

Editor's Introduction

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In his accounting of Mantetsu and Man'ei ethnographic films, "Phantasmagoric Manchukuo: Documentaries Produced by the South Manchurian Railway Company, 1932–1940," Jie Li introduces a five-hundred-reel film archive that the South Manchurian RR Company created during the ephemeral life of "Manchuria." He explains the films' production and intended use (inducements to tourism, labor recruitment, touting the benefits of colonization to local Chinese) yet argues that "the films retain a certain naiveté that *defies accusations of conspiracy* [emphasis mine]," while at the same time clearly creating a vision that justifies gross occupation strategies. Li's general strategic aim is to set a foundation for "read[ing] these films as . . . a phantasmagoria"; colonized, colonizers, visiting Nazis, and diplomats alike might be excused for falling under its thrall. The crucial dialectic of intended meaning in relation to "unintended revelations," deepens understanding of how even the

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shoddiest “nation-building projects” harbor the idealism of political false consciousness.

Jie Li tenaciously muddied moral culpability and sought to complicate the way we grasp propaganda and the phantasmagoric elements of colonial violence. Baryon Tensor Posadas’s “Fantasies of the End of the World: The Politics of Repetition in the Films of Kurosawa Kiyoshi” is not concerned with colonialist idealism. Yet, interestingly, he addresses how filmic violence and moral culpability are enmeshed in Kurosawa Kiyoshi’s generic serial-murder plots. In Kurosawa’s B-fantasy world, mass murderers are inexplicable even to themselves. Their actions are indecipherable because murder has become a quotidian activity. There is nothing exceptional about it, and consequently murderers “are unable to ascribe exceptional motives to their actions.” It is not a bad metaphor for colonial idealism, this fantasy of murder’s acceptability and quotidianization. Posadas then invokes Slavoj Žižek’s distinction between subjective or personal and objective and institutional violence at the essay’s conclusion to argue that in refusing to see injustice, Yoshioka, the film’s protagonist, exemplifies the actual fact that no crime is innocent of the very institutional structural violence that makes things appear to be normal, inevitable, quotidian. The injustices he refuses to address haunt Yoshioka mercilessly; the spectral woman in the red dress reflects unacknowledged historical wrongs at the end of time that he cannot even see.

James Reichert’s contribution, “*Oyama* and Anxieties about the Feminization of Japanese Film,” contributes to understanding the long pan-Asian debate over the female impersonator’s feminine performance in film, as anatomically correct female actresses supplanted the *oyama* or *onnagata* figure. Some media viewers and critics voiced concern that impersonation created what they felt was an excessive femininity, while New Women, advocates of new female-oriented commercial culture, and male progressives argued that the *oyama* and its big, female fan base threatened Japan’s new cinema in the eyes of the world. James Reichert underscores the historical point that fans did not “naturally choose” anatomical naturalism over cross-dressing superstars. They were pushed: the campaign for alleged natural anatomy had more to do with the scorn reformers felt would come “Japan’s” way if the scandal of old-style feminine performance was to dominate the new media.

In the 1910s, a campaign launched the effort to install a new gender order: Laura Mulvey's male gaze was installed in a policy of conscious derogation of still-popular forms.

To an unprecedented extent, critics such as Posadas have exposed how film technology extends the means of production and installs subjectivation, to a degree also the extension of the means of production through the human body. In Luke Robinson's hands, "Voice, Liveness, Digital Video: The Talking Head in Contemporary Independent Chinese Documentary" interrogates the documentary mode to ask "what does liveness actually mean in [the] context" of the Chinese documentary tradition as this relates to sound. In counter-documentary tradition over the last thirty years, he argues, "talking heads . . . operate as the locus of a particular sort of liveness[,] one that presents itself as unmediated presence rather than as a product of mediation." It means that mediated counter-documentary sound creates different kinds of distance. This marks a stylistic shift. The "talking head" that has often been presumed to be a survivor's unmediated voice not only is shown to be represented in a certain way through the active intervention of the documentary director, but also this stylistic shift establishes in a new way this category of "liveness." Robinson finishes his essay with commentary on the relation between a documentary filmmaker and an old woman, who is a professional testifier, documenting in a playfully cynical fashion the tragedy she had experienced, each canny about their ability to forward the mediated aims of the other.

