Indeed, these contrasting aspects reveal the dynamism of *keitai*, enabling us to understand the phenomenon within a multifaceted cultural milieu rather than through fragmented descriptions of respective events and happenings.

The exploration of *keitai* culture eventually raises the question of how new technology negotiates with the existing conditions of our lives and consequently settles into everyday practices. In convincing cases of *keitai* culture, we see that mobile media, as a personal and intimate technology, plays through tensions between national and individual, old and new, and different genders. It is noteworthy that mobile technology did not necessarily progress following the logic set by technological developers, but rather underwent transitional processes and relocated into cultural modes accommodating various social contexts. Taken together, mobile media is a cultural artefact rather than a technological gadget.

As I have discussed elsewhere (Kim 2015), ‘everydayness’ is increasingly becoming a crucial aspect for understanding contemporary modes of new technology use. The everydayness of media is troublesome for media researchers, because it raises skepticism concerning how we may perceive banal and self-evident events in our media experiences. This epistemological problem is particularly critical for the case of mobile media. Unlike such mass media as television and radio, which display public or social information to convey a clear message, mobile media tends to conceal itself behind personal and private moments inspired primarily by unconscious affordance to the device. Although personal technologies like *keitai* blur the boundary between media behaviors and banal experiences, it is important to recognize that the cultural display enabled by mobile media should be viewed as part of the everydayness afforded by a contemporary mode of new technologies. Through the lens of *keitai*, we see that mobile media discloses new types of social networks at the same time as it highlights the need for new forms of creativity and cultural performance.

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Note

- 1 In Japan, email is more popular and widely used than texting. *Keitai* with mobile internet began offering an email platform in the late 1990s, with the result that many Japanese users perceive mobile media rather than PCs as the major platform for email. Texting was also provided as a subsidiary feature of general telecommunications service, but word count was strictly limited and multimedia (e.g., images, movie clips) exchanges were not supported, whereas mobile emailing allowed for longer messages and file attachments. While mobile literary communication in other countries tended to proceed in sequence from literary texting to multimedia texting and finally to email, in Japan, mobile email emerged suddenly and was widely accepted.

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Character goods, cheerfulness and cuteness

'Consumutopian' spaces as communicative media

Brian J. McVeigh

Shibuya Station, one of Tokyo's biggest and busiest commuting centers, links together train lines, subway lines, bus lines, taxi stands, main thoroughfares and small alleys. Venturing out from one of the station's exits, one enters a square where the bronze statue of the dog 'Hachikō'¹ stands and confronts façades of white, red, blue and green neon signs that shine, flicker and blink atop buildings, illuminating the night sky with a kaleidoscopic spectacle of colors that create scenes straight out of a sci-fi movie. Most signs are store names whose luminous glow lures, tempts, fascinates and stimulates desire. A cacophony of street hawkers' calls, chattering, traffic sounds and the noise of overhead trains fill the square. Giant video screens, flashing news and commercials, stare down on the busy square and intersection where four major avenues, smaller streets and alleys converge, forming a huge, field-like crossing area. Surrounding, on top of and in Shibuya Station are fast-food eateries, restaurants, bars, coffee shops, department stores, boutiques, movie theaters, video arcades, travel services and other commercial establishments. There are also *pachinko* (pinball) parlors that cast a gaudy glow with their lights that stud, hang from, wrap around and crown what look like huge electric birthday cakes or perhaps alien spaceships visiting earth.

Also in the square, facing the intersection, is a 'police box' (*kōban*), manned by crisply uniformed officers who quiescently observe the throngs of passersby and streams of traffic: students attired identically in quasi-military uniforms, staid white-collar workers in dark suits and prim 'office ladies' in more cheerful corporate uniforms. All are decked out in status- or occupation-specific attire. *Hachikō-mae* ('in front of Hachikō') is a favorite meeting place; near or around the statue young couples meet for dates, friends rendezvous and others with business congregate. Some just seem to be on the prowl while others observe the moving masses. Still others, hired by businesses, hand out packages of tissues wrapped in advertising copy and fast-talking, sharply dressed men approach young women, propositioning them with promises of fame and fortune if they would only meet their associates. Also in the square tonight is a politician's campaign truck, decked out in slogans. About 20 police encircle the vehicle, guarding the politician who stands on the stage set up on the truck. He seems to scream into the microphone, desperately attempting to catch the attention of those leaving and entering the square. Though a few assemble near

the truck, most walk by and ignore the hackneyed, slogan-filled speech. The fact that the police are protecting the politician appears somehow comical, since hordes of passersby rush past the truck, uninterested and oblivious to his speech-making. It is as if only the politician himself and those who are there to protect him take his campaign seriously. On other days, right-wingers set up their ominous black trucks near the square, with giant loudspeakers shouting out nationalist slogans.

Shibuya Station epitomizes Japan's public space, particularly its urban version. A nexus of urban transportation, advertising, mass media, the state's seen and seeing presence (police box), a politician's desperation, apparent political apathy, hyper-consumerism, leisure. All these aspects that mediate and articulate desire, consumerist capitalism and state projects occur within public space, a dense medium of commuting/consuming/producing sites and practices. Japanese 'publicness', especially its more urban variety, is captured by the term *machi*, which may mean city, town or street, though 'a public commercial and entertainment area' (White 1994, p. 120) describes the concrete practices associated with the word. Though Japanese cities do have broad streets and avenues with sidewalks, most of urban Japan lacks sidewalks and is dense with cramped lanes, twisting alleys and cluttered passages snaking through mixed commercial and residential zones. In many shopping areas the wares of small stores are displayed and spill out onto the same busy narrow streets shared by pedestrians, cyclists, cars and trucks. This type of public space of Tokyo is not necessarily *representative* of public spaces found in other places throughout Japan (especially in the rural areas). However, it does *exemplify* how space is appropriated for corporatist and statist purposes *and* occupied for purposes of popular consumption (as especially evident in Japan's urban areas). In other words, this example shows how space functions as a communicative medium.

The problem: how to describe visual atmospherics

Wandering around urban Japan is a walk through a world of sugary scenes of anthropomorphized animals in countless nooks and crannies. Despite investigating the popularity of such images and their expressions in material culture,² I still feel something is lacking in what I had to say about an atmospherics of charmed sights and sweetened sentiments. How does one delineate a feeling, mood or temperament embedded in an environment? How does one explain visual leitmotifs that are ubiquitous and so much a part of everyday surroundings that one takes them for granted? The challenge is how to describe a milieu, spirit or décor. These problematic issues are compounded since the production of cheerful and cute ambiences in Japan have so many sources (corporations, state, local governments, organizations) and are interpreted differently by individuals.

To answer the aforementioned questions, I begin by explaining a number of concepts/topics that, while overlapping and intersecting, can be disentangled for purposes of clarification. The first is spatiality, which as I will illustrate, functions as a medium through which communicative activities are conveyed. The second concept is how the psyche absorbs and processes messages from the environment. Spatiality, which can be either physical or imaginary, is generated and configured by 'consumutopia', the third concept. This is the postmodern counter-presence to ordinary reality in which capitalism, consumerist desires and mass production converge and enlarge our fantasy worlds (McVeigh 2000a). As aspects of consumutopia, 'mini-utopias' and 'simulacra-scapes' describe how the medium of space works its magic.³ The fourth topic is character goods, the anthropomorphized creatures that populate places and locations and function as communicative media. Most character goods emit cheerfulness and cuteness, sentiments and moods that constitute the fifth topic.

Below I flesh out these concepts and topics while exploring the sociopolitical and economic uses behind the prevalence of cheerful and cute imagery, i.e., as visual themes that are utilized by powerful institutions as a way to ‘soften’ their self-presentation and as socializing agents that maintain public order. I hope to demonstrate how products of late capitalism, technologies of simulation and media interact, as well as how different spatialities – physical, virtual or inside our heads – interrelate. Finally, I discuss how cheerfulness and cuteness, as everyday esthetics/ethics of ‘resistance consumption’, are appropriated by individuals for personal use. I rely on more recent examples as well as older ones in order to inject historical perspective, i.e., to demonstrate how what we are witnessing in Japan is not terribly new or merely trendy, but is the latest in an ongoing production of space.

Public space as mass media: contouring subjectivity unawareness

How does public space and the urban landscape, as a communicative medium, contour individual subjectivities? To answer this, the nature of psyche must first be understood. Most of what we know is nonconsciously acquired, not consciously learned. Furthermore, the psyche, rather than a mirror of the outside world, is a culturally built and informed mechanism that incessantly manufactures knowledge for socially pragmatic ends (e.g., navigating through space and absorbing the meanings it emits). The next issue to be understood concerns the nature of space, which I frame with a conceptual triad: (1) ‘context’: this is the most comprehensive concept and designates the postindustrial order of productive/consumptive institutions, practices and processes (workplace, commercial sites, state agencies, etc.) and the socializing institutions which maintain the postindustrial order (families, schools); (2) ‘text’: public space itself which can be ‘read’ and ‘interpreted’ by those passing through it. Text is basically a product of the context. A point to be stressed is that the text of public space is meaningless without the context of the wider sociopolitical and economic order, which invests public space with significance; and (3) ‘subtext’: the subjective substructures of social actors, informed by the context, which more or less nonconsciously assemble, form linkages and manufacture knowledge.

An understanding of the psychological processes involved has profound implications concerning how individual subjectivities relate to public space. This is because during socialization (and subsequent re-socializations), the context affords the individual an encyclopedic range of information that is nonconsciously ingested, worked and re-worked, so that subjectivities and sentiments are formed. For instance, while passing through public space, an individual will observe, more or less nonconsciously depending on various factors, the immediate environment. Advertisements whetting consumerist appetites, official admonitions about commuting etiquette (forming lines, not rushing onto trains, no smoking), local government announcements about upcoming events, etc., are all absorbed. Some information will be immediately filtered out, some soon discarded,⁴ some carefully analyzed and some will sink to the nonconscious level, where it may form symbolic associations and connections with other previously acquired information. These associative processes operate to a large degree without the conscious awareness of the individual. Moreover, concrete sensory input is pressed into service to reinforce more abstract ideologies about self-identity. In this way, nonconscious mental operations work to form the bedrock of belief about the significance of spatiality.

Public space, like any environment, is not productive of subjectivity in any simple, mechanical way; public space does not inform, it inculcates; it does not dominate, it disseminates a certain urban order. Nevertheless, public space, vis-à-vis subjectivity, is not inactive and inoperative, but active and operative. Public spaces permeated with messages (e.g., commuters passing through

Tokyo Station can check market figures on a giant electronic stock board), aid in the construction of nonconscious substructures for the interlinked projects of capitalism, consumerism and statism. These quiet messages do not *cause* people to behave in a certain way; rather, they influence them. Too many sundry messages are being deployed for an individual to be totally convinced of any one meaning.

In addition to the obvious ways in which public space is productive as noted above, it is also productive in another less obvious but no less important sense: though somewhat diffuse, public space possesses an abundant amount of 'normative visibility' – i.e., the colorful spectacle of the urban landscape is 'naturalized' and made 'normal'. Consequently, public space socializes the particular subjectivities required for producing and consuming commodities in Japan's information capitalist society. Moreover, the economic pressures that configure urban space shape our expectations of how to navigate that space. Speed, efficiency and how space 'speaks' to us are all constructed. For example, the citizens of Osaka have a reputation for always being in a hurry, impatient and business savvy, and this is supposedly why certain technologies first occurred there. Consider how the following technologies both socialized and encouraged the people of Osaka to adapt to a quicker lifestyle: Japan's first moving walkway was introduced in Osaka in 1967, as was a signal in front of Osaka Station that indicated how many seconds pedestrians would have to wait until they could cross the street (now standard all over Japan). The electronic boards in subway and train stations that indicate when a train has left the last station and is approaching was introduced first in Osaka as early as 1972. Other devices that first appeared in Osaka include automatic ticket vending machines that accept more than one coin at a time as well as prepaid cards for using trains operated by different companies.

Imaginary spaces

In addition to real, physical spatiality, imaginary spaces are another crucial communicative medium. The relation between physical and metaphorical space is a two-way street, since they readily exchange meanings – 'real' spaces are 'folded' into imagined places and interior visions are projected onto the exterior world. The interchangeability of different types of spaces allows us to appreciate how physical sites and psychological states, driven by technology, shape each other. Such transposability encourages the merging of boundaries between real space and less than 'real' space – think of advances in virtual reality technologies. Consumerism, technological innovations, media and economic practices increasingly redefine, produce and complicate spatiality, thereby generating virtual worlds.

Specific 'places' of the virtual world include cyberspace, cartoon-land, electronic screen-scapes, introspectable mind-scapes and other forms of pretend space. Such proliferating spaces result from the interaction between: (1) consumerist desire; (2) capitalism; and (3) digital technologies that virtualize experience. Japan, as well as other post-industrial, information-infused societies, offer examples of the propagation and ever increasing production of invented places that characterize late modernity and how technological advances drive increasing modes of simulation.

Screens as windows into imaginary spaces

As an example of imaginary spatialization, consider how technology conveys its communicative magic on sleek sheets: writing, pictorial representation, paintings, signs, frontage, TVs, movie theaters, computer monitors and displays of all sorts operate via a basic two-dimensional mode. All these objects, which may be termed 'screens', possess a dual aspect because they act

as either windows or walls: one ‘can see into’ or one ‘cannot see behind’ something. Screens are like windows, they are portals into other realities. But as walls, they are partitions between the observer and the production of what is observed, hiding the complex mechanisms, circuitry and gadgets that make spectacles magically appear. As the technology of and behind surfaces becomes more sophisticated, our inner psychic landscapes ‘scale up’ by expanding and interiorizing even more.

Postmodernity is a carnival of magical mirrors. Shimmering surfaces and spectral images make up our everyday world in which texts flicker on sheets and figures sparkle on electronic screens. Reflections reflecting reflections constitute reality, a house of mirrors built by capitalist consumerists and commercialism that generates, replicates and distorts our desires, fears and aspirations. This celebration of mirrors is attained – indeed driven – by technology, which makes possible simulacra of all types – reproductions, copies, duplicates, facsimiles, models, mock-ups, imitations, fakes, counterfeits and forgeries.

The most salient examples of how mechanisms generate new spaces that work as media, of course, are the internet and smart phones. Consumption patterns involving cyberspace – specifically emailing, surfing, messaging – increase a sense of interiority, thereby highlighting individuality (e.g. personality, personal traits, distinctiveness). The use of such technologies as phones must be understood within the context of larger, historical and global trends that witness the mapping of new geographies of consciousness and demonstrate how human psychology is deeply configured by technological developments (McVeigh 2003).

Consumutopian spaces as socializing agents: how they order public space

Because they are so ubiquitous, mini-utopias and simulacra-scapes have a socializing impact that requires comment. The messages they broadcast in public space do not impose themselves upon us, they implant ideas within us; they do not dictate, they persuade; they do not order, they invite pedestrians to behave in a certain way. They are able to do all this because individuals are ideologically primed by contextual experience to accept their messages. But another factor of this efficacy is the ‘natural’ milieu of mini-utopias and simulacra-scapes. As a form of mass communication, mini-utopias and simulacra-scapes possess several hidden assets that enhance their efficacy.

Consider the sheer repetitiveness of the representations deployed. The same advertising images, commercial jingles, company logos, store labels, brand names, celebrity faces, political slogans and public announcements recur on signboards, billboards and huge video screens (that typically stare down at some of the larger urban intersections). ‘Consuming of displays, displays of consuming, consuming of displays of consuming, consuming of signs and signs of consuming; each subsystem, as it tries to close the circuit [exists] at the level of everyday life’ (Lefebvre 1971, p. 108). This omnipresence of information makes the messages of daily sights seem like an intrinsic, essential part of the scenery of the public order. The omnipresence of simulacra ensures that most people accept them as part of their mundane life. Simulacra-scapes provide the illusion that there is something inevitable and given about public space, as if identical images sprout up on walls in the same manner greenery grows in the natural landscape. Because these images form the background of everyday scenes, they are not usually questioned but acquire a taken-for-grantedness. This naturalness only adds to the inescapable feel of places colonized by corporate and state forces, turning public space into the hyper-real (Baudrillard 1983). For the average pedestrian on any given day, public space is not constituted of ‘occurrences’ but of ‘recurrence’, not ‘spectacles’ (Debord 1977), but rather countless ‘micro-spectacles’ that, because their weight

in the aggregate is so much heavier than episodic events, configure nonconscious thought patterns and therefore have more socializing impact in the long run.

As an example of how mini-utopias and simulacra-scapes transcend the conventional classifications of the corporate and state spheres, consider how certain scenes are put together by families, individuals or local civic organizations motivated by public spirit. What we have is a highly common, popular and widespread phenomenon. Walking around a Tokyo neighborhood where I used to reside one sees several signs proclaiming ‘Let’s build cheerful families and make cheerful neighborhoods’. One family had posted two homemade signs, both with the Pokémon character Pikachu. In one sign he warns about dangerous driving, while in the other he informs pedestrians that the street is used by students commuting to school. Another example: in a small train station, seats were covered with cushions made by a neighborhood group that had written on them ‘Building a Cheerful Society’ (*akarui shakai-zukuri*).

The creatures of cheerfulness and cuteness: character goods

Many mini-utopias and simulacra-scapes are populated by entities who originally dwelled in the world of pop art or were corporate creations. These and other creatures – e.g. Ultraman, Doraemon, Atom Boy, Anpan Man, Thunder Bunny, Sesame Street characters, Winnie the Pooh, Disney characters, Pokémon characters, Dear Daniel, Peanuts characters – find expression as *kyara* (from *kyarakutā gudzu* for ‘character goods’; or *masukotto ningyō*, from ‘mascot dolls’). Character goods are concrete, three-dimensional manifestations of themes, inhabiting and colonizing spatialities, both physical and imaginary.

As of this writing, almost 20 years ago ‘sales of products having a popular character theme totaled about ¥3.4 trillion in 1997’ (*Japan Times* 1999). By 1999, Sanrio Co. alone had given birth to 430 characters. Since then, about 170 designers create four new characters every year on average (Matsumoto 1999).

Character goods have been popular among ‘white-collar workers in their 40s’ for some time now (*Japan Times* 1999a):

Norio Yoshida has a panda on his watch, another on his wallet. There’s a cartoon version on his business card and a plastic one stuck to the antenna of his mobile phone. His desk at work is crowded with panda figurines. At home, there are even pandas on his toilet paper. ‘I can’t help it,’ the 31-year-old engineer said of the droopy, doe-eyed Tare-panda character, the newest star in Japan’s coterie of cuddly. ‘It’s just really cute.’

(Parker 1999)

Character goods populate so many spaces and sites that they have become a natural element of *le quotidien* (Occhi 2014). They advertise products, services, events and policies (Occhi 2010). They beam from signs, notices, posters, billboards and circulars; they dangle from book bags, briefcases, key chains, mobile phone straps and other *akusesarī* (accessories); they decorate building facades, window displays and service counters; they adorn hats, shirts, coats and socks and ears in the form of earrings. Character goods also seem intent on showing up everywhere in Japan’s commercial landscape. For instance, traditional souvenir confectioneries (*ningyō-yaki*) in Tokyo are now made in the shapes of Mickey Mouse, Hello Kitty, various Disney characters and other cartoons and characters (*Japan Times* 1998).

Another more futuristic example involves a popular email software called PostPet, in which ‘cyberspace pets organize and deliver e-mail for their owners’ (Hanna 1999). These ‘pets’ have

minds of their own and ‘write in “secret diaries” and send you letters while “on the job”. Sometimes they post unsolicited mail to your buddies.’ These computer creatures ‘can betray, rebel, or be sickeningly nice’. They also can also earn money doing part-time jobs to buy themselves treats or furniture for their own rooms. According to a young man, ‘I absolutely adore them, even though I’m a man. They’re just so cute’ (Large 1999). The future will no doubt bring more examples of computerized cheerfulness and cyber cuteness. For example, Matsushita Electric Industrial Co. has designed stuffed bear and cat robots that can talk and make gestures. These electronic toys are marketed for the elderly who need companionship (if even of a computerized sort) (*Japan Times* 1999b and *Daily Yomiuri* 1999a).

The overwhelming ubiquity of and frenzied consumerist desires surrounding character goods are made possible by imaginary spaces. The places these creatures live in acquire a realness when one considers that many people behave as if they in fact do occupy space, as virtual as that space may be. Character goods, then, show us how physical sites and psychological states interact and how space – however defined – is utilized economically and metaphorically.

Characters, or in Japanese more precisely *yuru-kyara* (‘loose character’) are used to symbolize places, regions, towns, cities, events, organizations or businesses. ‘Loose’ in this context connotes gentle, laid-back, light-hearted or perhaps unimportant. *Gotōchi-kyara* more specifically designates local character. They are neither a brand icon nor a cartoon character (Steinberg 2016). The term ‘mascot’ does not adequately capture the meaning of these characters, i.e., figures ‘associated with professional sports teams, which tend to be benign, prankish one-dimensional court jesters that operate in the narrow realm of the sidelines during game time’. For example, Kumamoto, a city in south-western Japan, is represented by Kumamon (from *kuma*, for bear, plus *mon*, local slang for man). With his ‘black glossy fur, circular red cheeks and wide, staring eyes’, his image graces 100,000 products (Steinberg 2016). His origins are in a campaign to attract tourists to Kumamoto by using the Bullet Train, which was extended to Kumamoto on March 1, 2010, a date that is now Kumamon’s birthday. Another example: Mr. Bari, a very plump and complacent-looking chicken, stands for the great pride residents of Imabari city in Ehime prefecture have for their chicken dishes; he took first place in the 2012 Mascot Grand Prix (Master Blaster 2012).

The proliferation of *yuru-kyara* is truly astonishing; the San-X company obligates its staff members to create one cute character per month. It seems that every local has its own representation. As an indication of how deeply ingrained this culture of characters is in Japan, note that a national contest, the Yuru-kyara Grand Prix, is held. 1,727 different mascots attended the most recent one in 2014 and had almost 77,000 spectators. Millions voted (Steinberg 2016). But it is worth pointing out that for every highly popular character, there are an untold number that labor away obscurely in the busy and crowded commercial cracks and crevices of everyday life in Japan, loitering in front of establishments hawking products and trying to catch the attention of indifferent passersby. Or consider how the city of Osaka has 45 different characters promoting its various aspects (Steinberg 2016).

Certain characters reflect contemporary social concerns in Japan. For example, a brown bear cub, Rirakkuma – from the English ‘relax’ and the Japanese *kuma* for ‘bear’ – encourages people to follow a more relaxed life in a society where *karōshi* (death from overwork) is a problem. He sports a red button, and mysteriously, he has a zipper on his back that when opened, reveals a light blue polka dot patterned material. Created by the Japanese company San-X, like other characters he appears on stationery, dishware, backpacks and stuffed animals. Rirakkuma’s friend, Korilakkuma is white (*ko* means small or child). If Rirakkuma wants people to unwind and slow down, Gudetama (from ‘lazy egg’), with its apathetic yellow face, reflects the real feeling

and attitude many people might have in Japan's overly disciplined, repressed and work-obsessed society. 'While most *kawaii* characters' personalities range from polite obedience to manic cheerfulness, this character is an underachiever and proud of it' (Hofmann 2016) (it might be noted that Gudetama is a representation of a subgenre of Japanese culture of cuteness or *kimo-kawaii* or gross-cute).

The virtual world of Hello Kitty

Consider how an otherworldly realm surrounding Sanrio's most popular character, Hello Kitty, has been spun by marketing and technologies of simulation in order to populate mini-utopias and simulacra-scapes (McVeigh 2000a, 2014a; Yano 2013). Besides her massive manufacturing, distribution and advertising activities, Hello Kitty lives in and invites us to live in an entire virtual world shared by millions. Her fantasy world exemplifies the locus where technological innovations of the industrial revolution and the consequent emergence of mass affluence come together. These political economic forces, with their mass production and insatiable desire to collect and consume, open up new territories of the mind with novel experiences. Hello Kitty typifies a commodity that promises to furnish us with a utopia of the individual mind. Her birthday is November 1, 1974 and she lives in London. She has the 'weight of three apples' and is cheerful and lively. She likes small cute things – candy, stars and goldfish – and 'loves to play outdoors, in the park or forest', though you can also find her 'happily practicing on the piano or baking a cake'. She is a third grader who likes traveling, reading, eating and making cookies and has adventures at school. Hello Kitty has a family: papa (described as hardworking, dependable, absent-minded, with a sense of humor); mama (who is very kind and loving, takes care of her house and is famous for her apple pie); grandpa (who is smart, paints and likes to tell stories); and grandma (who likes to embroider in her rocking chair). Hello Kitty also has a twin sister, Mimi, who wears a yellow ribbon over her right ear to distinguish her from her better-known sister. All these 'facts' afford her a certain realness.

Asked about why they purchase character goods, many individuals have told me that these objects cheer them up.⁵ Indeed, 'Some prefer animals and fanciful things (*kakū no mono*) more than people'. They are liked because they are inexpensive, possess charisma (*karisuma*) and are an easy way to *kazaru* (ornament, decorate). They give one a feeling of familiarity or intimacy (*shitashiū*) and allow one to cherish (*shitawashii*) something. 'They get rid of feelings of discomfort (*iwakan*)'; 'Cute things are so popular because they calm our feelings and soothe our minds'. They also give one a sense of solidarity with others who have bought the same characters: 'People emulate entertainers (*geinōjin*) who have certain character goods'. 'They can feel a sense of kinship (*shinkinkan*) with others'. However, character goods also give some individuals a sense of superiority (*yuētsukan*): 'Some try to make others jealous by buying hard-to-find characters'. As one young woman explained it, 'These are items used by people who compete using cuteness. All this cuteness, after all, is a type of framework and character goods are used as items for fitting into this framework.'

Some individuals gave responses that revealed notions about ethno-identity. 'Because we Japanese are not good at self-expression (*jiko hyōgen*) we can borrow the power of a character'; 'Japanese have no identity, so they need character goods'; 'Recently people are easily carried away by trends and so they buy character goods. This is because they can't clearly express their own opinions'; 'Many Japanese imitate other people'. According to Shizuno Tomofumi, a psychologist at Tokyo International University, 'Young people, especially teenagers, are afraid of being left behind the trends but are unable to make their own decisions based on their own ideas'. Consequently, they rely too much on the media (*Daily Yomiuri* 1997). Tomofumi's opinion

may be somewhat of an exaggeration, but, as one young woman put it, 'Even though people will say that they don't want to carry something that everybody else has, they don't really feel that way and think it is bad to be different. So they buy them.'

The ubiquity of cuteness

Three points need to be made about cuteness. First, in Japan cuteness is not restricted to children (or females). Some items and simulacra-scapes are produced with adult consumption in mind. Note the names of these media treatments of cute items of material culture: 'Hello Kitty – not just for the kiddies any more' (1997) and 'Character goods cast marketing spell over adults' (1999). Thus,

A more unique aspect of Japan's fondness for cute may be that it isn't reserved for kids. As people grow older, cute products, cute fashion and even cute behavior remain a socially acceptable way to express oneself, reach out to others and to relax ... Twenty-somethings squeal kawaii almost as much as the younger generation. Among older women, schoolgirl naiveté is considered more attractive than cosmopolitan glamour. For men, getting in touch with one's childlike side is considered an acceptable form of stress release.

(Parker 1999)⁶

Cuteness is often associated not with the childish or immature, but with the trendy.

The second point about cute is that it 'is not just a teen trend' (Parker 1999). Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, cuteness is not the latest style or a mere fad in the fashion cycle of Japanese pop culture; rather, it is a standard esthetic of everyday life (whose more specific expressions can be plotted along two axes of infantile/mature and innocence/erotic; see McVeigh 1996).

The third point about cuteness is that it comes in many incarnations. Some examples of specific expressions of cuteness are: baby cuteness; very young cuteness; young cuteness; maternal cuteness; teen cuteness; adult cuteness; sexy cuteness; pornography cuteness; and child pornography cuteness (McVeigh 1996). For my present purposes, the type of cuteness that I examine is 'authority cuteness' – the display of weakness by authority figures or centers of power in order to soften relations that are ordinarily perceived as impersonal, hierarchical or intimidating. Authority cuteness possesses two major categories: corporate-deployed cuteness and state-deployed cuteness.⁷

The messages of the medium of space: authority cuteness

The social logic behind authority cuteness is simple: if those in positions of power can convince those below them that they are in fact not intimidating, the task of persuading, influencing and controlling them becomes easier.⁸ In Japan, the use of cuteness to nudge along, warn or admonish is quite conspicuous. From advertising, warning signs of construction sites, public service announcements, to materials put out by the state on various matters, messages from powerful institutions and officialdom are softened and thus made more acceptable.⁹ We should be aware of how centers of authority (state agencies, educators, large companies, etc.) attempt to associate themselves with images of weakness and subordination, e.g. smiling babies, innocent children, talking animals, pretty colors, funny creatures and *akarui* (cheerful) things.

Corporate-deployed cuteness

The most common examples of authority cuteness originate in the corporate sphere, both as items to be sold and as images and icons to be appropriated by other companies, the state and individuals. Visit a store, service window or office and one is bound to encounter cuteness. Companies and banks place stuffed animals here and there inside their offices. Sometimes they have specially made dolls representing clerks and workers placed on desks with their names written on them. Indeed, putting people into small figurines appears to be a tradition, e.g., dolls modeled after popular celebrities and politicians. Application forms for Dai-Ichi Kangyō Bank credit cards have Hello Kitty's countenance. After all, 'If the image of banks is forbidding, so is that of the item perhaps most frequently found in their vaults. Cash, after all, is typically described as "cold" and "hard", not "warm" and "soft"' (Bailey 1999). Mitsui decided to sell its goods and services using the Finnish Moomin character: 'The company expects that the peaceful and relaxed Moomins will appeal to today's consumers' (*Daily Yomiuri* 1999b).

In advertising, powerful institutions make themselves appear weak by employing images of women, small animals or young children and corporations typically use characters to soften their otherwise powerful image. For example, 'Tokyo Electric Power prints fliers featuring Little Miss Electricity, a pony-tailed cartoon housewife who encourages people to save power' (Parker 1999). The use of cuteness in order to broadcast a friendly institutional face can assume rather spectacular forms. The airline JAL painted Disney characters on its planes, though some JAL attendants protested wearing Minnie ears. Not to be outdone, All Nippon Airways decorated its planes with five characters from the popular cartoon Pokémon (from 'pocket monsters'): Pikachu, Pippi, Myu, Myutsu and Kabigon. Flight attendant uniforms were decorated with Pokémon images, as were seat covers. All Nippon Airways also has planes with characters from the cartoon 'Peanuts'. The West Japan Railway Co. painted its bullet trains with birds, bears and witches from the Banjo Kazooie computer game (*Asahi Evening News* 1998), and an Anpanman limited express currently runs between Shikoku and Okayama.

Mascots for various organizations almost always assume a cute, cheerful form. The character for a campaign to cut back on energy consumption organized by five workers' unions is a cute bear called 'Coco-chan'. The mascots of the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympics were Sukki, Nokki, Lekki and Tsuki. The organizers explained that these 'Snowlets' – a name that derives from 'snow' and 'let's', i.e., call on 'everyone to join in the fun'. These mascots appeared on various objects, such as stationery, lunch boxes, ear muffs and condoms.

A very common example of softening authority is making uniformed figures, such as security personnel, train station employees and construction site workers, cheerful and cute. For example, signs warning pedestrians of the dangers at work sites have infantilized workmen with large heads and wide eyes. Often bowing and surrounded by wavy lines indicating the trembling of obsequious apprehension, they politely warn those passersby to be careful or offer apologies for inconveniencing pedestrians. Japan Railways has used posters with a picture of the Rika doll (the less sexualized Japanese sister to the Barbie doll) to campaign for better etiquette on trains and in train stations. In one poster, Rika is portrayed holding a cellular phone that is as big as she is, thereby diminutively making her look cuter. In an apparent bow to 'internationalization' (or to catch people's attention), some signs display blonde, blue-eyed women cheerfully warning pedestrians.¹⁰

State-deployed cheerfulness and cuteness

State-deployed cheerfulness and cuteness are visible from the central level of state operations to the local level. An example of the central state's use of cheerfulness is the Japanese Foreign

Ministry's employment of Doraemon, the famous robotic cat cartoon character. In 1992, the ministry took out an ad in *Trud*, Russia's largest daily, with Doraemon welcoming Yeltsin to Japan with the words: 'I heard that Mr. Yeltsin is coming to Japan on Monday. Please make a lot of friends in Japan.' It was hoped that the ad would win over Russian public opinion, helping in the sensitive negotiations over the return of the northern territories to Japan. According to a Japanese official, 'If the Russian people feel more friendly toward Japanese (as a result of the ad), it will be easier for Yeltsin to decide to return the islands' (*Daily Yomiuri* 1992).

