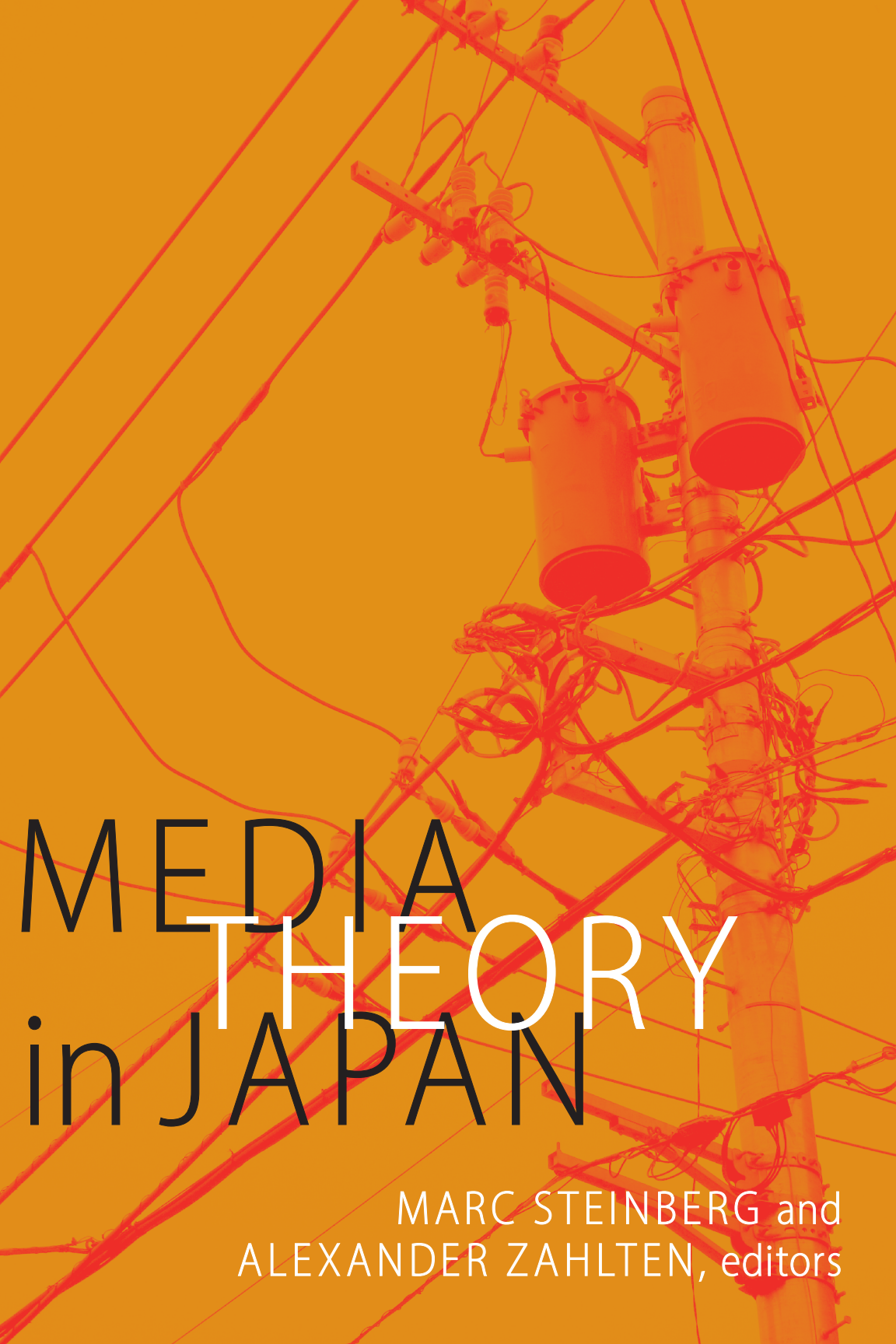

MEDIA THEORY in JAPAN

MARC STEINBERG and
ALEXANDER ZAHLTEN, editors

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Contents

Acknowledgments

A journey is made by one's traveling companions, as the Japanese expression goes. On the journey that resulted in this volume, we had the benefit of an incredible group of contributors. We thank each and every one of them for taking the time to put their ideas into conversation, and to forge this collective project. We are grateful to them for the journey as well as for the final product. Ken Wissoker and Elizabeth Ault at Duke University Press were immensely supportive of this project from the very beginning, and their continuous advice—and patience—were invaluable in navigating it through its multiple stages. The Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies was vital in supporting a workshop that allowed the contributors to meet and spend an intense and very rich two days exchanging ideas on all aspects of this enterprise. The current form of this volume started to take shape at the Histories of Film Theories in Asia conference at the University of Michigan in 2012, organized by Markus Nornes, where we benefited from early and immensely sensible advice from Tomiko Yoda. Karen Beckman, Yuriko Furuhata, Joshua Neves, Masha Salazkina, and Haidee Wasson offered guidance and solidarity in the art of creating an edited collection. We extend our deep thanks to our talented research assistants, Peter Bernard, Alain Chouinard, Andrew Campana, Kimberlee Sanders, and Edmund Stenson. We thank everyone in our contexts near and far who offered advice and support during this project.

Finally, there is one contributor who is especially in our thoughts. Ryoko Misono enthusiastically agreed to contribute a central chapter to the volume at a late stage in its development, greatly enhancing the project as a whole. She tragically passed away just days after sending in her essay. With Misono-san the fields of film and media studies in Japan lost one of its most promising

young scholars. It is our hope that this volume helps keep her work alive and realizes the intervention about which she felt so deeply.

Note on Names:

Japanese names in this volume appear in the order family name first, given name second, unless the person goes by the given name first, family name second convention. For the sake of consistency, all contributors to this volume are referred to by their given name first, family name second.

Preface (Interface)

AKIRA MIZUTA LIPPIT

The volume that follows is long overdue. Which is not to say that it arrives late, or even too late, but rather that its timeliness appears in the form of a long-anticipated, and thus deferred, actualization. It represents a needed point of contact, or interface, between a media culture and its thought, between the material and conceptual dimensions of media culture in Japan. For too long there has been a perception that visual media cultures are practiced in Japan—film, art, architecture—but understood or thought elsewhere. Practiced within but thought from without, this false rift effects an erasure of those who have thought and continue to think media in Japan from within. Marc Steinberg and Alexander Zahlten's anthology *Media Theory in Japan* brings these dimensions together for the first time, perhaps—certainly in English—and into a present that also, at once, takes the form of a past, hence overdue. A past folded at the same time into a present, arriving in the dual temporalities of a future anterior, or perfect.

This overdue volume portrays a lively media theory in Japan then and now by many of the critics and theorists most active in media studies today. But even with its publication, this volume remains overdue. Past due, past the time of its anticipated arrival, *Nachträglichkeit*, and yet at the same time absolutely timely in its presentation of a coherent interface between media theory and practice in Japan. How is it possible to reconcile postponement with timeliness, and what sort of temporality is invoked in such a temporal schism?

It is perhaps the temporality of a media theorization par excellence. The deferred arrival of such a volume, overdue, reveals the problem of a national media and its theorization as chronic, which is to say, "about time." What sutures the practices and discourses of media within a cultural sphere bound by a single language, however porous, and however multilingual that language

(as Japan's frequently is), may be temporal. A temporality marked by the timeliness of delayed arrivals.

In this sense, it is not only history that separates media practices and discourses, nor even languages and cultures, but also times that disjoin the two, times that are born of the material infrastructure of media praxes—of technologies and creativities, technologies of creation, one might say—and of media discourses, in all of the complexities that language interacts with: thought, representation, and expression. The task then may lie in finding the temporality that allows the incommensurate temporalities that define the media to interface, to encounter one another in a temporality other than one's own. It is this temporality that arrives in this volume, overdue.

An overdue volume is also one that acknowledges, and in some cases settles, debts. These debts are to a set of past inscriptions, "a line of credit," to use Derrida's idiom, that makes possible the present. It is not only about settling and closing accounts, of "counter-signing" as Derrida says, but also about acknowledging a past that reverberates in the present, that continues to resonate in the contemporary discourses on Japanese media. A series of such lines throughout *Media Theory in Japan* attribute indebtedness to a present that channels a frequently underacknowledged foundation.

Keisuke Kitano invokes literary theorist Kobayashi Hideo, while Takeshi Kadobayashi and Thomas Looser situate Azuma Hiroki's interventions in subculture studies as modes of media theory. As antecedents to media theory, Anne McKnight traces a lineage through feminist art and criticism; Alexander Zahlten, through "New Academicism"; and Fabian Schäfer, through the Kyoto school, as modes of media philosophy and thought. As critical moments in the evolution of Japanese media theory, Akihiro Kitada inscribes leftist philosopher Nakai Masakazu; Ryoko Misono, the artist Nancy Seki; Marilyn Ivy, NTT's *InterCommunication* project; Marc Steinberg, the reception of Marshall McLuhan in Japan; and Miryam Sas, the mistranslation of poet and theorist Hans Magnus Enzensberger. For Yuriko Furuhata, architecture informs Japan's media theory; for Tomiko Yoda, it is marketing and advertising. For Aaron Gerow, the history of Japanese television theory provides a foundation for contemporary media theory in Japan. Each account offered of media theory in Japan originates from and returns to a place other than the narrow confines of either nation or thought. A portrait of displaced origins and impossible teleologies appears throughout *Media Theory in Japan*.