In Kyle Ikeda's "Unarticulated Memories of the Battle of Okinawa: The Early Fiction of Second-Generation War Survivor Medoruma Shun," we encounter another problem in the question of memory, articulation, and mediation. Moving from the "the role of personal memories," which come to affirm or challenge historical narratives once they have been publicly narrated, he asks, "What . . . is the significance of *unarticulated* personal memories of the Battle of Okinawa, and what are some of the reasons that they remain unnarrated?" His point is that neither official given memories about personal suffering nor historical stories told on the basis of memory are sufficient explanations for historical trauma. Second-generation and intergenerational relations and memories are significant because they can register "the inchoate and subconscious," not just in children's medi-

ated understanding about their parents, but also, perhaps, in the parents' own memory structures. Ikeda's project is historical. Meditating through Medoruma's fiction, Ikeda indicates how trauma is avoided, delayed, and too hot to handle; there is no way that survivors can avoid defending against full cognizance of hideously damaging events. While there will always be memory that exceeds narration, Ikeda argues, one means to acknowledge its force is to read it back through the grown child's memory repository.

Yukiko Shigeto's "Tenkô and Writing: The Case of Nakano Shigeharu" extends this preoccupation with issues of self and experience lying beyond narration, as she works through the peculiar category of *tenkô*. The act connoted a conversion from Marxism to agnosticism or political allegiance in the given fascist order. In Shigeto's vision, various forms of *tenkô* must be parsed out. Nakano Shigeharu's version of this ritual was singular because, for the most part, the solution other writers chose involved abnegation of the self. In the essay, Shigeto argues that Nakano's *tenkô* offers a way out of these two *tenkô* because it was a conversion into the self, that is, "that which occupies a 'position' that ever eludes any commonly held notions of position." In other words, what Nakano plumbed was his existing tense relation with language and writing in his commitment to Japanese Marxism. That Nakano set out to "forge" his own literary "ascription of meanings to words . . . without any external guarantees," to write outside Marxism yet to refrain from silence, is the double bind that Shigeto analyzes. As a true writer, Nakano's literary gift lay in stickiness. He could not abandon his self to ideologized language or retreat from his engagement with language because his self was ensured by his relentless, sticky way with his language and writing. That is why the critic offers Nakano's *tenkô* as a singular and a significant exception to the form of *tenkô* that has generally been analyzed as binary. Nakano's *tenkô* was, she suggests, a movement toward critical subjectivity.

Dennitza Gabrakova, in "Archipelagic Thought and Theory's Other: Traveling Theory in Japan," engages *Guntô: Sekairon (Archipelago: A World Theory)*, the work of theoretical anthropologist Imafuku Ryûta. The text plays with the term *postcolonial* and appears to argue that this word might solve a problem of incoherency because, as Ikeda noted, a name has to be put to toxic unconscious material or inchoate experience. Gabrakova holds that

guntō names a fractured poetic language that only it—*guntō* itself—can communicate. She explicates Imafuku's extension of *guntō* into his “‘archipelago of multilingualism,’” showing why analytically it is advisable to distinguish “Japan” from its own multiplicity; *guntō* reveals itself to be a multiplicity, a critical meta-language of archipelagic, and because it is not a name or place called “Japan,” it is available latently, to be worked into a methodology. That is to say, *guntō*'s latency enables it to provide a foundation for a singular, “Japanese,” performative self-definition of the postcolonial voice, or “tongue.” This act opens the possibility of the national integer dissolving into an “archipelago.”

This general issue draws to a close with Christopher Payne's “Wushe, Literature, and Melodic Black Metal: The ‘Nonpolitics’ of Wuhe and the ‘Political’ ChthoniC.” According to Payne, the 1930 uprising of local Taiwan inhabitants, apparently against Japanese colonization, has a complex history, not well explicated, yet it has come to play an important role in popular late 1990s and 2000s pop culture in the work of melodic-black-metal band ChthoniC. Because he works in a Levinasian world, Payne gives scholarly attention to how the Musha Incident appears in the novel *The Remains of Life*, how the incident might be historically interpreted, and, most importantly, what would move this massacre beyond politics and into an ethical realm; and he suggests this may be effected using the violent music of a heavy-metal Taiwan-based cosmopolitan band called ChthoniC. The conclusion of this complex argument is a long meditation on the ethics of responsibility and our debt to others and ourselves in relation to violence as such. Beautifully argued, this essay ends with Payne's invocation of the “‘bond’ to our past,” which can be encouraged to “[manifest] itself and [allow] us to become aware of our debt to history, our debt to its victims and its ruin.”