If there is a Japanese state agency that one would expect to be particularly concerned about its image, it is the Self-Defense Forces. Like other national states, Japan maintains a costly and well-oiled military machine. However, consider what Article 9 of Japan's Constitution states: 'the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes'. In order to accomplish this aim, 'land, sea and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.' Whatever one may think of this glaring incongruity between Japan's maintenance of a sophisticated military and its idealized pacifism, the issue of Japan's defense is highly controversial. Perhaps in order to direct attention away from this controversy and inconsistency, the Self-Defense Forces produces *imēji kyarakutā* (image characters) of infantilized cartoon soldiers for public relations purposes. The two main characters are Prince Pickles (*Pikurusu ōji*) and Little Parsley (*Paseri-chan*). The Self-Defense Forces also employs cheerfulness in recruiting ads that feature smiling faces of young girls with military personnel in the background. The discrepancy here could not be more striking: the use of cheerful and cute images by a state institution whose mission is rationalized, efficient and concentrated violence.

The use of cheerful young women by politicians during campaign season appears to be *de rigueur*. These women can be seen dressed in bright colors and wearing white gloves, waving from candidates' vans or platforms, smiling and shouting to pedestrians: 'Hello! Please give us your support!' Another example of the political use of the softer side of things: the Liberal Democratic Party distributed 'cute' dolls designed in the likeness of Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryūtarō before a general election (*Japan Times* 1996).

At the local level, the authority of the police is softened by using simulacra-scapes with the mascots Pipo-kun and Pipo-chan.¹¹ These mouse-like creatures reside in police box windows, adorn most-wanted criminal posters, are used in public safety campaigns and act as public relations figures for the police. Pamphlets, listing gruesome statistics about traffic deaths and injuries, are adorned with smiling and blithesome Pipo-kun and Pipo-chan. These figures have also been spotted in the form of individuals dressed as the character handing out pamphlets warning pedestrians about sexual molesters in Tokyo train stations.

Messages on signs aimed at pedestrians that one would not ordinarily associate with cheerfulness or the comical – e.g. warnings about speeding cars, tricky turns, deep waters, unfriendly pets or other potentially hazardous situations – are given a cute, colorful spin, as if an incantation of utopia can somehow exorcise the demons of danger. Consider the opinion of a visitor to the Earthquake Science Hall in Tokyo:

My only criticism of the Science Hall is that it fails to engender a similar feeling of horror in its static displays. Candy-box cartoons running around over cracked pavements and homely, cartoon mothers smiling and giving sweet advice hardly reflects the feelings of having to survive in the teeth of disaster.

(*Hadfield* 1989)

Cuteness, in addition to being a daily esthetic, has influenced the more refined art world. One art critic complains how 'cuteitis' has infiltrated Japan's art scene (Silva 1996), while the artist Murakami Takashi, whose exhibits are said to elicit cries of '*kawaii!*' ('cute!'), uses *manga*-like figures and other elements borrowed from pop art in his work because, in his opinion, Japanese society is well accustomed to them.

Resistance consumerism

'Despite the stereotypes of drab, humorless businessmen and the austere, understated esthetic of Zen, Japan has another, more telling side. It is the world's capital of cute.' Indeed, 'savvy marketing ... has made cute a multibillion yen business' (Parker 1999) and cute 'is usually enough to fuel the spread of an emerging trend' (Takahara 1999). Not all observers of Japanese society, it should be stressed, appreciate corporate attempts to make so many scenes sunny or 'to present an adult fantasy of infancy in which *kawairashisa*, or cuteness, is predominant' (e.g., McCormack 1996: p. 100; see also Asada 1989, Mita 1994 and Yoshimi 1989).

Though here is not the place to pursue the subtleties of the argument, elsewhere I have contended that cuteness is a key component in an 'anti-official' esthetic/ethic that counterbalances an official esthetic/ethic of economic national statism (see McVeigh 2014b). The official ideologies are a nexus of statist visions of order and control, corporate dreams of capital accumulation and among the masses, hopes for a middle-class lifestyle (however that is defined). Such projects demand acceptance of a fair amount of disciplinary practice, training, schooling, socializings and resocializings during an individual's lifetime. For example, powerful politico-economic institutions encourage conformity in self-presentation (visible among uniformed students, white-collar workers, 'office ladies', etc.). As a way of 'resisting' these 'serious' labor/productivist official ideologies, 'playful' anti-official practices of leisure/consumption and a daily esthetic of cuteness and cheerfulness are employed. The upshot is that production/consumption and official/anti-official practices mutually define and support each other: one must work hard to acquire the capital to engage in consumption practices.

By 'resistance consumption' I do not mean a conscious, organized and systematic insurrection against the statist and capitalist order. Resistance consumption does not forcibly question, it quietly raises some doubts; it does not directly challenge, it playfully provokes; it does not deride, it humorously mocks; it does not threaten, it ignores; it does not attempt to overthrow, it briefly displaces; it is not insurgent, it is carnivalesque; it does not subvert, it diverts attention (if only temporarily) from the dominant structures; it does not attempt to stage a political revolution, it encourages participation in hedonistic agitation. Practices associated with the consumption of cuteness are not anti-state or anti-corporate in any explicit or obvious sense, i.e., they are not self-conscious 'political statements'. Resistance consumption, then, does not directly target power structures; indeed, it is more often than not inherently ironic, since the same individuals who so desire to consume devote themselves to the officially condoned productivist lifestyle in order to accumulate capital so they can consume. Resistance consumption is where productivist and consumptivist ideologies come together and, indeed, mutually reinforce each other. I contend that it is through the consumption of cuteness that these two ideologies most obviously meet.

Conclusion: the productivity of space

Presently technology allows the production of spatial realities in ways that are unimaginable to people living 50 or 100 years ago. Pop culture may hold lessons for us about the virtualization of physical experience by media, particularly how the dizzying dynamic between observed space,

mental imagery, the imaginary and spatial relations are used to construct new virtual worlds. The significance of mini-utopias and simulacra-scapes lies in their construction by a number of vectors – i.e. artistic creations, a daily esthetic/ethic of cuteness/cheerfulness, corporate profit, consumerist desire and the state's deployment of popular images – that intersect. Whether the original intention can be traced to capital accumulation, the plans and projects of officialdom, simple *joie de vivre* or juvenile escapism, mini-utopias and simulacra-scapes convey cheerfulness in countless corners of Japan's urban areas. They are miniature utopias embedded in *le quotidien* that promise the joys of consumerism and appeals for public order. The points and sites of intersection of the various trajectories occur in public spaces where they are observed/consumed by pedestrians, strollers, shoppers and commuters.

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Notes

- 1 Hachikō (1923–1925) was a dog who continued to wait for almost ten years at Shibuya Station for his master who had passed away. He has come to symbolize loyalty and has been memorialized as a statue and in a movie.
- 2 McVeigh (1996, 2000a, 2000b, 2014a).
- 3 Japan's many theme parks, especially Tokyo Disneyland, offer wonderful examples of utopian spaces. This topic deserves another article. See Raz (1999).
- 4 Filtering out and discarding information requires as much cognitive processing as building mental associations. Since such processes are nonconscious, we are not aware of this psychological labor.
- 5 I am thankful for the time some university students took to discuss their opinions about character goods with me.
- 6 Some may read less than admirable traits into the adult fondness for cuteness. Note the opinion of Takashima Naoyuki, a professor at Musashino Art University: 'Japanese adults differ from their Western counterparts in that they feel less pressure to shed the trappings of childhood. The line between childhood and adulthood is blurred by a society that coddles people, rather than forcing them to be independent ... "People here don't completely grow up ... If you don't feel like being an adult ... you've got Hello Kitty"' (in Parker 1999).
- 7 In addition to state and corporations, authority may be associated with cuteness in other ways. For example, 'Emperor Hirohito was a lifelong fan of Mickey Mouse and other Disney characters. As a child he called his hobby horse Snow White (the Imperial Household Agency told outsiders it was called White Snow). When he made a state visit to America in 1975, Hirohito insisted on visiting Disneyland in California, where he signed Mickey's guestbook and purchased a Mickey Mouse watch, which he wore for the rest of his life. Hirohito died in 1989 and was buried with his Mickey Mouse watch still on his wrist' (Seagrave 1999: plate caption, no page given).
- 8 Such 'soft' convincing and persuading has its counterpart in language. Concerning the proper sociolinguistic forms which should be used by the powerful in Japanese, Mizutani and Mizutani make the following point: 'The underlying idea is that influential persons should act so as to conceal their power and put their weaker associates at ease. It is generally regarded as good and even considerate for influential persons to occasionally show weakness. Needless to say, such weakness should not be vital ones, but it is better to have some weaknesses than to be perfectly strong and consequently powerful or intimidating' (1987, p. 44).
- 9 Attempts at softening the image of an institution or organization is fairly common. For example, in the immediate postwar period, Japan's Communist Party was intent on building up a 'lovable Communist Party'.
- 10 Signs, posters and public announcements are often written with verb stems suffixed with '*mashō*', a polite but amicable way to invite others to do something (usually translated as 'let's ...').

- 11 Japan, of course, is not the only society in which authority is sweetened with cute images. A newspaper article mentioned how new tax forms in Hungary ‘bear cheerful cartoons explaining how they should be filled in’ (LeCallier 1988).

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Nature, media and the future

Unnatural disaster, animist anime and eco-media activism in Japan

Gabriele Hadl

Introduction

Establishing shot: ecocide in progress

Normally, research into intriguing features of media culture needs no justification. How we study culture often becomes the subject, yielding something useful or edifying. But these are not normal times.

We are already experiencing major social and economic upheaval, aggravated (if not primarily caused) by decades of accelerating ecocide. The twentieth century brought improved health, prosperity and longevity to many parts of the world (New Internationalist 1999), but the ecological debts taken on to power this progress are coming due. Economists consider the burst of the carbon bubble imminent (Rubin 2015). Climate scientists see atmospheric tipping points approaching rapidly (Hansen 2008). Biologists see Earth's sixth great extinction in progress (Ceballos et al. 2015). Marine biologists warn of major food chains on the verge of collapse (Nagelkerken and Connell 2015). Geologists have coined a term for our age, the Anthropocene (Steffen et al. 2011), which is thought to have superseded the Holocene (by the mid-1800s), an epoch of relatively stable ecosystems and shorelines which made the emergence of human culture possible. Many such systems appear now close to "severe and irreversible change" (Hansen 2008).

Climate change is not off in the future. Many of us adults in temperate climes are already much less able to enjoy the frog concerts, bat swarms, starry nights, snowy winters and clement summers of our youths. Those in the tropics rarely experience the vibrant coral reefs, nearly impenetrable forests, predictable rainy seasons and manageable storms of yesteryear. And those who have grown up in the Middle East are witnessing their childhood places become gradually unfit for human habitation (Pal and Eltahir 2015). As a team of leading climate scientists points out about the continued use of fossil fuel on a massive scale: "This situation raises profound moral issues in that young people, future generations, and nature, with no possibility of protecting their future well-being, will bear the principal consequences of actions and inactions of today's adults (Hansen et al. 2016, p. 4).

Long shot: what other fields are contributing

Thanks to people in economics, natural sciences, politics and community organizing, we know that effective and efficient measures exist, such as: cutting fuel subsidies, introducing fair pricing and environmental levies, shifting energy production away from fossil fuels, promoting slow and local food, planning zero-waste cities, and practicing carbon-binding agriculture, cradle-to-cradle product design, negative-emission architecture and decentralized renewable energy. The aim is shrinking the *footprint* (the negative environmental impact) (WWF Japan 2012) and enlarging the *handprint* (the positive impact) of any action (Harvard School of Public Health 2016). To avert ecological breakdown and achieve a new balance is still feasible, said leading authorities in the early 2010s, even at little or no total cost, if there is sufficient will for quick action (IPCC 2014; Redrawing the Energy-Climate Map 2013; Brown et al. 2015). The humanities must help mobilize this will.

Medium shot: what the humanities are contributing

Historians have shed light on how action to save civilization has been delayed for over three decades by the oil and coal industries, through a network of public relations agencies, think-tanks, lobbyists, industry-influenced research and politicians (Oreskes and Conway 2010; Dunlap and Jacques 2013). The Education for Sustainability movement has risen from an academic fringe culture to a major learning paradigm (UNESCO 2017). Social and political researchers concerned with gender, migration and human rights are beginning to recognize there are no human rights on a dead planet. Schools, universities and academic organizations are greening their activities, not only to protect the interests of the young people they serve, but for good business sense.

Best shot: what media, communication and culture studies are contributing

Few media and communication researchers have heeded climate scientists' call for "all hands on deck" (Hansen 2009). As environmental materialists point out, our work to analyze and demystify unsustainable media technologies, contents and institutions has often inadvertently promoted them (Maxwell and Miller 2012). However, environmental communication researchers have worked for decades with some success to clarify how ecological messages can be more effective, which parts of media society can be remodeled, and which will have to be abandoned on the way to sustainability.¹

Among scholars in Western cultural theory, interest is growing in emergency studies and the framing of disasters as culturally generated and/or exploited. Human-initiated disasters such as terror attacks or natural ones such as droughts can be used by socially powerful actors to limit civil rights and/or consolidate power. Other scholars argue that crises present opportunities for generating balance, provided people have access to "technologies of survival," found in such diverse places as democratic social movements, sustainable living experiments, martial arts, traditional cultures or aboriginal languages and ways of relating (Hawken 2007, Milev 2011, Beck 2014, Klein 2015). At the forefront of cultural theory, some argue for a radical rethink of the place of humans among the "others" with whom/which we share the planet, including animals, plants, fungi, machines, ecosystems and even inanimate matter (Haraway 2008, Kohn 2013, Bennet 2010).

Some urgent questions for our times emerge: Can media societies be made sustainable and resilient? If yes, how? If no, how to quickly abandon the unsustainable, non-resilient aspects, and

what to replace them with? In terms of media, culture and communication studies, which cultural practices can be added to our “toolkit for survival” (Milev 2011)? In this chapter, I will look for answers in three areas of environmental communication in Japan: disaster communication, green media and green ideologies in commercial popular culture.

Three close-ups: technologies of survival?

Close-up 1: How can a media society respond to environmental emergencies?

The latest IPCC report (IPCC 2014), the most comprehensive and authoritative overview of climate science to date, recommends mitigation (e.g. reducing greenhouse gas emissions) as well as adaptation (e.g. preparations for increasingly extreme weather and rising tides). The Japanese isles may be at comparatively moderate risk from the effects of climate change, but have ample experience with disasters. In fact, the field of disaster and resilience studies is growing in Japan, dealing with many practical aspects such as logistics, preparedness, reconstruction planning and media use in disasters. However, Japan’s record in disaster communication is uneven.

Unnatural disasters: TEPCO in Fukushima and Chisso Corporation in Minamata

On March 11, 2011 a massive earthquake and a tsunami hit the coast of eastern Japan, north of Tokyo, killing around 20,000 people and damaging critical infrastructure, including the Fukushima Daichi (“Fukuichi”) nuclear power plant run by Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO).² The plant began leaking large amounts of cesium and other radioactive elements. About 470,000 people were evacuated (154,000 of these only due to the nuclear accident), though many more decided to flee without evacuation orders. Around 1,600 died as a result of evacuation, and hundreds of workers, many from the margins of society, received radiation doses raising their lifetime cancer risk. Hundreds of thousands of farm animals and pets were left behind, many starving to death or left to fend for themselves (Matsuki 2011). Years on, populations of birds, insects and fish show signs of damage (Møller et al. 2012), though for some mammal species such as wild boars the beneficial absence of humans may outweigh the effects of radiation (Deryabina et al. 2015).

As it emerged later, Prime Minister Kan Naoto considered the possibility of evacuating the residents of Tokyo (Fackler 2012). This late availability of information was not an isolated case. Many such short-term risks were either not known or not made public at the time. The most important facts will not be known until much later, if ever: when the disaster will end (decommissioning the reactor will take several decades by most estimates); what the long-term impact to the local ecosystem will be; how many human casualties will result (high estimates suggest hundreds per year); or who can eventually be held responsible.

Disaster communication research has long emphasized the importance of timely and reliable information. In the earthquake and tsunami, timely warnings saved tens of thousands of human lives. However, in TEPCO’s Fukuichi accident, the flow of information was much less smooth. Though the reasons for this have been much debated and researched (JSSJMC 2012), this much is clear: in general, the Japanese media system works well in natural disasters, but not in industrial ones.

At Minamata Bay in the 1950s, something was wrong with the cats. Many were seen twitching, then dying in agony. Birds fell out of the sky. Many humans were unwell, too, often to a debilitating degree. It slowly emerged that Chisso Corporation (Chisso) had let methyl mercury leak into the bay, harming and killing thousands of humans, along with uncountable numbers of marine animals, birds and mammals. Chisso (which knew from experiments on cats that its plant

was likely to blame), the government and mainstream media long ignored local people's demands for information. Victims and the world eventually learned the truth thanks to a *jumin undo* (residents' movement) (Funabashi 2006, Almeida and Stearns, 1998), supported by photographers, journalists and alternative media (Ikeda 2013). Though the bay was declared recovered in 1997 and Minamata became an environmental model town, some victims of the delayed information and cover-up are still fighting for justice more than half a century on.

Many researchers have noted parallels between the TEPCO and Chisso industrial disasters (*kougai*) (George 2012). There were no established procedures for reporting accidents. TEPCO and government officials used a much criticized euphemism to mitigate their responsibility: an accident of such magnitude was "*souteigai*" (beyond the frame imagined). Neither the responsible companies nor key government and media organizations had an interest in creating a big stir.

Real conspiracies and conspiracy theories

From the 1950s until March 10, 2011 (the day before the accident at TEPCO's Fukuichi plant was reported), the government promoted nuclear power through all available channels, from school poster contests to TV shows (Niwano 1991). Electric utilities, though regional monopolies, advertised heavily in TV and print media (Hayakawa 2014). Commercials featuring celebrities endorsing nuclear power and praising it as clean, safe and economically essential were common on television (Maruyama et al. 2011). For media organizations dependent on such money and on staying in the graces of Dentsu, Japan's biggest advertising agency and in charge of much of the campaign, it was clearly difficult to report in a balanced way on nuclear power, or give appropriate attention to nuclear accidents when they did happen. The missing information and opinions were occasionally found in local newspapers, in weeklies less dependent on Dentsu, and, of course, in non-government organization (NGO) and movement media (discussed in Close-up 2 below). Yet the muted mainstream reporting was not a simple case of the media watchdog turned lapdog with advertising sausages. The *Yomiuri*, one of Japan's major newspaper and TV conglomerates, has been a major proponent of pro-nuclear policy from the beginning, influencing both public opinion and government policy (Maruyama et al. 2011).

The Japanese mainstream media have traditionally enjoyed a high level of trust. As the contours of the Fukuichi disaster became public, however, citizens felt betrayed. Many who had watched pro-nuclear commercials uncritically and nodded to reassuring reports on accidents at various facilities demanded to know why they had not been properly informed. Some vented their anger online. Nuclear promotion materials posted on video-sharing sites and blogs became targets of outrage and bitter ridicule. A posting of the 1990s short film *Pluto-kun: Our reliable friend* attracted wide attention before the Japanese YouTube site blocked it in response to a copyright claim by the Japan Atomic Energy Agency (Figure 22.1).

Rock musician Kazuyoshi Saitō hit a nerve when he remade his popular love song *Zutto suki datta* (I have always loved you) into a protest song called *Zutto uso datta* (They have always lied to us) and posted it online. It starts with "If you walk this country/you will find 54 nuclear plants/textbooks said so/and TV commercials too: 'They are safe'" (Saito 2011). Other, older protest songs were rediscovered and shared online, such as the rock band Za Taimaazu's (The Timers) sarcastic *Genpatsu sansei ondo* (Pro-nuclear song leader) from the 1980s, the prophetic *Samaataimu Buruzu* (Summertime Blues) and *Merutodaun* (Meltdown), which their label had tried to censor at the time. The black humor of a 1960s protest song remake titled *Toden ni hairou* (a double entendre of "Let's join TEPCO" and "Decommission the collapsing utility") by an anonymous group also attracted several hundred thousand views in a matter of weeks, as did *Human Error* by the obscure Kyoto punk band Frying Dutchman. Their 19-minute rap is a well-researched history and sociology of Japan's nuclear policy, spiked with expletives aimed at the pro-nuclear



Figure 22.1 Fukuichi period T-shirt featuring Pluto-kun (see e.g. at www.youtube.com/watch?v=lw1LYthC4PQ)

Source: courtesy of Small Design, <http://youpouch.com/2011/04/25/171608/>

establishment and shout-outs to the audience: “Once you know that history, your views will change! Once you see the negative chain reaction that nuclear energy has throughout our society, it’ll make you want to puke! If you have a heart, that is...” (Frying Dutchman 2012). The song was used in many anti-nuclear rallies, while the video, subtitled in eight languages, was used to gather signatures for an international online petition.

Eventually, many mainstream media engaged in public soul-searching, and some, at least temporarily, engaged in aggressive reporting on Fukuichi and the ensuing radiation pollution, which often tipped into the hysteric (JSSJMC 2012). Many non-mainstream media, from communist party-affiliated newspapers and local TV stations to boulevard weeklies, supported investigative journalism and exposed collusion dubbed *genpatsu mura* (nuclear village) between powerful people in politics, media and science to downplay the risks of nuclear power.

In the early stages of the disaster, valid information, propaganda, misinformation and deliberate disinformation circulated throughout the political and social spheres, and it was often hard to distinguish between them. In the light of revelations on *genpatsu mura*, citizens became suspicious of information from official sources, but few had practice assessing the reliability of other sources. The fact that critical thinking and media literacy are not widely taught and practiced in Japanese education (Suzuki 2013, Ikeda 2013) made it easy for conspiracy theorists of various stripes to attract attention by promising to “reveal the truth.” Even some otherwise sensible critics of nuclear power alleged that since the government had understated the risk from nuclear power, it must have overstated the risk of global warming, which it had used prominently in its pro-nuclear ads since the 1990s. The faulty logic of this argument has not deterred many anti-nuclear campaigners from using it anyway, and some even circulated (long-disproven) claims by US-American climate denialists. Climate campaigners have tried to combat climate denialism

within the anti-nuclear movement and to build alliances with slogans like “A future without nuclear power or global warming” (KikoNet 2012). They also pointed out that the pro-nuclear policy has long also been a pro-coal policy (building coal plants alongside nuclear plants), delaying support for renewable technologies in which Japanese companies could have been world leaders (KikoNet 2012). Conspiracy theories are still far from widespread in Japan, but their currency has increased significantly due to flawed industrial disaster communication.

Opportunities and dangers

In the short and medium term, the TEPCO Fukuichi disaster brought a healthy scrutiny of the “nuclear village,” energy policy and media responsibility (Media Soken 2011). In terms of environmental footprint, ambitious energy savings that had been dismissed as unrealistic until March 11, 2011 were achieved with a spirit of “we all do our share” in the following months, without overall damage to the economy (Shigen Enerugii Chou 2012). The emergency also brought concrete changes in legislation and regulatory structure, e.g. on nuclear safety, an end to the electric utilities’ regional monopolies and more support for renewable energies. Solidarity with and help for the victims of the triple disaster became a matter of civic duty, for individuals and companies alike. The anti-nuclear movement, long a minority subculture, temporarily enjoyed mainstream appeal, attracting tens of thousands to some of the biggest demonstrations since the 1960s.

Fukuichi also provided opportunities for conservative politics and right-wing movements. In the early weeks after the triple disaster, TV stations cancelled all commercials. The time slots were filled with public service announcements (PSAs), by the Advertising Council (AC), an industry-funded non-profit organization. The audience soon wearied of AC’s stock advice about good cheer and good manners. Hastily, new disaster-themed PSAs were commissioned. Among them were spots for the *Nihon no chikara wo shinjiru kyanpein* (Believe in the Power of Japan campaign, broadcast on TV and radio from March to June 2011). Shot in somber colors, overlaid with a rousing soundtrack, they featured entertainment greats such as pop group SMAP or comedian EXILE, who earnestly addressed the camera with statements and slogans such as *nihon wa tsuyoi kuni da* (Japan is a strong country). Its stated aim was to give those affected by the earthquake and tsunami a sense of support, but even at the time some observers noted its patronizing and nationalist overtones (Maruyama et al. 2011). Given the history of ethnic scapegoating in natural disasters, such as the Korean Massacre following the 1923 Great Kantō Earthquake, some viewers voiced discomfort. In retrospect, the campaign appears as part of the normalization of rightist values and slogans in culture and politics.

Five years on, media producers and audiences seem to have largely settled back into pre-Fukuichi patterns. Some are firmly advocating nuclear power again. However, so far no one has dared to again broadcast commercials showing happy children playing in front of nuclear power plants, like the one featuring popular baseball coach Hoshino Senichi broadcast widely in the Kansai area until just before the Fukuichi disaster became public (KEPCO 2009).

While the media taboos on nuclear risks and popular protest against nuclear power have lifted, criticism of coal remains off limits in mainstream media. The government’s mid-range energy plan foresees coal as the new baseload provider, supplemented by as many nuclear power plants as can be restarted. In news reports on domestic smog, responsibility is often assigned to China, though pollution blown in from the continent is only part of the problem. Electric utilities, forced by TEPCO’s Fukuichi disaster to idle all of the countries’ nuclear reactors, responded by restarting some of their dirtiest oil and coal plants. In addition, over 42 new coal plants are scheduled to go online by 2020. As with nuclear power, there is an element of environmental discrimination: coal plants are often placed in what Naomi Klein (2015) calls “environmental

sacrifice zones,” industrial sites in disadvantaged communities, where residents may be internally divided, and suffer economic hardships or discrimination. Though environmental NGOs are sometimes reticent to work with such communities, some have recently kicked off an anti-coal campaign (KikoNet 2016).

While timely logistical information can save lives in emergencies, the people need an unvarnished understanding of the risks they face, so those providing information must be as forthcoming, clear and accurate as possible. Simply dismissing worries (especially when the situation is clearly out of control) erodes trust, which impedes the dissemination of life-saving information. Reckoning with a dangerous situation (“level-headed panic”) is usually preferable to underestimating it.³ The Fukuichi experience also supports the claims of media literacy advocates (Suzuki 2013, Ikeda 2013): people must have practice in seeking and evaluating information, and must be skilled at dialogue.

On the material level, the triple disaster revealed the fragility of media society. Unexpected energy shortages impede the flow of goods and information, everything moves slowly, if at all. Decentralization and technologies that are easy to set up and maintain (low tech/slow tech) are certainly part of a resilience strategy. With natural disaster, preparation for the worst case is indeed wise. However, with unnatural disaster, it is reasonable to ask how the risks can be minimized (mitigated) and if they are worth taking at all. This requires a reasonably healthy media system and a responsive democratic political system. If the media environment is polluted (through the dominance of advertising and government public relations), the natural environment becomes polluted, too.

Close-up 2: Can environmental reporting and eco-media contribute to sustainability?

How do we know about the natural environment? How can we identify threats to it and the options for dealing with them? Fukushima and Minamata demonstrated that reporting can be a matter of life and death. Yet, research on environmental reporting suggests that mainstream news media by and large fail to adequately inform citizens about environmental threats (though there are significant differences across institutions and countries, see Eide et al. 2010). The reasons are well researched (Cox 2010, Hansen 2010): One is political economy. Mainstream media have to sell news to audiences, and eyeballs to advertisers; they have to keep relations with governmental institutions, advertisers, advertising agencies and other powerful institutions; and they may be pulled into disinformation campaigns. But there are structural reasons as well: environmental issues fit poorly into mainstream media’s standards of newsworthiness (news values), established categories (newsframes) and newsroom practices.

News values vs. the environment

News is often what happens suddenly and can be grasped easily. Environmental issues tend to be slow-burning and complex. By the time an environmental problem fits the “new development” or “if it bleeds it leads” criteria of headline making, the damage is often already severe. The animals and people of Minamata Bay had suffered for decades before their plight became “news.” Environmental “news” are often “too late.” Many environmental problems are also hard to visualize, requiring repackaging in order to attract attention. Dubbing areas of reduced ozone concentration in the stratosphere the “ozone hole” helped galvanize speedy action: consumers reduced their use of aerosol sprays, the US Environmental Protection Agency restricted their production, industries pledged to phase them out and political leaders signed international treaties to ensure a global effort (Ungar 2000, Grundmann 2010). As a result, news can now report

that the “ozone layer is healing.” For climate change, on the other hand, many common visualizations are fraught. The planet on fire is too symbolic, polar bears are too distant from everyday life, and what can be shown belching from smokestacks and exhaust pipes may be water vapor or soot, but not invisible CO₂. Thus, a recent trend in visual climate communication is highlighting changes in local landscapes, wildlife or extreme weather (Sheppard 2012). This trend is alarming. If climate effects are becoming visible around us and easy to report, it must be late indeed.

Framing (out) the environment

Issues like climate change and radioactive pollution are too big for the news. Few mainstream media outlets have an “environment section.” To get reported, environmental issues have to fit into established “frames” such as international news, politics, economy, society, science or weather. For example, global warming (*chikyuundanka*) can be reported as “international politics” when there is an international climate conference, or as “science” when there is a new research report. Science reporting in Japan tends to be high quality and there is no domestic organized climate denial campaign. However, as elsewhere, “new and surprising” is more newsworthy, so an outlier research result (especially if promoted in the US media) can easily be emphasized at the expense of the scientific consensus. Reporting on the restart of nuclear power plants (*genpatsu saikado*), when framed as “economy,” focuses on the financial side, but framed as “politics” on comments by government bodies or politicians. Big questions such as the destruction of Australian aboriginal people’s lands through uranium mining, or the problem of storing waste for millennia are framed out. In the economy frame, the views of the Ministry of the Economy, Trade and Industry and the Japan Business Federation (*keidanren*, consisting of big corporations and close to the Liberal Democratic Party) dominate. Many other parts of the government and economy may support climate action, but their views get little airplay. If coal is reported on at all, it is in an “economy frame,” with a predictable emphasis on its alleged low cost, and the fortunes of companies in the sector, including their complaints about “burdensome” environmental hurdles. Reports on green technology or climate action are often relegated to evening or local editions, and often have an element of *greenwash*, exaggerating the extent of a company or local governments’ commitment to “greening” (UL Environment 2013). The most promising place for climate-related news is in the “weather” frame: storms and heavy rains, record heat and unusual snowfall, the peak of fall colors or cherry blossoms are treated as matters of national interest (Coulmas 2000). Unfortunately, the influence of climate change on these is rarely mentioned. Even when 2016 became the first year three typhoons hit the northern island of Hokkaido, few reports mentioned that the climate crisis increases the risks of extreme and unusual weather events.

(Mostly) grey newsroom practices

Newsroom practices also stack the deck against environmental news. First, for many news organizations trying to reduce expenses, environmental beats or desks are easy targets. Original reporting costs money, especially if it involves sending journalists to a far-flung location (which is where environmental issues are often most acute)⁴ or paying someone with expertise in science or international diplomacy (e.g. for UN climate conference reporting). In times of shrinking ad revenue, newspapers and TV news increasingly repackage news wires and press releases (“news subsidies”), though this strategy often ends up costly, as audiences will not pay for content that is cheaper (or free) elsewhere. In addition, Japanese scholars have long pointed out that the strongly government-dominated press club system, the news agency duopoly, the newspaper-TV conglomerates and the entertainment and advertising oligopolies make for relatively authority-oriented and homogenous reporting across all big papers/networks. This can have environmental upsides, as we saw with triple-disaster energy-saving appeals: when the government and big

business players agree on environmental policies, they can promote them effectively. However, the fact that civil society sources are rarely used means that the people most affected by environmental crises – in environmental sacrifice zones, young, poor, female and/or living in developing countries – are the ones least likely to get a voice.

Greening news media

Mass media environmental reporting is essential for averting and mitigating environmental crises (Hansen 2010, pp. 75–103, Cox 2010, pp. 208–22, Corbett 2006, pp. 213–46). Internationally, there are examples of news organizations greening their content, investing in environmental desks, establishing environmental sections or series, using more NGOs as news sources and training journalists and editors to spot disinformation and greenwash. There have been some initiatives in Japan as well (IGES 2001). However, currently such efforts are rare, perhaps due to the revenue crisis, but also because environmental organizations focus more on producing their own websites and social media.