This volume, then, is as much about an alternative media archaeology as it is about theorizing the eccentric genealogies it reveals; as much about paying dues and giving due to those that make the present visible. The authors

of *Media Theory in Japan* settle a debt that goes beyond the field of media studies; one that expands the realm of media in Japan to include philosophy, feminism, literary theory, economics, and art. What makes the nature of these accounts of media archaeology in Japan, these lines of credit extended, remarkable is that they mark the advent of a media theory located not only in media studies. A media theory that takes place not only outside of the nation but also as a discourse of the outside. A media theory that comes from and returns to a Japan dislocated.

In Japan and elsewhere, media studies represents the aggregation of various disciplines, lines of thought, and modes of expression. Its boundaries are located not in national or even postnational contours, nor are they effects of cultural, ethnic, or aesthetico-political practices. Instead, the media and its thought take place as a series of extensions, to borrow McLuhan's idiom, and as what Deleuze and Guattari call "lines of intensity" and extensity, which traverse technology and art, practice and expression, discourse and politics. As intensities, these lines move from without to within Japan; as extensities, from within to without. In this matrix of media praxis and thought, Japan itself becomes a medium, an interface of multiple lines of practice and thought bound by the charges that animate the nation as a temporary and finite media state. Japan itself is not, as the authors reveal, a permanent state, nor is Japanese media a national entity, an infrastructure of phenomenon. Japanese media theory is defined by the authors in this volume not as the delineation of a national practice but rather as the disarticulation of a national discourse; media theory in this sense performs a "dejapanization."[1] To undo the nation, but also to understand the name of the nation not as the culmination of a discourse but as that which is already inscribed in advance, and then erased. *Déjà*ponisme, *déjà*pan.

In this formulation, what is overdue comes to be déjà vu. What arrives late was already there once before. Japan appears and disappears in this work, an organizing principle/unsustainable origin, and destination. Because all media actualized and theorized exceed the terms by which nations are formed. Media practice and theory are no more Japanese than they are classical Greek or modern American, no more "Oriental" than Western: they arrive in the form of translations and mistranslations, transpositions and displacements, taking place between and outside of nations as such. And thus perpetually.

THE CRITICAL PROBLEM taken up by *Media Theory in Japan* is neither media theory nor Japan as such but the conjunction that brings them into

contact: *in*. What type of interface does the title's "in" represent? For the chapters that constitute this volume hardly remain within Japan: what takes place in and around media theory in Japan comes from without as well as from within, not only from the registers of national thought but also from within and without the disciplines and practices one might call "media theory." *Media Theory in Japan* is thus neither about media theory nor Japan but rather a phantasmatic possibility of the two together, conjoined by an "in," which is not even or strictly in. The "in" here also means "out," within and without, inside out as much as outside in.

In this sense, the volume undoes the very set of binds, dialectics, and causalities that would ascribe lineage and nationality to ideas, as if such fabrications were even possible. In *Media Theory in Japan*, media theory itself disappears along with Japan, only to return as a series of provocations that begin neither here nor there, and arrive, as it were, only when overdue, ensuring the postponement of a destination that would posit something like a "media theory in Japan." *Déjà*ponisme might describe the trope that undoes the axioms of national thought and practice but also speaks of their simultaneity: media theory in Japan can only be thought, perhaps in advance and *après coup*. As such, any timeliness would require the split temporalities and historicities that this volume performs. To arrive overdue is to arrive on time, *in time*, as a chronic mode of undoing what cannot be done in the first instance, which is to ascribe national identity to thought, particularly to media thought. To be overdue, in this case, is also to invoke déjà vu. A present made possible by the before that appears in every after, the after inscribed in any before.

How then to preface that which is overdue and déjà vu? What does it mean to write before such a volume, to inscribe or prescribe a text before a set of interventions that arrive later than imagined or desired? How to signal that which has already come and returned again? What could such a preface achieve, and in what temporal form?

To preface a work is to stand before it, to speak in advance of that which follows. It is at once a provocation (calling forth) and an utterance a priori: the first word, or rather a word before the first word, facing before any face has appeared. But when the word to come has already come, when what follows is also already past, then any preface can only intervene en route. Because the interventions collected in this volume signal a history of theory in transit as well as transition, the only possible preface would be an interface. That which would arrive in the middle, which is to say never, sus-

pended in a thought in transit, and no longer prefatory. A preface defaced, if not effaced, neither undone nor overdue, in lieu of a proper preface to arrive later, perhaps much later, in due time.

NOTES

1. See, in this connection, Akira Mizuta Lippit, "Playing against Type: On Postwar Japanese Film," *Artforum* (February 2013): 210–17.

INTRODUCTION

MARC STEINBERG AND ALEXANDER ZAHLTEN

Can you name five media theorists from Japan? This is intended less as a confrontational question than a loaded one. If you can, what are you saying about theory? What are you saying about media? If one moves beyond the very specific and circumscribed sociotope of North American and European academic work on media (or Japan), and what is defined as "theory" by *what "we" do*, then questions come crashing in that force a reassessment of some of the goals, assumptions, and methods of a very important inquiry: How can we understand our inescapable relationship to media? How can we understand our attempts to understand media, especially under the wobbly umbrella of "theory"? And how do we move away from a narrowly defined "we" in both of these questions?

In the English-language context both early discourse on media and its recent resurgence have tended to elide engagement with some of the most complex sites of media practice and theorization. Theorists wrote instead from the position of the universal, assuming that the West stood in for the world. This tendency to a degree continues with the rise of the Internet and the spread of digital media, at a moment when media theory in the European and American milieus has gained a new and more speculative life. In the wake of the flurry of work around new media, the retracing of formerly new media, and the subsequent critique of the framework of the "new," there has been a turn to what can now be called media theory or media studies in a novel

form. New lines of inquiry emerge from the convergence of film, screen, and video studies; cultural studies; science and technology studies; and new media studies, as these established fields are being reshaped in the process.[1] The objects of media studies are the many forms of media made visible by new media studies, past and present. Its concerns are with format, platform, infrastructure, body, paper, language, and other facets of mediation, ranging from the decidedly abstract to the distinctly material.[2] Scholars wrestling with the affordances of this specific transitional moment in media history are searching for the theoretical tools to engage with a radically shifting media ecology. Forgotten texts from another era of media transformation—most notably Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media*, penned at a time when the new medium of television was first turning heads—have developed a renewed influence. Moreover, German media theory represented by the work of Friedrich Kittler and Wolfgang Ernst has had a strong impact on Anglo-American work on new media, even as the scope of this work is still being explored.

However, knowledge of media-theoretical discourse outside of North America and Europe is extremely limited. Japan, with one of the largest and most complex media industries on the planet and a rich and sophisticated history of theorization of modern media, is nearly a complete blank spot on the Euro-American media-theoretical map. If Japanese models of industrial production were the subject of great interest—and much hand-wringing—from the 1980s onward, the lively theorization of media taking place in Japan was markedly not. If media technologies and media cultures from Japan—consider trends in mobile media and miniaturization—exerted immense influence on everyday life around the world, then the specific models of media that thinkers in Japan have developed have remained overwhelmingly unknown even to specialists. Philosopher Nakai Masakazu's theory of film reception, formulated in the 1930s, focuses on the lack of a copula in film aesthetics and the results for corporeal spectatorship; it would have been a fruitful approach for reception theory in the United States and Europe decades ago and remains relevant today—if one had had the opportunity to engage with it (see Akihiro Kitada's contribution in this volume for Nakai's approach). This kind of invisibility is particularly regrettable considering the strong interdisciplinary cross-pollination that the theorization of media has allowed for in Japan. It is also part of a larger and by now familiar structural imbalance in knowledge production itself—something that Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto effectively pinpoints in his critique of the discipline of film studies—between a West that is figured as the site of Theory, and the

Rest as the site of history or raw materials ("texts").[3] As Aaron Gerow further elucidates, this structural imbalance was at times internalized by Japanese film theorists themselves, who lamented the absence of film theory in Japan, despite the country's rich history of film theorization.[4]

Let us be unequivocal at the outset, then: there is media theory in Japan. Even taking a relatively conservative definition of it, the theorization of media in Japan spans a time period from at least the beginning of the twentieth century until today. Sociologists from Gonda Yasunosuke to Miyadai Shinji to Ueno Chizuko to Yoshimi Shunya; philosophers from Nakai Masakazu to Yoshimoto Takaaki (also Yoshimoto Ryūmei); art theorists and critics such as Ishiko Junzō, Hasegawa Yūko, Matsui Midori, and Sawaragi Noi; editors and authors such as Ōtsuka Eiji; film critics and theorists such as Osaki Midori and Hasumi Shigehiko; artists, economists/critics such as Asada Akira; and ethnologists such as Umesao Tadao—the list of writers who have profoundly engaged with media goes on. Japan experienced an intensification and multiplication of media technologies and practices in the twentieth century similar to that in North America and Western Europe. There is accordingly a long history of reflection on these processes. (To give one small example, the term "information industry" was coined in Japan a decade before Daniel Bell introduced his idea of the "information age.")[5] These writers and the debates that they and others have engaged in have formed a heterogeneous yet dense discourse on the relationship of media and life that was eminently aware of global developments in media theorization, even as English-language writing remained almost entirely oblivious to the discussions taking place in Japan. Hence we agree wholeheartedly with Alexander Galloway, Eugene Thacker, and McKenzie Wark when they write, "The story of media theory in the twentieth century has still yet to be written."[6] We would simply add that this is all the more true in the Japanese context—not to mention other sites marginalized within the theory imaginary, from China to South Asia, or Africa to the Arab world.[7]

This volume aims to trace some of the central theoretical and conceptual work around media in Japan from the 1910s to the present day, paying attention to the technological, historical, institutional, and cultural practices that form the ground for its emergence and development. As such, this volume offers, to our knowledge, the first systematic introduction to and contextualization of the history of media theory from Japan in any language, including Japanese. Yet it operates alongside Euro-American frameworks—chronological history, the concept of "theory"—even as it problematizes them. The specter of colonial time, then, which defines Euro-American

Others as continually belated and too late, lurks in the background of the discussions found here.[8] Japan, itself a colonial power for the first half of the twentieth century, has shown the capacity to continually and actively complicate that specter. The temporality of both theorization and its transmission, then, remains a central concern for this endeavor. A different—but not necessarily *belated*—temporality will haunt any discussion of media terminology and theorization. To give but one example, Lev Manovich's landmark volume *The Language of New Media* (2001) was published in Japanese in 2014, which is slow for a publishing industry with a massive translation arm that so quickly responds to global trends in media writing. In fact the translation lag in this case may be explained if we remember that Japan's infatuation with the term "new media"—which referred mostly to VCRs, cable TV, and the computer—had its boom and fizzle in the 1980s, leaving little appetite for the recycled framework of "new media" in the late 1990s and 2000s (even if this time it was used in reference to computational media).[9] Accounting for these differences in uptake and description of media events and their theorization outside the comfortable synchro-functions of "belated" and "advanced" opens up new avenues of exploration, which are undertaken by the essays in this volume.

Two aspects require us to rethink some of our fundamental premises about what exactly we mean by *media theory*. First, this compound is a tenuous link between two moving targets. As David Rodowick describes in great detail in *An Elegy for Theory*, the concept of theory has a long and variable genealogy, and the linking of theory with a medium such as film—in the now naturalized form *film theory*—is intensely historical. As Rodowick notes when referencing the first time this then highly idiosyncratic link was formulated by Béla Bálazs: "What film studies has forgotten in the intervening decades is the strangeness of this word, as well as the variable range and complexity of the questions and conceptual activities that have surrounded it over time like clouds reflecting light and shadow in ever-changing shapes."[10] This variability is joined by the shifting criteria for defining or even just naming "media." Lev Manovich has pointed out some of the ways technological changes have shifted the definitional standards for this qualification, in a manner that simply adds on new categories without revising the existing ones. While film and photography were still distinguishable via the divisions between time- and space-based media going back to Lessing, the advent of television and video did not allow for that framework. Instead they were allotted roles as distinct media by the practices they afforded. The criteria thus shifted to the social sphere and to questions of engagement. The computer,

in Manovich's argument, radicalizes that shift and confronts us with a post-medium situation.[11]

Second, media theory is itself profoundly reliant on media—particularly the medium of print, and the circulatory networks of print capitalism (magazines, journals, book volumes, and their publishers), but also the specific configurations of media institutions and their histories, with which media theorization grapples. There is more interaction between media theory and the contexts for this theorization than has been accounted for in most studies of media theory.

The Situation Is Media Theory

We can best illustrate this last point by turning to the very title of this volume, which raises more questions than it answers: *Media Theory in Japan*. As several of our contributors aptly pointed out in a workshop leading up to this volume, all of these terms deserve to be put in quotation marks. Each term within this title raises questions: What are media? What is media *theory*? What is media theory *in* Japan?

Whichever question we grapple with, one thing is clear: media theory as a kind of conceptual work is conditioned by the constellation of media and the practices associated with them. Hence this book's emphasis on "in Japan"; this is not simply a marker of a location but a way of broaching the inevitably *contextual* process of media theorization itself. (Here we bracket the way that "Japan" is a baggy construct that stands in for a series of often geographically circumscribed practices of writing and interaction that sometimes engage the question of the nation but just as often do not. Indeed, the case could be made that media theorization is quite a regional affair, sometimes centered in Kyoto, as in the 1930s, and sometimes in Tokyo. Still, we use "Japan" as a conceptual shorthand for the intersection at which this engagement with media occurs.) As media studies moves away from its exclusive concern with the temporal location of "*new* media," we take the opportunity to pose questions about the spatial locatedness of theory and the specificity of certain kinds of theoretical work. This enables the explication of the geopolitical unconscious (or semiconscious) of media theory, structured among others by university ranking systems, the uneven trickle and flow of translation, military and economic power, and an aesthetic politics of knowledge.

W. J. T. Mitchell and Mark B. N. Hansen's *Critical Terms for Media Studies* offers an inspiring point of departure for moving beyond media theory's

recent emphasis on thinking *new media*, showing the continuities between thinking about media new and old. The volume helpfully suggests the terrain encompassed by media studies, and maps out a number of theoretical problems that compose the field of media theory. As Mitchell and Hansen forcefully emphasize in their introduction, media do not simply designate an externality against which to position the human. Rather, "*media* names an ontological condition of humanization,"[12] and for this reason is a perspective from which to think the human-media condition. Hence Mitchell and Hansen propose that we pivot away from Friedrich Kittler's famous dictum "Media determine our situation"[13] to instead situate "media as a perspective for understanding." This shift, they write, "allows us to reassert the crucial and highly dynamic role of mediation—social, aesthetic, technical, and (not least) critical—that appears to be suspended by Kittler."[14]

But what happens if the very conditions of thinking mediation arise from the particular media and media-cultural forms with which we interact? This is an aspect of media theorization that Mitchell and Hansen's volume—and the vast majority of writings on the subject—tends to pass over in silence. Put differently, the contributions to their volume concern media problems often posed in the language of the universal, drawing on texts and traditions that are exclusively from European or American contexts. While the technological and intellectual development of media theory is examined, the geographical or geocultural focus on American, British, French, and German events and writers is all too pronounced.[15] In that sense, media theory has always already been a covert subset of Euro-American area studies on the one hand, and complicit in larger geopolitical power structures on the other. The canon is also a cannon.

In this book we pass from the ontological status of the coconstitution of human and media, to the practical (and historically grounded) problem of how distinct cultural-media configurations give rise to distinct forms of mediation, and distinct kinds of media theorization. That is, we resist the universal language of theory in favor of a contextual and unstable practice of theory, without giving up on the belief that theorization—of media or anything else for that matter—is an indispensable tool with which to grapple with our times.

This volume of essays proposes to make this shift from media theory as universal to media theory as a practice composed of local, medium-specific, and culture-inflected practices. Such practices are as much about performance and the particular dynamics of a given media ecology as the content of a given theory. This volume, then, proposes to reframe certain practices

as part of a history of media theorization. Ideas cannot be separated from the economic, historical, and medial conditions of production. This is not simply to say in a materialist vein that ideas are produced by material conditions, however. The essays in this volume also show how the *practices* of theory themselves intervene in and transform these medial and economic conditions. Theory makes the news, and theoreticians sometimes become media celebrities, making theory of media in the media. We acknowledge too that theory may be—or perhaps even habitually is—consumed as a commodity, complete with cycles of novelty and obsolescence that have profound consequences for the ways that theories are produced, circulated, and read.[16] We may go so far as to say that debates and denominational battles between proponents of competing media, theoretical paradigms and the way they are organized tell us as much about these paradigms as the conceptual frameworks they put forward. Theory, as it is understood here, is as much based on the performative as the constative, not to mention the mediatically connective. The modes of performance of theory tell us something about the theories themselves, and, we argue, require us to rethink the very status of media theory today. Put differently, accounting for the materiality of media theory opens the space for rethinking the materiality of media.

We might paraphrase Kittler, then: situation determines our media theory. Or perhaps more accurately: the situation of more or less temporally and spatially bounded media cultures and ecologies determines or informs media theory. This gives us the opportunity to, on the one hand, test the ways canonical media theories from Europe and North America have fared in different climes, and, on the other, also see how existing philosophical or critical movements in Japan can be read differently when looked at from the angle of media and mediation. The importance of the situation does not simply mean we need to gather more empirical facts about local media theories; it also means that the very contours of what we call media theorization must be tested, and reexamined. Situation informs, or transforms, theorization.

Media Theory in Japan, then, presumes that different media-cultures give rise to distinct forms of media theorization, and also require that thinkers of media reexamine what they mean by "media theory." Rather than starting with a restrictive or prescriptive sense of what media theorization is or should be, our contributors approach the contours of media theory in an exploratory manner. As always, what is included in the category of theory is a political question that often brings understandings of media encrusted from years of living with the existing canon. Without wishing to completely relativize the term, the essays here nonetheless provoke a sense

of questioning around what habitually is called "theory." This means that on the one hand, writers in the European and American context should understand their work as conditioned by historical circumstance, and on the other, that they use this as a basis for understanding other contexts as something more than a variation on a universal theme. It also means that writers in Japan or other non-Euro-American contexts understand their discourses as something other than "local." Our hope is that the diverse modes of media theorization or media studies in Japan (and elsewhere) potentially highlight the presuppositions of "media theory" as it is practiced and articulated today, in a predominantly European and American media studies context.