Looking for green news in Japan, one may find green niches within commercial mainstream media, but also in public service, satellite or local cable TV, as well as boulevard, party-affiliated, domestic English and local press. For example, the big Okinawan newspapers (*Ryukyu Shinpo* and *Okinawa Times*) report on environmental issues related to US military bases like air and noise pollution at Futenma airbase, forest destruction through a planned helicopter pad in Takae, or damage to coral and dugong habitat at the planned Futenma replacement in the waters off Henoko Bay. NHK, the national public service broadcaster, often shows documentary programs that deal with environmental issues and features an “eco-channel” in its online services. NHK also collaborated with the World Meteorological Association to create a mock “Weather Forecast in 2050,” which dramatically shows where the business-as-usual path may lead by the time today’s young people are middle-aged (Figure 22.2) (NHK 2014, WMO 2016). This was



Figure 22.2 Fictional weather forecast for Japan in 2050 showing 50 consecutive midsummer days, 60 tropical nights, and Tokyo temperatures topping 40.6 °C/105°F (based on a business-as-usual climate scenario, see IPCC 2014)

Source: NHK (2014)

included in its popular “NHK Special” documentary series. However, straight talk on the government’s environmental policy is rare, relegated to its satellite (BS) channels, international channel (NHK World) or online services.

Green(er) alternative media

There are places with more green potential. Alternative media organizations have different business, newsroom and organizational models from mainstream media (Hadl 2011). Some of these consciously report environmental issues. For example, OurPlanet-TV features several environmental sections. One focus in 2011–2012 was on the tough choices of parents in Fukushima prefecture: Shall women and children evacuate, leaving bread-winning men behind? Shall they stay and carry radiation meters? Should children play outside in polluted woods and sandboxes, or stay indoors, risking obesity and *shizenbanare* (alienation from nature) (OurPlanet 2011)?

Quality environmental reporting lives in specialized environmental news publications, like *Climate Central*, *Treehugger*, *DeSmogBlog*, *Planetsave*, *Climate Home* or *Grist* in the English-speaking world. Japan lacks influential eco-media. The only eco-news media with wider reach are business magazines like *Kankyokaigi* (Environmental Forum), *Alterna* or *Shuukan Kankyou Bijinesu* (Weekly Environmental Business), which champion “the great transition” (Brown et al. 2015) to a low-carbon, high-efficiency and socially responsible economy.

Environmental documentary is also an important source of environmental information and activist inspiration. US eco-blockbusters like *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) and Leonardo di Caprio’s *11th Hour* (2006) had successful Japanese releases, and *The Cove* (2009) received a lot of press, though less for its content (an expose of dolphin hunting) than for right-wing efforts to suppress screenings. On the independent film scene, director Kamanaka Hitomi is widely known for her documentaries on nuclear power (*Rokkasho Rhapsody*, 2006; *Bees to Ashes*, 2010). Kana Tomoko’s *Beautiful Islands* (2013), so far the only Japanese feature documentary on global warming, is a slow, no-comment view of life in Tuvalu, Venice and Shimarev in Alaska. Known only to activists is the Pacific Asia Resource Center’s collection of development-oriented videos, including on issues such as overfishing, water privatization, e-waste and seed security.

Greening politics and culture

Environmental movements in Japan have a long history and many local successes (Hasegawa 2010). Their relations with mainstream media, however, are often fraught. This is depicted in *Pom Poko*, a Studio Ghibli anime inspired by a real-life residents’ movement against urban sprawl. Written and directed by Isao Takahata, *Pom Poko* shows a band of *tanuki* (raccoon-dogs), known in folklore as shape-shifting tricksters, fighting the destruction of their habitat (Heise 2014, Borlik 2015). Trying to sway public opinion and political decisions, they send press releases and petitions, work directly with sympathetic TV crews, network with *tanuki* from regions with successful movements and hold study meetings to upgrade their skills. Their efforts culminate in a visually stunning demonstration of Edo-period ghosts and mythic animals. They gauge the success of each action by checking TV reports (Figure 22.3), but when they realize an amusement park has co-opted their great ghost parade as a public relations stunt, one of them punches the TV. The broken screen is turned into a shrine for a dead leader and the movement splinters.

Pom Poko exaggerates, but not much. Environmental NGOs and movements (see Hasegawa 2010) do face big obstacles in using mainstream media. They often publish their own media, from old-fashioned flyers to online videos. In fact, environmental NGOs were among Japan’s internet pioneers (Hadl and Hamada 2009, Hadl 2011). However, today most NGO media are more aimed at members and allies rather than the general public, and their reach is accordingly narrow. Influencing public opinion is costly and does not reliably affect policy (evidenced by



Figure 22.3 *Tanuki as zoomorphic human villagers in Pom Poko (1994)*

Source: Studio Ghibli

the current restart of nuclear reactors, despite staunch public opposition), so informing members and allies, influencing sympathetic elites and lobbying bureaucrats may well be more efficient.

This is not to say environmental movements aim only at policy change. The biggest social movements in Japan, the anti-nuclear and anti-military base movements, are as much about policies as about promoting a pacifist culture. Some environmentalists also take the cultural approach. In 2001, Ikeda Masaaki became editor-in-chief of the magazine *Kohkoku*, published by Japan's second biggest ad agency. Inspired by the Canadian Local Exchange Trading System movement and *Adbusters* magazine, Ikeda turned the ad-industry cheerleader into what he called an anti-consumerist "Future Social Design" platform. For seven issues, subscribers were confronted with the social responsibility of designers, community design, Tokyo urban green action and many other ideas that were practically unheard of at the time (sociodesign 2009). Independently, Buy Nothing Day (Figure 22.4; also inspired by *Adbusters*) was celebrated yearly by a network of activists from 1997 to 2015 (Vinken 2010).⁵ Buy Nothing Day participants surprised shoppers with quirky street performances, organized homeless home-cooking events and enjoyed dumpster-diving for their dinners. In the 2010s, a loose group of young Tokyo-based eco-activists began urban guerrilla gardening, mediation flash mobs and in 2014 joined the global youth day of climate activism "The Future Is Rising" (Sawyer 2014) (Figure 22.5).

Then there is the *surou* (slow) movement (Vinken 2010). Inspired by the Italian slow food movement and rainforest protection in Costa Rica, a key organization is *Namakemono kurabu* (the Sloth Club). Predicated on the idea that the culture of speed ("To save the sloth, be the sloth!") is behind most of contemporary societies' destructiveness, it has promoted and developed green cultural techniques such as fair trade, local money, *hidenkika* (de-electrification/analogue revival), community wind farms, Edo renaissance (rediscovery of Edo period sustainable culture), GNH



Figure 22.4 Zenta Claus performance for Buy Nothing Day, Kyoto (ca. 2000)
Source: courtesy of Rob Morishige, Buy Nothing Day Japan (<http://bndjapan.org/>)



Figure 22.5 The Future Is Rising Japan, street performance for inter-generational climate justice (2014)
Source: courtesy of The Future (<http://thefuture.net/>)

(Gross National Happiness, an alternative indicator of wealth), cultural creatives and voluntary simplicity. Though the Sloth Club does invest in a website and social media presence, its main tools are live events, books and *surou shinema jouseikai* (screenings of slow cinema movies). Though the Sloth Club is far from *Adbusters'* sleek social marketing, it is good at spreading memes and appealing to young people turned off by the shininess and shallowness of commercial youth culture.

Ecomedia literacy

The education system is another promising arena for environmental activism. As discussed in the section on Fukuichi and environmental reporting, media literacy could contribute a great deal to sustainability. Media literate audiences and producers can recognize bias, call out corporate and government greenwash, use alternative media without falling into conspiracist traps and can self-critically use media to express themselves, including organizing effectively for political or cultural change. Yet the green potential of media literacy remained untapped for too long (Lopez 2011). In Japan, Fukuichi provided the impetus for bringing media literacy and eco-literacy together. In her *Media Riterashii no Ima – Kougai/Kankyoundai kara Yomitoku* (Media literacy now: Reading from the vantage point of pollution and environmental issues), Ikeda (2013) revisits topics like the Okinawa poison gas incident of the 1970s and its connection to the Vietnam War, the silencing and commercial exploitation of 1946–1958 Bikini Atoll *hibakusha* (people exposed to radiation through atomic testing) and the nuclear power public relations campaigns. She also looks at popular culture and alternative media, as well as experiments in creating archives, commemorative sites and public dialogue around environmental issues. My own *Ecomedia Literacy* (2016) spells out theoretical principles and suggests practical applications. In sample workshops, participants investigate animal representations they encountered in childhood, analyze environmental news, use green media, experience nature, produce slow media, put themselves into the position of oil company spin doctors, communicate campus/workplace sustainability and design media detoxification programs. Both texts demonstrate how raising ecomedia literacy levels is an essential part of a “toolkit for survival” (Milev 2011).

What green media and ecomedia literacy can (and cannot) accomplish

In this close-up, we have looked at the potential of mainstream news, alternative media and media literacy to act as “technologies of survival.” We saw that mainstream media have many structural limitations, which can and should be addressed. Further, green alternative media can supplement mainstream media, and help spread ecological culture, ideally “changing the flow” of the mainstream. In many Western countries, cultural innovations such as dumpster diving (retrieving prematurely discarded food), sabotaging technical gadgets, urban agriculture or bicycle demos have percolated from alternative publications into the mainstream. Though often commercialized and co-opted, they have also contributed to social and political change, from legislation on reducing food waste in France to the global Occupy! movement. In Japan, perhaps more than elsewhere, mainstreaming tends to strip ecological benefits away. For example, the Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability concept, formerly championed by the Slow movement, is now widely used to sell luxury commodities. The voluntary simplicity movement may have inspired the home-organizing *minimarisuto* (minimalist) trend, but the latter’s devotees often avoid facing overconsumption by throwing everything away before it crosses their doorstep.

Consumers of alternative media are rarely surprised by a mainstream headline. Readers of *Gijutsu to Ningen* (Technology and Humans), a critical science journal (1972–2005) certainly knew what a major earthquake and tsunami would mean for the Fukushima coast (Takahashi et al. 2012). In the English-speaking world, InsideClimate News’ investigations revealed that

oil company Exxon knew as early as the 1970s that its products caused potentially catastrophic global warming, yet decided to fund campaigns that have successfully turned climate denialism into a major political force. This was picked up by news outlets, retweeted widely as #exxonknew #exxonknew, and has led to public criticism and legal investigations of the company. But green alternative media are no substitute for quality mainstream reporting on environmental issues. This is especially true in Japan, where alternative media lack access to big audiences and mainstream journalism rarely takes cues from them. The matter is different in popular culture, as the following will show.

Close-up 3: Can popular culture make society greener?

All media contain messages about the environment (Lopez 2011). For example, the entirely artificial environments of most space genre video games suggest that we can exist without ecosystems that provide breathable air and nutrients. The underrepresentation of environmental issues in news programs, the overrepresentation of rare animals in nature shows, the ready consumability of plants and animals in advertising, the friendliness and cuteness of wild animals in animation and so on, all work together to reinforce an unsustainable worldview (Corbett 2006). Many environmental communication researchers argue that mainstream media have an overall negative acculturation effect, dubbed the “mindprint” (Lopez 2014).

Anthropocentrism: bête noire of eco-communication

Humans as the crown of creation is a central idea of Western culture, engrained over millennia by religion, art, science, education and popular culture. Media reproduce it in many forms: close-ups of human faces on magazine covers, the hype of technology that promises us independence from nature including our own bodies, the omission of animal suffering in meat marketing, the movie landscapes that are mere backdrops for car chases and leisure activities, even the rhetoric of “natural resources” in some environmental discourse (Corbett 2006, Hansen 2010, Cox 2010). Anthropocentrism is also built into media production. Animals have been part of film production from the beginning, but rarely accorded agency (Burt 2002). Nor have they been considered audiences or users of media, TV-watching pets and computer game-playing zoo animals notwithstanding (de Waal 2016, *Guardian* 2015). Media technologies are all but useless to anyone with paws or high-speed vision, though there are some recent challenges to this (Haraway 2008). Media contents, institutions and technologies are designed *by* humans and *for* humans, reassuring us on every level that we are special among living things.

Anthropocentrism holds that humans are *separate from*, *unique among* and *superior to* other parts of the natural world. However, recent evidence from microbiology to behavioral science suggests the scientific grounds for such ideas are thin (de Waal 2016, Haraway 2008). This comes as no surprise to environmentalist thinkers. They have long considered anthropocentrism a purely ideological construct held together mostly by excessive human self-regard and see it as one of the root causes of environmental destruction. They have developed alternatives with names like deep ecology, eco-feminism, biophilia, or bio-centric, eco-centric, post-humanist, Gaia-oriented and biosystems thinking. Many also draw on Buddhist, animist, aboriginal/indigenous, post- or pre-modern worldviews. Though they diverge on specifics, these proposals emphasize that all elements of the natural world have *intrinsic value* independent of humans, that all systems on Earth are *interconnected and embedded* in each other (expressed in metaphors like “web of life”), and that all organisms (as individuals, societies and even systems) *have agency*. The latter means they have their own motives, modes of being and perceptions, which humans can at very best guess at from within their own (biologically and culturally limited) world of perception and thought.

In *Communicating Nature* Julia Corbett (2006) identifies the following anthropocentric patterns of representation in American media culture: humans at the center of the story and image (humans as main protagonists, nature as object or backdrop), animals/nature as dangerous or friendly to humans (but never indifferent), nature as a commodity and place of leisure and entertainment (Corbett 2006, pp. 85–90). Common messages include that humans can control, destroy or save nature, that science can solve all problems, that nature is a test for humans to measure their strength against, that natural events and animals are either friends or demonic “others,” that boundaries between humans and animals are important and should be enforced, and that animals can act as humans (Corbett 2006, p. 130). Like most environmental communication scholars, Corbett considers such representations problematic, and suggests that alternative patterns could help make societies more sustainable.

Uses and abuses of zoo- and anthropomorphism

Do the many animals that populate Japanese animation and popular culture challenge anthropocentrism? Current debates in cultural animal studies and post-humanism suggest: not necessarily (Berger 2009, Kalof and Fitzgerald 2007, Calarco and Atterton 2004, Borgards 2015). First, as John Berger argued in 1980, in a world where real animals are disappearing, representations of animals soothe our de-natured minds, but leave us more alienated (Berger 2009). This phenomenon, now called techno-biophilia, explains the deceptive use of nature and animals in advertising (greenwash) and technical gadgets, from nature-themed screensavers to cricket-sound alarm clocks. Does the abundance of animal and nature imagery make people more or less concerned about environmental crises? Some psychological research indicates the answer may be “less concerned” (Kahn et al. 2009). This would suggest that virtual nature can destroy real nature.

Second, most animal protagonists are humans with some animal characteristics (zoomorphic humans). For example, Hello Kitty is a human girl, with friends, pets and clothes, albeit one with cat ears and paws. Peppa Pig is, except for her porcine head and occasional snorts, a cheeky British pre-schooler and has even inspired Pepper (sic) Pig recipes named wholly without irony after both the character and the dish’s ingredients (i.e. peppers and pig flesh alias pork, see Martha 2016). To paraphrase Corbett’s comment on Mickey Mouse (2006, p. 196): Peppa Pig and Hello Kitty tell us nothing about animals, but lots about ourselves.

On the other hand, some animal protagonists, those in the Flipper/Lassie tradition, are animals with some human characteristics (anthropomorphic animals). These representations tend to wrongly ascribe or exaggerate human-like traits or abilities, and this can lead to harmful misinterpretations of animals’ actions and needs (Corbett 2006). Advocacy for animal rights also often represents animals as cute and helpless like human children in need of protection (neoteny) (Corbett 2006), which can help create concern for animals and challenge the idea of human uniqueness. At the same time, such representations risk reinforcing human superiority by portraying animals’ social and mental lives as simplified versions of our own. They suggest we should value animals, but only those that resemble us.

Yet not all kinds of anthropomorphism are misleading. Some highlight real similarities or parallels between humans and other animals (de Waal 2016). In the BBC series *Clever Monkeys*, the narrator (star documentarian David Attenborough) emphasizes various monkey cultural achievements (from tree sap farming to theft), while the camera uses close-ups of faces and other visual conventions usually used for portraying humans. The Animal Planet docu-soap/animal reality TV show *Meerkat Manor* positions the viewer as a member of a band of meerkats with cameras inside burrows and key places in the territory and point-of-view shots from tiny tripods (see Haraway 2008 for a post-humanist discussion). Casting their interactions as a story of family bonds and struggles for resources helps viewers identify with these small mammals,



Figure 22.6 *Tanuki as humans in Pom Poko (1994)*

Source: Studio Ghibli

without erasing the essential differences between human and meerkat societies. The *tanuki* in the anime film *Pom Poko* appear largely as villagers fighting for their land, mostly drawn in cartoon-zoomorphic style or even in manga-style as humans without visible animal features (Figure 22.6), but in some scenes they are drawn naturalistically as animals (Figure 22.7). They are at once zoomorphic humans and anthropomorphic animals (and many other things besides, as is their trickster nature), showing the common need of humans and animals for a concrete-free habitat. Such representations could be characterized as *emphatic anthropomorphism*, enabling humans to imagine how other beings experience the world.

Western media culture contains the occasional challenge to anthropocentrism (Heise 2014), but for widespread alternatives, many eco-media researchers point to Japan.

Nature as culture in traditional Japan

Japan has a strong tradition of biophilia (the instinctual attraction of humans to things natural, Kellert and Wilson 1993). Constructions of Japanese identity rely heavily on images of nature. Some of these are conveniently domesticated such as cherry blossoms, bonsai or moss gardens. Others, such as typhoons, tsunamis, Mount Fuji (a volcano) or the powerful Pacific Ocean (e.g. Hokusai's iconic print "Rogue Wave off Kanazawa") celebrate destructive natural forces.

If the European enlightenment seeks to emancipate humans from nature, Japanese traditional arts (from tea to painting) embrace nature as culture. Environmental linguist Arran Stibbe (2012) analyzes how haiku conventions such as the appreciation of the ordinary, animals and plants as agents, things as they are (*sonomama*), and the avoidance of metaphor enshrine eco-centric principles. The interrelatedness of living things is embodied in the requirement for a seasonal world.



Figure 22.7 *Tanuki* as animals in *Pom Poko* (1994)

Source: Studio Ghibli

For a typical example of respect for all living things, he cites Kagano Chiyo's famous morning glory poem, which relates how one rainy morning the poet went to borrow water rather than disturb the morning glory blooming around her well bucket. The Japanese aesthetics of *wabi-sabi* elevate the imperfect, organic, asymmetric, transient, simple and humble (Figure 22.8) (Koren 1994). These values, many scholars argue, also influence the culture of everyday life (Okakura 1906, Stibbe 2012).

Contemporary culture: technophilia and biophilia

Like many observers of Japanese culture, Stibbe (2012) sees the roots of these eco-centric values in animism (formalized in modern Shinto), Buddhism and Taoism. However, he cautions, other cultural currents have forcefully pulled modern Japanese culture the opposite way, notably hierarchical and patriarchal Confucianism, and self-colonialization with Western ideas⁶ including progress obsession, economic fundamentalism, hyper-consumerism and human supremacism. Such currents, Stibbe argues, account for Japan's large environmental footprint, which is lower per capita than most developed countries, but far too high to be sustainable (WWF Japan 2012), and violence against its natural landscapes evident in concrete-covered mountainsides and coasts.

Some cynical observers go further and allege that the professed Japanese love of nature is actually a love of making nature do unnatural things, pointing to bonsai gardening and flower arrangement. Others dismiss the Japanese cultural obsession with seasons, which dictates that the peak of cherry blossom season should be top news in spring or that shops be festooned with plastic maples in autumn as an empty reference to a long-lost agricultural society (see Coulmas 2000).



Figure 22.8 Tea ceremony water bowl by Otagaki Rengetsu (ca. 1870)
Source: courtesy of the Rengetsu Foundation Project (<http://Rengetsu.org>)

In fact, contemporary Japanese animism is not easily co-opted by spiritual romanticism or eco-philosophy. That Japanese temples offer memorial services for defunct robotic dogs causes bemused befuddlement in the West (see Millner 2015). In fact, rituals for animals or inanimate objects from deceased pets to dull sowing needles have a long history of augmenting the incomes of shrines and temples. When house-organizing guru Marie Kondo recommends giving thanks to an unwanted item before disposing of it, she is recycling a once-popular custom rooted in animism. Dear old socks may be felt to have a spirit, though probably a different one from the family cat or the dog robot. In this mindset, humans are indeed not held superior, but they also have no special responsibility to “others” on the planet, beyond a show of good manners. In such a mindset, one should say thank you to that styrofoam bento box and tie it up neatly before tossing it out. Treasure the tree, but also kiss the robot (whose manufacture degrades nature). Japanese animism may be an alternative to anthropocentrism, but not necessarily one that fosters a more sustainable culture, especially when in the service of consumerism.

I concur that “although it is necessary to be selective, aspects of traditional Japanese culture can be drawn on as a source of inspiration for ways of acting more sustainably with natural systems” (Stibbe 2012, p. 138).

Anime and animism

When eco-cinema researchers analyze a film, they examine the “cultural templates [it uses] in portraying nature, how they define humans’ relationship with nonhumans, to what extent they engage with ecological crisis, and what (environmental) ideologies they criticize or encourage” (Heise 2014, p. 305). Some, following Soviet director Eisenstein’s 1944 essay on Disney (Eisenstein and Leyda 1988), also believe animation film preserves and revives animist (or post-humanist) ideas through its technology (animating inanimate drawings) and conventions. “Speaking and acting animals, plants and objects invite the viewer to see humans as only one of the manifestations of liveliness, intentionality, and agency in the fictional worlds of animation,

in which human interests and endeavors are often pitted against those of animals, machines, or objects” (Heise 2014, p. 305). But can eco-anime really provide a template for a more sustainable media culture? Mindful of the aforementioned caveats on Japanese traditional culture and animism (which also apply to post-humanism), I will look at what can be gleaned from eco-anime for a survivalist toolkit.

Ecological crisis in Nausicaa of the Valley of the Winds

Studio Ghibli (Sutajio Jiburi) is sometimes referred to as the Disney of Japan. This indeed gives a sense of its domestic cultural importance, popularity and marketing prowess. Yet, in terms of content and style, it is rather anti-Disney. Its typical heroines and heroes search less for personal happiness than balance and reconciliation between different worlds; romance is at most a side-theme; the landscapes are enormously detailed and realistic, even when they are fantastic; distinctions between good and evil are either irrelevant or purposely blurred; simple solutions for complex problems are not on offer; and endings, more relieving than happy, are usually beginnings of an uncertain future. Environmental communication scholars contend that many of Ghibli’s most popular releases successfully promote eco-centric ideals.

Eco-crisis is a major theme in many Ghibli films (Lioi 2015). In fact, a dystopian eco-fantasy, *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Winds* (1979) enabled its founding by directors Hayao Miyazaki and Isao Takahata. Front and center in *Nausicaa* are all three of Miyazaki’s favorite themes: the relations between humanity and nature, the futility of war and the joy of flight (Morgan 2015).

It opens with a girl wearing something like a gas mask flying through a lush landscape as beautiful as it is hostile. Thousands of years after a war with bio-weapons has laid waste to the earth, dead oceans and jungles of fungi with toxic spores cover much of the planet, and mutant insects and gigantic creatures resembling trilobites (called *ohmus*) roam. The Valley of the Winds is one of the few places where a small human civilization has survived, thriving thanks to rather protected and stable environmental conditions, including an underground source of clean water. However, these conditions are changing – the forest encroaches, the *ohmus* become more aggressive and news arrives of other human enclaves being wiped out. Soon the valley is engulfed in the military struggle of the remaining civilizations. Different groups try to consolidate power and to burn down the Toxic Forest in order to reinstate human superiority over nature. However, this violence further upsets the balance that has allowed humans their precarious existence. The *ohmus* set out to destroy what is left of the humans. This is narrowly averted by Princess Nausicaa, who can communicate with the *ohmus* and has realized (through scientific research) that the Toxic Forest is actually an ecosystem that slowly detoxifies the planet. The deep wells can provide clean water thanks to a complex filtering mechanism, made possible by the fungi who flourish on dead *ohms* and draw pollutants out of the environment (much like fungi and certain plants do in reality with radiation pollution). The landscape introduced so dramatically early in the film turns out not to be a main protagonist and the fearsome *ohmus* are not antagonists, but protectors of the world. The story was partly inspired by Minamata Bay’s destruction and resilience (Cavallaro 2006).

Human–non-human relationships in My Neighbor Totoro

While humanity’s relationship with nature is a central theme in many Ghibli films, it is not always framed in terms of conflict (Fujiki 2015, Stibbe 2012). In *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988), a family moves to the countryside where the children enjoy traditional pleasures: picking flowers, watching tadpoles, planting a garden and harvesting vegetables and they encounter black house spirits (*kurokurosuke*) and furry forest spirits (*totoro*). On the surface, *Totoro* is a nostalgic family movie, but, says Miyazaki, who wrote and directed it, “at the same time, I wanted it to



Figure 22.9 Rural landscape with electric wires in *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988)

Source: Studio Ghibli

be a film where viewers relate Japan's future environmental and ecological problems to the condition of the society which surrounds them" (Miyazaki 1988, quoted in Stibbe 2012, p. 172). The film raises environmental concerns not through the plot, but through its landscapes, colors, close-ups of everyday plants and animals (Stibbe 2012). I add that it also conveys animist ideas through its harmonious cast of beings, including frogs, flowers and even hybrid beings such as the *neko basu* (cat bus), furry and breathing yet with some mechanical elements. Though cars, electric lights, trains, buses and even power lines are part of this landscape (Figure 22.9), they never dominate, and the overall impression is one of a cultural landscape in ecological balance. *Totoro* papers over the problems of real life in the Japanese countryside, such as village politics, economic dependency on environmentally damaging public works projects, conflicts between farmers and wild animals and the large environmental footprint per capita (compared to urban life). Yet it presents a vision of positive relations between humanity and nature. Modest technological development and traditional agriculture, as well as areas of wilderness for gods and animals, with shrines as places of mutual respect. Isn't this how it used to be? Isn't this how it should be?

Environmental ideologies in Princess Mononoke

Princess Mononoke begins with a sign that the world is out of balance. It is the Warring States period (sixteenth century) in the northeast of Honshu (the biggest Japanese island). A giant boar-god attacks one of the last remaining villages of the Emishi tribe and is killed by Prince Ashitaka. Though the shaman tries to appease his spirit with the traditional methods of apologies, offerings, rites and deification, he curses all humans and especially Ashitaka. The shaman divines that the boar has been enraged by a piece of iron inside his body, in the west where the Yamato

people (ethnic Japanese) live. Ashitaka's only chance is to find out what turned the boar into a *tatarigami* (god of fury). Ashitaka heads west.

There he finds different groups of animals, humans and spirits struggling over the fate of the Big Forest and its god, *Shishigami*. This god is sometimes visible as a monkey-faced stag in the day and a giant, vaguely anthropomorphic gelatinous form at night. Reputedly the source of life and death in the forest, the various Yamato humans aim to kill him. Lady Eboshi wants to burn with impunity the trees in her iron-works with the help of her loyal group of former prostitutes, cowherds and lepers, and reduce the fearsome forest creatures to harmless animals. The emperor sends his spies and hunters under the monk Jigo's lead to bring him the god's head, rumored to confer immortality. The local warlord lusts after Lady Eboshi's iron and fire-cannons, proto-guns which empower her women and lepers to blow samurai to pieces. These different humans are pitted against each other and against the (equally divided) beings of the forest. The *yamainu* (Japanese wolves) led by Moro, Princess Mononoke's foster mother, attack humans at every chance. The traditionally peaceful *shoujou* (ape-like creatures) who, having in vain tried to replant the forest, turn to desperate measures, chanting: "Want human power. Power to kill human. Therefore we eat human." The *inoshishi* (boars) sacrifice themselves in a futile battle against humans.

In the end, the forest is devastated: The tree-spirits and small animals are gone, most bigger animals and the giant animal-gods are slain. The humans have suffered, too: many are dead and the iron town is destroyed. The forest god no longer transforms himself every dawn and dusk.

Mononoke depicts a clash of ideologies: shamanic (Ashitaka and his tribe), bio-centric (Princess Mononoke and the various groups of animals/animal gods), anthropocentric (Lady Eboshi, a techno-feminist; the emperor, and Asano the local warlord – both power-hungry patriarchs), Buddhist (Jigo) and spiritual-animist (the forest god and his plants and spirits). Miyazaki's sympathies are clearly with Ashitaka's indigenous culture and the creatures of the Great Forest. The plot suggests that when human supremacism replaces shamanism and bio-centric ideas, destruction ensues. Yet human supremacism and industrial development are not villainized. The emperor's hunters and spies are spared, even as they close in on the forest god. Jigo takes great risks to obtain the god's head, but when he ultimately fails, he is unruffled. In the Buddhist view, all beings (humans, animals, spirits and gods included) are trapped in suffering, desires and illusion. Finally, Lady Eboshi is Princess Mononoke's arch-enemy, and a power-hungry human supremacist hardliner: "Watch closely everyone. I'm going to show you how to kill a god. A god of life and death." Yet her motives are understandable as part of a history in which gods and animals have traditionally had the upper hand, and some humans (female, poor and/or infirm) were always at the bottom of the pecking order. For them, the prospect of a violent change to the status quo brings hope. Eboshi's iron works is a kind of development project, exploiting natural resources and adapting technology to bring dignity to the socially outcast while of course also empowering and enriching herself.

Mononoke mixes historical fact (or at least plausible conjecture) with animism and mythology. The Warring States period was indeed a turning point in Japanese development, with advances in iron production, though the large-scale introduction of fire weapons came much later. The weakening of beliefs in gods, the destruction of aboriginal cultures (Emishi culture disappeared before the seventeenth century, but Ainu and Ryukyuan cultures are currently fighting for survival and renaissance), the felling of almost all of Japan's virgin forests and the extermination of wolves are all historic facts. Shamanistic rituals are certainly powerless to restore ecological balance to a world so far out of whack. Yet the closing suggests that a new kind of peace between humans and other beings can be negotiated, provided humans do not cross a certain line. Princess Mononoke and Ashitaka manage to return the forest god's head to him, preventing

total destruction of all life (though something like a nuclear blast occurs). The landscape at the end is sunny and open. A second growth-forest is pushing up, and in the last shot a tiny tree spirit bobs his head.

The environmentalist mindprint and consumerist footprint of eco-anime

In Studio Ghibli productions, human characters feature prominently, but they are not separate from, unique among or superior to other beings. Spirits, plants, fungi, gods, monsters, animals, robots and ecosystems all have agency, and their own worlds independent of humans. Animal protagonists act sometimes as stand-ins for humans (zoomorphism), but more often offer a way to imagine other beings' worldviews (emphatic anthropomorphism). The films portray ways to rethink the relationships between humanity and nature, and while sometimes nostalgic, they do not suggest an unrealistic return to traditional values and religions.

Yet, for all its positive messages, eco-anime is no panacea. First, there is the dilemma of media effects. While cultural effects are not easily ascertained, there are some indications. On the one hand, *Mononoke* is widely credited with promoting the UNESCO World Heritage Site on Yakushima Island. Many viewers wanted to see the virgin forests that inspired *Mononoke*, bringing eco-tourism (though not entirely unproblematic), and leading to many direct nature experiences, which influence environmental attitudes and behaviors (Louv 2005). On the other hand, the social effect of a media text is not determined by its makers' intentions, but by its uses and readings within various cultural contexts. Ghibli's productions have greatly influenced Japanese visual culture. However, its echoes in anime, manga and video games suggest the environmentalist messages are less attractive than their epic battles and fantasy creatures. For example, Miyazaki may have aimed in *Nausicaä* to promote eco-feminist and anti-war messages, but video game makers have been mostly inspired to recycle its violent scenes and sexualized female representations, which they put into the service of misogynist, anti-environmental and/or war-glorifying plots.