Hence this book does not walk the narrow path of an intellectual history, nor does it offer an account of pure ideas that stands in for the ahistorical aura of high theory. Instead it holds on to the premise that the conditions of knowledge production work back on the knowledge produced. It also aims to build on existing channels that create the institutional conditions for multichannel exchange. By building on existing projects such as *Traces, Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, and *Mechademia*, which aim to create new series of "intercreferences"—to borrow Kuan-Hsing Chen's felicitous term—that translate and generate dialogues in, around, and outside Asia, as well as projects that aim to translate and make available film and cultural theory in English, this volume participates in the questioning and unsettling of the unidirectional translation of Western sources into local target languages.[17]

In *Kittler and the Media*, Geoffrey Winthrop-Young addresses the manner in which non-Anglo-American media theories are marked from the outset:

> The overwhelming presence of the Anglo-American academic industry in media and communication studies is such that many Anglophone practitioners no longer consider it necessary to situate their work by using national adjectives, yet contributions that originate elsewhere need to be labeled "French," "German," or "Japanese." These appellations do not refer to anything specific to France, Germany, or Japan, but merely serve to indicate that the work in question is *not* English. Nonetheless, the label *German* can and should be applied to Kittler.[18]

The question we engage here is a similar one: To what degree is Japan not merely an appellation designating something that is *not* Anglo-American? How might "in Japan" designate a set of qualities or conditions that orient the work of media analysis, and mark the modes of circulation of media theory? How might attention to the situation force us to pause, and rethink our

assumption—held particularly strongly in North American institutions—that the default setting for media theory is America; for a philosophy of media, France; and for media philosophy, Germany?

Zeronendai—Thought from the Aughts

Perhaps this point would be best made by referring to the situation from which this project emerged. In medias res, as it were, in the midst of an effervescence of media theorization in Japan: the 2000s. This is a moment when an increasingly large group of writers—collectively referred to in Japan as *zeronendai no shisō*, or "thought of the aughts"—took to analyzing Japan's vibrant popular media formations from the vantage point of an engagement with critical theory. The result was a critical mass of multigenerational writers bending themselves to the task of engaging critically with the spread of mobile phones, the rise of the Internet, the increasing cultural prominence of console and computer games, and especially the transformations of fan cultures that were read as the frontlines of changes in Japan's media-cultures. It was also a moment when such theorization produced best sellers, fueling a high-velocity rhythm of zeronendai publications. Examining the particularities of this moment will allow us to demonstrate the complexities of the situation of media theory.

Starting in the early 1990s practitioner-critics such as Nakajima Azusa and Ōtsuka Eiji began to write complex analyses of the intersection of fandom and the popular media culture around manga and anime, often as an indicator of broader sociopolitical developments. From the mid- to late 1990s, writers such as the psychoanalyst Saitō Tamaki, the sociologist Miyadai Shinji, the sociologically inflected writer Kotani Mari, and a young critic trained in Russian literature and Derridean philosophy called Azuma Hiroki turned toward the crucial intersection of anime-manga-games-light novels and the cultural transformations they saw as attending the rise of digital media. Azuma in particular began actively fostering an even younger clique of writers who took on various aspects of (generally male-oriented) *otaku*, or geek media forms, though the discourse was by this point largely dominated by young male voices. This very male clique points to a longer history of exclusion of female voices from Japanese media writing, which in turn suggests the need to look elsewhere to sites where female writers *could* do media theoretical work, from manga writing and criticism—where important work on queer (media) theory has developed—to art historical writing. The centrality of zeronendai critics was due in part to their creation

of multiple platforms for their work, among which was the prominent if short-lived journal *Shisō chizu* (Thought map), which Azuma cofounded and coedited with sociologist and media theorist Akihiro Kitada.[19] This and other platforms gave the sense of a coherent discursive space in which these writers could develop critical analyses of aspects of Japanese media culture. Most engaging was the way the writers combined an attention to techno-cultural transformations that were under way with a close attention to fan media forms.

Azuma's *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, originally serialized in 2001 and published as a paperback volume in the same year as *Dōbutsuka suru posutomodan* (*Animalizing the Postmodern*), became a best seller and one of the main markers of this development, performing a function similar to Lev Manovich's landmark *The Language of New Media*, published the very same year in English. Azuma focuses on animation, theorizes the database as a principal construct for the interpretation of post-Internet culture, and examines new media artifacts such as fan-produced video games—all topics that resonate with Manovich's work. Where they differ is that for Azuma the representative structuring force of new media and contemporary Japanese society (what Azuma calls the "postmodern," extending the life of a term by then in the decline) is to be found in Japan's fan culture and the figure of the otaku. In short, it is an analysis of new media through the prism of the geek.[20] Instead of a study of new media anchored in discussions of the filmic and net.art avant-gardes (Manovich), the central anchor for new media studies in Japan becomes the lowbrow, avant-pop, subcultural forms of anime, manga, and dating simulation games.

As a result, the grounds for new media theorization of the 2000s in Japan were less what Geert Lovink calls "vapor theory" and Jeffrey Sconce calls "vapor studies"—speculative and questionable studies of new media from the angle of future technologies to come (albeit there was some of this too).[21] Rather, the grounds for zeronendai thought tended to be the actually existing, concrete, if equally masculinist studies of male fans' productions of and interactions with dating sims, often down to the level of programming code. Fan cultures were placed at the center of this media writing, albeit removed from the complexities of reception studies normally associated with the study of fans from a cultural studies perspective. To put it polemically, imagine if 4chan (a clone of the Japanese Futaba channel, which is itself a clone of the 2chan), not net.art or virtual reality, were at the analytical core of new media studies in North America, and one will get the sense of the object parameters of Japanese new media theorization.

The interest the zeronendai writers generated both inside and outside of Japan—Azuma is widely read in South Korea, for example—in many ways made this volume's project of writing a history of media theory in Japan thinkable. As a network of theorization that is both proximate and distant, the zeronendai work became, for us, a useful point of departure.[22] For one thing, an encounter with zeronendai work also necessitates a recalibration of what we mean by "theory"; the works produced by the zeronendai writers draw on but do not usually read as high theory. It also is not Theory in the capital *T* sense that is figured in Terry Eagleton's suggestion that "theory means a reasonably systematic reflection on our guiding assumptions," or, as he puts it later in his book *After Theory*, in speaking of "critical self-reflection which we know as theory": "Theory of this kind comes about when we are forced into a new self-consciousness about what we are doing."[23] While theory may indeed be defined as a kind of self-reflexive practice, it is also something more. It has another angle that we might term the *cultures of theory*—cultures here including languages, disciplines, institutions, publishing venues, politics of knowledge mobilization, bookstore display patterns, and local cartographies of theoretical production and consumption. The cultures of theory must also include the geopolitical situation in which this theorizing takes place: print capitalism, the Cold War, the structure of knowledge transfer that mirrors the very special relationship of the United States and Japan during the postwar period, and so on. This "something more" to theory becomes exceedingly clear when we look at the zeronendai group, which never unfolded its debates through academic journals, and only rarely through conferences. Nor was it neatly the kind of popular theory or vernacular strategies of fans adopting or "poaching" theory, as suggested by Matt Hills—that is, a kind of theorization from below, by fans.[24] That said, it is clear that the writers associated with zeronendai often themselves explicitly self-identify as fans, and even more interestingly, self-identify as *fans of theoretical practice itself*. Azuma's operation of theory camps, or *dojo*, and the theory competitions modeled on the GEISAI amateur art festivals deployed and exploited by artist-provocateur Murakami Takashi to find new artistic talent, actively harnessed this amateur-theory-fan nexus.

The conception of the cultures of theory we posit here finds resonance in what Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih envision in their call to "creolize" theory. "Creolization," they write, "indexes flexibility, welcomes the test of reality, and is a mode of theorizing that is integral to the living practices of being and knowing." It denotes a mode of theory that "is not the 'Theory' most familiar to, and at times most vilified by, scholars in the United

States."[25] This unfamiliar theory, which nonetheless must be accepted as theorization, interests us most here.

Defining Media Theory

We have perhaps come to a point where we can better address the questions that the title of our volume raises, and that we flagged in the opening of this introduction: What are media? What is media theory? What is media theory *in* Japan? Here we would like to move from a general definition of the terms to a consideration of the disciplinary locus of media theorization, first in the Anglo-American academies—where traditions of media studies have been particularly strong—and then in Japan.

Following Mitchell and Hansen, we would assert, "What is to be understood [in media studies] is not media in the plural, but media in the singular; and it is by understanding media in the singular—which is to say, by reconceptualizing understanding from the perspective of media—that we will discover ways to characterize the impact of media in the plural" (*Critical Terms*, xxii). Media should not simply be understood as a collection of individual mediums—books, newspapers, radio, television, Internet, computer, and so on. Media are not simply "a plurality of mediums, an empirical accumulation of things" (*Critical Terms,* xxi); they are also the experience of media in the singular-plural, and the theorization of media that arises from this experience. Thus understood media are also (significantly for any media society but maybe especially so for Japan) an emergent system with its own set of dynamics and semiautonomous rules. As Galloway, Thacker, and Wark formulate in their introduction to *Excommunication,* "Media force us to think less about things like senders and receivers, and more about questions of channels and protocols. Less about encoding and decoding, and more about context and environment" (2). That is, media make us think about more than classically conceived modes of communication—they force us to examine the context and environment in which they not only operate but also cocreate. Hence media theory cannot be reduced to communication theory.