So do environmentally positive, intelligent, complex, non-anthropocentric media actually create more positive effects than negative ones? Research on environmental activist films such as *An Inconvenient Truth* indicates their effect on viewers' actions is temporary at best (Nolan 2010, Jacobsen 2011). But perhaps avid consumers of Ghibli productions really do have less anthropocentric attitudes, which eventually could become the basis of political and cultural change, or perhaps Ghibli movies have inspired prominent environmentalists? Considering how influential American nature writing and photography were in the formation of early US environmental movements, this seems at least plausible. More ethnographic and empirical research is needed to clarify whether Ghibli's environmentalist portrayals change attitudes and, more importantly, actions.

Second, there is the issue of utopianism and escapism. Eisenstein was fascinated by Disney's ability to "touch the deepest parts of the human psyche," but he also saw in its animism, totemism and plasmatic flexibility symptoms of "a society that has completely enslaved nature" (Eisenstein and Leyda 1988, p. 4). Alternative conceptions of inter-species relations are certainly a tool for survival for the medium term. In the short term, however, one should be wary of magical thinking: Harmony cannot be re-established through mystical heroines, and nature may be resilient, but not infinitely so. Science suggests there are planetary tipping points (Hansen 2008), after which irreparable damage occurs.

Third, there is the ecological materialist critique. *Tōtoro* may have sparked conversations on environmental issues, but it has also sold a lot of merchandise. Ghibli studios use the Totoro character as their logo, and license its use on anything from stuffed animals to bathroom slippers. Of course one can argue that if people are going to buy toilet slippers, one may as well sell them a

potential eco-message to contemplate. But to offset the footprint of all the Ghibli merchandise (not to speak the effects of cross-marketing with airlines, food giants and other big environmental polluters), those eco-messages would have to lead to a whole lot of pro-environmental behavior.

This leads, fourth, to the dilemmas of all environmental media production, including this text. All media use resources and cause pollution at every stage, from drafting a text on paper to downloading the finished product in order to read it (Maxwell and Miller 2012). In order to get environmental messages heard, you have to use paper, server space, electricity or the like, and hope your pro-environmental effects (handprint) will more than justify the expenditure of resources (footprint). Given what we know about the unintended effects of media, this is always a gamble. But the responsible eco-media maker can lower the stakes by minimizing waste and resource use in production and distribution, and buying carbon offsets for the rest.⁷

Closing shot: media studies for survival

So what tools do we have for making society more sustainable? Focusing on TEPCO's Fukuichi disaster, we saw that to mitigate and adapt to disasters, citizens need trustworthy information quickly, and that media reasonably undistorted by commercial, conspiracist and government interests are key. A healthy media system, including media-literate audiences and producers, is also a necessary – albeit not sufficient – condition for survival.

Focusing on efforts to popularize environmentalist ideas, we saw great potential in green news media and anime, but also many pitfalls, partly because these function inside a highly commercialized culture. Researchers, audiences and producers of media need to more consciously encourage, develop and support media (texts and institutions) whose positive influence (handprint) measurably outweighs the environmental cost of their production and distribution (footprint).

The sino-Japanese word for crisis, *kiki*, combines the characters for “danger” and “opportunity.” When crisis erupts, a window of opportunity for positive change opens, though it usually closes quickly. It is vital to have technologies of survival in stock, such as ecomedia literacy, green mainstream and alternative media and cultural institutions that work on the ethical and philosophical underpinnings for sustainability. While developing such technologies can often take a long time, history – from retooling the US economy for war in 1943 (Brown 2010) to voluntary energy savings in Japan in 2011 – suggests that quick changes are in fact possible.

Rather than looking through the lens of media, we need to put our hands into the dirt around us. Real dirt, but also the metaphorical dirt of wherever our work is: take our pension funds out of fossil fuels, and turn our research into eco-activism, whatever our field. There will be another time for studying the unique and curious features of Japanese media culture – if we turn away from the climate cliff. As Kyoto Award winner Lester Brown (2010) put it: “Saving civilization is not a spectator sport.” Media, communication and cultural studies must become part of survival studies.

Notes

- 1 For an overview of the field, see, the International Environmental Communication Association's website (<http://theIECA.org>) and its journal, *Environmental Communication* (Taylor & Francis).
- 2 I use the term TEPCO Fukuichi below as shorthand for the nuclear disaster, as it focuses on the facility and its operator rather than its hosts, i.e. Fukushima prefecture and its people.
- 3 My friend and colleague Ikeda Kayo coined the term *reiseina panikku* (level-headed panic).

- 4 That many environmental issues are most severe far from the centers of power (which is where news media have their offices) is sometimes by coincidence – for example global warming happens to threaten the tropics and the poles more than moderate climates – but more often by design. High-risk facilities are often sited in disadvantaged communities due to environmental discrimination.
- 5 I co-founded this network and coordinated its website BNDjapan.org.
- 6 From the 1860s on Japan has resolutely endorsed Western culture, and succeeded at not just avoiding political colonization, but “joining” the West as a powerful player. Okakura (1906, p. 7), explaining Japanese tea-ism to a Western audience, complained: “[The Westerner] was wont to regard Japan as barbarous while she engaged in the gentle arts of peace: he calls her civilized since she began to commit wholesale slaughter on Manchurian battlefields [in the Russo-Japanese War].”
- 7 While there is some debate about the concept of carbon offsets and problems with many offset schemes, it is for now the only possibility for media makers to get their footprint to zero and still get something to an audience. For Hadl (2016), for example, I purchased carbon offsets from Switzerland-based NGO MyClimate (www.myclimate.org/).

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Part V

Japanese media and the global



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Cultural policy, cross-border dialogue and cultural diversity

Koichi Iwabuchi

'Cool Japan' has become a cultural policy buzzword in Japan. While it originally meant the international popularity of Japanese media and consumer cultures and Japan's nationalistic discourses on the phenomenon, the term has been adopted as a major cultural policy and a substantial amount of money has been invested in the last decade with the aim to further promote Japanese media and consumer culture in the world. However, there are ever more critical appraisals of the policy's implementation. Some argue that Cool Japan is an old phenomenon of the 1990s and Japanese media culture is not so popular any more. Some argue that the self-claiming of 'we are cool' is itself rather uncool. Some argue that the Cool Japan policy is not effective in promoting Japanese culture overseas and only large media production companies and advertising companies make profits from it while the working conditions of media industries such as animation and game remains unimproved. Thus one would be reasonably inclined to dismiss Cool Japan. However, it is still a mainstream cultural policy and will continue to be so towards Tokyo Olympics 2020. And the problem of the Cool Japan policy is not limited to ineffective operation and negligible impact in terms of the promotion of Japanese culture and the enhancement of Japan's creative capabilities. While the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) has been taking the initiative of Cool Japan policy development, it is becoming more economy-oriented. The Cool Japan policy has serious implications for cultural matters. Looking into the enhancement of soft power and cultural diplomacy – especially 'pop culture diplomacy' – as part of the Cool Japan policy, this chapter argues that it is principally a one-way projection of national images in line with the idea of nation branding and its rapid development has accompanied the cost of two key cultural issues being disengaged – the promotion of cross-border dialogue, especially the one over historically constituted issues in East Asia, and the fostering of cultural diversity within national borders.

Pop culture diplomacy to creative industries

The policy discussion of utilizing culture and media communication to enhance Japan's image in the international arena is never new in Japan. It eventually began as early as the 1920s and 1930s, when Japan aspired to become an imperial and colonial power equivalent to Euro-American counterparts (Sato 2012). Although the country's defeat during the Second World War and the

subsequent American occupation interrupted this discussion, the potential of media culture for cultural diplomacy began to draw attention again in the late 1980s. The growing popularity of Japanese TV programs in Asian countries demonstrated that Japan's colonial past did not prevent Japanese culture from being received in the region and thus the capability of Japanese media culture to improve Japan's reputation began attracting wider attention. In 1988, the Takeshita government for the first time established a discussion panel on international cultural exchange with a focus on the promotion of exporting TV programs to Asian countries. In 1991, the then Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the then Ministry of Post and Telecommunications jointly established the Japan Media Communication Center to provide subsidies to developing countries importing Japanese TV programs. An especially influential factor in this development was the far-reaching popularity of *Oshin*, the Japanese soap opera about the eventful life of Japanese women in the early twentieth century, which was broadcast from April 1983 to March 1984 in Japan. The drama was distributed free of charge to many Asian countries as well as the Middle East and South America under the cultural exchange program of the Japan Foundation. Furthermore, rapid economic growth and the accompanied expansion of a middle-class youth culture in other Asian countries in the 1990s enhanced the relevance of Japanese media culture that represents the contemporary urban lifestyle of youth. The 1990s was the high point of the reception of Japanese TV dramas, popular music, animation and comic books, particularly in East and Southeast Asian countries. The favorable reception of Japanese media culture in Asia was something unexpected, as local media industries and audiences in the different countries had taken the initiative (Iwabuchi 2002). The locally driven spread of Japanese media culture further heightened the expectations among Japanese policy makers to promote Japan's better image in Asia by disseminating Japanese media culture.

It was under the Koizumi government (2001–2006) that policy concerned with the uses of media culture for enhancing national interests was firmly instituted for the first time in Japan. Koizumi was the first prime minister to refer to the advancement of cultural policy that aimed to promote media culture export and nation branding, stating in an address to the Diet that the government would strengthen the international projection of Japan's attractive brand images by advancing content industries such as film, animation and fashion.¹ Many committees focusing on the promotion of Japanese media culture were established, such as the Head Office for Intellectual Property Strategy (2002), the Committee for Tourism Nation (2003), the Committee for Information Software (2003), the Research Committee for Content Business (2005), the J-Brand Initiative (2003), and the Council for the Promotion of International Exchange (2006). Such rapid development had been made in a context in which Euro-American media covered the stories of the increasing popularity of Japanese media culture.² Euro-American approval prompted excitement about Japan's increasing cultural presence in the world in the context of the long Japanese economic slump since the mid-1990s, which had generated active policy discussion of the promotion of Japanese media culture.

In the course of these developments, influenced by Euro-American rhetoric and practice, the expression 'Cool Japan' thus gained currency as an umbrella policy term to incorporate diverse areas of interest of various ministries and government departments.³ While there is still no single ministry that plans and implements a coherent cultural diplomacy policy, METI has been taking the initiative in the implementation of the Cool Japan policy as it established the Cool Japan promotion office in June 2010. In 2013, the Cabinet Secretariat also set up 'the Council for the Promotion of Cool Japan' and 50 billion yen was allocated in the national budget for infrastructure promoting Japanese content overseas to spread the charm of Japanese culture internationally (which also includes food, fashion, tourism and traditional craft). METI adopted the term 'creative industries' for the English translation of the Cool Japan promotion office.

This development of the Cool Japan policy suggests that a concern with the economic benefit is mounting, but the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) has also been actively incorporating the idea of promoting Japanese media culture overseas into its public diplomacy program. Under the Koizumi government, MOFA integrated two distinct ministry sections devoted respectively to cultural diplomacy and international cultural exchange, and international publicity into a single Public Diplomacy Department in 2004. The term 'public diplomacy' was for the first time officially adopted in the *2004 Diplomatic Bluebook* and MOFA officially adopted a policy of pop culture diplomacy in 2006, which aims to further the understanding and trust of Japan by using pop culture as a key tool.⁴ Putting a clear emphasis on the capitalization of the international popularity of Japanese media culture, MOFA expanded its focus of cultural diplomacy via media culture beyond Asian regions. And, as I will discuss shortly, this move coincided with the rise of mutual antagonism between Japan, China and South Korea.

Soft power to nation branding

The development of pop culture diplomacy, and more broadly 'Cool Japan', was pushed by the globalized discourses of soft power and nation branding in the exercise of cultural policy. While first coined by Joseph Nye (1990) in the early 1990s post-Cold War context, the notion of 'soft power' became more widely discussed in the new millennium in many parts of the world. While soft power was revisited in search of a more diplomatic approach to world security within the US (e.g., Nye 2004), the increasing concern with nation branding has made the notion of soft power internationally more relevant, albeit with some significant alterations. Nye (2004) makes it clear that media culture is just one of three resources for enhancing the soft power of the nation-state, and the other two resources of respectful foreign policy and attractive democratic values are more fundamental. However, as many governments including Japan are interested in practical uses of media culture to establish appealing images of the nation, smooth international political negotiations and boost the economy, the soft power argument has actually been superseded by the logic of nation branding (Fan 2008). As Fan (2010, p. 101) defines it, nation branding can be conceived as 'a process by which a nation's images can be created or altered, monitored, evaluated and proactively managed in order to enhance the country's reputation among a target international audience'. The globalization of the soft power discourse, combined with the idea of nation branding thus puts the focus further on the international projection of appealing images of a nation.

East Asian countries are no exception to promoting national cultural products and industries to internationally enhance the image of the nation. It is well known that the South Korean government has sought to build on the sweeping popularity of South Korean media culture known as the 'Korean Wave'. The Korean success then stirred Japan and other East Asian countries to further promote media culture overseas, so much so that the soft power competition has been intensifying across East Asia in the twenty-first century (Chua 2012). In 2006, the then foreign minister Aso gave a speech entitled 'A New Look at Cultural Diplomacy' to would-be creators learning creative skills related to the production of digital cultures at a creator training school, Digital Hollywood near Akihabara. In this speech the foreign minister stressed the imperative-ness of establishing the good brand image of Japan by disseminating media culture and even stated that 'any kind of cultural diplomacy that fails to take advantage of pop culture is not really worthy of being called cultural diplomacy'.⁵

We want pop culture, which is so effective in penetrating throughout the general public, to be our ally in diplomacy ... one part of diplomacy lies in having a competitive brand image, so to speak. Now more than ever, it is impossible for this to stay entirely within the realm of

the work of diplomats ... what we need to do now is to build on this foundation [the fact that Japan already has achieved a good image] and attract people of the world to Japanese culture, whether modern or that handed down from antiquity.⁶

Referring to the 2006 BBC World Service poll about countries' positive and negative influence in the world, which included Japan for the first time, Aso proudly announced that Japan was among the most favorably recognized nations in the world,⁷ and went on to propose to boost Japan's brand image further by disseminating Japanese media culture (especially manga and anime). In 2006, as part of pop culture diplomacy, MOFA began sponsoring the World Cosplay Summit, which is annually held in Japan. MOFA also appointed the popular animation character, *Doraemon*, as Anime Ambassador in 2008 and three young female fashion leaders as 'Ambassadors of Cute' to travel the world to promote Japanese culture. MOFA distinguishes itself from METI in its engagement with Cool Japan by emphasizing that the purpose of the promotion of Japanese media culture is not restricted to economic profit as the enhancement of Japan's cultural standing in the world is the key mission. However, its pop culture diplomacy is not fundamentally different from METI's economy-driven policies in that they both are preoccupied with improving Japan's brand image through the promotion of Japanese media culture.

Engaging with cross-border dialogue?

While soft power strategies need to be examined through case studies of their actual operation, any empirical judgment of whether and how soft power of the nation can be enhanced and nations can be successfully branded are eventually quite difficult to verify (Fan 2010; Anholt 2013). And many stakeholders such as officials in various ministries, public relations advisory organizations, and media industries involved in soft power and branding programs bring diverse intentions and approaches to it, which might result in incoherent and even contradictory policy actions (Aronczyk 2013). The consistency and effectiveness of pop culture diplomacy and the Cool Japan policy in selling more Japanese cultural products and enhancing certain national images, as policy makers contend, is also questionable. Furthermore, the policy discussion focuses on how to make the best use of existing international appeal (supposed as such) of Japanese media culture as export commodity without developing a comprehensive policy for developing industries and enhancing creativity by tackling the improvement of working environments to enhance creativity and the globally structured issues of labor conditions and copyright control. This is why Japanese media industries and many creators are skeptical of the effectiveness of the state's policy to help new kinds of cultural creativity originating in Japan to flourish and thus advance the export of media cultural products and to be of any benefit to creators in Japan.⁸

In relation to pop culture diplomacy, a significant question concerns whether it can achieve a crucial objective of the promotion of international cultural exchange. As Fan (2008, p. 16) points out, 'The world is increasingly like a gigantic stage on which nations are competing against each other for attention and affection.' Nation branding holds the key to win this global 'beauty contest'. Likewise, driven by the globalization of soft power policy in tandem with the exercise of nation branding, a one-way projection of appealing Japanese culture is the principal operation of pop culture diplomacy. This is not to deny the potential that exposure to the media culture of Japan could enhance the understanding of culture and society in Japan, even if in a one-way manner. On the contrary, some studies including mine show how increased media connection in Asia has encouraged people to critically and self-reflexively reconsider their own life, society and culture, and revisit socio-historically constituted relations and perceptions with others (e.g. Iwabuchi 2002; 2004). However, extra efforts are needed to direct cross-border connections into

pathways of mutuality and exchange if cultural policy aims to promote international exchange and dialogue (Holden 2013), and pop culture diplomacy does not seem to show a serious commitment to such an objective.

How to deal with the unresolved historical issues of Japanese colonialism and imperialism in other East Asian countries, especially China and South Korea, is an important touchstone. In the above-mentioned speech, Aso did not mention the fact that the two countries showed very negative perceptions of Japan in the 2006 BBC survey. This reaction was pushed by the contradictory practices of the Koizumi government: while emphasizing the importance of exporting Japanese media culture to construct harmonious relations with other countries, Prime Minister Koizumi's persistent official visits to the Yasukuni Shrine further strengthened anti-Japanese sentiment in China and South Korea.⁹ The Japanese government has thus dealt with historical and territorial issues in East Asia in a manner that is at odds with the advancement of international exchange with neighboring countries. The intensification of anti-Japanese demonstrations in China and South Korea also revealed immature assumptions of pop culture diplomacy that the spread of Japanese media culture would soften historically constituted antagonistic sentiments. When Aso was appointed foreign minister in 2005, he told reporters that Japan's relationship with China should be unproblematic inasmuch as many young people in China were enjoying Japanese manga.¹⁰ Similarly, the 2005 White Paper produced by Japan's Economic and Trade Ministry clearly stated that 'without the spread of Japanese pop culture, anti-Japanese sentiment would have been stronger in South Korea'. It is assumed that South Korean young people who like to consume Japanese media culture will feel more tolerant towards the history of Japan's colonial rule.

Needless to say, the reality is not as simple as such reasoning suggests. In South Korea and China, many of those who enjoy receiving Japanese media culture take historical issues seriously, and that is separated from the pleasure of media consumption. In Beijing in October 2005, I listened to young people in China simultaneously stating that 'I really enjoy Japanese animation and it is my favourite', and 'I am very concerned with what happened between Japan and my country in the past'. A sympathetic reception of Japanese media culture might improve the image of Japan, but it neither erases the past nor people's memories of it. Media culture has no dreamlike capacity to transcend historical issues. Historical issues should be tackled sensibly, continuously and on their own terms. Let me underscore again that transnational circulation of media culture in East Asia does facilitate mutual understanding and mediated exchange in an unmatched manner. If we take this potential seriously, cultural policy should aspire to further facilitate cross-border dialogue among citizens over various issues including conflict-laden historical ones. A cultural diplomacy strategy should pursue a way of taking pop culture connections as a starting point to advance international cultural exchange through a sincere engagement with 'historical truthfulness' that can be fostered by encouraging people to self-reflexively rethink their views of the past and to exchange them with others (Morris-Suzuki 2005).

The historically constituted antagonisms with the two countries over territorial disputes and 'comfort women' have actually been worsening in recent years with the growing vicious circle of (cyber-)nationalism and jingoism in East Asia (see e.g., Sakamoto 2011, Kim 2014). In this geopolitical atmosphere, we have been observing an increased public diplomacy activity with the aim of publicizing Japan's positions on matters such as territorial disputes and more strongly asserting Japan's international standing rather than policy interventions to promote cross-border dialogue to tackle the inter-Asian jingoism.¹¹ While pop culture diplomacy is still one of the main policy actions of cultural exchange, MOFA puts more emphasis on public diplomacy since 2012, which clearly reflects Japan's changing relationship with China and South Korea. With the substantial rise of their political, economic and cultural powers, the rising soft power profile of

China and South Korea in terms of media culture and language education has rendered them less the main targets of pop culture diplomacy than serious rivals in the soft power and public diplomacy competition in the international community.

Fostering cultural exchange and cultural diversity?

Another crucial limitation that Cool Japan and pop culture diplomacy display is concerned with how the policy initiative of projecting the nation's brand images in the world has a drawback in terms of domestic implications for the engagement with cultural diversity. Although mutual respect for cultural diversity and international cultural exchange is claimed as an objective of cultural diplomacy in Japan,¹² what it promotes is a nation-to-nation kind of cultural exchange and cultural diversity. It does not engage with, or even suppresses, the issue regarding marginalized voices and multicultural questions within Japan. Cultural diplomacy enacted in conjunction with nation branding is not only projected externally, but also domestically mobilizes citizens, as they are encouraged to join in 'as representatives, stakeholders and customers' of the brand and 'act and think in ways that are well suited to the general contours of the national brand' (Varga 2014, p. 836). People are invited to perform as ambassadors for the nation-branding campaign as was clearly shown by the appointment of the 'Ambassador of Cute', and with Aso's call for the help of 'would-be creators' and for active participants in further enhancing the 'Japan brand'.

Furthermore, the internal projection of the nation's brand image has much to do with the exclusionary reconstruction of a narrative of the nation. Recently, critical scholarly attention has been paid more to its relevance to the reconstruction of national identity (e.g., Jansen 2008; Kaneva 2011; Volcic and Andrejevic 2011; Aronczyk 2013). The international projection of attractive images of a nation eventually necessitates the rearticulation of the selective narratives, symbolic meanings, and widely accepted stereotypical images of that nation to be appealingly represented as a coherent entity. As Jansen (2008, p. 122) argued, 'Branding not only explains nations to the world but also reinterprets national identity in market terms and provides new narratives for domestic consumption'. The growing interest in nation branding pushes the racialized rearticulation of selective narratives, symbolic meanings, and widely recognized images of the nation in search of the distinctive cultural assets or 'cultural DNA' of the nation to be internationally projected.¹³ One policy maker of the 'Japan Brand project' states that it is necessary to reevaluate 'Japan' to properly discern its distinctive cultural DNA and strategically apply it to Japanese products and services.¹⁴ The Japan country report of the EU's recent *Preparatory Action: Culture in the EU's external relations* also endorsed this move by pointing out that Japan's public/cultural diplomacy and the Cool Japan policy aims to 'enhance awareness of the "uniqueness" of Japan' (Fisher 2014, pp. 3–4) by taking 'an approach which is based on Japan's portrayal of itself as ethnically and linguistically homogeneous and culturally unique'.

Arguably such a narrative of the nation is made in market terms and thus is superficial and ahistorical, lacking substantial depth and coherence. And while 'branded imagination seeks to infiltrate and subsume the symbolic order of nationhood', there is no guarantee that it succeeds in internally obtaining people's consent over the national narrative with which they are encouraged to identify (Kaneva 2011, p. 11). Nevertheless, its role in the dissemination of an exclusive conception of the nation as cultural entity should not be underestimated in terms of the disavowal of socio-cultural differences within the nation (Aronczyk 2013; Kaneva 2011). While from time to time the traditional culture of some ethnically minoritized groups might be internationally projected as tokenized multicultural commodities, the kinds of media culture promoted for international circulation are chiefly those that are commercially mainstream in their countries

of origin, and there is not much space for socially and culturally marginalized voices within the nation. The growing concern with cultural diplomacy and nation branding even suppresses a vital cultural policy engagement with cultural diversity within Japan. One remarkable example is the advancement of NHK World as a most significant international platform to disseminate the perspectives of the Japanese government as well as to introduce Japanese culture. In early 2006, the expansion of international broadcasting services had begun to be discussed in Japan, and the renewed services of NHK World commenced in February 2009. Actually, the discussions of the service started when foreign nationals residing in Japan requested then Prime Minister Koizumi to culturally and linguistically diversify the Japanese broadcasting service to meet the demands of people of various ethnic and linguistic backgrounds in Japan. Koizumi agreed with their request, but in a Cabinet meeting several days later, it eventually resulted in the expansion of an English-language international broadcasting service for the purpose of enhancing national images and conveying the opinions of the Japanese government to the world. The concern with enhancing Japan's national image in the world for the promotion of political and economic interests obviously overwhelmed the broadcasting system's public mission to provide due service to citizens of diverse socio-cultural backgrounds.

Aronczyk (2013, p. 176) argues that 'the mundane practices of nation branding do serve to perpetuate the nation form ... Because they perpetuate a conversation about what the nation is *for* in a global context'. As soft power and nation branding has become a globalized discourse and policy action, there has also been the considerable growth of international mediated spectacles and cultural events in which a projection of national cultures and brand images is *mutually* exhibited, consumed, evaluated and competed (see Roche 2000; Urry 2003), and functions to endorse the nation as the most meaningful form of collective identification and the main unit of international cultural exchange. This development has disseminated the idea among the populace that the promotion of nation branding is very important for the promotion of national interest.¹⁵ They also widely institute what Beck (2006, p. 29) calls a 'nationalist outlook', which encourages people to take a container model of territorial understanding of culture, conceive 'the global as the maximum intensification of the national', and comprehend cultural diversity mostly as that between nations.

This kind of conception of international cultural exchange and cultural diversity has a serious bearing on the disengagement with the growing multicultural situation in Japan. The Japanese government has not adopted an 'immigration policy' and its multiculturalism policy is still seriously underdeveloped, displaying a striking difference from the rapid progression of cultural policy to promote the international circulation of Japanese media culture. Although Japanese policy makers began discussing this topic in 2005 when the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications established the Committee for the Promotion of Multicultural Co-living (*tabunka kyousei*), such initiatives still lack substantial policies for social integration and multiculturalism. The government delegates actual support for and handling of foreign nationals living in Japan to local governments and nongovernmental and nonprofit organizations and thus refuses to consider the multicultural question as a national matter. The multicultural coliving policy discussion evades the vital question of who Japanese citizens are, proper members of society, and keeps intact the rigid boundary between 'Japanese' and 'foreigners'. Based on a bi-polarized conception of 'Japanese' and 'foreigners', the engagement with cultural diversity within Japan tends to be reduced to the advancement of international cultural exchange between 'Japanese' and 'foreigners'.¹⁶ In this point, multicultural coliving co-opts the aspirations of Cool Japan. The dissemination of attractive Japanese cultures is assumed to promote international cultural exchange, but it generally extends only to the one-way encouragement of foreigners to deepen their appreciation of Japan. This kind of international exchange is further expected to incite

foreigners' interest in visiting, traveling, and staying in Japan. And this is often considered as a form of international cultural exchange to be facilitated under a multicultural coliving program that local governments and universities actively develop.¹⁷ Hence, policy concerns of multicultural coliving and pop culture diplomacy and Cool Japan conjointly advance an international cultural exchange based on the bipolarized notion of the Japanese and the foreigner and interact to discount the attention to growing ethnic and cultural diversity within Japan.

The policy discussion of creative industries has pointed out the significance of fostering cultural diversity for its development (e.g., Florida 2002). In Japan, this concern is approached in terms of accepting foreign talent from overseas. Since 2014, the Japanese government and METI has started seriously to discuss easing the granting of a long-stay visa to talented creators as part of the Cool Japan project. As one key member of the Cool Japan Fund states:

Continuously introducing foreign cultural elements and maintaining the cultural diversity is vital. TOKYO 2020 is a big chance for us to energize innovation through promoting diversity. One of our most important recommendations is promoting immigration of creative industry professionals. This is the perfect time to open Japan up to the world with a focus on two keywords – culture and creativity.¹⁸

This discussion is reminiscent of the global trend of eagerly accepting talented and creative workers useful to the national economy, while strictly regulating the intake of other kinds of migrants. We are witnessing the discussion of the acceptance of foreign temporary labor from Asian regions for the construction work for the Tokyo Olympics 2020, the event that is closely overlying the Cool Japan project. How the policy discussion of accepting beneficial foreigners for the Cool Japan project will be implemented and how many people will actually enter Japan through this scheme remains to be seen. Yet it is crucial to closely watch what sort of cultural diversity is encouraged and embraced with a stress on talent and excellence that meets the demand of the Cool Japan policy and what kind of impact it will have on the recognition and inclusion of the already existing ethnic and cultural diversity within Japan.

Re-orienting cultural policy

The substantial development of the Cool Japan policy in the last decade focuses upon the projection of a selected national image by exporting appealing cultural products for the sake of the national interest and does not engage with or even suppresses crucial questions of who is the actual beneficiary, how cross-border dialogue can be further advanced, and how growing cultural diversity within Japan is fostered. While there have been emerging hopeful signs that trans-Asian culture connections facilitate mutual understanding and mediated interaction at the grassroots level, we need to develop a pedagogical intervention to pursue their full potential. Cultural policy should aim to develop a public pedagogy to make better use of media culture and transnational connections, fostering them to promote self-reflexive cross-border dialogue on the worsening antagonism over historical issues.

A crucial issue that the Japanese case highlights is the necessity of cultural policy to take seriously its *domestic* implications in order to promote cultural exchange and cross-border dialogue beyond the consolidation of a homogenized and exclusive understanding of national culture. Recently we have witnessed the expansion of the scope of cultural diplomacy to place greater emphasis on fostering mutuality and cultural exchange and on putting more emphasis on the interaction with the internal public as well as external audiences (Holden 2013). To advance cross-border dialogue, the development of 'domestic cultural diplomacy' is required so as to

encourage the national populace to learn about and listen to others rather than merely projecting an image of itself (p. 11). Learning about others requires us to unlearn a pre-defined framework of knowing about 'us' and 'them', and rethink why and how 'us' has been perceived in a way to not embrace 'them' as being with and part of 'us'. Such domestic exercise of cultural policy would elucidate hitherto unrecognized relationships between 'us' and 'them' in terms of transnationally shared problems, historical narratives, culturally diverse compositions of a nation, and human mobility within and across borders. It does not negate the promotion of the national interest but expands its scope in a more open, dialogic, and inclusive way that goes beyond the pursuit of narrowly focused economic and political objectives. Cultural policy discussion will be further advanced as we approach the Tokyo Olympics 2020 in Japan and the next few years will be crucial for all stakeholders to actively engage with progressing cultural policy in ways to democratize society, make the nation more inclusive, and engage with the public good.

Notes

- 1 Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi's Policy Address at the National Diet, January 20, 2005.
- 2 One of the most influential reports coined the term 'Gross National Cool' or GNC and portrayed the rise of Japan as a global cultural superpower (McGray 2002).
- 3 A TV program titled 'Cool Japan' (NHK BS2) also started in 2006.
- 4 MOFA's official webpage: www.mofa.go.jp/policy/culture/exchange/pop/
- 5 www.mofa.go.jp/announce/fin/aso/speech0604-2.html
- 6 Aso Taro, 'A New Look at Cultural Diplomacy: A Call to Japan's Cultural Practitioners'. Speech made at Digital Hollywood University, Tokyo, April 28, 2006.
- 7 Country Rating Poll 2006: www.globescan.com/news_archives/bbc06-3/index.html
- 8 This is also related to the fact that Japanese media industries have developed due to the great efforts made by media creators and corporations without the help of the state's promotion policy in the post-war era. For example there has been no quota policy of regulating the import of foreign TV programs (as is also the case with Hong Kong), but the Japanese domestic TV market became nearly self-sufficient in the early 1970s. Media cultural industries in Japan have a sense of pride that they have developed creative production capacity by themselves and thus are cynical of the state's capacity to understand the process of media culture production, even holding a sense of antipathy towards the incorporation of media culture into the national strategy of cool Japan. The state's involvement itself is considered 'uncool'.
- 9 Nye criticized Koizumi's repeated visits to the Yasukuni Shrine for their damaging effect on Japan's soft power. See Joseph Nye. Interview about Koizumi's visit to Yasukuni Shrine, *Tokyo Newspaper*, October 22, 2005.
- 10 http://business.nikkeibp.co.jp/fb/putfeedback.jsp?_PARTS_ID=FB01&VIEW=Y&REF=/article/world/20070919/135310/
- 11 www.kokusai-senryaku.ynu.ac.jp/sympo/pdf/20130125/09_saiki.pdf
- 12 *Bunka gaiko no suishin ni kasuru kondankai houkokusho* (A report by the Discussion Group on the Promotion of Cultural Diplomacy), July 2005.
- 13 For the South Korean case, Cho (2011); for the Japanese case, see, for example, www.kanto.meti.go.jp/seisaku/uec.../lec01_kouen_22fy.pdf
- 14 E.g., http://blogs.yahoo.co.jp/hiromi_ito2002jp/57705983.html; www.kanto.meti.go.jp/seisaku/uec.../lec01_kouen_22fy.pdf
- 15 A 2010 survey on what aspects of Japan people are proud of showed that 90 percent of respondents in their 20s and 80 percent of those in their 30s stated that they were proud of Japanese animation and computer games. See 'Poll: 95% Fear for Japan's Future' (June 12 2010, www.asahi.com/english/TKY201006110455.html). This result suggests a widely infused perception that they are key in Japanese culture for the enhancement of soft power.
- 16 This point is closely related to the fact that multicultural co-living has been developed as an extension of 'local internationalization' policy in the 1990s, by which the national government aimed to support local governments in accommodating the increasing number of foreigners staying and living in their constituency with the stated aim of smoothing international cultural exchange within Japan (see Iwabuchi 2015).