There are many possible accounts for the development of media studies. John Guillory has recently offered an insightful genealogy of the genesis of the concept of media, arguing that ultimately it is only in the context of the plurality of media forms that we can come upon something like the concept of medium.[26] In other words, the specificity of a given medium—as much as the set of general properties of a category usefully termed "medium"—is only revealed upon the emergence of another, newer medium with which it

can be compared, and through which it is remediated. Akihiro Kitada in this volume quotes Mizukoshi Shin, who argues similarly that "tremors in media can awaken media theory"—that is, transformations in the media give rise to something like media theory. This is certainly something we find borne out in the various essays of this volume; moments of new media are often moments of new developments in media theory.

What we would call media theory in the European and North American context finds its origins in a particular institutional lineage of media studies.[27] A brief overview of this lineage would trace: (1) early research on communications technologies, as it curves through (2) the Marshall McLuhan moment—arguably the first figure to articulate a research agenda around the development of media theory—into (3) the rise of film studies in the French, British, and particularly American academy during the 1970s, inspired by a particular conjuncture of formal analysis allied with Marxist and feminist theories of the filmic image, to (4) the simultaneous impact of television studies and UK cultural studies on the landscape of film studies, shifting to another, more quotidian medium—the television—at the same time as more empirical forms of analysis are introduced, to (5) the rise of "new media" in the 1990s, which saw a revival of earlier media theories (notably McLuhan's) and the embrace of wider-ranging theories of media to make sense of the sometimes novel media forms (Wendy Chun, Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin, Lev Manovich, Geert Lovink, Mark Hansen, and Lisa Nakamura), to (6) the more recent dropping of the term "new" to brand a kind of *media studies* that nonetheless is indebted to the epistemological frameworks and questions of power that emerge through the particular lineage sketched here (shifting to analyses of formats, platforms, media objects, and materialities: Lisa Gitelman, Jonathan Sterne, Alexander Galloway, and Jussi Parikka). This is largely an outline filtered by the engagement with media in institutionalized, academic contexts. There exists of course an entire body of theorization outside of this specific form of institutionalization. And, as we know from the abundant self-referentiality within film, comics, and television, media auto-theorize. At yet another level, as John Caldwell has effectively shown, "industrial cultural theorizing," or middle-level theorization, also happens at the level of media producers themselves.[28]

We call "media theory" any sustained engagement with media such that it produces new ways of knowing this media. This engagement could be of a theoretical, reflective kind of the sort imagined by Eagleton in his definition of theory cited above. But it must also make room for a kind of vernacular theorization, or a theorization that happens in the performance of the

media condition, rather than in a reflection on these conditions. Distinct from communication theory, this is a theory of media that is produced from within media; from media lived as context, and as ecology.

Media Studies in Japan

Nonetheless, theory located in and produced from within university structures plays a decisive role in shaping the course of other locations of theorizing. It is therefore important to acknowledge the institutional history of media theory in Japan as well. There is a difference implied in the terms *theorization of media* and *media theory*. The latter tends to point to an academic institutionalized setting. It is difficult to claim that this was the dominant force in determining the course(s) of the theorization of media in Japan, and indeed media theory / theorization in Japan may provide an important occasion for complicating the relation between theory and Theory. Yet the work done from within the university has provided important affordances for, and exerted considerable influence on, nonacademic contexts as well. Though the institutional history of the study of media in Japan appears in the coming chapters in fits and starts, it is useful to give a rough account of it here. Before doing so, it is important to note that the following institutional account neglects the important noninstitutional history of media theory that includes particularly female voices such as Osaki Midori, whose work on cinema is often cited as an important moment within film theory in Japan, or the TV criticism of Nancy Seki, whose combination of written text and metatheoretical "eraser prints" is the subject of Ryoko Misono's essay in this volume.[29]

Meiji era thinkers such as Fukuzawa Yukichi have already discussed the importance of print, electric transmission, and postal services for "modern civilization." With the presupposition that media theory is closely connected to the development of mass media and tends to ask questions about the interconnection of textual content and issues of circulation, reception, and the resulting system, the study of media from within academia arguably makes one tentative start in Japan in the 1910s with sociologist Gonda Yasunosuke's investigations into film (although Gonda did not have a full university position at the time but rather worked at a school teaching German). However, the initiative for creating a legitimate site for the study of media took hold in the 1920s, when Ono Hideo promoted *shinbungaku* (literally "newspaper science"). The term was directly translated from the German *Zeitungswissenschaft*, and Ono's theoretical approaches were strongly

oriented toward the German model, a fact that became a common point of criticism by figures such as philosopher Tosaka Jun. Ono, set on establishing an institutional home for shinbungaku in Japan, travelled in 1923 to various institutions in Germany, Britain, and the United States. After an initial attempt to establish a research institute for newspaper studies at Tokyo Imperial University (currently University of Tokyo) in 1927 failed (it was deemed too practitioner-oriented), a proposal for a newspaper research seminar (*shinbun kenkyūshitsu*) was approved in 1929. This seminar quickly developed a sociological bent—another legacy of German influence via Karl Bücher—and would exert considerable influence over the course of media theory in Japan until today.[30]

The Second World War exerted an inhibiting influence on the study of media, while in the immediate postwar period the US occupation actively encouraged establishing shinbungaku departments, for example at Waseda University in 1946. Media studies received its next big push in the 1950s when the introduction of television in 1953 created an awareness of the need to shift away from a purely print-based model of media research. Yet for several decades, media theory would not take place in specialized departments but rather in departments for literature, psychology, and, to a significant degree, sociology. The sociologist Katō Hidetoshi developed an influential approach to television in the late 1950s, and indeed it was one of Katō's teachers, Minami Hiroshi, who would become the first chairman of the Japan Society of Image Arts and Sciences (Nihon Eizō Gakkai; JASIAS) in 1974. This was to become one of the main venues for research on film, television, and other aspects of moving-image media. Both Katō and Minami had studied at American universities (Katō at Harvard, Chicago, and Stanford; Minami at Cornell), and the influence of American social science on their work was considerable.

The Society for Cinema and Media Studies in the United States originally focused on film (or rather cinema) and only added "media" to its name in 2002. The term *eizō* as used by the JASIAS provided a similar but somewhat different bent on accommodating a larger perspective on media. The term can loosely be translated as "moving image," but Yuriko Furuhata has argued that in the debates around the term in the 1960s it most basically suggested a mediated image, be it still or moving.[31] Such an attempt to avoid a medium-specific orientation is also visible in the founding of the Department for the Study of Culture and Representation (Hyōshō Bunkarongakka) by film critic and literature theorist Hasumi Shigehiko, theater director Watanabe Moriaki, and others at Tokyo University, where the influential Interfaculty

Initiative in Information Studies was later founded in 2000. The Association for the Study of Culture and Representation, which grew out of the Department for the Study of Culture and Representation, was founded in 2006 and takes a high-theory approach toward what one might call media studies. Specialized societies for the study of a particular medium came later; the Japan Society for Cinema Studies (Nihon Eiga Gakkai) and the Japan Society for Animation Studies (Nihon Animēshon Gakkai) were founded in 2005 and 1998, respectively.[32]

Issues of institutional power have played a significant role in the development of media studies in Japan. While much of the media theoretical work of the 1950s to 1980s straddled the line between academic work and *hihyō* (criticism) and was formulated in a wider space of discourse across many institutions, media theory as it developed from the 1990s onward was heavily influenced by the sociological model developed at Tokyo University. (For the decisive role of the specific genre of hihyō criticism in both theorizing and negotiating the possibilities of theoretical language caught up in postcolonial tensions, see Keisuke Kitano's chapter in this volume). In part due to shinbungaku's role as forerunner at the university, and also due to the university's cultural capital and its financial power to institute new departments, the University of Tokyo's sociological model of media studies has spread widely and can be sensed in the work of prominent theorists such as Yoshimi Shunya, Miyadai Shinji, Mizukoshi Shin, Akihiro Kitada, and Azuma Hiroki. From this brief institutional history we can see that general questions around media have superseded investigations of a particular medium.

As we discuss in more detail below, the individual chapters in this volume similarly range across media—from photography to film to television to architecture to fashion and the Internet—in an attempt to account for the diversity of sites around which the theorization of media takes place, and where discussions of media are concentrated at particular moments in time. Yet this approach also sometimes puts this volume at odds with the institutional history of media studies within Japan. Above we stress the importance of a critical approach to media theorization in Europe and North America, and its marginalization of other modes of theorization; in this volume our contributors similarly take up different moments in the development of media theory, some from within the halls of academic institutions, and some from within the structures of the mass media themselves. The rejection of familiar modes of legitimation is key to (re)narrating the history of media theory. Nonetheless, there are institutional dynamics of field and dis-

cipline that this volume has to work with while working around them. The contributors to this volume predominantly write from within either a film and media studies or an area studies context. While disciplinary affiliation by no means determines approach, it does have an impact on how the scholars here treat media theorization—whether as part of an institutional or cultural formation, or as part of a philosophical inquiry. That said, we believe that each contribution here does some of the work of chiseling away at the traditional complicity of the divide between history (or culture) and theory. Each chapter embarks on an account of media theorization that is historically nuanced and aware of the geopolitics of Theory.

Volume Structure

Does the materiality of the book form of necessity support a "brutal" conception of history, that is to say a chronologically determinist one? Does a printed volume on media theory necessarily bias its investigations toward the allegiances of print capitalism—modernity and nationally organized, linear history? These are decisive questions for a volume concerned with how theorists of media in Japan negotiated these concerns and how they dealt with narratives of "the West" and temporally skewed hierarchies.

This volume does not track the history of media theory in Japan via a simple line drawn from the 1920s to today.[33] This is due in part to a refusal to subsume a markedly diverse series of encounters to a linear history and the overly simplistic trajectory it implies. In part this is also due to our sense that contributions to this volume broach different topics, and take different tacks. Some essays are more accurately described as cultural histories of an encounter with media theory; others trace the engagement of different theorists around common questions, such as technology. Others still dig deep into the philosophical questions around mediation such that they encourage us to think media theory more precisely as mediation theory. Some deal with particular media forms, others with a multiplicity of media, others still with the problem of mediation as such. The organization of this volume reflects this diversity of approaches.

The volume opens with a section titled "Communication Technologies," which groups together a series of inquiries into how media technologies were thought, be it as materials, as environments, or as orchestrators of consumption. At times their theorization unfolded as a forgotten return, as they were framed much like previous media were, without an explicit awareness of the prior debates. Tracing such a development, Aaron Gerow turns

our attention to tensions arising around the strangely familiar theorization of the new kid on the media block in the 1950s: television. Television first began broadcasting in 1953, and gained much theoretical and critical attention during its first decade of existence. But, as Gerow informs us, theoretical accounts of the medium began appearing as early as the 1930s, a point in time when the medium was still in its experimental phase. Moreover, these accounts recall earlier theorizations of film and its specificity in the 1910s and 1920s. Against this historical backdrop, Gerow examines debates around television during the 1950s, suggesting, "Early television theory was as much about the possibility of media theory in a changing society, as it was about the medium and its effects." He poses the question of why many discussions around early film returned, accompanied by a sense of (strategic?) amnesia in the late 1950s. Television is associated, as most material and immaterial technologies are, with a certain spatial practice that has strong connotations of class, gender, and a certain temporality—in this case, newness. Gerow disentangles these associations and how they interact with "TV theory," which becomes a major impetus for the development of an explicit theory of media.

Yuriko Furuhata's contribution moves from the wartime period through Expo '70, focusing our attention on the site of a redefinition of technologies of mediation: the field of architecture. Furuhata's essay sheds light on the role of the renowned architect Isozaki Arata as an intercessor between avant-garde visual artists and architects, suggesting the importance of architectural discourse as a site of media theory. Furuhata's essay sheds light on what she calls the "cybernetic turn" of Japanese architectural theory as a historical precursor to contemporary attempts to rethink media's relationship to the environment. Focusing on the formative role of Tange Lab and the work of associated architects Tange Kenzo and Isozaki Arata, Furuhata suggests how the postwar articulation of the cybernetic model of the information city both inherited the legacy of colonial urban planning, and responded to the postwar governmental push for postindustrialization and the experimental practices of building multimedia environments. Furuhata hence examines the intersection of architectural practice with communications theory, discourses around cybernetics and the information society, and media theory.

Takeshi Kadobayashi traces a very different model of environment and mediation in the work of Azuma Hiroki, one of the most influential young theorists of the 2000s and a major figure of the zeronendai group. Azuma wrote his first work in the pages of the journal *Hihyō kūkan* (Critical space)—

the main platform for criticism in the 1990s, established by Nyū Aka (New Academism) veterans Asada Akira and Karatani Kōjin—and the new media journal *InterCommunication* (a journal that is the focus of Marilyn Ivy's contribution). Kadobayashi sees Azuma's *InterCommunication* article series "Why Is the Cyberspace Called Such?" as a transitional phase for Azuma. It was this moment that led Azuma from his role as young apprentice to the older generation to what he is known as today: the preeminent theorist of popular media culture in Japan. It is here too that Kadobayashi discovers Azuma's incipient—and partially abandoned—media theory.

Marilyn Ivy examines a form of missed or mis-communication through the history of the pathbreaking *InterCommunication* journal in the 1990s and 2000s. Sponsored by one of the largest telecommunication companies in the world and edited by some of the major intellectual figures of the time, the journal was planned to provide a passageway to the global intellectual sphere and heavily featured translations and, at least initially, English sections. Ivy interrogates the different functions of this journal, positioned in the interstices of exchange and insulation; traces the utopian bent the journal followed with regard to technologies of communication in particular; and gives an outline of some of the decisive debates of 1990s media theory in Japan. Insofar as these debates lay the ground for the central media theorists of the 2000s, Ivy's essay provides a picture of an often-overlooked transition point between the Nyū Aka movement of the 1980s, and the zeronendai no shisō (thought of the aughts) generation that emerges in the 2000s, of which Azuma was a central figure.

The next section, "Practical Theory," assembles six contributions that look at the practice of media theorization as performative acts, or, put differently, how acts such as creating advertising campaigns, translating theories (and performing that translation), or even performing a media persona have in Japan functioned as implicit and sometimes explicit theorizations of media. Marc Steinberg details one of the most prominent cases of performing theory, which took place around the translation and interpretation of one of the ur-texts of media theory in North America and (Western) Europe, Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media*. As Steinberg details, McLuhan's work also possesses this status in Japan, where the term *media-ron* (media theory) emerges around the introduction of the Canadian media theorist's work. This introduction was channeled by a kind of doppelgänger theorist who both mirrors and redirects McLuhan's very flexible body of work: Takemura Ken'ichi, a man deeply embedded in the advertising world. Steinberg outlines the contours of the lively public debates around McLuhan's work in the

late 1960s. These debates—which often revolve around how well McLuhan can be used in advertising practice—suggest the important ties between media theory and commercial practice that inform media theorization in Japan to this day, and highlight the key institutional role advertising agencies played in introducing and popularizing media theoretical work, as "actionable theory." They also shed light on the politics of influence and translation on the reception of theory, and even on the conception of theory itself.

Miryam Sas explores the contentious discussion, aggravated by mistranslations, at a symposium organized in connection with the visit of German poet and (at the time) media theorist Hans Magnus Enzensberger. Sas lucidly analyzes the reactions of a number of key leftist intellectual figures of the 1970s to the direct encounter with Enzensberger. The chapter is also very much an account of the attempt to salvage and defend the model of ideological critique within media theory at a moment when the depoliticization of the public sphere in Japan already loomed on the horizon. Highlighting this site of interdisciplinary encounter between artists and media critics, Miryam Sas uses Enzensberger's visit to Japan as a vantage point from which to examine how networks of media theory operate along transnational axes. In so doing, she reopens the question of nation and how it functioned at what was a highly performative event, in which almost all participants were aware of the intersections of geopolitical power relations that undergirded their conversation. Here Sas points to the importance of placing Marxist media theory in a transnational context, with the arrival of Enzensberger providing a chance to reveal a vibrant cross section of Marxist media theory in Japan and beyond. The Enzensberger moment also sheds light on an increasing preoccupation of intellectuals and writers of the time: the growing prominence of the cultural industries, the shifts occurring within the cultural industries, and the transformation of political society under their influence.

It is to this transformation of the cultural industries that Tomiko Yoda turns, focusing on the manner in which market segmentation and industry practice created the identificatory figure of the young girl and placed her at the center of a consumer culture conceived of as both utopian and egalitarian. Dubbing this the "girlscape," Yoda investigates the medial practice of defining this new consumer as situated on a plane of free choice that is apparently removed from the pressures and power relations that structured society in Japan. Mapping the visual and verbal strategies that accompanied the rise of the girlscape, she relates this development to the highly political

"landscape theory" developed in Japan in the late 1960s and early 1970s—a prominent discussion of how power structures life in a rapidly transforming country. The cultural industries developed their own theory of media at the time, one that was fundamentally dependent on the (en)gendering of consumers, and the incorporation of these consumers into the girlscape.

Alexander Zahlten's chapter probes the coincidence of the rise of the academic media celebrity in early 1980s figures such as Asada Akira and Nakazawa Shinichi with a ten-year winter of media theory. Zahlten tracks the appearance of the so-called Nyū Aka theorists and the discourse around these massively popular best-selling authors, who were in such high demand in print, TV, and radio of the 1980s. He argues that while in a transitional moment—the effects of which are still felt today—Nyū Aka seemingly never formulated a theory of media, and that the reason for this is to be found in the manner in which the group changed the mode of theorizing itself: Nyū Aka performed a media theory rather than formulating one. A central aspect of this practice as media theory is the concept of irony as it was employed by Asada and fellow Nyū Aka writer Karatani Kōjin. Irony, by softening up the relation between content and form, allowed this group to play with the semantics of theory while actually enacting a theory of media in practice.

Ryoko Misono focuses on the body of work of the popular media figure, TV critic, and eraser-stamp artist Nancy Seki. An enormously prolific author writing about TV at exactly the moment its primacy in the media ecology of Japan began to wane, Seki developed a complex reservoir of self-reflexive tactics that included artistic practices that reference Warhol and deploy a sharp humor. Misono sees the late Seki as *enacting* a media theory that made heavy use of the tools of popular culture itself. As Misono outlines in her essay, Seki's tools were threefold: critical text; an "eraser print" illustration of a TV celebrity's face, based on a carving into the medium of the rubber eraser; and a short tagline included below the illustration. The three elements worked together to offer an immanent critique of television itself, circulated in the form of a weekly or monthly page-long magazine column. A singular figure within popular culture, Seki understood her work as dealing with media when there is no longer an outside to media. Misono examines Seki's concern with the question of what shape the public sphere takes in a mediatized society, and how to operate within media flows, all the while critiquing them.