- 17 E.g., see Kanazawa municipal government's project of revitalization of the city: www4.city.kanazawa.lg.jp/11001/shiminkikou/shiminnkikou9/bosyuu.html. As for a university curriculum: <http://info.bgu.ac.jp/faculty/foreign/english-education/>
- 18 By Tak Umezawa, www.cj-fund.co.jp/en/news/column/5.html (June 21, 2016).

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I hate you, no I love you

Growing up with Japanese media in (postcolonial) South Korea

Sueen Noh Kelsey

Prologue

On February 14, 2007, the KBS drama *Dalja's Spring* amused Korean viewers by parodying a famous farewell scene in the Japanese manga *Candy Candy* (Yim 2007). The heroine Dalja was trapped in a love triangle between Gijun, a businessman, and Taebong, a cook's apprentice. Gijun had a crush on Dalja and read *Candy Candy* to better understand women. When Dalja chose Taebong over him, he decided to let her go in the comic's way. Embracing her from behind just as Terry did Candy, he whispered a direct quote from the comics, 'I wish time stopped as it is.'¹ At that moment, a subtitle with the words appeared on the screen and the theme song of the *Candy Candy* anime started to play as background music. The lyrics went, 'Even though I am lonely and sad, I won't cry. I'd rather bear and forbear over and over again. Why would I cry?' The heroine, Candice (Candy) White, was abandoned as a baby and grew up in an orphanage near Lake Michigan. As a teenager, she was adopted by a prestigious family and sent to a boarding school in England. She met Terrence (Terry) Grandchester there and fell in love with him. Their school life seemed so romantic that I dreamed of having a boyfriend like Terry. I was not alone. For many Korean girls, Terry was the man of their dreams.²

The humorous twist on *Candy Candy* in the drama illustrates Koreans' familiarity with Japanese comics. Virtually all Korean women of my generation read *Candy Candy* or watched its anime version, which was broadcast twice in the 1970s and 1980s. I later found out that *Candy Candy* originated in Japan and came to realize that its nationality was concealed because of the past colonial relationship between Korea and Japan. Many other animations and comics I had enjoyed while growing up in Korea also turned out to be Japanese, often accompanied by fictitious names of nonexistent Korean creators. As the settings for many such works were in Western countries, it was easy to hide their origin. When a comics story had Japan as its setting, however, its cultural identity was strategically disguised. Japanese characters were renamed as Koreans, and kimono was modified into hanbok, a traditional Korean clothing. Koreans now recognize the cultural adaptation of Japanese comics, but those comics still evoke from them a passionate nostalgia for their childhood (Ahn 2001). This is an intriguing, somewhat contradictory, phenomenon. Many Koreans still resent Japan for its past colonial aggression, yet Japanese texts conjure up memories of the good old days. Moreover, since those texts were often set in the West, what

Korean adults actually remember is the Japanese view and imagination of the West. Such childhood memory has a lasting impact on contemporary Korean culture.

This chapter examines the consumption of Japanese media in South Korea, focusing on Korean women's active involvement with Japanese girls' comics (or *shōjo manga*). I consider the prevalence and popularity of such hybridized texts from the former colonizer in the former colony as constituting a postcolonial culture worthy of scholarly attention. Kelsky (2001) emphasizes the significance of 'the postcolonial optic', which 'permits us to attend to the continuing adjustments and permutations of colonial power relations in the contemporary era; it requires us to analyze the ways that the power differentials embedded in older colonial projects still exert their effects even when the formal colonial relationship is gone' (p. 25). According to her, both Japan and the United States wield postcolonial power over Korea, as these countries had colonial or pseudo-colonial relationships in the past that continue to the present. Korea was colonized by Japan in the early twentieth century. During the Korean War, it was aided by US troops, which have been stationed there since 1955. Thus, the postcolonial status of Korea engages in a three-way power relation between Korea, Japan, and the United States, rather than in a two-way interaction between colonizer and colonized. For this reason, and in order to develop a better understanding of the consumption of Japanese media in contemporary Korea, it is important to investigate the cultural interactions within this triad in a global context.³

A story of the manhwa generation

This chapter is largely drawn from my doctoral dissertation research conducted in South Korea in 2006, employing critical, self-reflective ethnography, which is adopted 'when we belong to the culture under scrutiny' (Theodoropoulou 2015, p. 15). I must acknowledge that what I can grasp here is only a partial, situated truth in a particular context. Also, my perspective is neither objective nor disinterested as I hold multiple identities of being a 'yellow', middle-class, Christian, heterosexual woman in the United States. Born in the 1970s, I grew up witnessing the remarkable economic growth as well as agonizing political turmoil in postcolonial, postwar Korea. In my late 20s, I moved to America to pursue a PhD. The fact that I am Korean but away from home grants me an insider as well as an outsider view on my topic. Besides, I am a sympathetic insider of comics fan culture rather than a detached outsider. Nonetheless, I am no longer a pure fan as I have trained as an academic professional in the West. Such a fluid insider-outsider position equipped me to observe and analyze Korean women's engagement with Japanese media both sympathetically and critically.

A decade has passed since my fieldwork, but my informants' accounts are relevant today as this project primarily looks into their past experience and its lingering impact on the present. I focused on a specific population pertinent to my topic, the so-called manhwa generation. The label refers to individuals born in the 1960s or 1970s who grew up reading Korean and Japanese comics (manhwa and manga, respectively) in the 1970s and 1980s.⁴ They were bombarded with illegal copies of Japanese manga as comic books and magazines were their primary source of entertainment in their childhood. The majority of my key informants were recruited from comics fans' online communities. As comics were a relatively marginalized medium, the internet emerged as a major venue for comics fans to share their interest. For this research, I dealt only with women since media consumption is gendered in patriarchal society. Thirty-one women agreed to participate in my research, and 21 of them belonged to the manhwa generation. My informants formed quite a homogenous group in that they were all urban, middle-class, at least college-educated Korean women. Also, most of them have had transnational experiences through

studying abroad to earn graduate degrees, learning English, traveling around the world, visiting overseas relatives, and residing in the United States. Their degree of interest in the Japanese media varied, ranging from devoted fans/collectors to general consumers.

In this chapter, I do not intend to claim that they represent the whole population of Korean women, but believe that they are valid enough to fulfill the purpose of this project. When quoting my informants, I refer to them by pseudonyms or modified screen names.⁵ During the fieldwork, what intrigued me most was that Japanese girls' comics, not as *their* culture but *our* culture, encroached upon Korean women's memories whether they were conscious of it or not. This is a postcolonial reality that continues to evolve today due to globalization via the internet.

Troubled history, hybridized culture

The historical and geographical conditions of Korea in relation to other powerful nations give clues as to the hybridized nature of contemporary culture. Located in East Asia, 'Korea is the proverbial shrimp between two whales, a fingertip of land the size of Idaho that curls away from the Chinese mainland and toward nearby Japan' (Feffer 2003, p. 21). In the twentieth century, the country found itself entangled in political and economic relationships with strong countries – Japan, China, Russia, and the United States. Japan coercively annexed Korea on August 22, 1910, and ruthlessly oppressed the colony until the Japanese Emperor announced surrender to the Allies on August 15, 1945. On its Independence Day, August 15, 1945, Korea was divided into south and north by the United States and the Soviet Union (Feffer 2003). Cold War tensions between the two superpowers triggered a civil war in the peninsula. The Korean War officially broke out in 1950 and ended in 1953, separating the two Koreas to this day. The war brought US military aid to South Korea along with its pop culture.

As an outcome of Korean modern history, Korea has been culturally hybridized – i.e., Korean, Western, and Japanese cultures have simultaneously circulated in the nation. Japanese culture was first implanted into Korea through colonialism. As the colonial government pushed towards cultural assimilation, Korean people were forced to speak Japanese and take Japanese names. After winning liberation from Japan, the Korean government severed diplomatic ties between the two countries. Meanwhile, the US emerged as a rescuer and friend during the Korean War, and American culture became popularized in South Korea. In 1965, diplomatic relations with Japan were restored, but its culture remained prohibited until 1998. Nevertheless, 'the official ban did not make Korea impermeable to Japanese pop culture; even the government-owned Korean Broadcasting Station was guilty of the illegal importation of Japanese pop culture' (Chua and Iwabuchi 2008, p. 4). Such a consistent, illegal inflow of Japanese culture into Korea has led its people to enjoy the foreign culture with or without knowing its origin.

Furthermore, it is notable that Japan mediated a cultural flow between Korea and the West. In other words, Korea was introduced to hybridized Western culture via Japan. During the colonial period, Korean intellectuals who studied in Japan encountered new, Western literature translated into Japanese (Fulton 1996). My informants recognized that Western culture in Korea had been channeled through Japan and pointed out some cases of Japanized translation. Haruki heard from her parents, who had majored in film studies, how the title of French director Jean-Luc Godard's film *À bout de souffle* (English title: *Breathless*) had been Japanized in Korea. Far from its literal meaning, 'out of breath', the film was introduced as *Do Whatever You Want* to Koreans, a literal translation of its Japanese title. Another example was Canadian writer Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, one of my informants' favorite childhood readings. The novel was translated from Japanese into Korean. Moreover, while the original story had multiple volumes, the novel was condensed into one volume by a Japanese publisher and introduced to Korea with

its Japanized title *Red-haired Anne*. The manhwa generation read the digested Japanese version focusing on Anne and Gilbert's relationship.

Japanese pop culture's territory is not limited to its former colonies, but extended to the West (Ahn 2001). Iwabuchi (2002) claims that 'Japan is unequivocally located in a geography called 'Asia', but it no less unambiguously exists outside a cultural imaginary of 'Asia' in Japanese mental maps' (p. 7). Japanese culture is thus Westernized and hybridized, and manga is no exception. Thorn (2001) recalls that he got 'hooked on' *shōjo* manga because of a 'serialized, illustrated story of love between boys set in a vaguely German, vaguely early twentieth-century boys' boarding school'. Thorn (2005a) argues that such non-Western, female-oriented, and culturally hybridized comics perplex Westerners, for 'there is not even a rough equivalent of the *shōjo* manga genre, which is created primarily by women artists explicitly for audiences of girls and young women' in the West. In the 1970s, a group of talented young female artists, nicknamed 'Magnificent Forty-Niners' as they happened to be born in or around 1949, 'began to experiment with new themes, stories and styles, rejecting the limitations of traditional definitions of the *shōjo* manga genre and appealing to increasingly older readers' (Thorn 2005a). It is notable that they were inspired by 'European cinema and literature (not to mention American and British rock and roll)' (Thorn 2005b, p. 131).

Japanese television animations were often adapted from Western novels and movies and broadcast in South Korea. The *World Masterpiece Theater* series, in particular, provided Korean children with a series of Japanized Western classics, such as *Heidi*, *Girl of the Alps*, *A Dog of Flanders*, *3000 Leagues in Search for Mother*, *Anne of Green Gables*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Robinson Family Lost at Sea: Flone in a Mysterious Island*, *Princess Sarah*, *Little Prince Cedic*, *Little Women*, *Daddy Long-Legs*, *Trapp Family Story*, and *Les Misérables*. The Japanese images dubbed with Korean voices were remembered as *our* culture. Korean children constructed their idea of the West based on the animations. As children, my informants assumed all Western culture was American. Jane was surprised to find that what she used to believe as American culture, was indeed Japanese. While living in America in the 1980s, she could not find her favorite 'American' books. She said, 'We thought these works were really popular masterpieces, but I couldn't find them in the U.S. For example, *A Dog of Flanders*, every Korean knows it. We even have a song about it. But no Americans knew about it.' The novel was written by Marie Louise de la Ramée, an English author beloved in Japan and introduced to Korea. The tragic story of a boy, Nello, and his dog Patrasche, in which the two froze to death, resonated with postwar sentiments in South Korea. Lee Seung-hwan, a famous Korean singer, released his song *A Dog of Flanders*, inserting part of the Japanese animation's theme song as an intro. He calls the dog 'my Patrasche' that made him cry in his childhood and warms up his heart today. It was a great hit among the manhwa generation sympathizing with his memory.

My informants also indirectly tasted the Western culture to which Japanese *shōjo* manga referred. Hyemin, for example, talked about a comics heroine's playing main roles in Western plays, *Little Women* and *Helen Keller*, introduced in Miuchi Suzue's *Glass Mask*. The comics story dealt with the struggles of ordinary-looking yet talented actress Kitajima Maya. She said that Jo used to be her favorite character in *Little Women*. Since Youngran, Maya's Korean name in the pirated version of the text, played Beth, however, Beth had become her favorite. The manga also led her to pay more attention to Beth in the movie adaptations. Also, *The Rose of Versailles* set at the time of the French Revolution sparked her interest in drawing Western dresses. Originally created by a 'Magnificent Forty-Niner', Ikeda Riyoko, this manga story was redrawn by a Korean artist, Jung Youngsook, in the 1970s. This manga was also pirated under a nonexistent Western author's name, 'Marie Stefan Dweit'. Comics fans online researched how this name came into existence and assumed that it came from a Jewish author, Stefan Zweig,

who wrote the novel *Marie Antoinette*. This novel was believed to have inspired Ikeda to create the comic.

The manhwa generation criticized Western ideals of beauty dominant in *shōjo* manga, but inevitably, their sense of aesthetics has been cultivated by the foreign medium consumed in their childhood. Youngeun deplored the fact that Koreans had accepted ‘the modified West’ filtered through ‘hodgepodge Japanese culture’. She questioned why the heroines in girls’ comics had to be slender, good-looking Westerners and the settings must be America, France, or a medieval European country rather than Korea. Similarly, history teacher Chen warned against the danger of racist tendencies in Japanese girls’ comics, but confessed that she still loved ‘Barbie dolls, Western girl’s thin waist, and Westernized beauty’. In addition, the visual imagery established by Japanese *shōjo* manga affected her perception today. When she thought of Marie Antoinette, she came up with the French queen’s image of Japanese girls’ comics character in *The Rose of Versailles*, not her actual portrait. Interestingly, *The Rose of Versailles* has been used for history education. Laelia referred to the comic in her Western history lecture at Korea National Open University to pique her adult students’ interest in the French Revolution and found that 70 percent of them had read it. Similarly, Rewan had been motivated to study the Russian and French revolutions because of Japanese girls’ comics, *The Window of Orpheus* and *The Rose of Versailles*, both drawn by Ikeda Riyoko. She remembered searching ‘every nook and cranny of libraries’ to find a portrait of a French Revolution figure, Louis de Saint-Just, who had always been depicted as a beautiful man in Japanese *shōjo* manga.

Notably, despite Japanese efforts to assimilate Western culture, my informants were able to catch the ‘Japanese sentiment’ underneath the Western façade. In *The Rose of Versailles*, Minah sensed ‘thick Japanese colors’, unlike actual French history. She added, ‘It looked like a history of an unknown country’. Rewan and Jane presented consistent opinions. Rewan analyzed that although the settings of Japanese comics were Western countries, the comics characters acted as if they were Asians. Jane claimed that such a contradiction made the comics ‘even more Japanese in terms of sentiment’. She described two specific episodes in which she detected a strong Japanese sentiment in manga. In one episode, a maidservant made a mistake and attempted to commit suicide, which reminded her of the Samurai’s disembowelment ritual to die with honor. In another episode, a barren queen was abused by her mother-in-law. In Confucian societies, ‘a barren woman or a woman who bore only daughters was seen as the culprit of family extinction’ (Ko et al. 2003, p. 130). Jane claimed that Westerners would never be able to understand such sentiment. Her observations showed that even Westernized manga could not help but exude Japanese culture. Likewise, reading Japanese girls’ comics as a Korean woman was a culturally hybridized act – such comics were Westernized, Japanized, and Koreanized all at the same time and dismantled the boundary between the local and the global in my informants’ memories.

Nostalgia for the happiest time of life

All my informants had cherished memories related to consuming Japanese comics in the past, and such memories led them to pursue Japanese culture even today. Their past experiences powerfully influenced their present taste in girls’ comics. ‘Although I love [Ariyoshi Kyoko’s] *Swan*, I think it is indeed a memory. Why would I still like it today even to the extent of buying its original [Japanese] version?’ Ami wondered to herself. She added that she had bought the original series of *Swan* ‘impulsively’. She was not ‘immersed’ in the comics story any more, yet she still ‘flipped through’ it often. Seojin also shared that she looked for what had been her favorite comics in the past and collected them. Her collection included the Japanese comics *The Rose of Versailles* and Kusmoto Maki’s *KissXXXX*. She said it had not been easy to find them because

they had gone out of print a while ago. Seojin emphasized, 'It's not that I like the comics themselves. I am re-seeking my memories.'

My interviewees unanimously said that they had been exposed to Japanese manga and anime since their early childhood. Orthia, born in 1973, remembered having read comics in a children's magazine, *Sonyeon Joongang*, in 1978. She said that she had enjoyed comics before she had even learned how to read. In her memory, children's magazines had serialized local comics as well as pirated Japanese ones. More specifically, she recalled that the first generation of Korean women cartoonists like Min Aeni had imitated 'sentimental' Japanese comics. I happened to interview Min Aeni for my master's thesis analyzing the relationship between Korean and Japanese girls' comics, and heard in person that she had 'copied' some works of *shōjo* manga artists like Mizuno Hideko and Maki Miyako, who had founded the first wave of Japanese girls' comics in the 1960s (Noh 2000). In Orthia's memory, the original comics plagiarized by Min Aeni were 'of high quality' and 'much more polished' than other comics.

My informants recalled their first time reading comics as 'one of the happiest moments' in their lives. When she first encountered comics, Chen said that her 'heart was pounding' and she 'could not wait to see the next episode'. 'As I focused on comics,' she said, 'I became oblivious of other worries and struggles. It was the happiest time of my life.' Japanese comics carried a strong emotional impact on my informants. Rewan recalled, 'I couldn't sleep for three days and nights because it was too much fun. I was deeply impressed. I still have the diary that I wrote about the experience.' Youngeun also shared her memory with vivid illustrations:

If you ask me now what my happiest moment was, it was my second year of middle school when I ran to a comics café combined with a snack bar, through the rear gate right after school, every day ... One of my favorite things nowadays is the moldy smell of comic books at the comics café. If I go down to basements, sometimes I can still capture the smell. Such an encounter always evokes my nostalgia for the moldy smell.

Most of my generation had not known the true origin of Japanese comics as their ethnic identity had been concealed. A well-respected *Candy Candy* fan in her online community, Jane collected everything related to the comics including *Candy Candy* candies. She was called 'Detective Jane' by her community members since she had eagerly searched for 'the originals' of her childhood media and persisted in finding out Japanese authors' names and titles of pirated Korean versions. At her place, she showed me the original Japanese comic books published in the 1960s and the 1970s and compared them with pirated Korean versions redrawn by local artists. I was surprised that my childhood media had mostly copied Japanese ones, literally from cover to cover. She also collected Pareum Books, a series of retelling novels of Japanese girls' comics, in which all the authors and characters had transformed into Westerners. Opening a Pareum book, I could not but laugh at its detailed autobiography of a 'French' author who had been born into a family of novelists, had studied philosophy at the Sorbonne, and had become a professor. The author was presumably an 'all-round athlete' excelling in cycling, swimming, and even figure skating. The Korean ghost author was introduced as 'translator'.

As Jane unfolded more of her collection, I became overwhelmed by a sudden flux of nostalgic feelings, especially when she opened Takahashi Makoto's illustration book. Although I had not known the name of the artist, I did remember seeing his embellished drawings of the Western princesses with big, sparkling eyes: *Cinderella*, *The Little Mermaid*, and *Snow White*. After the visit, I showed the pictures of his illustrations to my friends, and they immediately recognized them since those images had been printed on their lunch boxes, schoolbags, stationery, and everywhere. The princesses used to have such sophisticated looks before Disney animations took over

Korean children's imagination. What was memorable about the aesthetics of Japanese girls' comics in my childhood was a subjective, exaggerated depiction of human eyes:

By far the most striking visual aspect of girls' comics is the orblike eyes of the characters ... Heroines in girls' comics are generally drawn with pencil-thin eyebrows, long, full eyelashes, and eyes the size of window panes that emote gentleness and femininity. Over the years artists have also come to draw a star next to the pupil that perhaps represents dreams, yearning, and romance – and beneath the star to then place one of more highlights.

(Schodt 1997, p. 91)

My informants called such eyes the 'jewelry eyes (*boseoknoon*)'. Jane was a big fan of them, and her sense of beauty was exclusively rooted in *shōjo* manga from the early 1970s. Rationally speaking, Jane admitted that such a depiction of the human face 'having jewels in eyes' was indeed 'monstrous'. Since she had been fascinated by such drawings in her childhood, however, she felt that the classical Japanese girls' comics aesthetics was most beautiful.

As much as their past memories were cherished, my interviewees consented to having felt 'betrayed' and 'dreadful' when they had found out that a considerable portion of their childhood comics had indeed originated from Japan. Before import of manga became legalized in Korea, all pirated Japanese comics had been disguised as local comics. Sophia said, 'I used to think comics were just comics', without questioning their nationality. Chen recalled that she had become aware in her teenage years that she had read Japanese comics. Back then, she had felt 'betrayed' because her favorite 'Korean' authors had not really existed. Aldo used to believe that she 'had not read Japanese comics at all' while she had been 'crazy about *The Window of Orpheus* and *The Rose of Versailles*' without knowing their origin. When her teacher had revealed that *The Rose of Versailles* and her favorite TV animation featuring a magical princess had come from Japan, she had 'got deeply shocked' and felt 'dreadful' beyond 'betrayed'.

Nevertheless, my informants' childhood memories shed some positive light on the experience of consuming the illegal, pirated productions. Marybell, the moderator of a classical Japanese *shōjo* manga community, fell in love with *My Love Marybell* (Japanese title: *Marybell*), presumably drawn by 'Kim Youngsook' and published by 'Swan Books'. In the 1980s, Swan Books primarily emulated Uehara Kimiko's works and published them under Korean names. As a senior in high school, Marybell came across the original Japanese *Marybell* at a bookstore. At first, she was naïve enough to believe that 'Kim Youngsook's work had been so popular that it had been exported to Japan'. Soon she took note of its publication year, 1977, much ahead of Kim's times. That was when she realized that her favorite author had copied Japanese comics. In retrospect, Marybell said, 'I trembled with a sense of betrayal for a while'. Afterwards, however, she 'thanked' Kim for introducing her to Uehara Kimiko's works. 'Without Kim Youngsook,' she said, 'how could I have ever read these comics?' She thus decided to 'absolve' Kim of his 'sins': 'I am now fine with it because I can't disregard my memories no matter what'. Her nostalgia had made her look for Swan Books and encouraged her to collect 1,500 volumes of the pirated works in total.

Some informants had been proactive in collecting comic books in their childhood even before retail sales of comic books became popularized in Korea. Fatima said that she had collected *The Rose of Versailles* and Clover Books by saving her allowances as an elementary student. Clover Books is a series of children's comic books that prospered in the 1970s. The series encompassed a wide variety of genres – such as romance, gag, sci-fi, adventure, detective, sports, history, biographical, educational, and anti-communism comics – and included pirated Japanese comics. From 1972 to 1982, the Clover Books series published as many as 428 titles and sold at least 10 million volumes in total (Goo 2001). Jane introduced me to an internet community,

'Nostalgia for Clover Books', where fans of the series sought to self-publish and revive them. Members of the community put together their collections, contacted Japanese publishers that copyrighted the original works of pirated editions, and were granted permission for republication. The Nostalgia for Clover Books club has accumulated an incredibly vast sea of historical data – from written reflections on past memories to photographed or scanned images of childhood media like comic books, novels, animations, magazines, movies, variety shows, and toys. They have made Japanese anime into computer files, now subtitled rather than dubbed, and posted the files to bulletin boards. Just like interlocking and tessellating the tiny pieces of a huge jigsaw puzzle, its members have been compiling their 'vanishing' memories into a clearer, bigger picture. In the pursuit of collecting comprehensive memories in the past, they embrace Japanese culture as part of their childhood 'treasures'. All of my informants uttered sighs of admiration at their returning memories. The 'golden age' seems to always remain in the past.

Ambivalence toward Japanese culture

By and large, Korean sentiment toward Japan has been ambivalent based on the historical entanglement of the countries (Shim 2005). In ancient history, Korea had transmitted advanced culture to Japan and helped the 'barbarians' found their civilization. Koreans have traditionally looked down on the Japanese, believing that 'they were culturally more civilized than the latter' (p. 247). After colonization, Korea grew resentful toward the 'enemy', yet modeled itself after Japan in its industrialization and economic development. Shim (2005) claims that such contradictory feelings about Japan cause duality in the reception of Japanese culture. Before the Korean government lifted its official ban of Japanese cultural products, almost every sector of its cultural industries, such as comics, animation, television shows, newspapers, and films, had pirated, plagiarized, or imitated Japanese pop culture. Many Koreans, however, were not aware of the origins of their favorite media or the Japanese influence on them.

My informants remembered that they could access Japanese manga by various means – buying them at bookstores; renting them at comics cafés, book rental shops, book trucks, and class libraries; passing them around among friends, classmates, and comics community members; and even through the milk lady, piano lessons, and dentists' offices. While Japanese culture was officially banned, some of them were able to enjoy Japanese cultural products thanks to their fathers. Aldo, whose father had worked abroad, recalled bringing a Japanese pencil case to school to 'secretly' show to her classmates. She had to be 'careful' for it was regarded 'unpatriotic' to use Japanese products. Haesii's father engaged in foreign trade with Japanese companies and bought her Japanese animations featuring superheroes like *Science Ninja Team Gatchaman*. She reflected that Japanese superheroes fought as a team 'collectively' against evil and were specialized in their powers, unlike American ones who always fought 'individually'. In the 1980s, Japanese popular music, commonly known as 'J-pop', became widely spread in the Kangnam area. Orthia remembered that Shontai and Hikaru Genji had been popular in her high school. She reflected on the female duo Wink, vividly describing how 'They looked like twins. They wore the same clothes and moved like robots or mannequins. They were really attractive.'

With the emergence of the internet, Japanese culture has become more readily available to South Koreans. Aware of the illegality of their consumption of Japanese culture, my informants called it 'the dark channel'. Japanese cultural texts that are not yet officially imported into Korea can be easily found online as Japanese culture fans have uploaded their favorite shows to online communities. Koreans can enjoy Japanese culture almost simultaneously with the Japanese. Regularly downloading Japanese TV shows, BlueCat said, 'If *SMAP X SMAP* is aired on Monday, it will be uploaded by Wednesday, even subtitled'.⁶ Forrest, Mihee, Nurim, and

Eunsoo confessed that they downloaded Japanese anime, rationalizing that the internet was 'the only channel' to access some texts. Forrest collected the *World Masterpiece Theater* series by downloading them and burning 900 CDs so far. Jooyoung said that her coworker had provided her with 'scanned' copies of the Japanese girls' comics *Nana* while residing in New Jersey. Due to such changes, Laelia argued that the internet 'had diminished cultural differentials' between Korea and Japan while social differentials still existed.

Based on the national resentment toward the enemy country, Japanese culture fans had ambivalent feelings toward Japan. 'When I listened to Japanese music in my high school years,' Mihee looked back, 'my classmates called me "a traitor to the country" or "a pro-Japan collaborator". They even said, "Aren't you going to root for Japan during the World Cup?"' Because she had been 'persecuted' for her favorite media, Mihee said that she had become more 'obstinate'. Nevertheless, she was often bothered by 'the historical constraint' and convicted by 'the pricks of personal conscience'. She confessed that her inner contradiction had not yet been resolved. Forrest, who had been to Japan to attend concerts, surprised me by saying, 'I don't really like Japan'. She said that she had gotten 'shocked' to find that a series of animations, *World Masterpiece Theater*, that she had been passionate about were indeed Japanese. But she could not but keep on searching for her favorites. She contradicted herself: 'I can't really watch too nationalistic things like *samurai*. That's the *irony*. I watch them, but I can't like the country on the other hand. I watch them because I like them, but ...'.

Japanese culture fans in Korea, therefore, sought to compromise their longing for the culture with 'a-historical, a-contextual' attitudes toward Japan. In other words, they argued that Japan happened to be a place where they could find their favorite comic books, dramas, and music, not more than that. Mihee emphasized that she had been to Japan 'only for shopping' without sightseeing. Hyun, a Japanese drama fan, criticized Korean subtitles in the illegally uploaded Japanese texts, pointing out that they did not use proper Korean. She also said that Japanese drama community people were 'very sensitive' about Japanese territorial claims over Dokdo. Dokdo is a group of small islands in the East Sea of Korea, called 'Takeshima' in Japan. Korea and Japan have fought over the islands since the colonial period. Japan has frequently revisited the issue and re-stirred Korea's national rage against the country. Some informants expressed their antipathy against Japan. Hyemin said that she felt 'uncomfortable' with Japanese-style school uniforms depicted in Naoko Takeuchi's *Sailor Moon*. She also pointed out 'a very unpleasant episode' in a Japanese manga that described Mongolia as 'very filthy'. '[Japanese] can't help it! It's their national spirit!' she vented. Though geographically proximate, Korea has different customs and national sentiment than Japan. Dongsoo noticed differences in lifestyles, pointing to the fact that Japanese people used both hands to hold rice bowls, warmed up *sake* (rice wine) in ceramic flasks, and often went to *onsen* (hot spring). Like-minded, Hyun said that she felt 'a fundamental distance' from Japanese manga. In Japanese dramas, she felt 'repulsed' toward Japanese-style fireworks, pilgrimages to Shinto shrines, flower arrangements, and family traditions.

Furthermore, Koreans feel uncomfortable with 'the blatant violence and sex, bleeding scenes, amputations' in Japanese comics (Lent 1999, p. 34). Manga in general are well known for presenting 'virtually all forms of sexuality – romance, flirtation, kissing, courtship, sexual intercourse, oral sex, female and male homosexuality, sadomasochism, prostitution, orgies, transvestitism, hermaphroditism, incest, bestiality, voyeurism, and rape' (Perper and Cornog 2003, p. 666). My informants said that they 'grossed out' over Japanese texts featuring incest, rape, sadism, homosexuality, and pedophilia. Aldo was told by her middle school friend that Japanese culture had been 'sensational, violent, and sexually liberal'. Even today, Japanese culture looked 'too sexual' to my informants. Haruki said, 'Japanese dramas and comics do not make a big deal out of sex. It's not secretive. For instance, they have such conversations as, "You must have done it at least

once per three months”. They take it for granted.’ She was shocked that even teenage girls in *shōjo* manga had sexual intercourse once they started going on a date. Yerim did not like Japanese comics sensationalizing ‘sexual perversion’ just for entertainment’s sake without serious consideration. Rewan also shared that she felt alienated from Japanese manga when she encountered stories featuring incest and the Lolita complex.

Japan, still closer than the West

Although my informants pointed out many ‘subtle’ yet ‘fundamental’ cultural differences between Korea and Japan, they still felt ‘closer’ to Japanese culture than to Western cultures. Japan and Korea have many similarities not only because of the past colonial relationships but because of geographical/cultural proximity. Iwabuchi (2002) argues that ‘the prevalence of Japanese popular culture in East Asia tends to be (easily) accounted for in terms of the presupposed salient cultural and racial similarities’ (p. 132). He explains that the transnational cultural power that Japanese culture sways over East Asia comes not from its superiority but from its intimacy to allow Asian audiences ‘to experience cultural resonance and immediacy’ (p. 133). In short, he claims that Japan has ‘intimate cultural power’ (p. 133). Such ‘intimate’ power lies in the audiences’ perception of and identification with the foreign texts.

Japan is a ‘close yet far’ country to Koreans. It is ‘close’ in terms of geography, but ‘far’ because of historical animosity. Overcoming this historical barrier, Korea seeks to restore the relationship with Japan as ‘a neighbor’ through recently increased cultural exchanges. Ami argued that she felt closer to Japan than other countries because she had been familiar with the culture since her childhood. As she had acquired the language ability, she had visited Japan once a year and enjoyed interacting with Japanese people. She had eaten out with strangers whom she had met on the street. Once she had run into a middle-aged lady who was interested in Korean culture at a Shinto shrine, and the lady had taken her out. Ami was interested in Japanese history and religion, and favored an ‘Asian atmosphere’ as found in ‘serene’ Shinto shrines, gardens, and small villages. After all, she said she was more inclined to explore Asian countries, such as India, Thailand, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Vietnam, than Europe.

My informants said in concerted voices that Japan was at least more intimate and closer than the West, more specifically America. Seungha’s visit to an American army base in Japan interestingly illustrated the East–West contrast:

My eldest aunt’s husband was American, maybe a journalist. He might have followed American troops. He wasn’t a soldier, but resided in the army base. So we went over there. In fact, that place was more like America than Japan. Houses with outdoor swimming pools were dispersed. We chilled out there a bit and went out to Tokyo for sightseeing. Tokyo looked like Myeongdong [a district in Seoul], but people spoke in Japanese and Japanese letters were all around. It’s not that different. The inside of that American army base looked much more foreign.

Seungha had also visited her relatives in the United States and resided in Philadelphia to study English for a year, so she was familiar with what the actual America was like.

My informants agreed that Japanese culture felt closer than American culture. Haruki had not watched Western movies any more since she started watching Japanese dramas and movies. She said, ‘Should I say I’m slower in identification [with Western culture]? Because of the differences in appearance, I feel like it departed farther away from me.’ Forrest also said that she ‘got tired of patterned Hollywood movies’ and enjoyed more Japanese films. Some felt closer

to Japan for its similar school system and lifestyle depicted in manga. Sophia said, 'I would feel the differences if it were American comics, but we're the same Asians'. She specified, 'They also go to all girls' middle school and high school, and then move on to college or work like us. I don't feel alienated from their family relationship.' The similarities in the school systems are not a coincidence. Annexing Korea, the Japanese colonial government had established a 'modern' educational system in the colony. Nonetheless, my informants had grown up taking it as *our* school system. Nurim got 'shocked' at *Baby and Me* for she discovered that Japanese everyday life in the comics was too similar to *ours*. 'I first realize that Japanese people also eat *doenjang-guk* [miso soup] in *Baby and Me*. "Oh my, this is too similar!" Of course, I later found that their miso soup was different from ours.' She had owed her intimacy with the comics to localization as she called the two main characters by their Korean names – Takuya by 'Jin' and Minoru by 'Shin'. Hyemin's motherhood made her sympathize with *Baby and Me*. 'After I had my son and raised him,' she reflected, '*Baby and Me* touched the subliminal fear that anyone would have. I got terrified supposing what if my precious baby would live without me and only with his father and younger sibling.' Because the comics story overlapped with her real life, she could not but take every single word and scene in the foreign text seriously and personally.

My informants' familiarity with the *shōjo* manga aesthetics affected their criticism of American aesthetics. Fatima's juxtaposition of the so-called '*soonjung feel*' vis-à-vis '*yankee feel*' was fascinating. The term *soonjung* is associated with innocence, romance, and sensibility in the context of girls' comics, namely, *soonjung manhwa* in Korean. As Fatima's aesthetics had been cultivated by 'decorative ... Japanese taste' in 'European style', she 'got disgusted at the *yankee feel*.' The so-called *yankee feel* refers to American aesthetics. A fan of Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, she bought its comics adaptation from America. 'I couldn't even look at it [chuckles]', she looked back, 'I couldn't stand the drawings. Why do Americans draw like that?' Not only comics drawings, but also any Western culture, including literature, celebrities, and paintings, was inspected through the lens of *soonjung feel*:

Dostoevsky's novels are totally based on *soonjung feel*. All the heroes in *Crime and Punishment* as well as *The Brothers Karamazov* are handsome. Reading *The Brothers Karamazov*, I thought it would be fun to adapt the story into girls' comics. [chuckles] In *The Brothers Karamazov*, if you look closely into the brothers, the first brother is a good-looking, debauchery playboy *type*. The second son is a very abstinent and handsome *type*. The third is an angel-like youngest son *type*. [chuckles] It was so much fun to read it in this way.

Chen, who was supposed to be a bystander, jumped into the conversation. She agreed with Fatima that the *yankee feel* did not appeal to her, either. Although she collected Barbie dolls, she could not stand 'greasy' Ken, Barbie's boyfriend. Chen was not fond of Superman, Spiderman, and the X-men because she 'could not bear with abnormal clothes', which were 'weirdly tight and revealing bumpy muscles'. By contrast, Fatima and Chen lauded the late River Phoenix and young Johnny Depp for their embodiment of the *soonjung feel*. Fatima lamented over the loss of Leonardo DiCaprio's adolescent beauty, while Chen exalted the English soccer player David Beckham's 17-year-old look as 'a work of art'. They went on to appraise that Andrea Casiraghi, a prince of Monaco, reached the peak of his beauty in his teenage years. Their quest for the *soonjung feel* reached as far as Impressionist paintings. Fatima recalled that she had loved Renoir's *Ballet Girl* for its *soonjung feel*. I noted that they favored feminine, delicate, and gender-blended drawings of Japanese girls' comics. Fatima said that Korean readers' aesthetics originated from Tezuka Osamu's *Knight of the Ribbon*: 'Eyes must be round, neck straight, nose sharp, shoulders symmetrical, and lips small!' She added that

such a look was similar to Western babies rather than adults. Interestingly, Chen said that Disney animations were not pretty in her eyes even though Tezuka initially imitated Disney's characters to create his own.

Epilogue

Korea culture has been hybridized through Western and Japanese influences. While colonized by Japan, Koreans were forced to accept the colonizer's culture. Even after it became independent, Japanese culture was continuously brought and circulated in the country. It is noteworthy that Western culture introduced to Korea has been mediated by Japan for many years. Korean women's childhood memories, therefore, demonstrated the trans-cultural nature of their media consumption and illustrated the three-way postcolonial relationships between the three nations. Their sense of aesthetics has also been influenced by Westernized yet Japanese *shōjo* manga's drawings. As discussed, they deemed it impossible to stay free from the influence of the ubiquitous hybridized culture in South Korea. They did not, however, passively accept Japanese culture as *their* culture. Instead, they had actively transformed it into *our* culture through an internalizing process. Korean women hold ambivalent feelings toward Japanese culture because of the historical relationship between the two countries. Nonetheless, based on the historical connection and geographic proximity, they have found cultural similarities with the 'enemy'. In a highly globalizing era, Korean women continue to negotiate with Japanese culture by accepting, compromising, or rejecting parts of the culture and making sense out of their culturally hybridized media consumption.

Notes

- 1 The original scene in the comics epitomizes the tragic romance of Candy and Terry. After becoming a famous actor, Terry invited Candy to his premiere of *Romeo and Juliet* in New York, intending to propose to her afterwards. A tragic accident, however, separated them. During a rehearsal, Susanna saved Terry from a fatal accident at the expense of her leg. As Terry felt torn between his love for Candy and obligation for Susanna, Candy broke up with him to relieve him from his dilemma. On the stairway of a hospital, Candy and Terry parted for good.
- 2 If a Korean male celebrity is extraordinarily handsome and has long hair, he is often nicknamed Terry.
- 3 Similarly, in her book *Imagining the Global*, Darling-Wolf (2015) examines the 'power triad' of Japan, France, and the United States as she seeks to 'complicate, and possibly deconstruct', both 'East/West' and 'West/West' dynamics (p. 4).
- 4 My informants were born between 1967 and 1983: Rewan in 1967, Hyemin in 1968; Youngeun, Haesii, Fatima, Jane, and Marybell in 1970, Chen in 1971, Aldo and Yoonseo in 1972, Laelia, Orthia, and Dongsoo in 1973, Yerim, Hyeran, Boram, Haruki, and Hyun in 1974, Seunggha, Jooyoung, Sophia, BlueCat, and Forrest in 1975, Minah in 1977, Seojin in 1978, Sangeun, Nurim, and Eunsoo in 1979, Ami in 1981, Mihee in 1982, and Yujin in 1983.
- 5 If they are members of online communities, I modify their screen names just as they call each other by their nicknames rather than real names. If their nicknames are not in Korean, I keep the 'foreign' nuances by giving them English or Japanese aliases.
- 6 *SMAP X SMAP* is a variety show hosted by SMAP. SMAP, an acronym of 'Sports and Music Assemble People', was one of the most popular idol groups in Japan, consisting of five male celebrities: Nakai Masahiro, Kimura Takuya, Kusanagi Tsuyoshi, Inagaki Goro, and Katori Shingo. The group broke up on December 31, 2016.

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Remade by Inter-Asia

The transnational practice and business of screen adaptations based on Japanese source material¹

Eva Tsai

Introduction

The regional and global spread of Japanese popular culture is a subject that has been well studied over the last 20 years. The border crossing of Japanese film, manga, anime, games, TV shows, and music owed much to the legacies of colonization, the political engineering of the Cold War, and the disjunctive effects of globalization. But the transnationalization of Japanese popular culture involves more than the movement of cultural commodities. It occurs at the level of production, distribution, and consumption as well as in many other areas of exchange. Some major twentieth-century examples include Japan–Hong Kong film collaboration in the 1950s (Yau 2010), the subcontracting of Japanese anime to South Korea that has been ongoing since the 1960s (Yoon 2009; Choo 2014), the circulation of pirated manga in South Korea and Taiwan under censorship regimes in the 1970s and 1980s, and the region’s enthusiastic consumption of Japanese TV and J-pop music through newly legitimized media channels in the 1990s (Iwabuchi 2002). These reveal both the complex workings of the local media and cultural industries and the different regulatory conditions of various East Asian states. While the Japanese government and media industries were reluctant to fully capitalize on Japan’s cultural popularity in East Asia, they did actively promote manga, anime, and other Japanese cultural products to the West. These efforts were coordinated and formalized as part of the Cool Japan cultural policy in the early 2000s (Chua 2012). This difference was rooted in Japan’s long desire for the Western gaze, the potential financial gain, and soft power competition in Asia at a time of rapid economic growth in China and South Korea.

In the current period, which is characterized by frequent inter-Asian media trade and an interest to exploit intellectual property, how has Japanese popular culture flourished? This chapter suggests an answer to that question by looking at the practices and business of inter-Asian adaptations and remakes of Japanese source material. Historically speaking, Japanese TV shows have been a creative benchmark for East Asian TV practitioners in South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. A great number of variety and game shows have been remade through the licensing or imitation of Japanese originals. The popularity of Japanese idol dramas and trendy dramas in the 1990s encouraged stylistic and genre evolution within the South Korean and Taiwanese TV industries (Lee 2004).

Since the 2000s, the preeminence of Japanese TV has been challenged by the commercial success of South Korean dramas and variety shows. Online streaming platforms, which place quality domestic and foreign programs alongside each other, present Japanese shows as merely some of the many choices available in the marketplace. Although critics and niche audiences still hold Japanese TV programming in high regard for its experimental storytelling and the diversity of its subject matter, a fuller understanding of Japan's creative symbolic power requires us to explore the context, contacts, and negotiations of the inter-Asian media industries.

With their protean capacity to reinvigorate and transform intellectual property, cross-media adaptations and remakes promise industry growth and export potential. Moreover, such media practices raise the need to reframe the notion of industrial creativity. Consultants, translators, negotiators, legal experts, and other highly specialized expertise now join the traditional assemblage of creative workers like writers, directors, and actors to formulate a more complex picture of industrial creativity. These are concerns that have exceeded media studies' accustomed inquiries into production, distribution, and consumption. Informed by production studies, creative industry studies, and adaptation studies, this chapter discusses the negotiations of rights owners, local remediation, and the implications for Japanese authorship in recent inter-Asian adaptations and remakes.

Specifically, I consider: (1) Korean television adaptations and remakes of marriage stories by Japanese screenwriter Nozawa Hisashi, and (2) *Say Yes*, a 2013 Chinese film adaptation of the Japanese TV drama *101st Proposal*, which had been remade previously for television in China (2004) and South Korea (2006). Tracing the very different paths that these works took as they crossed from Japan into South Korea and China illuminates the conditions and forces that are shaping inter-Asian media production and circulation. The first case relates the border-crossing journey of an independent Japanese rights owner in the South Korean media industry; the second case reveals Japanese and Chinese media capital's reaffirmation of the proven East Asian idol drama formula. Since in each case a rather well-known Japanese screenwriter is implicated (though not personally engaged in negotiations), I reconsider the role of authorship in transmedia inter-Asian adaptations and remakes.

Before I delve into the cases, I would like to review two sets of literature, one on the inter-Asian TV format trade (specifically the drama trade) and the other on cross-cultural adaptations. These will alert us to, respectively, the TV industry's abiding interest in genre making and the structural conditions of local agency.

Japanese drama and the Inter-Asian TV format trade

In *East Asian Screen Industries*, Darrel William Davis and Emilie Yueh-Yu Yeh trace how East Asian national film industries transformed into a competitive and flexible network of industrial, aesthetic, and business entities in the 1990s and 2000s. Within this largely film-centered analysis, the authors accorded particular importance to Japanese television. In 'The Power of Small Screens', the only chapter not on film, they note that Japanese television provided 'irresistible formats and source materials to networks in neighboring areas' (2008, p. 65). The aesthetic and narrative influence of Japanese trendy dramas is evident in commercial television and filmmaking in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and South Korea over the last quarter century. The 'power' in 'The Power of Small Screens' also refers to television's strategic role in the media industry's integrated investments, especially their franchising potential. Japanese TV networks have financed and developed several movies (e.g., *Bayside Shakedown*; *Keizokoku~Beautiful Dreamer*) based on successful TV series. Hence, Davis and Yeh (2008) called television 'the great multiplier: fertile seed for moving

images and narratives to sprout, grow and migrate to allied markets like Internet, games, mobile phones and the cinema' (p. 70).

In the recent decade, we have observed only more intensified and flexible exploitation of the 'one-source multi-use' principle in the Japanese entertainment industries. This seems to confirm the emergence of 'new television' – a model of television production and distribution based on the adaptation, transfer, and recycling of narrative and content (Keane et al. 2007). This particular economic arrangement provides a certain degree of financial and cultural insurance in the competitive capitalistic structure of the television industry. Led by networks like Tokyo Broadcasting System, which has sold more than 100 program formats to 40 countries, Japan is considered the leading format trader in East Asia, particularly in game shows and variety shows.

While Japan is known for 'media mix' – a franchising business strategy with particular success in the animation industry (Steinberg 2012) – in considering the transferability of Japanese narratives and genres across borders, we must also pay close attention to the local production culture. Writing against the thesis of cultural homogenization and cultural imperialism, Dong-Hoo Lee (2003) underlines the uses of Japanese programs during a particularly competitive period in the South Korean television industry. In the 1990s, hybridizing Japanese programs was an important means for Korean television practitioners to discover new visual and storytelling techniques. Television producers then developed Korea's own trendy dramas to target a young generation sensitive to global consumer culture and new technologies (Lee 2004).

In Taiwan, years of Japanese television consumption have allowed local media professionals to master the televisual idioms of Japanese TV drama and modify them for local audiences. Since 2001, television adaptations of Japanese comic books have created a steady market (Lee 2010). The majority of these adaptations are romances or fantasies targeted at young women. The adaptation of the manga *Hanayori Dango* (Boys over Flowers) in Taiwan – entitled *Meteor Garden* (2001) – exemplifies local television's capacity to rewrite and remediate from Japanese material. *Hanayori Dango*, which was subsequently adapted also for television in Japan (2005), South Korea (2009), and China (2009), was a class romance between a down-to-earth girl and a rich young man, often accompanied by three equally privileged male friends. In Taiwan's drama adaptation, the marketing and visual language highlighted the four male characters' desirable masculine bodies. (The four lead actors immediately formed F4, a popular boy band, in the wake of the drama's success.) The heroine's attraction to the hero, a domineering bully, raises the question of redeemability and paves the way for romantic development, whereas the original story is more ambiguous and suggests that the heroine may opt for independence rather than romance (Deppman 2009).

It is not a coincidence that idol-based fantasy romance marks the most marketable Japanese source material for inter-Asian television adaptation. Both Deppman (2009) and Yang (2012) have noted that the genre's popular resonance lies in its temporary reconciliation of the social division and antagonisms that are common throughout the region. The Taiwanese *Meteor Garden* offers ideological closure for transgressions of class and patriarchal family order. Yang further observed that many inter-Asian media texts, be they licensed adaptations or original productions, only allow the remediation of certain experiences, such as the love stories of single, professional women (Yang 2013). In her analysis, remediation sensitizes us to concerns beyond the developmentalist interests of the format trade. This view of remediation allows us to extend our analysis to the agency and ideological limitations of local television, specifically a consideration of what is dramatized and what is excluded from dramatization. In the 2009 Chinese remake of *Meteor Garden*, class antagonism is minimized with the invention of a new character – a benign patriarch in the real estate business (Fung and Zhang 2012). This design serves to support the

hegemonic interests of the authoritarian neoliberalist state and papers over the social injustices caused by land speculation in China. In contrast, class contradictions are explicitly foregrounded in the Korean adaptation (*Boys over Flowers*, 2009). Behind this discrepant ideological effect is an opulent depiction of the wealthy lifestyle and storytelling of class contradictions in family and romantic relationships (Fung and Choe 2013).

The narrative choices made in each work of adaptation must then be understood in terms of each national television industry's stake in particular representations. Compared to the 'technology transfer' of reality shows or game shows (Keane et al. 2007), drama adaptation cannot be easily achieved from a format recipe. While the many adaptations of *Hanayori Dango* in East Asia throughout the 2000s demonstrate the regional currency of Japanese source material, the mutual reference between the adapting television industries seemed to have constituted the most critical momentum. In understanding the extent of Japan's influence, we may need to take a more empirical approach as Brienza (2014) and Lukács (2010a) have done with the thesis of 'Cool Japan' in the United States. The next section will look for more appropriate analytical pointers from the transmedia adaptation in East Asia.

Adaptation networks in East Asia

In reaction to increasing media convergence, studies of adaptation have gradually transitioned from a concern with fidelity toward the source material to a consideration of the industrial realities that enable the production of adapted work. The 'adaptation industry' – a formulation that includes a range of media stakeholders from literary authors, agents, and film producers to book fairs and film festivals – is Simone Murray's (2012) theoretical attempt to address the impact of other media industries on the book industry. The perspective is premised more on the potential to exploit intellectual property than on the work of the actual adapters. Nonetheless, the framework inspired dialogue among adaptation scholars such as Kyle Meikle, who reasserted the relevance of textual negotiation in adaptation, which he regards as a social process that is not exclusively 'industrial' or 'for profit' (Meikle 2013, p. 263). An alternative viewpoint, reframed as 'adaptation network', takes after Bruno Latour's material-semiotic analysis in the field of sociological relations. It seeks to analyze both realized and phantom nodes of exchange, such as screenplays, contracts, treatments, and correspondence.

The adoption of 'network' as a conceptual critique of 'industry' in adaptation studies is useful, but I would like to add another layer of meaning for the term, one that comes from the regional screen trade in East Asia. Screen and film studies in East Asia have demonstrated an acute sensitivity to the power of networks, which facilitate cross-border financing, production, distribution, product exposure, professional partnerships, and aesthetic/knowledge trade (Davis and Yeh 2008). A recent special issue on Japanese and Korean film franchising and adaptation in the *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema* has attempted to develop a more local theoretical understanding by analyzing the behaviors of regional network actors and engaging with Western-centered adaptation, remaking, and franchising theories. Underlying East Asian screen adaptations is a flexible web that connects diverse actors, each possessing a varying degree of power to realize or shape any particular production. Their interest to capitalize on the popularity of certain texts has resulted in the wide range of adaptations currently taking place. As part of this heightened competition, different industry adaptors also compete for the power to authenticate the text. *Brave Hearts: Umizaru*, the fourth film in the *Umizaru* series and one of the top-grossing Japanese films of 2012, may be seen as the latest component of the *Umizaru* franchise that started out as a manga (1998–2001) and then adapted into an NHK drama (2002–2003). However, these

earlier versions have virtually disappeared amid the flood of promotional materials circulated by Fuji TV, the film's producer, from the time the film franchise began with the first *Umizaru* film in 2004 (Denison 2014, p. 114).

While successful cross-platform transmedia franchises in the West overwhelmingly require the backing of media conglomerates (Jenkins 2006), there have been cases in East Asia where small-scale media phenomena develop into cross-media adaptations. *Through the Night*, an independent film made by Zainichi Korean and Japanese coproducers, was such a case (Ogawa 2014). Portraying the perseverance of the ethnic Korean scrap metal collectors in 1950s Osaka, the 2002 film was an adaptation of Yang Sogil's novel, which reappropriated the 'Apache' image of the Korean scrap metal collectors that was already in popular culture circulation due to a cult film series (*Iron Man*, 1989) and the novels of two postwar literary giants, Kaiko Takeshi and Komatsu Sakyō. The film sought to connect with Yang's experience as a young, unemployed poet in Osaka and glamorized the resilient, cyborg-like Zainichi community. The film was made before developments that brought about improved relations between South Korea and Japan, such as the Korean Wave, Japan and South Korea's 2002 cohosting of the World Cup, and South Korea's incremental lifting of its ban on Japanese cultural goods in the 1990s and 2000s. In a rare move, the international coproducers shot the film's Osaka backdrop scenes in Kunsan, South Korea. The coproduction was facilitated by members of the Zainichi community, who as a result gained visibility as the film subject as well as recognition as investors and promoters (Ogawa 2014).

Through the Night may seem like an anomaly, but it reflects the historical mediation present in many cross-cultural adaptations, remakes, and franchises in East Asia. The transformations that shaped the region over the last century – colonization, modernization, the Cold War, and globalization – have yielded subjective experiences that are a critical interpretative frame for understanding the specific relationships that form and cultural products that are made as stories cross borders. In his analysis of the South Korean film *Ring Virus* – a remake of the well-known J-horror film, *Ring* – James Byrne (2014) attempts to go beyond the received J-horror discourse (e.g., feminine hysteria, vengeance against industrial capitalism) that has dominated the Western imagination of Asian horror films. Looking instead at how Japanese and South Korean filmmakers reworked horror in the film from the novel and first film, Byrne attributes *Ring Virus*' expanded storytelling of the tragic, hermaphroditic heroine to South Korea's melodramatic conventions as well as to a horror genre tradition that, compared with Japan's, is less preoccupied with the United States.

South Korea certainly does have political, military, and cultural entanglements with the United States. According to Akiko Sugawa-Shimada, the South Korea–US relationship during the Cold War influenced *Transtoday: 5 Transformer Fighters*, the South Korean film adaptation of the Japanese superhero team TV series *Go-Rangers*. Resisting what she called the 'Japanese super combat series' model, *Transtoday: 5 Transformer Fighters* showed ideological affinity with the American hegemony, which includes 'gender equality, cultural hybridity, and a positive appreciation of industrialization' (p. 181). The adaptation also plays out 'South Korea's political dilemma with North Korea and its attempt to nurture a confident national identity' (Sugawa-Shimada 2014, p. 181).

The specific cases reviewed here concerning Japanese and South Korean adaptations, remakes, and franchises alert us to differences in the conditions and modes of collaboration. Major corporations, small-scale producers, and independent media players come together in various unpredictable ways. Local storytelling conventions and political history in the region also shape products that originate in cross-cultural and transmedia exchange. The industry conditions that enable successful adaptations, remakes, and franchises in East Asia are diverse and to a large degree

local. For example, S.V. Srinivas' study (2003) indicated the promotional power of distributors in southern India's fragmented, low-value market in the 1970s and 1980s. Kelly Hu's study of Chinese video websites (Hu 2014) captured a realignment of power between the broadcasters, online platforms, and subtitling groups as they responded to changing state policies. Studies such as these challenge the assumption that the global format business constitutes a singular, transnational trading system (Chalaby 2015).

The two case studies that follow reveal something of the disjointed, ad hoc nature of the networks behind the remakes and adaptations created in East Asia. The analysis draws on production culture studies (Caldwell 2009) and from the literature reviewed above. It pays particular attention to the emergence of new roles in intellectual property (IP) negotiation and production in inter-Asian networks between Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and China.

The after-life of Nozawa Hisashi: IP negotiation and adaptations in Japan and South Korea

Nozawa Hisashi (1960–2004) was a successful novelist and scriptwriter known for his socially resonant marital stories and thrillers. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s until his premature death in 2004, he was much sought after by major TV producers and wrote, on average, one primetime serial per year. Unlike the majority of Japanese TV love stories, which treated marriage as the characters' inevitable 'happily-ever-after', Nozawa's marital stories featured reflective husbands and wives in active exploration of their desires and identity (Tsai 2007). Since his death, three of Nozawa's marital stories have been adapted into Korean TV dramas, and one of those was also made into a stage play. His novels have been translated and published in South Korea, Taiwan, China, and the United States (Table 25.1).

That Nozawa's oeuvre found new forms and markets across national borders is an unusual achievement for a scriptwriter, whose recognition as 'author' was subject to the rigid institutional branding practices of the time (Tsai 2004; Lukács 2010b). The active promotion of his work by Nozawa Office – the small, independent business headed by Nozawa Hisashi's widow Nozawa Yukiko – and the Korean production context are the two main factors contributing to this success. Drawing on interviews with Nozawa Yukiko and the Korean scriptwriter Park Yeon-seon, scholarship on the Korean media industry, and audience responses, this section considers Nozawa's Korean dramas from three production-side perspectives: that of an independent rights owner, adaptation networks in Japan and Korea, and the South Korean mediation of Japanese marital stories.

Nozawa Office was originally a straightforward business set up by Nozawa Hisashi to manage his royalties. After he committed suicide, management of the company fell to Nozawa Yukiko. A homemaker up until that point, Nozawa Yukiko had two young children to support and no particular business experience. What she did have was ownership of Nozawa's original screenplays, plot outlines, and novels, many of which had not yet been adapted to the screen. 'I based my work judgment on "What would Nozawa Hisashi have done?" Would this case bring him joy? If it were Nozawa Hisashi, even if the royalties were small, he would still want to work with a certain actress or a certain director' (Higuchi 2007, pp. 59–60). Unfortunately, all of her business calls to production companies in Japan, even those that had prior relationships with Nozawa Hisashi, were at first met with disinterest (personal communication, February 3, 2016).

With no industry contacts, Nozawa Yukiko created the Nozawa Office website and developed the business in a piece-meal, trial-and-error fashion. Eventually, she came into contact with So-net, an internet service provider owned by Sony that had expressed interest in producing

Table 25.1 Cross-national, cross-media IP products derived from Nozawa Hisashi's work

Original work	Japan TV/filmproduction	Korean TV drama adaptation	Other adaptation and translation editions
Novel: <i>Ren'ai jidai</i> [Alone in Love] (1998) Tokyo: Gentosha	<i>Ren'ai jidai</i> , 12-episode serial by Yomiuri TV (2015), script by Fujii Kiyomi	<i>Yeon-ae Sidae</i> , 16-episode serial produced by Yellow Film, broadcast by SBS (2006) Broadcast on Japan's Sky Perfect TV with Japanese subtitles	Korean theater productions (Seoul, Sep. 23, 2011–Mar 25, 2012; Oct 5–Dec. 29 2013) Korean edition (2006) Seoul: Sodam; Simplified Chinese edition (2008) Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House
Novel: <i>Koibito yo</i> [Dear Lover] (1995) Tokyo: Gentosha	<i>Koibito yo!</i> 12-episode serial by Fuji TV (1995), script by Nozawa Hisashi	SBS (2007); 20 episodes; DVD edition released in Japan Broadcast in Taiwan on the channel, Videoland	Korean edition (2007) Seoul: Yellow Entertainment
Drama script: <i>Shin'ai naru mono he</i> [To My Beloved]	<i>Shin'ai naru mono he</i> , 12-episode serial by Fuji TV (1992), script by Nozawa Hisashi	SBS (2012) Streamed online in Japan through KNTV (2013) DVD released in Japan (2014) by Kadokawa Media Factory	
Novel: <i>Toride naki mono</i> [Man without Fortress] (2004) Tokyo: Kodansha	<i>Toride naki mono</i> , 2-hour drama by TV Asahi (2004), screenplay by Nozawa Hisashi		Chinese edition (2015) Taipei: Doing
Novel: <i>Shinku</i> [Deep Red] (2003) Tokyo: Kodansha	<i>Shinku</i> , film by Toei (2005), screenplay by Nozawa Hisashi		Chinese edition (2009), Taipei: Crown; Korean edition (2010), Seoul: Wisdom House; English edition (2016), New York: Vertical

Source: Nozawa Office Homepage: <http://nozawahisashi.jp>

some of Nozawa Hisashi's work for an online streaming service it was developing. The collaboration never materialized, but a year of project development with potential producers initiated Nozawa Yukiko into the industry network. A former producer-collaborator in Japan referred her to a Korean production company that was sourcing material in Japan. The resulting project was the highly successful 16-episode Korean TV drama adaptation *Yeon-ae Sidae* (Alone in Love) (2006), which aired on SBS (Figure 25.1).

Negotiating marital stories IPs in precarious networks

Alone in Love is about a young divorced couple that has trouble moving on because they have not fully grieved their stillborn son. The story bears Nozawa's signature concern with the



Figure 25.1 *Yeon-ae Sidae* (*Alone in Love*, directed by Han Ji-Seong, 2006) was the first of three marital love stories by Nozawa Hisashi that were adapted into Korean TV serials

Source: photo permission by Seoul Broadcasting System

complexities of marriage and divorce. The 2006 Korean drama featured major stars (Son Ye-jin and Kam Woo-sung) and was directed by Han Ji-seung, who was committed to materializing the details and spirit of the novel (*Magazine T* 2006). Korean audiences responded favorably, complementing its cinematic aesthetics and high production quality. They found the drama realistic and therapeutic, some saying that it was even ‘better than the novel’.² The positive response can also be attributed to the creators’ compelling rendering of subtle emotions. Park Yeon-Seon, the scriptwriter, said she was asked by the production company, Yellow Film, to pay close attention to the expression of sentiment. The fact that people were still talking about the drama nine months after it was first aired gave her encouragement (2007, personal communication, February 4).

Because *Alone in Love* was Nozawa Yukiko’s first major deal with an international company, she did not enter into it with particularly high expectations (2016, personal communication, February 3). And although the production endured setbacks, most notably the withdrawal of funding by a Japanese investor, Nozawa’s experience with Yellow Film was positive. The relationship was facilitated by Yellow Film’s willingness to translate the script into Japanese for Nozawa’s input and approval as well as by Yellow Film’s vice president, who was able to communicate directly with Nozawa in Japanese.

This productive model of cooperation was not to be repeated. The negotiations for the two subsequent Korean adaptation projects that were ultimately produced were complicated by

state-mandated changes in the South Korean media industry as well as by conflicting copyright claims by Nozawa Yukiko and Fuji TV, the network that originally produced the dramas for Japanese television. Following the success of *Alone in Love*, Yellow Film expressed interest in producing another marital drama based on Nozawa's novel, *Koibito yo* (Dear Lover). However, financial trouble led Yellow Film – a listed company – to be bought by an American corporation, which later dissolved it. The demise of Yellow Film was a symptom of the changing structure of South Korea's media economy. In the 1990s, the Korean legislature set out to reform the oligopolistic structure of the country's broadcasting industry by passing laws requiring the major terrestrial broadcasters, such as KBS, MBC, and SBS, to outsource a certain quota of their programming to independent production companies. This led to a rapid expansion in the number of independent producers, which were able to claim copyright over the works they produced and to negotiate their own commercial contracts, privileges that were previously the sole prerogative of the major broadcasters (Lee 2010, p. 191). The competition among independent producers in this new high-risk market was fierce and many, like Yellow Film, went out of business.