Finally, Anne McKnight looks at how art practices in the 2010s are developing alternative modes of reflection on media. Focusing on the example of the artist Rokudenashiko, who was arrested for obscenity, McKnight

specifically looks at ways in which Rokudenashiko circumvented the male-dominated space in which theorization has largely taken place in Japan—the space of hihyō that Keisuke Kitano outlines in his contribution to this volume. By using humor to work through issues of the commodified female body and the restrictive national role assigned to it, Rokudenashiko hit a nerve that provoked a state reaction. While Nancy Seki attempted to ironically reflect on the media system while deliberately positioning herself at its center, Rokudenashiko operates at its fringes, using its shrapnel to construct an alternative space. Referencing McKenzie Wark's concept of "low theory," McKnight maps one attempt to connect reflections on media models and gender roles to everydayness in ways that appear whimsical but are decidedly oppositional.

The final section, "Mediation and Media Theory," brings together four contributions that each engage with the fundamental questions of what mediation is and how to deal with it theoretically. What is a medium, and what are media? How can they be configured between materiality and metaphysics, between social reality and geopolitical power relations? The section begins with a contribution by one of the foremost Japanese media theorists today, Akihiro Kitada, a central figure of the "thought of the aughts" generation. Kitada's chapter offers a close and unique reading of the media theory of Nakai Masakazu, a leftist theorist with some connections to the Kyoto school (a philosophical movement of the 1930s and 1940s), and later head of the National Diet Library. Nakai draws on German philosophy to create a highly corporeal theory of cinematic spectatorship, a sophisticated communal model of how we make sense of filmic media that stands in productive tension with today's phenomenological and embodied approaches to film. Nakai is often considered the Walter Benjamin of Japan—for reasons that will be made apparent in Kitada's essay. He was fascinated by the new medium of the cinema, and deeply involved in thinking through the kind of political potential this medium could have. Kitada's essay on Nakai points to the latter's development of the German concept of the *Mittel*, which becomes the basis for an embodied theory of media effects. For Nakai, the disjunctures of meaning that media create are bridged by audiences/users, who intuitively and physically adjust to the common experience of media. Kitada goes on to outline how Nakai both prefigures important developments in Euro-American media theory by decades, and can at the same time still function as an important stimulus for thinking about media today.

Fabian Schäfer's chapter reenvisions the philosophy of the Kyoto school—which for many has problematically become a metonym of philosophy in

Japan—as a philosophy of mediation, or what in German is called *Medienphilosophie*, which we may provisionally translate as "media philosophy." Schäfer provides an overview of early debates on mediation and distills many of the conceptual stakes of media theory that philosophers in 1930s Japan prepared, addressing the work of central figures such as Nishida Kitarō, Tanabe Hajime, Tosaka Jun, and Nakai Masakazu, as well as that of the sometimes marginalized figures of Watsuji Tetsurō and Kimura Bin—most of whose work dates to the prewar and wartime eras. In this very unusual perspective, Schäfer suggests that these thinkers' work on mediation and in-betweenness is in fact a full-fledged theory of mediation that in turn forms the basis for a media philosophy (with a strong allusion to the term "media philosophy" in the German context). This novel rereading of the central figures of the Kyoto school suggests that their work should be reevaluated as central to the media theory that came after it.

Kitano Keisuke then focuses our attention on the literary sphere, in order to explore how questions of media theorization were framed. It is to the key figure of the mid-twentieth-century critic Kobayashi Hideo that Kitano turns to investigate the status of a particular kind of media critique in the 1950s, focusing on Kobayashi's approach to media such as photography and cinema through the genre of criticism known as hihyō. Hihyō and its conventions have defined the larger part of public intellectual discourse in Japan since the 1930s, and inevitably shaped most of the discussions of media presented in this volume. Taking place mostly in magazines and journals and situated somewhere between criticism and academic theory, hihyō was tailored to the needs and speeds of a massively productive print culture. As conceived of by Kobayashi, it deals fundamentally with the question of how to use language and thought that is always-already-hybrid in order to consider the specific location of modern Japan. Put differently, Kobayashi grapples with the complex question of how to talk about media in Japan when the technology/medium of language and theory already operates with gears and screws that are not entirely "made in Japan." Kitano thereby shifts our attention from the sphere of high philosophy to that of literary critique and the attempts of public intellectuals from the literary establishment to find another site of media theorization—albeit a more vernacular one.

Thomas Looser closes the section with a review of media theory from the 1980s to the 2010s, and a return to a consideration of theories of mediation—this time in the contemporary moment, and in relation to questions of social change. Looser considers how media theory and the possibilities it offers has in Japan always been tied to a crisis in thinking about possible social orders

and subjectivity. Focusing on the "lost decades" and the sense of crisis that began in the 1990s and gained a new sense of urgency with the meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi reactor, he follows especially the work of Azuma Hiroki. Looser detects shifts in the way Azuma and his group deal with the problem of mediation and suggests that these shifts are closely tied to the manner in which media technology and social change are thought together. At the same time, Looser tracks the role of media theory as an indicator of social change, demonstrating how the presuppositions underlying media theory have transformed from the economic boom time of the 1980s to recessionary, post-Fukushima Japan. In so doing, Looser brings to the surface the (otherwise implicit) theories of mediation that structure the work of contemporary media theorists such as Azuma, Kitada, and others.

This volume concludes with an afterword by Mark Hansen, whose work on media theory has been germane to and inspirational for this volume. Hansen acutely engages with the essays in this volume by rethinking their organization and the possibilities this reorganization offers. Beginning with the significant tension between the intra- and transcultural he finds underlying the volume's stress on media theory *in Japan*, Hansen rearranges the contributions into three "modes": "Remediating the West," "Mediatizing Japan," and "Inter-izing (beyond) Japan." By doing so he draws out possibilities of speaking to specificity of media and media theorization while taking the movement across contexts into account. It is in this negotiation, which he distills out of a careful rereading or rather additive reading of this volume's contributions, that he locates ways to consider the concrete manifestations of the "continuum of life in the age of global media."

To close this outline of the volume's contributions, we end with its opening, or rather, the preface, written by Akira Mizuta Lippit, whose work has consistently operated as theory at the borders and interstices of Japanese and North American academies. Like Hansen, Lippit emphasizes the many valences and crisscrossing passageways the "in" Japan indicates. Far from proposing a closed national boundary, Lippit underlines how he sees the project of the volume pointing to an out, or rather "an inside-out as much as an outside-in." This spatial dynamic, according to Lippit, plays out on the background not only of media and their theorization from different times but also of the different temporalities they respectively are charged with: "The task then may lie in finding the temporality that allows the incommensurate temporalities that define the media to interface, to encounter one another in a temporality other than one's own." It is an encounter that is in Lippit's view both necessarily overdue and timely.

Conclusion

These, then, are the parameters of this volume, one that attempts to be capacious in its coverage of time period and eras, but also focused in its concern for key debates within media theory in Japan. However inclusive we may have aspired to be, we cannot claim adequate *coverage*. Indeed, a mere list of what is left out would itself take a dedicated chapter. Or two. It would include, for instance, a discussion of the interaction of media theorization with Japanese colonialism or a more sustained engagement with the influential postwar *Shisō no kagaku* movement of the 1950s (which both Gerow and Furuhata touch upon in the course of their essays); the encounter of free radio, radical Marxist media theory, and Deleuzoguattarian thought in the persons of Kogawa Tetsuo and Ueno Toshiya; a close examination of the feminist media work of Ueno Chizuko in the 1980s and 1990s; theories arising from authors/fans/theorists such as Ozaki Midori (in the 1930s) and Nakajima Azusa (in the 1980s/1990s); the move toward dialogues around media within Asia in the 1990s and 2000s via the Inter-Asia Cultural Studies collective, with key figures such as Yoshimi Shunya, Chen Kuan-Hsing, and Chua Beng Huat, or, later, Kim So-Young with the TransAsia Screen Culture project, moving discussions of media beyond the nation-state and to questions of the regional—and this is just to scratch the surface. All of these specific moments will in turn provide intersections with larger developments and spheres of study. Many of the above cases would allow for a much-needed foray into the exploration of the role of sound, for example—from the role of music on the street to avant-garde music's role within 1960s experimental media cultures in Jikken Kobo and at the Sogetsu Art Center to the central role of popular music in the media mix, and from sound demonstrations to ambient sound design to contemporary idol culture. This volume tendentially weighs itself toward discourses in and through print and visual culture primarily to provide a focused point of departure (in several senses) for such investigations in the near future.[34]

This also brings us to the issue of media forms covered in this volume. As we noted earlier, this volume opts for thinking media as more than (to quote Mitchell and Hansen again) "a plurality of mediums, an empirical accumulation of things" (*Critical Terms*, xxi). As such, the essays in this volume do not treat individual media as a set of channels or technologies to be covered each in turn. The reader will not find a procession of media commodities or institutions, from woodblock prints to newspaper to film to radio to film to video, and so on, each afforded a distinct chapter. That said, despite being

thought of as always-already-relational, the contributions in this volume do provide a plurality of media forms to be considered, from television through architecture and the medium of a journal. Insofar as the particular materiality of a given medium lends greatly to the manner in which it is theorized, a consideration of multiple distinct media forms (and their effects on the manner of their theorization) *is* nonetheless fruitful, if provisional. A particularly underrepresented medium that has been subject to vibrant theorization is film itself; we omit a close discussion of film because there has been such impressive work on it already, and additional work being prepared.[35] The body of work existing and forthcoming on film in particular reduces the urgency for this volume to focus on the question of the theorization of film, even if it does play a large role in the background.