Dear Lover's IP was shuffled to another production company, which compared with Yellow Film did not have as strong a production vision, was more deferential to the broadcaster, and did not communicate well with Nozawa Yukiko (2016, personal communication, February 3). The story of *Dear Lover* begins with two couples getting married on the same day and gradually unfolds to reveal new and old romantic entanglements. The Japanese TV adaptation in 1995 featured popular A-list actors and actresses (Suzuki Honami, Kishitani Goro, Sato Koji, and Suzuki Kyoka). Yet despite Nozawa Yukiko's input, the producers of the 2007 Korean adaptation seemed to have made casting choices based on transnational market considerations rather than acting ability.³ Nozawa Yukiko was also disappointed by the lack of adaptation plans, which to her is an essential part of the creative development process. In permitting Korean production companies to adapt *Alone in Love* and *Dear Lover*, Nozawa Yukiko handed over the script outline along with the original novel. A script outline is sometimes regarded as less important than the original novel, but because it communicates a holistic understanding of the plot development and character actions expressly for the purpose of production, its practical worth can be considerable. The value of script outlines became increasingly apparent to Nozawa Yukiko as she gained experience in the industry (2016, personal communication, February 3).

In the next project, *To My Beloved*, Nozawa Yukiko felt even more removed from the process. This was caused by concerns with both the Korean production company and the original Japanese broadcaster, which asserted copyright claims over the work. She said:

I felt I couldn't do very much. They didn't respond to my request to have the script translated. They only seemed to want to buy it. I didn't have much say. Still, it wasn't so bad because I needed the income. So I just accepted the terms. The JTBC version was more like a remake, since there was no original novel to adapt from. I was concerned about Fuji TV's reaction, even with TV Asahi in the game.⁴ Fuji TV is particular about their broadcasting rights.

(2016, personal communication, February 3)

If the quote demonstrates a certain cautious stance toward Fuji TV, it was because Fuji TV did contact Nozawa Yukiko during the Korean adaptation of *Dear Lover*. Interested to expand their rights business overseas, Fuji TV intended to claim a 50 percent 'royalty from derivative works' based on a clause in their standard scriptwriters contract. Yet, Nozawa Yukiko was able to deflect

their claim based on two legal technicalities: (1) the novel existed before Fuji TV's production, and (2) Nozawa Hisashi never officially signed a contract with Fuji TV. This was what allowed Nozawa Yukiko to survive as an independent content (IP) negotiator in a field of major players.

Though various Japanese media conglomerates, such as Kadokawa Publishing and Fuji Sankei, have been credited for their unique media-mix and franchising successes, the Japanese TV industry around 2005 had not streamlined its IP business internationally. In the view of Nozawa Yukiko, it was a buyer's market. As an independent IP seller, Nozawa Yukiko slowly built a cross-national, cross-media IP business (see Table 25.1) – however tentatively – by using her own limited resources to make international calls and trips to develop potential IP projects.⁵ She also earned an MBA degree in order to deepen and update her knowledge of the intellectual property business. Arguably, Nozawa Hisashi's most important institutional collaborator, Fuji TV, played no positive role in Nozawa Office's international IP business. Nozawa Yukiko's experience resonates with transnational, individualizing paths of Japanese filmworkers in Yoshiharu Tezuka's research (2012). Informed by Manuel Castells' call to investigate cosmopolitan experience in the empirical, actually existing sense rather than from a philosophical-ethical understanding, Tezuka examines how Japanese film producers, distributors, investors, and directors survive under the market conditions set by global neoliberalism. Nozawa Yukiko likewise carved out unique opportunities within and among the sometimes hostile regional media and publishing networks and actors – among which Fuji TV is a prominent competitor. In the next section, we will look more closely at one example of Fuji TV's attempt to develop its IP business in East Asia.

A Chinese remake and remediation of a Japanese classic

The transborder screen trade, a broad category that includes coproductions, remakes, transborder casting, and adaptations, is familiar territory for Fuji TV. Against the backdrop of the Korean Wave and the cohosted 2002 FIFA World Cup, Fuji TV initiated several coproduced film and TV serials with South Korean partners in the early 2000s (e.g., *Friends*; *Rondo*). Its immensely successful romantic drama, *101st Proposal*, has been remade three times since the millennium. The first, a Chinese TV serial (2004) starring then popular Korean star Choe Ji Woo and Taiwanese actor Sun Xing, had a Chinese production staff, a Korean scriptwriter, and several Korean investors (Lee 2008, p. 195). The Korean remake, which aired on SBS in 2006, localized the plot quite a bit, including changing the profession of the heroine to a radio personality. In 2013, a Chinese film version of the drama, *Say Yes*, earned over 20 million RMB at the box office in its first month of release (lifeFR 2013). Is all this the result of the strong 'Japanese IP DNA'? It was presented as such in at least one promotional context. During the 2016 Shanghai Television Festival, SMG Pictures and Fuji TV announced a series of coproduction plans to remake three classic Japanese love stories in 2017 (D Entertainment, June 7, 2016). Presiding at the panel were Ota Toru, Fuji TV's legendary drama producer and now the company's senior managing director, and his frequent collaborator Sakamoto Yuji, the screenwriter for *Tokyo Love Story*. The intent to canonize Fuji TV's 'classic' love stories was clear. However, the success of this venture is in no way guaranteed. Using the 2013 coproduced film *Say Yes* as a case study, this section calls attention to the power of local remediation, which in this instance occurs at two levels: (1) the trans-local creative network that exists between China and Taiwan, and (2) a reworking of a fantasy to tap into China's widely shared *diaosi* (loser) sentiment.

Say Yes was directed by Taiwanese director Leste Chen, a young director (then 32) who had developed a successful career in China amid the flow of cultural talents from Taiwan to China. The film casts Taiwanese model/actress Lin Chi-ling in the role of a classy cellist and Chinese

film actor Huang Bo in the role of a small contractor. The casting decision, coming from Fuji TV (Malaimo 2013), reflects an accurate reading of the two actors' transborder charisma. A late-comer to film acting – her first role came when she was in her 30s – Lin built a transnational acting portfolio that includes a role in John Woo's *Red Cliff* franchise (2008–2009) and a starring role in the Japanese TV serial *Moon Lovers* (2010) with Kimura Takuya. Her dominant appeal, however, remains that of a goddess, forever desired and permanently out of reach (Malaimo 2013). Chen, who had directed Lin in an earlier film, worked this image into the story, which would come to be promoted as 'a loser's pursuit of a goddess' (*Dazhong Dianying*, 2013). Though this tag largely matched the premise of the TV drama – that is, how a man who has been turned down by 99 dates could win the heart of a true beauty – the filmic rendering of 'the loser' had a specific social resonance in 2012 China.

According to the Chinese film magazine, *Dazhong Dianying*, *Say Yes* was practically custom-made for Chinese young people because its main characters were representative of three topical figures in contemporary Chinese society: the *diaosi* (loser), the *gaofushuai* (a tall, rich, and handsome man), and the goddess (2013). *Diaosi* emerged as an internet meme in China around 2012 to refer to those of humble origin with no social connections, good looks, or other competitive advantages. An identity marker originally used to mock the excluded majority in opposition to the privileged, *diaosi* quickly became an affective self-identification through which the desire for mobility and alternative definitions of happiness and success may be imagined (Szablewicz 2014). *Diaosi* embodies desire for Chinese citizenship and membership, 'because it captures at least one prominent dimension of so many Chinese people's self-perception as to what it means to be an ordinary Chinese in this day and age' (Yang et al. 2014, p. 211). The appropriateness of the *diaosi* figure was acknowledged by many viewers in their in-depth reviews.⁶ 'Lin Chi-ling and Huang Bo make an impossible couple. It matches the current Chinese society that is filled by *diaosi*' (Gailopu 2013), said one. According to another 2013 audience reviewer, Huang is a particularly believable *diaosi* because of his humble origin, numerous roles as ordinary, migrant laborer characters, and a slow, unassisted path of career building. Rather than giving the heroine expensive and classy gifts like his privileged rival, his character expresses heart-felt care for the heroine by crafting a cello chair tailored to her height (Figure 25.2). In the finale, his character joins a singing competition on a TV reality show. Not in the original TV drama, this setup resonates with the boom of singing competition reality shows in China since the mid-2000s (Hsieh 2015). One sustaining narrative in these Chinese singing reality shows has been the story of an ordinary person achieving his or her dream on stage. This tone of self-responsibility resonates with the post-socialist, neoliberal condition in China (Jian and Liu 2009; Yang 2014).

When asked to explain the success of *Say Yes*, Fuji TV's Ota attributed it to the director's good sense, his careful emotional rendering, the skillful use of music, and the stylish representation of Shanghai. 'Overall, it is close to Japan's version' (Sagara 2013, p. 54). Ota seemed satisfied. The film does stay faithful to the original characters and the ideal of romantic love. The cameo by Takeda Tetsuya – the actor who played the lead male role in the original Japanese drama – signaled its lineage and endorsement by the Japanese media company. But if we want to identify the reasons behind the film's social and ideological resonance, we have to look to the local social reality in China. Affective responses to intensifying competition and widening inequality gave rise to the *diaosi* identity and its corollary – the unattainable yet inescapable dream of success. That's not to say that people unquestioningly bought into the fantasy. As one audience reviewer aptly put it, 'sometimes, seeing a movie is to avenge the banality of life' (Jiandan 2013).



Figure 25.2 Huang Bo's character in *Say Yes* (Chen 2013) takes notes on the heroine's (played by Lin Chi-ling) performing posture with the intent to handcraft a chair to match her physique. Used by permission of Huang Bo and Lin Chi-ling

Conclusion

Transmedia adaptations, franchises, and remakes are a fast-growing business across Asia. This chapter analyzed business networks and practices in recent inter-Asian drama and film adaptations based on Japanese source material. Specifically, it presented two case studies that shed light on industry practices and conditions. The first case examined the transnational trajectory of Nozawa Office – a small company that manages the adaptation rights of deceased writer Nozawa Hisashi, and its negotiations among the unstable production networks in South Korea and Japan. The second case considers remediation at the production and social levels in a Chinese film adaptation based on Fuji TV's romantic TV drama, *101st Proposal*. The two cases offer a comparative and complementary perspective on the relative power of independent players and media corporations in the transborder screen trade.

The overseas expansion of Nozawa Office was conditioned by both Japanese TV industry passivity and South Korean interest in sourcing from Japan. The extraordinary story of Nozawa Yukiko narrates the transformation of a homemaker into a self-made entrepreneur in the transnational screen business. At the same time, it illuminates the emerging opportunities and roles for smaller players in the format trade. Nozawa Office is more than an 'estate', which in adaptation studies has been treated as an unpredictable proprietor outside of the industry with an inconsistent approach to domestic and international markets (Hewett 2015). Compared to Fuji TV, which commanded talent and capital through its Japan–Korea coproductions, Nozawa Office developed a different mode of transnational collaboration and a different line of products. Though the negotiations were not always smooth, Nozawa Hisashi's work and authorship were preserved as a form of intellectual property.

By comparison, Nojima Shinji was credited as the scriptwriter of the Japanese drama *101st Proposal*, but Fuji TV took control as the sole proprietor of the drama's adaptations and remakes. Fuji TV's claim on various IP screen products involves the co-optation of screenwriters' rights to develop independent IP businesses. Similar co-optations have played out in the post-network TV production environment in the United States where negotiations between corporations and creators have resulted in a situation where TV screenwriters and writer-producers are expected to contribute to network websites and other marketing platforms that largely exist for corporate branding (Mann 2009).

In assessing the regional power of Japanese media and cultural industries in the format trade, we should investigate further how the inter-Asian production networks use their resources to facilitate the productions of both major and independent players. The more successful products seem to be those that have undergone more local remediation, as in the case of *Say Yes*. The owners of Japanese IP can promise a lot, but success depends just as much on the delivery of a locally meaningful story.

Notes

- 1 I wish to thank Nozawa Yukiko for online and face-to-face interviews in Korea, Taiwan, and Japan (2009–2016). I wish to also thank Noh Hae-rang for his research and translation assistance (2006–2007). Without the Japanese and Korean translation support from Wang Shi-fen, Qiu Ke-ying, Aoi Tsumura, and Shin Ji-hyun, this chapter could simply not have been completed. The author is responsible for all mistakes and problems in the chapter.
- 2 Based on the collection of 119 postings on the drama's SBS website, <http://tv.sbs.co.kr/yeonae>
- 3 The leading heroine is played by Yun Son-ha, who has had a double-track career in Japan and South Korea since the 1990s.
- 4 JTBC is a Korean broadcast channel whose investors include the Korean news agency Joongang Daily and the Japanese broadcast network Asahi TV. The project was initiated by the Japanese branch of Joongang Daily.
- 5 Nozawa Yukiko contacted me during one of her business trips to Taipei in 2013. She was exploring the possibility of working with TV production professionals. Yet despite Taiwan's regular TV drama adaptation of Japanese comic books, there have been no plans to make adaptations based on the more mature themes found in television dramas. Much of her international business meetings have been documented on the Nozawa Office blog under the tag, *shuzai* (research). See <http://nozawahisashi.blog.so-net.ne.jp>
- 6 Audience responses were collected from the website Douban, which attracts educated young people to share in-depth reviews of films and other cultural products.

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Anime's distribution worlds

Formal and information distribution in the analogue and digital eras

Rayna Denison

Anime is replete with worlds. The metaphor of the anime world is fast becoming scholarly short-hand for the sometimes vast and long-running transmedia franchises comprising anime, some of which present unbroken lines of production dating back to the 1970s.¹ In extreme cases, anime can span thousands of television episodes, as well as dozens of films, and include a host of spin-off and ancillary media productions, along with a plethora of licensed goods. For anime, the pre-planned aspects of this transmedia production are known as 'media mix' (Ito n.d., Steinberg 2012), but the longer, unplanned and sprawling transmedia franchises still remain relatively obscure within academic discourse. In one of the first attempts to conceptualize these production chains, Marc Steinberg has argued that anime's textual worlds are so complex as to require a 'parallel worlds' theory to explain how coherence is maintained across time, differing media platforms and changes in production technologies and creative personnel. Steinberg argues that anime's media mixes create:

Two distinct models of transmedia storytelling. The first is a model of convergence: the elimination of impossible elements from a particular media franchise, with each element adding a piece to the whole, or the world ... The second is a model of divergence ... the media mix may work as much through divergence and bifurcation as addition ... If the trope of parallel worlds is so common to media mix narratives, it is because each strand within each medium potentially constitutes a kind of parallel world, and each strand is simultaneously an addition and a divergence.

(2012, pp. 86–7)

The former of these observations has strong connections with Henry Jenkins' work on media convergence, which describes 'the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want' (2006, loc. 170). By contrast, Steinberg suggests that anime's worlds might be simultaneously diverging as well as converging in response to local production practices. The necessity of a 'many worlds' theory of anime demonstrates how anime franchising challenges the capacity of existing theory, making it a considerable challenge to analyze anime's worlds.

However, the worlds inhabited by anime characters are only part of the complex, mutable and highly variable means by which anime have meaningful presences in our lives. The current text- and production-centered debates study only part of the complexity inherent in examining anime's worlds. This is because production and textual studies pull focus from another of anime's parallel worlds – distribution. Amongst all of the possible approaches that can be taken to studying anime, distribution tends to have only a marginal presence, seen at the fringes of debates around translation, authorship and fandom.

Studies of anime distribution have tended to focus on fans' efforts to spread anime texts through informal networks of fan translation and dissemination, rather than attending to the work undertaken by authorised distributors. This imbalance has resulted in the marginalization of discussions about anime's formal distribution. This is particularly notable within the growing body of work that examines fans' creative attempts to spread anime around the world in the face of industrial restrictions (for examples see Condry 2010, Lee 2011a, 2011b, Perez-Gonzales 2006). Consequently, there are more studies of the work done by fans in circulating anime outside of industrial control than there are studies of anime distribution *per se* (though some exists, for example, Ruh 2010, Denison 2007). Ian Condry's analysis of fans' creative work neatly explains why fans have been of more interest to scholars than their industrial counterparts. He argues that 'For most people in industry, any unauthorized sharing of copyrighted material is piracy pure and simple. It constitutes stealing the fruits of other people's labor. For others, however the world of media sharing ... evoke[s] complex debates about what's proper and what's property' (2010, p. 193). These debates about fandom's propriety versus industrial property rights have been caught up in a larger set of clashes between media industries and consumers colloquially known as the 'copyright wars'.

Distribution, in terms of anime, has been caught up in a zeitgeist surrounding the participation and interactivity of fans online, meaning that their inverse, formal distribution, has tended to be overlooked. The current digital landscape for distribution is also changing so rapidly that academic studies are struggling to keep pace with the changes in fan and industry practices and attitudes. As a result, the debates around fans' work against industry interests tend to present tidily polarized positions that usefully mirror current scholarly thinking about how to analyze the flows of media in a post-digital age. I want to argue that a more holistic view of anime's distribution can offer a lot more. By focusing more holistically on the distribution of anime we can better understand how anime has become an increasingly prevalent part of global culture before and since the digital era. Through a more holistic analysis of distribution we can see how anime's worlds are rewritten by their encounters with new markets. To this end, I want to challenge the perception of 'industry' and 'fans' locked within an ongoing war, and to replace this set of binary oppositions with a more nuanced sense of the ongoing interactions between Japanese producers, overseas distribution intermediaries and the audiences that they seek.

Approaching anime distribution

Roman Lobato points out that, 'to be of social consequence, a film must first reach an audience. In other words, it must be distributed. Distribution plays a crucial role in film culture – it determines what films we see, and when and how we see them; and it also determines what films we do *not* see' (2012, p. 2). These sentiments are as relevant for anime as they are for film. For example, much of the contestation over the meanings of anime takes place because of perceived delays or shortfalls in distribution and, therefore, attending to the distributive logics underpinning the flows of anime can provide us with an alternative perspective on the debates around what anime means as it travels the world. As they are translated, repackaged and denuded of their

local context, I argue that anime's worlds take on yet another new 'parallel' existence: discussion of anime's parallel worlds should include the partial, temporally disjointed and sometimes creatively extended worlds generated by formal and informal transnational distribution practices.

Studies of Japanese media distribution have been sporadically appearing in English-language scholarship for well over a decade now. This interest roughly coincides with the introduction of new digital home technologies, particularly following the transnational popularity of Tartan's Asia Extreme DVD label, which introduced the UK (and elsewhere) to a cycle of Japanese and Asian horror films in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Dew 2007, Wada-Marciano 2007). Japanese film distribution studies have, echoing this distribution trend, tended to focus on specific genres or labels (for example, Martin 2009, Wroot 2013), offering an incomplete template for dealing with anime's transmedia production mix.

In contrast, Koichi Iwabuchi's (2002, 2004) work on the flows of Japanese television across Asia, and Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano's (2012) analysis of Japanese digital film production and distribution, both offer more holistic attempts to conceptualize the importance of distribution within the narrative of Japanese media history. Iwabuchi has argued for a reconsideration of the field that positions Japan as one hub of production amongst many, rather than taking a Hollywood-centered approach to understanding distribution (2002). Offering a distinctively different approach to distribution, Wada-Marciano analyzes how Japanese filmmakers are using digital and internet technologies to create interest and distribution possibilities for niche productions like documentary filmmaking (2012). In their insistence on analyzing media flows, in concert with the networks of distribution and the mechanisms enabling niche productions to reach audiences, Iwabuchi and Wada-Marciano have taken important steps towards understanding how distribution impacts the meaning of texts.

However, neither of these scholars is much interested in the flows of anime specifically, nor in the impact that the processes of distribution (and their lack) have on the way anime is discussed and understood outside of Asia. In this chapter, therefore, I want to place the distribution of anime at the heart of a discussion about the impact of distribution technologies on our understanding of Japanese media. I have chosen to focus on a single transnational market here – the US market – not least because the US has tended to be a significant secondary market for the global spread of anime, particularly in terms of English translations and formal and informal distribution routes (Ruh 2010). Even considering that the liberalization in Asia has made it, collectively, Japan's most significant export market, the USA still ranks first in the number of international contracts with the Japanese animation industry (Masuda et al. 2015). Moreover, many of the US texts tend to be recycled into anime's tertiary markets, with US translations used as the source material for further translations (Pizzuto forthcoming). This is a product of distribution companies seeking global rights contracts that allow them to think bigger than nations, to think at least transnationally, if not globally. Focusing primarily on the US market therefore enables a tracing of multiple threads of anime distribution, and analysis of the links between companies and fandoms in separate countries.

Undertaking this study requires a mixed set of analytical tools. As the title of this chapter suggests, Roman Lobato's (2012) concepts of formal and informal distribution provide a descriptive starting point for the conceptualization of anime distribution practices. Lobato's work has much in common with that of scholars like Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green, whose spreadable media project argues for an 'emerging hybrid model of circulation, where a mix of top-down and bottom-up forces determine how material is shared across and among cultures in far more participatory (and messier) ways' (Jenkins, Ford and Green, 2013, p. 1). While a useful approach to distribution, there are assumptions in Jenkins' and other similar studies (for examples, see Delwiche and Henderson 2013, Tryon 2009) that do not map easily onto the world of

anime. For one, anime's distribution businesses range in size and include relatively small, niche organizations with few employees as well as mass media conglomerates. On the smaller end of this scale it means that intermediary distribution agents can be outmanned by, and can be less subculturally influential than, the groups of anime fans taking part in activities like fan subtitling (fansubbing). Additionally, there has been a distinct blurring of the lines between the most powerful organizations in anime distribution and their fansubbing counterparts, seen, for example, when industry hires fansubbing groups to subtitle anime for formal distribution. This extreme 'messiness' makes top-down, or bottom-up, analysis of distribution difficult to sustain for anime. Therefore, I examine the distribution of anime using Lobato's more neutral terms of formal and informal distribution because such terms allow me to focus upon the blurring of lines between the formal and informal economies of anime distribution.

Lobato defines the differences between formal and informal distribution in the following way:

Formality refers to the degree to which industries are regulated, measured, and governed by state and corporate institutions. Informal distributors are those which operate outside this sphere, or in partial articulation with it ... the informal distribution realm, far from being a marginal force at the edges of films culture, is actually the key driver of distribution on a global scale.

(2012, p. 4)

As with the idea of parallel worlds of anime distribution, Lobato demonstrates how the transnational circulation of texts can cause them to shift between categories, and he also notes that informal distribution can overpower formal flows, becoming an important driver for industry action. In line with this thinking, the remainder of this chapter presents a chronologically organized analysis of how anime's meanings are shaped by its distribution at home and abroad, specifically focusing on moments of what Barbara Klinger terms the 'global polysemy' of media texts (2010, p. 112). I question how these technologies have impacted the global spread of anime, and how the lack of distribution, or partial distribution, might disrupt the meanings of anime's worlds.

From analogue to digital: anime's worlds in the world

Anime's worlds have been transnational since the inception of television animation in Japan. Early in the history of television anime, for instance, the producers placed the export of anime to the USA at the very heart of proto-anime production. Therefore, in this section, I will examine how that set of industrial flows developed from their initial stages to consider how the USA has emerged as one of anime's most significant secondary markets. These connections between distribution cultures has shaped and reshaped anime from its earliest moments and continues to do so into the digital era.

Within Japan, anime's story 'worlds' began when Osamu Tezuka began to license the first television anime, *Tetsuwan Atomu* (*Astro Boy*, 1963–1966), for appearances in merchandising campaigns (Steinberg 2012). Born of necessity – primarily, the need to cover the high costs of animation production – Tezuka's model for Japanese animation production began from the principle of expanding the textual universe out into the commodified experiences of children's culture (Steinberg 2012). However, as Jonathan Clements (2013) has argued, Tezuka's *Tetsuwan Atomu* came at the cusp of a boom in television animation production in Japan, a boom that was to quickly diversify production across myriad companies, styles and genres to create what we now know as anime. This first anime production boom was largely instigated by the need to create children's programming

for television schedules, but these developments came out of previous popularization of feature film animation in Japan through local cinematic exhibition (Clements 2013).

During this period, two companies were particularly notable for their impact on both production and distribution. The first was Tōei Dōga, which had been producing successful films since the late 1950s, including *Hakujaden (Panda and the Magic Serpent)*, Taiji Yabushita and Hiroshi Okawa, 1958), which was perhaps the most significant of a string of animated films that Tze-yue G. Hu (2010) and Clements (2013) note were produced for an Asian, and not just Japanese, distribution market. Just as important, though, was that Tōei Dōga came to prominence through its industrial distribution relationship with its parent company the major film studio, Tōei, which had its own domestic theatrical exhibition circuit in this period. It was access to exhibition that allowed Tōei Dōga's films widespread access to the market (for more, see Standish 2006). Beginning well before Tezuka's *Tetsuwan Atomu*, and training animators like Hayao Miyazaki and Isao Takahata, Tōei Dōga has been instrumental in enabling the subsequent development of many of Japan's most powerful animation studios.

A second company, Fuji TV, also helped to popularize early anime by including them as a significant part of their broadcast schedules. Fuji TV's broadcasts included Tezuka's *Tetsuwan Atomu*, but also rivals to Tezuka's television anime crown. Companies like Tatsunoko Pro began to offer popular series hard on *Tetsuwan Atomu*'s heels, including the popular *Mahha Go Go Go (Speed Racer)*, Tatsuo Yoshida, 1967–1968). Fuji TV is still a significant broadcaster and innovator within the anime market today, creating, for example, an alternative to mainstream anime programming and a working environment friendly to female creators through its NoitaminA broadcast slot in Japan (Schley 2014). Fuji TV has continually been a significant presence among Japanese anime broadcasters within Japan, a field which has continued to expand across anime's history to include specialist satellite anime broadcasters (for example, TV Tokyo) and multiple time slots per day in which anime dominates (Joo et al. 2013). Domestically, cinematic exhibition and television broadcasts have played significant roles in anime's local popularization, with major studios and television broadcasters supporting its dissemination across Japan.

If local licensing and distribution deals played a significant role in proto-anime productions, their sale to international distributors also helped to prove the market's viability. These deals significantly shaped anime from the earliest days of Japanese television animation. For instance, deals with NBC Enterprises in the USA helped Tezuka to afford to produce television animation like *Tetsuwan Atomu* and *Janguru Taitei (Jungle Emperor Leo/Kimba the White Lion)*, 1965–1967). However, as Fred Ladd recounts, the US distributors required significant alterations to these earliest anime to make the Japanese shows fit with US audience and network expectations. For example, Ladd notes that Tezuka 'agreed that *Leo* would remain a cub throughout the entire initial series of 52 episodes' of *Janguru Taitei* (Ladd with Deneroff 2009: 52), curtailing Tezuka's initial plan to show the central lion character ageing throughout the course of the programme. In this way, even at the point of creation, early Japanese television animation's worlds were being shaped by transnational distribution (for more, see Clements 2013, Denison 2015).

Thereafter, the 1970s and 1980s saw significant expansion and genrification within the Japanese market as 'anime' became the dominant form of animation in its domestic market (Clements 2013). With the advent of home video, this market once again expanded, allowing the addition of more adult-oriented content in Japan, normally in the form of straight-to-video Original Video Animation (OVA, also called Original Animation Video) that could bypass the television distribution market and thus avoid broadcaster-led content requirements (Takahashi and Tsugata 2011). In this same period, Japanese anime producers began to make deals with toy companies, which encouraged a gendered split in anime's markets that continues today, most notably in the meta-generic categories of the *shōjo* (girls) and *shōnen* (boys) markets (for more,

see Steinberg 2012, Denison 2015). This expansion within the Japanese market for anime meant that there was significant content available for international distribution, but in this same period Japanese anime companies found themselves struggling to sell anime to the US, as restrictions on violence and adult-oriented content restricted the formal flow of anime's worlds to the US market (Ladd with Deneroff 2009). In response to content issues, this early period, from the 1960s to the 1980s, became noted for the way US distributors remixed anime. Both European and US distributors recut, dubbed and added localizing cultural elements to existing anime series, hiding their Japanese origins and creating new parallel story worlds for anime (for examples, like the reproduction of *Battle of the Planets/Gatchaman* or *Robotech*, see Ruh 2010).

Toward the end of this period, home video irrevocably changed the spreadability of anime. VHS and Betamax technologies were available globally and the use of NTSC television systems in both Japan and the US meant that the tapes were transferrable between national contexts. This, along with close Japanese–US relations in this period meant that a grassroots fandom began to emerge that actively worked to circulate anime texts (initially without subtitles) informally between the Japanese and US markets. Likewise, in this period, US fans started to record anime from television channels aimed at the Japanese diaspora in the US, and to buy tapes from retail outlets serving this population (Patten 2004a). Through these means, fans worked to popularize anime, and subsequently began to expand into the subcultural spaces of conventions and university clubs from the late 1970s onwards (Patten 2004b). In doing this active promotional work for anime, fans became what Sean Leonard calls a 'proselytization commons', working to spread anime fandom in the US and to create a market ready for formal distribution (2005, p. 282).

The most significant contribution made by these fans to the popularization of anime in the US was their creation of fan subtitled (fansubbed) video tapes, which were exchanged between groups (often duplicated until they were almost unwatchable) for collective viewing at conventions and similar events (Leonard 2005, 'History of Anime in the US' n.d.). In this way, fans initiated loosely organized networks of exchange, translation and distribution that fostered the nascent fandom, and (sometimes dysfunctionally) built it up into a market that industry could sell to (Patten 2004b). Leonard contends that 'early anime companies had to rely on the existing fanbase and had to grow that fanbase if they were to turn a profit. That fanbase relied on the circulation of fansubs. The proselytization commons shaped the commercial enterprise, not the other way around' (2005, p. 294). While this point is well taken, by the time that fansubs started to appear in significant quantities in the early 1990s, a growing number of specialist anime distribution companies had already started forming in the US.

The 1990s might be thought of as the second generation of formally organized US anime distribution. These new companies differed from the first generation by drawing staff from the fandom, as in the case of AD Vision's founders John Ledford and Matt Greenfield, and some of these second-generation companies were also among the first to have links back to Japan, as with Pioneer ('History of Anime in the US'). Another major difference was the shift to a dual-language world for transnational anime, with companies like AnimEigo, AD Vision and Streamline Pictures producing subtitled (often in addition to dubbed) versions of anime videos.

This generation of formal anime distribution was, like their informal counterparts, faced with considerable technical challenges, including the initial lack of normalized subtitling technologies for video (AnimEigo, n.d.). This early stage of formal video distribution also produced anime's first fandom schism as fans tended to align themselves with either subtitled or dubbed content, rather than purchasing both formats (Cubbison 2005). In essence, this was a distribution-originated split caused by an industry trying to serve two markets: on the one hand a television audience more used to dubbed and recut anime, and on the other an acknowledgment of the fansubbing market's success wherein industry partially mimicked fansubbing

practices by producing formal subtitled videos. Distribution was thereby responsible for a fracturing of anime's worlds along audio lines, as voice acting practices normalized particular 'anime voices' in the US that were distinct from the audio-visual worlds available to Japanese audiences.

These first formally distributed videos also reflect a set of generic limitations in the transnational flow of anime worlds. There are still significant debates about which was the 'official' first anime released on video in the US. Early release contenders include AnimEigo's *Metal Skin Panic: MADOX-01* (Shinji Aramaki and Hideaki Anno, 1987) released in 1989, a *mecha* robot OAV (AnimEigo, n.d.); whereas, Fred Patten has claimed elsewhere that Streamline Picture's release of the live action promotional video *Akira Production Report* (1990), or US Rendition's *Dangaioh Volume One* (1990), another OAV *mecha* genre story, should be considered the first (Patten 2003). However, these releases were dwarfed by the success of a single high-profile anime film, Katsuhiro Ōtomo's *Akira* (1988), which was released theatrically and on video by Central Park Media in the US. What quickly becomes clear from examining these early releases is that the first 'anime' video releases did not mirror the variety of anime genres popular in Japan at this time, which included high school comedies, sports anime and romances to name just a few of the genres that were popular alongside science fiction in this period (Denison 2015). Moreover, anime in the US in this period became a conglomeration of the separate television and home video markets in Japan at the time. As the examples above show, in the US early formal video distribution was dominated by science fiction and by a generalized sense of what 'anime' might be.

What is most interesting here, given Leonard's claim about fansubs leading the industry in this period, is that these releases were also not those most commonly cited in relation to fansubs. Some of the most popular fansubs included high school comedies like Rumiko Takahashi's *Ranma ½* (1989–1992) (Leonard 2005). This had a significant impact on the conceptualization of anime worlds early in their transnational existence. To have access to the kinds of television anime series popular in Japan, fans had to actively seek out content, usually by watching informally distributed fansubbed videos. As a result, fans had limited levels of control about the kinds of anime worlds they engaged with, nor much control about how coherent their encounters with anime were (which episodes, and in which order).

These early informal and formal efforts to distribute anime to the United States resulted in a set of patterns that has marked the distribution of anime ever since. For one, there has been a repeating pattern of boom and bust in distribution, seen for the first time as anime struggled to get television distribution in the US in the 1970s (Ladd with Deneroff 2009). For another, informal fan distribution has consistently pushed the formal distribution market, as seen in the reliance of fans as personnel for US companies during the rise of formal anime video distribution in the US, and in Leonard's argument that popular fansubs were sought for formal distribution by companies in the 1980s (2005). Informal distribution patterns also show an excitement about, and early adoption of, new technologies on the part of the most active anime fans, with the most participatory elements of the fandom investing significant money in new technologies that enhanced their ability to proselytize for anime.

From DVD to streaming: power fluctuations in the interactions between formal distributors and fan activism

Technology has been perhaps the biggest challenge, and opportunity, for formal anime distribution in the digital era. The advent of DVD, which quickly overtook VHS and Laserdisc technologies as the dominant anime technology between the mid- to late 1990s (McDonald 2007), was just the first stage in the digitalization of anime's worlds. With these new digital

technologies came an expansion in the size of anime's worlds, but also in the ease of their replicability. This led not just to new industrial and fan cultures of remixing, but also to long chains of reproduction and repetition, as each new digital medium encouraged the redistribution of old as well as newer anime worlds.

The period is also marked by repeated phases of industrial consolidation, along with considerable tumult as once locally situated fan groups started to create online networks of informal communication and distribution. The digital period has been marked by dramatic boom and bust cycles that have caused paroxysms in the formal distribution field, while the technologies driving anime distribution have occasionally become sites of explosive tensions between industry and the consumers they serve. The result is that anime's digital era has been marked by an intensification in distribution of all kinds, from the multiplication of formal distribution formats, through to the digitalization of fansubs. More importantly, the worlds of anime have become virtual worlds, with online distribution shifting the market away from tangible media formats towards entirely digital subcultures of communication and distribution.

In Japan, as elsewhere, DVD became the first truly successful digital distribution medium. DVD's significance was amplified in Japan in light of anime's importance to the domestic media markets. Anime's distribution and revenues are greatest at home (Association of Japanese Animations 2015). This has always been the case, and not least due to the Japanese market's willingness to bear a higher cost of anime product. DVDs are perhaps the best example of this trend. They are more expensive and contain less content than those typically produced for secondary and tertiary markets. For example, for the popular *Meitantei Conan* (*Case Closed*) anime, a *gekijōban* film (a theatrical version, usually of a television show, often released in the gaps in distribution between seasons) currently costs approximately \$50 when on DVD and \$80 on Blu-Ray, while a DVD featuring episodes of the television show will usually contain two to four episodes and each disc will cost around \$35 (prices taken from Amazon Japan). Justin Sevakis, of the Anime News Network, notes that these high DVD prices reflect an unusual historical turn in domestic anime distribution. In Japan, DVDs sold to audiences are sold at the same price point used to sell DVDs to rental stores. This high retail price has created a collector-oriented market for anime distribution in Japan, with fans of anime spending large quantities of money amassing complete collections of DVDs (and other merchandising and ancillary products) relating to their favored anime worlds (Sevakis 2012). In this way the domestic media market suggests that anime distribution was specializing across the 1990s and 2000s, moving into new specialized worlds that served fandom first and the mainstream audience second.

The internet, and associated computer technologies, have radically shifted the debates around anime distribution. Formally and informally, the internet is creating vast databases of anime that collect and spread anime in ways that increasingly deny traditional boundaries between nations, refocusing attention on shared linguistic cultures and regions of distribution. Hiroki Azuma argues that we can now conceptualize anime itself as a 'database' out of which a range of elements are drawn in order to create new texts. Azuma links this idea to fan consumer practices, arguing that fans can enter into a new stream of production at any point in its existence, and be inspired to consume the whole of a world as a result (2009). This explicit link between computer technologies as a metaphor for consumption practices suggests a shift in the distributive logic of anime in the digital era. Thinking about the way digital technologies have reshaped anime's worlds in relation to computer technologies is all the more important when considering the way analogue technologies have been surmounted by digital ones, and what this means for the longevity and coherence of anime's worlds.

Justin Sevakis (2012) acknowledges the lingering central place of DVD sales in the business model for anime in Japan. He argues that, for many anime in Japan, DVD (and now BluRay) sales

are still crucial to their long-term profitability, which 'explains why Japanese producers are so leery of anything that might allow Japanese fans to import a much cheaper American disc' back to Japan (2012). The long tail of distribution in Japan, from television through to the 'videogram' (*videoguramu*, a package that includes all home media like DVD and BluRay) has long been a vital part of the anime business model in the domestic market. Throughout much of the last two decades, the videogram packages sold to consumers in Japan have been the most financially rewarding aspect of anime distribution for production companies (Masuda et al. 2015). However, the industry has experienced significant changes in recent years. From a model that places DVD sales and merchandise at its heart, the industry is expanding its profit centers to include everything from online video-on-demand and streaming technologies, to the reproduction of popular anime in live (often musical) concerts and theatrical performances, to the use of anime character imagery in the designs of gambling and arcade games like *pachinko* (Masuda et al. 2016). The growing significance of ancillary markets has been largely a product of the boom and bust cycle in DVD production that has seen DVD sales grow rapidly in the early 2000s before declining precipitously from 2006 onwards (Joo et al. 2013, p. 25).

The boom and bust in the anime DVD market was felt even more keenly outside Japan than within it. For example, up to 2006, there was a period of formal distribution growth that saw an expansion in the numbers of formal anime distributors in the US. Manga distributors like VIZ Media and TokyoPop entered the anime distribution arena, while smaller companies like FUNimation rose to industry prominence by obtaining licenses for the most transnationally popular anime texts. When the Navarre Corporation bought FUNimation in 2005 for a reported \$142 million, both the size and potential of the US anime distribution industry was expressed monetarily (Anime News Network 2011). Anime's transnational worlds changed and expanded in response. Television shows, especially those based on popular *Shōnen Jump* manga like *Naruto* (created by Masashi Kishimoto, 1999–) and *Bleach* (created by Tite Kubo, anime series and films produced 2004–2012), came to redefine the idea of an anime world in the US in this period, and found homes once more on US television as well as on DVD.

Additionally, standalone films from well-known directors such as Katsuhiro Ōtomo, Mamoru Oshii and Satoshi Kon also gained significant cinematic releases as well as releases on DVD. Studio Ghibli was at the vanguard of this movement, finding a distribution home in the US through the offices of Buena Vista International, and later Disney (Denison 2007). Disney's high-profile releases of Studio Ghibli films in cinemas and on DVD (often localized through dubbing by well-known Hollywood stars) from the late 1990s through the 2000s had a significant impact on the genre expectations of anime audiences within and beyond the US (Pett forthcoming). This boom period's emphasis on anime television shows worked to expand the time fans spent with anime's worlds, but only in a decontextualized way. Although bootlegged or imported merchandise for anime remains a popular part of anime's subcultures, there is little in the way of an ancillary market for anime, and the transmedia worlds of anime tend to be handled by different companies with differing release timetables and strategies in the US.

A good example of this world-breaking distribution pattern can be seen in the ill-timed release of *gekijōban* films in the US market. When released at all, these films often come under separate licensing deals. In the example of the *Bleach* anime franchise, for instance, the third film in the series, *Bleach: Fade to Black* (Noriyuki Abe, 2008) was released at the end of the tenth television season in Japan, but only after the twelfth season of the television show aired in the US. Although these *gekijōban* films are normally created as standalone feature films in Japan, off-setting the temporality in this way means that character development within the television series is not married to the appearance and experience of characters in the films. The US release of anime worlds also tends to elide ancillary productions like OVAs,

with OVAs from both *Bleach* and *Naruto* failing to reach US audiences on either television networks or DVD. As a consequence of these choices, formal distribution of anime outside Japan has a tendency to curtail anime's worlds, or to create dissonance through temporal disjuncture.

These were gaps that fans became ever more able to fill for themselves, particularly as the cost of digital subtitling computer programs dropped, and as broadband internet speeds increased. Initially, fansubbing groups relied upon personalized networks based around private Internet Relay Chat channels, or upon specific placement of digital files on peer-to-peer file-sharing networks that relied on programmes like BitTorrent. Industry complaints about this 'shadow economy' were focused mostly on quality, with fears that these sometimes high-definition fan subtitled reproductions of anime texts were better than those that could be sourced by formal distribution agents in the US (Condry 2010, Denison 2011). The main problems emerged as online fansubbing moved from peer-to-peer file-sharing systems, which required consumers to spend long periods of time downloading files, to systems focusing on streaming fansubbed anime. Though often lower in image quality, streaming anime files enabled fan translations to be uploaded to the internet within hours of their original broadcast time in Japan, and to be watched instantly, anywhere in the world, for free. Toward the end of the 2000s, the speed of this new distribution technology commingled with fans' increasing demands for immediate access to anime texts (Lee 2011a), and led to heightened clashes between fans' informal distribution work, and the work of formal distribution intermediaries who were trying to license anime for distribution in the US.

Hye-kyung Lee (2011b) and I (2011) have both noted that many fansubtitlers yoked their creative work to an ethical code that denied the legitimacy of directly competing with industry. However, this creative work is only the starting point for anime's online distribution, and it is the mass consumption of fansubbed anime online that presents the real challenge to industrial practice. The challenges faced by industry were three-fold: first, industry remained focused on using the internet to sell its tangible commodities like DVDs, while much of the fan community had shifted to using computer technologies to watch digital online versions of anime; second, the shift towards digital fansub streaming of popular anime was happening faster than industry could license and dub its preferred anime texts; and, third, consumers had become used to getting anime for free. In response, formal distributors had to find more efficient means by which to reduce the time it took to obtain licenses for anime. For example, John Ledford of ADVision has commented that this process could take between six months to two years for an existing anime product (McDonald 2007).

In relation to streaming, the use of aggregator websites like YouTube or Tudou enabled the (quasi-)legal collation of vast databases of fansubbed anime content that consumers could browse online without having to pay, and without the time-consuming wait to download files (Condry 2010). The situation reached a critical point in the mid-2000s and, as the conflict became heated, Justin Sevakis, the editor at the Anime News Network, was prompted to write an open letter to industry. In it he blames the formal systems of distribution for failing to challenge fan behaviors early on, noting that 'There is now an entire generation of anime fans who have never been forced to pay a single dime to get their anime fix' (2007).

The anime bubble of the mid-2000s burst in dramatic fashion. More than half a dozen US-based anime distributors went bankrupt and closed, and some of the larger companies like AD Vision restructured, closing offices and changing their distribution tactics (McDonald 2007). FUNimation, which had the largest share of the US distribution market in the mid-2000s was sold by its parent company, Navarre, back to a group of investors that included its founder Gen Fukunaga (McDonald 2010). Even the high-profile Studio Ghibli-Disney distribution deal was

watered down, with GKids, a specialist distributor of world animation texts, acquiring the license for the Studio Ghibli library in 2011 (Milligan 2012).

The Japanese distribution market has also seen significant change. A recent report by the Association of Japanese Animations (Masuda et al. 2015) shows fluctuating trends in anime income streams over the 13 years between 2002 and 2014. Overall, the picture for traditional distribution on television and film remains strong, but the videogram market has significantly declined from 37.3 billion yen in 2006 down to only 15.5 billion yen. The bursting of the bubble is visible in the decline that took place between 2008 and 2009, during which period the revenues from 'videos' dropped by nearly half. It has yet to recover. Industry commentators may argue that fans caused the bubble to burst (Smith 2007), but the Japanese producers also appear to have inflated the per-episode costs of anime in the early 2000s, which exacerbated the situation. Sevakis (2012) claims that 'In the ridiculous money-losing day of the anime boom, these fees [for international distribution licenses] went up well over US \$70,000 per episode. That's half of the cost to make the whole show!'. When the bubble burst, these prices quickly dropped, but the failure of traditional distribution systems has meant that the market has not yet recovered to the heights of the mid-2000s.

Fansubs continued unabated during the turmoil in formal anime distribution. However, industry has now found numerous lines of response to the mid-2000s criticisms from commentators like Sevakis. With streaming becoming the new dominant consumption model for anime, the formal market has shifted online. As the AJA Report in 2015 shows, internet distribution has yet to replace the lost profits from the DVD bubble, but it is increasingly profitable to the domestic anime producers. In the US, specialist distributors like AD Vision launched new businesses. AD Vision's Anime Network, for example, is described as 'the largest on demand cable network in North America' founded in 2009. Its focus is on multi-platforming its content through as many online distribution 'windows' as possible, which can be seen in its home page statement: 'offers viewers instant access on an increasingly wide array of devices, including their computer, gaming console, TV, tablet and mobile device. Viewers can also find Anime Network on many other affiliates such as Amazon, iTunes, Hulu, Google Play, PlayStation and Xbox' (Anime News Network, 2015).

In a similar move, existing distributors like FUNimation began their own speed-subbing efforts, and entered into new contracts with Japanese producers to simultaneously broadcast (simulcast) the most popular licensed shows. As of 2016, FUNimation was simulcasting almost 30 anime shows per week, though this practice has had issues. At one point, after their servers were hacked, FUNimation famously withdrew from simulcasting an episode of the popular *One Piece* anime. There was considerable fan backlash against the way FUNimation 'withheld' the episode, punishing the entire fan community for the act of a small, antagonistic minority (Anime News Network, 2008).

However, formal distributors' efforts to match the speed of fansubbing groups has meant that the time lag between the development of Japanese and overseas worlds of anime has been significantly reduced, and anime's worlds have been made much more widely accessible, legally, to consumers than was the case in the past. The fact that many of these formal distribution responses lock anime away behind ever multiplying regionally specific payment barriers, and the fact that these new technologies are not as permanent as media like DVD, means that overall, fans are still seeking to archive anime online. Consequently, these industrial responses have not made the informal distribution market entirely irrelevant.

One company that has attempted to do so is Crunchyroll. The existence of Crunchyroll is another example of formal distribution embracing the shadow economy work of fans. Crunchyroll began with venture capital group Venrock pouring over \$4 million into Crunchyroll when it was still just a shadow market fansub aggregator website in 2008. Quickly thereafter, as

one of the website's co-founders explains, they made legal distribution deals with three Japanese anime producers:

Crunchyroll's goal has been to provide a fully legitimate viewing platform so that anime fans can access the most popular titles in a timely manner from Japan via an authorized outlet. We are redesigning the site to ensure that all professionally-produced content is approved by licensors. This partnership with TVTOKYO, Shueisha and Pierrot is great validation for online distribution.

(Anime News Network 2008)

In making this deal, Crunchyroll began to gain legitimacy as a key formal anime distributor, and has since grown to become the most significant specialist hub for legal online anime distribution, with over 700,000 paying subscribers and 10 million registered users worldwide (Anime News Network 2015). As these figures suggest, Crunchyroll has become a transnational company seeking licenses to distribute anime texts globally. Again, the focus is on television, repackaged as internet streaming content, so many of the worlds presented through Crunchyroll's distribution are partial, lacking associated films and OVA materials.

What is more significant are the overlaps between formal online distribution in the contemporary period, and the impact of simulcasting on fans' creative work. *Naruto Shippuden* (2007–2016), a second television series in the wider *Naruto* franchise, is a good example of these trends. When Crunchyroll announced its exclusive right to simulcast *Naruto Shippuden* in 2009, the same show was already licensed to VIZ Media in the US. Moreover, VIZ had already sublicensed the show for streaming on Joost and Hulu in this region, and had announced its own plans to stream episodes (Anime News Network 2008). Consequently, Crunchyroll's distributive logic was not based on permanent exclusivity, but on short-term exclusivity. They also made their early simulcast available only to subscribers, creating a reason for fans to begin paying for popular anime. Through such means, Crunchyroll and other simulcasting distributors began to reshape the online market away from the 'dark energy' of the fansubbing communities and back towards formal, paid-for, anime consumption. This has meant that anime's profile is high, and highly repetitious as the same show can appear on a number of different formal distribution streaming services.

Inclusion on formal distribution sites like Amazon Prime and Hulu also means that anime is now expanding into general streaming services, available legally to general audiences and not just for specific anime fan communities. With anime's worlds being distributed through proliferating licenses and 'windows', then, the dominance of television as anime's core medium is being reinforced while knowledge about the wider landscapes of anime's domestic worlds are being elided via restrictive distribution.

Conclusions: anime's expanding and contracting worlds

Above I have shown how anime's meanings have been continually expanded through the transnational dispersal of anime texts within and beyond the Japanese market. But as anime has spread, it has not spread evenly. Although the digital era has been one of huge expansion in the varieties of anime that flow around the world, nadirs in distribution still remain. Moreover, anime's parallel worlds are not always distributed with holism in mind, and ancillary media productions are still valued far less by transnational distributors than are the core media of franchises. Furthermore, as popular anime are proliferating online, appearing in more and more 'windows',

there are growing questions about how to continue expanding the market when exclusivity is becoming an increasingly rare commodity.

One response to the proliferation of online distribution 'windows' has been the formal distribution industry's return to transnational production practices. For example, Gen Fukunaga of FUNimation commented in 2010 that the company would enter into international co-production deals for new anime. He argues that

we need to reach a wider and wider segment of people, and draw more people in to the genre. And we feel that the best way to do that right now is through these co-productions, where let's say there's a fan of some hot sci-fi novel or a fan of some hot video game or a fan of some hot U.S. television series, and then we make an anime of it.

(in interview with Macdonald 2010)

Once again, these comments reveal how the international marketplace continues to shape the content of anime's worlds, just as it did retrospectively in the 1960s and 1970s. Fukunaga's company is therefore among those looking to transnationalize anime for global distribution, and to move beyond associations between anime content and Japan, or anime content and specific fan-oriented models of distribution, in an effort to capture a wider cross-over market. By controlling anime's worlds more directly, these distributors aim to hybridize anime's worlds in relation to non-anime properties making 'anime' part of wider media worlds beyond Japanese-led storytelling.

These efforts to build in exclusive rights to content are themselves a response to the intensified recycling and repackaging of anime across generations of new technologies of home viewing. In terms of anime's worlds, DVD was perhaps the most significant turning point to date. First, inside and outside Japan, DVD releases allowed formal distributors to repackage existing content onto a new media platform, thereby profiting from the additional sales of already successful anime worlds. The work of fans in reformatting these materials for peer-to-peer downloading and internet streaming exacerbated this existing trend through unlicensed channels, while US licensors have repeated the recycling process as they developed their own online platforms. In this regard, then, anime's worlds are expanding, but also could be viewed as stagnating, with the hits of the past still continually inscribing meanings for the whole of anime's distribution chains.

The new streaming era offers a second remarkable turning point because its texts are both intangible and impermanent. This shift towards streaming of anime holds in its technologies the potential for a new generation of 'lost' texts. Given that archiving is an important feature of fan-collecting behaviors (Klinger 2006), when licenses lapse and formal distributors remove streaming content, a question remains about how the online fan community may respond. Whereas recycling of anime content across platforms and windows of distribution has played a significant role in previous generations of fandom, the recuperative and archivist tendencies on the part of the fanbase have the potential to become increasingly important to anime history.

This is all the more interesting in a period in which the formal and informal 'tensions' seem to have subsided, as formal distribution channels like FUNimation and Crunchyroll work through simulcasting to capture paying audiences, and general online content providers like Netflix and Amazon Prime have begun to provide anime as part of their offerings to more general audiences. These efforts are now being reinforced by Japanese producers, too. The protection of formal anime distribution has begun in Japan with the formation of a government and industry organization called Manga-Anime Guardians (CODA 2013). Their three-pronged

approach to curtailing piracy involves the removal of unlicensed materials from websites, the launch of a website called Manga-Anime Here (<http://manga-anime-here.com>), intended to redirect potential anime consumers toward formal distribution websites, and specially produced films encouraging fans to view formally distributed anime.

However, they are late entrants in this debate. The popularity of simulcasting and the growth of legal streaming across the past decade have already inverted the discourse from questions about the death of anime (asked about at Anime Expo in 2008), to a set of fan discussions online about the death of fansubbing. Fans are, of course, still wildly creative as regards anime, but fan creativity appears to have shifted toward Anime Music Videos and other forms of recycling and re-presentations of anime texts, and away from fansubbing. In these ways, fans are still working to expand anime's worlds, and to give them new meanings, but their practices seem to be shifting away from direct conflicts with industry.

Additionally, the creative work of fans is being recuperated. Throughout its transnational distribution history, anime has been reworked, recycled, transnationalized and repurposed, all of which impacts upon the meanings of anime's textual worlds. Fans' desires to holistically recover 'lost' aspects of those story worlds demonstrate the desire for holistic viewing experiences around the world. Audiences have attempted to surmount linguistic, temporal and industrial barriers placed in their way, and in doing so they have continually put industry under pressure to reform, and to present more of anime's worlds. The fast-changing distribution landscape of the past half-century has typically benefited fans over their industrial counterparts, making a close relationship between anime fans and industrial distributors a vital part of anime distribution practices. Notably, to this end, Crunchyroll, FUNimation and other companies have started to rebuild their websites as fan community spaces, bringing fans into closer contact with the formal channels of distribution. In this way, anime's transnational worlds are being expanded to include the participatory cultures once at odds with formal distribution practices.

Despite these closer links, however, and despite the rebalancing of the market in favor of formal anime distribution in recent years, the anime worlds presented to transnational audiences remain the same as their forebears. The anime worlds of today still tend to be restricted – for instance, instead of distributing whole franchises, Netflix in the UK has a tendency to stagger its releases of anime television shows along half-season lines – and formal distribution online still seems to follow traditional formal distribution patterns. Furthermore, television and films still often remain conceptually separated within online anime distribution, which has a tendency to fragment anime into seasons instead of presenting them as holistic franchises. Time lags are still common, too, in the releases of less popular anime texts, and of ancillary productions like *gekijōban* films and OVA materials. Accordingly, the popular is still privileged over the niche in formal anime distribution, and the distribution of more fringe types of anime production remains limited to the bigger specialist distributors like Crunchyroll, FUNimation and VIZ Media. The world of anime, therefore, is still a partial, fragmented space, despite its transnational spread and growth over the past half-century. In the uneven distribution of anime's worlds, therefore, we can see the way every new transnational market reshapes anime in its own image, producing ever new parallel worlds through distribution.

Note

- 1 The longest-running anime is *Sazae-san*, created as a four-frame manga series by Machiko Hasegawa. It began to air as an anime in 1969.

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Conclusion

Final reflections on the Japanese media's global voyage

Fabienne Darling-Wolf

Goldorak, I'm telling you, that was quite a machine, not your average kitchen appliance!
(37-year-old French man)

Our generation, it's Candy and Goldorak.
(40-year-old French woman)

When I was young, there was Candy Candy, the manga. There was also the anime.
(41-year-old Japanese woman)

The chapters included in this volume powerfully demonstrate that the media are one of the terrains on which various socio-cultural dynamics of identity formation are shaped, contested, negotiated and occasionally invented. In Japan as elsewhere, media representations intersect on multiple levels with cultural conceptions of gender (e.g. Sarah Frederick, Barbara Sato, Deborah Shamoan, Michelle Ho, Christie Barber), race (e.g. Michael Plugh, Michael Thornton, Atsushi Tajima), sexuality (e.g. Katsuhiko Suganuma, Shu Min Yuen, Claire Maree) and the nation (e.g. David Earhart, Iwona Merklejn, Patrick Galbraith, Yunuen Ysela Mandujano-Salazar, Koichi Iwabuchi), to name only a few. The cultural narratives that the media simultaneously reflect, construct and spread are significant both internally (e.g. Michael Plugh) and in relationship to the rest of the world (e.g. Yunuen Ysela Mandujano-Salazar, Gabrielle Hadl, Sween Kelsey). They take place historically and in our contemporary era (e.g. Kiyoshi Abe, Kyoung-hwa Yonnie Kim). In other words, the Japanese media are important to study, not only as a means to better understand the specifics of the Japanese socio-cultural context, but also as a way to explore broader dynamics of globalization, culture and national identity formation in Japan and elsewhere.

As a powerful geopolitical entity whose formation as a modern nation is entangled in its relationship to 'the West' (Ivy 1995), Japan has long been implicated in processes of transnational cultural influence. Chapter 1 in this volume discussed the continuing mark of one of the earliest waves of Japanese cultural influence to 'the West' and, particularly, on the French cultural context. The quotes opening this chapter (drawn from interviews I conducted in Japan and in France for an earlier project) illustrate the impact of a second wave of global Japanese media consumption, which, if more recent than the Japonism(e) movement, took place in Europe and other parts of

the world much earlier and with much greater force than in the United States. Indeed, a lot happened in the 20 years between *Paris Match's* early 1979 cover story on 'The Goldorak madness' and CNN's 1999 report on the 'Pokemon mania'.

Not only did the Japanese media spread to relatively 'culturally proximate' (Straubhaar 2007) nations such as Korea – even if not officially due to the ban on Japanese imports (see Kelsey, Chapter 24) – Taiwan, or China (see Tsai, Chapter 25), but it left its mark on cultures around the globe. As noted in the Introduction, such texts as *Candy Candy*, *Goldorak/Grendizer*, *Albator/Captain Harlock* or the shows in the *World Masterpiece Theater* series defined generations of viewers outside of Japan. As one of my French informants explained, 'Goldorak, it's universal ... the glue at the base of culture' (Darling-Wolf 2015, p. 109).

In the course of studying Japanese animation's global voyage, I have repeatedly found myself reminiscing about *Candy Candy* with Mexican friends, *Grendizer* with Lebanese colleagues, or singing the *Heidi* theme song in multiple languages with conference attendants from various European nations – often to the great surprise of North American guests. Japanese animation is so pervasive in France that generations are frequently identified by the animated texts they grew up with – the 'Goldorak generation', the 'Dragon Ball Z generation' (Garrigue 2004) – and is casually referred to throughout the French popular cultural landscape (as in rapper Lord Kossidy's quote above). It is not by coincidence that the French electronic duo Daft Punk sought out *Albator/Captain Harlock* creator Leiji Matsumoto – made Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters (Ordre des Arts et des lettres) by the French government in 2012 (Carter 2012) – to create an animated film based on their *Discovery* album titled *Intersellar 5555* (Ina Culture 2012). The film was released at the 2003 Cannes Festival. As Nicklaus (2013) put it in an online article on the subject, like other French viewers who 'rushed out of school to follow Albator's adventures', members of the group had been 'fascinated since the age of five by the animated series'. The reference was not lost of Daft Punk's global audience, even if not everyone in the United States may have gotten it (D'Alimonte n.d.).

Global media scholars understand that under contemporary conditions of globalization, everyone is always influencing everyone else. Hollywood gets clues from Japanese filmmakers who themselves drew from the French New Wave (Lyon 2016). Matsumoto identifies the 1955 film *Marianne of my youth* as a source of inspiration for *Albator/Captain Harlock's* female characters (Nicklaus 2013). Hayao Miyazaki similarly acknowledges the influence of French animator Paul Grimault in *Castle of Cagliostro* by modeling the castle after the palace of the king of Takicardi in Grimault's *Le roi et l'oiseau* (McCarthy 1999). Transcultural representations can get quite complicated. For generations of French viewers, *Tom Sawyer* is a Japanese animated series rather than a Mark Twain novel. The (Japanese) series nevertheless shapes viewers' imagination of an idealized 'America' – the first lines of the French version of the show's opening song goes 'Tom Sawyer, it's America, the symbol of freedom'. Candy's story starts 'on the shores of lake Michigan'. Other *World Masterpiece Theater* classics, such as *Ie naki ko (Remi sans famille/Nobody's boy)* or *Heidi* may, on the other hand, be perceived with French viewers as representing 'their' culture (Darling-Wolf 2015).

A detailed analysis of these complex processes of what I have called 'glocamalgamation' (Darling-Wolf 2015, p. 142) is beyond the scope of this chapter. Suffice it to say here that they cannot simply be framed around binary oppositions between influence and resistance, importers and exporters, or East and West. As local, national and global dynamics are mutually constituted, how different contexts' transnational influence is negotiated and discussed both 'locally' and 'globally' reveal a lot, however, about the politics of positioning and the politics of representation.

As noted in Chapter 1, the historical downplaying of the global reach of the Japonism(e) movement is understandable in light of the tendency to analyze 'East/West' dynamics in terms

of how ‘the rest’ resists ‘the West’ and through the limiting lens of Orientalism. As I hope to have demonstrated, this lens does not fully do justice to Japan’s complex relationship to ‘the West’, and serves to mask the country’s own imperialist aggression throughout Asia by positioning it as a victim of Western (neo)colonial threat. Orientalist tendencies do remain, however, in much writing about Japan in ‘the West’, which frequently emphasize either the more peculiar and bizarre aspects of Japanese popular culture (e.g. Lolita complex) or its most traditional characteristics (e.g. geishas, onsens). Some of the work on Japanese animation emanating from US academic contexts follows this pattern by focusing on texts perceived as more ‘culturally marked’ as Japanese – *Spirited Away* or *Princess Mononoke* rather than *Tom Sawyer* or *Anne of Green Gables* – and by positioning anime as a quintessentially Japanese genre that has little to do with ‘Western’ (meaning Hollywood and Disney) cultural forms (see for example, Cross 2006, Napier 2007, Price 2001). Texts that do not fit this description are either completely ignored (i.e. *Heidi*) or dismissed as ‘not truly Japanese’, as if drawing from other contexts automatically resulted in betraying one’s cultural roots (Darling-Wolf 2016). Yoshioka (2008) writes, for instance, that ‘Because of his guilt over Japan’s wartime atrocities in Asia, Miyazaki was initially attracted to Western culture; he often chose the West (mainly Europe or its look-alike) as the setting for his anime. But Miyazaki soon realized that he could not reject Japan’ (p. 263, emphasis mine). In addition to essentializing and exoticizing Japanese cultural production, such arguments problematically oversimplify the nature of transnational cultural influence. As I have argued elsewhere, *Heidi* is clearly a Japanese text that beautifully bears Isao Takahata and Hayao Miyazaki’s signature (Darling-Wolf 2016), even if it ostensibly takes place in Switzerland.

One goal of this volume has been to interrupt this narrative by illustrating the diversity of Japanese media and the complexity of their role in civic life and in the shaping of cultural, gendered, racial, sexual, local, global (etc.) identities both historically and in our contemporary era. Together, the chapters included here point to the need to resist the tendency to characterize Japan as a weird outlier on the map of global geopolitics due to its unusual status as a highly ‘Westernized’ yet assertively ‘non-Western’ entity, and to critically explore the dynamics that may have led to such characterization.

In particular, they point to the need to recognize both ‘Western’ and Japanese complicity in this problematic positioning. Indeed, the Orientalist move to downplay the long history of Japanese culture’s transnational influence and paint Japan as an inscrutable exotic outsider that will forever remain a mystery to the rest of the globe would not be so effective were it not powerfully resonating with identity narratives circulating within Japan – in particular, the *nihonjinron* discourse on Japanese uniqueness discussed in several of this volume’s chapters.

Opposing Japan to the West and (over)emphasizing Western (i.e. American) historical power was an important feature of postwar efforts to reposition Japan as a war victim and erase the memory of the horrors of its own imperialist aggressions (Dower 1993, Duus 1998, Gluck 1993). As Koichi Iwabuchi (2002) reminds us in his articulation of what he characterizes as a process of ‘strategic hybridism’ in postwar Japan (p. 53), ‘The search for a national “essence” in the sphere of race, culture, and language has been a recurrent theme in modern Japanese history’, which has ‘gone hand in hand with the acceptance of significant Western influence’ (pp. 54–5). His analysis in this volume of the Japanese government’s recent efforts to promote a new form of ‘pop culture diplomacy’ point to the continuing link between external projection and internal dynamics. Noting that ‘the international projection of attractive images of a nation eventually necessitates the rearticulation of the selective narratives, symbolic meanings, and widely accepted stereotypical images of that nation to be appealingly represented as a coherent entity’ he concludes that ‘pop culture diplomacy and Cool Japan conjointly advance an international cultural exchange

based on the bipolarized notion of the Japanese and the foreigner and interact to discount the attention to growing ethnic and cultural diversity within Japan’.

We need to continue to tease out the complexity of processes of (trans)cultural and national identity formation, their intersection with multiple socio-cultural factors and the role of the media as catalysts to these developments. The chapters in this volume demonstrate that the Japanese context provides a useful terrain on which to explore these dynamics. Studying the Japanese media not only informs our understanding of contemporary Japanese society and culture as a contested and ever evolving narrative, but also helps us come to terms with the messiness of contemporary dynamics of globalization, transcultural influence, national identity formation and local consciousness wherever in the world we might be.

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