The chapters within this volume both introduce key moments of media theorization in Japan and pose questions relevant to media theory in general (that is, media theory both in Japan and outside of it). This work is a beginning, and the issues, movements, and events within Japanese media theory that we have not been able to discuss will, we hope, be the subject of subsequent study that further expands what we understand by media theory in Japan, and what we include as media theory in this volume. We hope that this volume both initiates and continues a move toward a more nuanced and less geopolitically centered conception of media theory. It hopefully stands alongside other emerging nationally, regionally, or transnationally conceived accounts of media theory that will write not only the history of media theory more or less known to media studies in North America and Europe but also those histories that are not yet known, thereby transforming once again our established understanding of what media theory is. But "discovery" is not the impetus that can drive such a project. Rather it is the expectation of increased engagement, interaction, and ultimately intra-action (to abuse Karen Barad's term) between contexts of theorization. Together the essays here represent, we hope, a moment on the road to developing an organic or useable definition of globally situated media theorization. Geographically situated but constantly intra-acting media infrastructures, after all, determine our situation. And media theories that respond to this situation remain one of our central tools for describing, critiquing, and transforming it.

1. For an exemplary text in this regard, see Alexander R. Galloway, Eugene Thacker, and McKenzie Wark, *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

2. Think of the fruitful influence of a materialist strain of media theory that initially entered English-language scholarship through the reception of Friedrich Kittler's work, and the further interaction of that line of media theory with more recent work often subsumed under New Materialism, such as Jussi Parikka, *A Geology of Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

3. The opposition—and complicity—between theory and history that Yoshimoto isolates in his earlier critique in "The Difficulty of Being Radical" (251–52) is rearticulated as the distinction between Western *theory* and non-Western ("Japanese, Taiwanese or Indonesian") *text* in his extension of this important work in *Kurosawa: Film Studies and Japanese Cinema*, 36–37. For the original essay, see Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, "The Difficulty of Being Radical," *boundary 2* 18, no. 3 (fall 1991): 242–57; and for its extension, see Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, *Kurosawa: Film Studies and Japanese Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

4. Aaron Gerow, "Introduction: The Theory Complex," *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 22 (December 2010): 2.

5. Umesao Tadao established the term in *Jōhō Sangyō-ron* [The theory of the information industry, 1963], and was possibly influenced by Fritz Machlup's *The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962). The expression "information society" (*jōhō shakai*) gained currency in articles from 1967 onwards, and especially in Masuda Yoneji's *Jōhō shakai nyūmon: Konpyūta wa ningen shakai wo kaeru* [Introduction to information society: Computers transform human society] (Tokyo: Pelican, 1968), while "informationalizing society" became an important term from Hayashi Yūjirō's *Jōhōka shakai: Hādo na shakai kara sofuto na shakai e* [Information society: From hard society to soft society] (Tokyo: Kōdansha Gendai Shinsho, 1969) onward. See also Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Beyond Computopia: Information, Automation, and Democracy in Japan* (New York: Kegan Paul, 1988).

6. Galloway, Thacker, and Wark, *Excommunication*, 5.

7. Unsurprisingly, important work in these areas is emerging. See, for instance, Weihong Bao, *Fiery Cinema: The Emergence of an Affective Medium in China* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); Victor Fan, *Cinema Approaching Reality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); Bhaskar Sarkar, *Mourning the Nation: Indian Cinema in the Wake of Partition* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); and Kay Dickinson, *Arab Cinema Travels: Syria, Palestine, Dubai, and Beyond* (London: British Film Institute, 2016). While not engaging media theory per se, an important challenge to rethinking the boundaries of theory comes in the way of Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih's edited collection, *The Creolization of Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

8. Johannes Fabian, *Time and Its Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

9. This reason for the lag in translation for the Manovich book was suggested to us by Kadobayashi Takeshi.

10. David Rodowick, *Elegy for Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 3.

11. Lev Manovich, "Postmedia Aesthetics," in *Transmedia Frictions: The Digital, the Arts, and the Humanities*, ed. Marsha Kinder and Tara McPherson (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), 34–44.

12. W. J. T. Mitchell and Mark B. N. Hansen, *Critical Terms for Media Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), xiii.

13. Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter,* trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), xxxix; quoted in Mitchell and Hansen, *Critical Terms,* vii.

14. Mitchell and Hansen, *Critical Terms,* xxii.

15. The exception to this slant is found in David Graeber's and Lydia H. Liu's contributions, which, while evoking a wider geography, refer to these places in relation to their past (in the history of exchange in Graeber's case, and the history of writing in Liu's). This unfortunately reproduces the sense of West as present, and Rest as past.

16. For an early, incisive critique on the consumption of theory as a commodity in Japan, see Marilyn Ivy, "Critical Texts, Mass Artifacts: The Consumption of Knowledge in Postmodern Japan," in *Postmodernism and Japan*, ed. Masao Miyoshi and Harry D. Harootunian (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989).

17. Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia as Method* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 211–55. This volume is directly influenced by the growing number of books in the field of Japanese cinema that put the theoretical into the history of the discipline, such as Thomas Lamarre, *Shadows on the Screen: Tanizaki Jun'ichirō on Cinema and "Oriental" Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2005); Markus Nornes, *Cinema Babel: Translating Global Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Aaron Gerow, ed., "Decentering Theory: Reconsidering the History of Japanese Film Theory," special issue, *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 22 (December 2010); Yuriko Furuhata, *Cinema of Actuality: Japanese Avant-Garde Filmmaking in the Season of Image Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013). This project began to take on its current form at the Histories of Film Theories in East Asia conference organized by Nornes and held at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, September 27–30, 2012.

18. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, *Kittler and the Media* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2011), 2.

19. The journal had a five-volume run, and was published biannually from 2008 until 2010, when Kitada split off from the project and Azuma continued the journal under the name *Shisō chizu β*.

20. This approach has been adopted more recently in relation to North American geek or hacker culture. See in this regard Christopher Kelty, *Two Bits*: *The Cultural Significance of Free Software* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); and Gabriella Coleman, *Coding Freedom: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Hacking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).

21. Geert Lovink, interview by Peter Lunenfeld, "Enemy of Nostalgia: Victim of the Present, Critic of the Future: Interview with Geert Lovink," *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art 70* 24, no. 1 (January 2002): 8; Jeffrey Sconce, *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 181.

22. Yet even as the zeronendai functioned as an initial motivating factor for this project, it also continues to work as a cautionary tale against setting up this recent effervescence of media theory in Japan as the end point in the narrative here.

23. Terry Eagleton, *After Theory* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 2, 17.

24. Matt Hills, "Strategies, Tactics and the Question of *Un Lieu Propre*: What/Where Is 'Media Theory'?" in *Social Semiotics* 14, no. 2 (2004): 133–49.

25. Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, "Introduction: The Creolization of Theory," in Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, ed. *The Creolization of Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

26. See John Guillory, "Genesis of the Media Concept," *Critical Inquiry* 36, no. 2 (winter 2010): 321–62.

27. Nick Couldry offers a useful synopsis of the institutional history of media studies in "Theorizing Media as Practice," *Social Semiotics* 14, no. 2 (2004): 116.

28. John Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 9.

29. For a consideration of Ozaki's work, see Livia Monnet, "Montage, Cinematic Subjectivity and Feminism in Ozaki Midori's *Drifting in the World of the Seventh Sense*," *Japan Forum* 11, no. 1 (1999): 57–82.

30. For an excellent overview of the debates around shinbungaku, see Fabian Schäfer, *Tosaka Jun: Ideologie, Medien, Alltag* (Leipzig, Ger.: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2011).

31. For a thorough outline of the discourses around the term *eizō*, see Furuhata, *Cinema of Actuality*.

32. Dudley Andrew offers a brief overview of the history of film studies in Japan in "The Core and the Flow of Film Studies," *Critical Inquiry* 35 (summer 2009): 885–87.

33. The reader may, of course, choose to read it that way, in which case we would advise reading in the following order: Akihiro Kitada, Fabian Schäfer, Keisuke Kitano, Aaron Gerow, Marc Steinberg, Yuriko Furuhata, Miryam Sas, Tomiko Yoda, Alexander Zahlten, Ryoko Misono, Marilyn Ivy, Takeshi Kadobayashi, Tom Looser, and Anne McKnight.

34. Moreover, a large body of work on sound and music exists for such explorations to draw on; research by such scholars as Hosokawa Shūhei, Michael Bourdaghs, Mori Yasutaka, David Novak, Sasaki Atsushi, and others already provides an immensely fertile ground for future work.

35. The special issue on film theory in Japan in the *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* (December 2010), guest edited by Aaron Gerow, stands as an immensely important intervention that explores the question of what theory means in the context of Japan as much as how it manifests vis-à-vis film. The forthcoming edited collection on film theory in Japan by Markus Nornes and Aaron Gerow will add even further to the discussion of film and its theorization.